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### NEWSWIRE

## Leader's drive puts Power Systems on top

By John Craig, Editor - **04.27.2007**

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. - As strength and conditioning coach at the University of Tennessee in the mid-1980s, Bruno Pauletto used to grow frustrated in his search for exercise gear.

"There wasn't any company that put all the equipment under one umbrella," he said. "It was a little bit here, a little bit there. I thought that if I could get a catalogue that had everything we needed, it'd take off."

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So Pauletto began locating equipment, identifying manufacturers and distributors, and buying products that he could re-sell to his counterparts at other schools. He and his wife, Julie, eventually assembled their own small catalogue and started peddling their wares, along with self-made training videos.

"We started in our house with maybe 10 or 15 products," he recalled. "We had plyometric boxes and weight belts, things like that. The products would get delivered to us, and we'd ship them back out UPS."

The extra income was nice, but after seven years, the couple's side business was in danger of becoming too much of a good thing.

"With me coaching full-time, Julie was really doing everything," Bruno said. "And it was getting to be too much for her."

Something had to give: Pauletto would either keep his job at Tennessee, with its perks and long-term security, and scale back his burgeoning distributorship, or roll the dice and become a full-time entrepreneur.

Pauletto chose the latter.

"Best financial decision I've ever made," he said this month, reflecting on his 21 years as the head of Power Systems, one of the biggest names in the fitness industry.

The Knoxville-based company is still selling equipment through its catalogues. But it has also branched into Internet sales and will move into a new 215,000-square-foot headquarters - four times the size of its current home - this fall.

The once mom-and-pop company now has 72 employees, more than 1,200 products and thousands of customers, including every National Football League team and scores of colleges and professional baseball, basketball and hockey franchises.

Pauletto has turned over day-to-day operations to a full-time executive, but he still has his hand on the throttle, and Power Systems continues to operate in the workmanlike image of its founder.

Born in Italy, Pauletto was 10 years old when his family moved to northern Canada for the promise of steady work for his father, who helped string power lines along some of the most frigid terrain in North America. Resettling in French-speaking Quebec wasn't easy for Pauletto and his four siblings. As a 10-year-old unschooled in the native language, Pauletto was placed in a first-grade class.

"It was very tough for me," he said. "But I think those experiences helped down the road. You know the saying, 'What doesn't break you, makes you stronger.'"

Pauletto, who spoke Italian at home, became fluent in French and English as well. He excelled at sports, took a liking to the shot put and received a partial scholarship to the University of Central Michigan, where he was a three-time track and field All-American

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### The Sweatshop

#### All aboard Espresso

People keep throwing money at Espresso Fitness. The California maker of interactive stationary bikes says it's received \$12 million in funding from a San Francisco venture capital group called Physic Ventures.



### Marketwatch

#### 'Me, running on a treadmill?' GAL'

Try to interest the typical couch-dwelling, screen-soaked teenager in a brisk walk on a treadmill or some weight training and you're likely to receive a roll of the eyes.



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and won the NCAA title in 1978.

Pauletto made the U.S. Olympic team in 1980, but saw his dream of competing dashed by the American boycott of the Moscow Games. Four years later, he made the team again, but at age 26 was already working part-time and pursuing a master's degree in exercise physiology at Tennessee, and unable to commit to the same level of training.

"I did poorly in 1984," he said. "I was at my peak in 1908, but with the boycott, the athletes took it on the chin."

At Tennessee, Pauletto became one of the country's leading strength and conditioning coaches. He served as president of the National Strength and Conditioning Association and wrote extensively on training methods.

"My track background helped me," he said. "Track and field athletes had been training long before the other sports, so I had the practical and academic background and was able to combine the two."

As a member of his company's four-person research and development team, he's still testing products to try to predict what might be a hit. He's seen a lot of bad ideas over the years that he'd rather not discuss, he said, and a lot of good ones, too, such as the rubberized medicine balls that Pauletto peddled at a trade show seven years ago.

"They were so colorful, a lot better looking than those leather balls that we used to have in gym class years ago," he said. "I thought people would go for them."

Today, those balls are among Power Systems' biggest sellers.



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### CALENDAR

#### May 2008

**4-7** 44th Annual National Sporting Goods Association Management Conference & 9th  
Phoenix, AZ For more information please visit  
[www.nsga.org](http://www.nsga.org)

**28-31** American College of Sports Medicine Annual Meeting  
Indianapolis, IN For more information please visit [www.acsm.org](http://www.acsm.org)

**29-1** The World Spinning and Sports Conference

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