

INTO THE RIDE #68

The Mid Racer Part 2

by Randy Schlitter



In September of 2007 we revealed the Xstream, a bike we termed as a mid racer due to the seat position being approximately in the middle between high and low racers. The bike has undergone a lot of road miles and subtle frame changes, and through it all has retained the original essence of the project and design intent, which is to build a bike with performance on par with high racers. The aero position allowed by either high and low racers has placed them in front in terms of speed. But both have tradeoffs in areas that we felt there was room for improvement.

Handling is hard to quantify. For most who have tried any of the Xstream prototypes, it comes out on top. This sampling was from first-time to experienced riders. Like most of our long wheel base bents, the Xstream tracks well, but can get a little iffy climbing a steep hill at sub 5 MPH speeds. The good news: the bike spends very little time at under 5 MPH!

Comfort is also hard to quantify. But coming up with a long wheelbase that does not ride with the road shock transfer of a high racer was not difficult. By its very nature a long wheelbase will absorb more road shock, preserving the rider's desire to continue. This is crucial for a bike intended for ultra events, and can pay benefits even for short day races. The fresher a rider feels is related to ride quality and comfort, as well as performance. When it was all said and done, we felt the Xstream blends the comfort of passive frame suspension, clean aerodynamics and handling that allows a rider to turn in better times.



Reaching these design goals has a dual purpose, as the intent was to create a RAAM racer, but also a bike with wide appeal. That would require good handling and plenty of performance. Along the way we came to know the bike we tagged the Xstream, and in some ways the moniker is a perfect fit. As far as extremes, the bike pushes what is expected from long wheel base bents. In terms of performance, it is not extreme in how it handles, and therefore suitable for use as a starter bent.

Details about the Xstream program will be released at InterBike in a few weeks. Interest in the bike has been building ever since September of '07. This interest and the positive outcomes of factory and field testing have made it easy to commit to production. Over the course of the program we have built Xstreams from steel, aluminum, and titanium. The winning frame material is aluminum. It gives the best price/weight/stiffness, and takes full advantage of the trussed design.

We have tested a variety of seats and handlebars; the winning combinations are the Hoagie seat and handle bar and riser similar to the V3. Other seats like the new Sling Mesh tested well, when a more upright riding position is desired. I am sure most will be happy with the spec, all-up weight, and MSRP of this fine recumbent. Until next time ride safe and stay into the ride.

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