

“Virtual Training Pays Off: Java-Inovotec Riders Shine at Kirehe Road Race”

As virtual cycling gains momentum across Africa, Rwanda is emerging as one of the early adopters of the new technology that blends sport and innovation. At the heart of this transformation is the Java-Inovotec UCI Continental Team, which recently established a Virtual Performance Center (VPC) in Gatsibo-Ngarama.

In this interview, Pascal Ndizeye, Team Principal of Java, Inovotec, speaks to Muhinde Jjeje, Rwanda Dispatch journalist about how virtual platforms like Zwift are helping young riders, especially girls from rural areas, train competitively while staying in school. He also shares insights on the challenges, successes, and Rwanda’s potential to become a regional hub for virtual cycling in East Africa.

Interview

Q. How did the Virtual Performance Center come to be established at your team base in Gatsibo-Ngarama?

A. Our girl riders are based in rural areas, and we wanted to keep them in school while motivating them to continue their cycling training. The best solution was to adapt the technology used in fitness and by European cyclists during the cold season.

Zwift came to my mind, so I posted on social media asking for anyone interested in supporting cycling development in Rwanda. Team Africa Rising and Zwift saw our post and stepped in to help us.

Q. What difference has virtual training made in the performance and motivation of your riders so far?

A. Our riders are students; they study from 7:00 a.m. to 4:40 p.m. Every evening at 5:00 p.m., they come to our Virtual Performance Center and train on Zwift for one or two hours before heading home. The results speak for themselves; we dominated the Kirehe Race thanks to the Zwift training program.

Q. How are you using data from platforms like Zwift to improve your riders’ real-world racing results?

A. The data from Zwift is very real and valuable. We monitor each rider’s heart rate,

power output (FTP), and performance metrics, and we plan training sessions based on that daily data. On weekends, we go out on the road for practical sessions, and it's working for us.

Q. Do you think Rwanda can become a regional hub for virtual cycling development in East Africa?

A. Absolutely. Rwanda just hosted the 2025 World Cycling Championships, proving that we can deliver world-class cycling events. The Java Inovotec Performance Center will definitely become the hub for East Africa's Virtual Performance Centers.

Q. What challenges do young riders still face in accessing this kind of technology?

A. The technology is expensive. Many young riders here can't even afford a basic racing bicycle, so obtaining this kind of equipment is out of reach. The best option is for them to come to our center and use the equipment we already have.

Q. How do you see virtual cycling shaping the future of professional cycling in Rwanda?

A. Inovotec is currently the only team in Rwanda with this technology, but we plan to work with other local teams to onboard their riders and help them get empowered.

In the long term, our goal is to evolve into a Cycling Academy rather than just a single team. That way, we can bring more young people, especially students — into the Virtual Performance Center and build the next generation of Rwandan cyclists.

This conversation is part of Rwanda Dispatch's coverage of the growing impact of virtual training on African cycling.

This is just one perspective on Rwanda's growing virtual cycling scene, Read our full feature on how Virtual Performance Centers are accelerating Africa's Cycling revolution [link coming soon].

[Virtual Performance Centers to accelerate Africa's Cycling Revolution](#)