

INTO THE RIDE #83

Xstream 26 Long Wheel Base Multi-Role Speedster

by Randy Schlitter

The Xstream 26 is set up to handle larger cross-section tires, and the stock bike comes with the tried and true Primo Comets. There is something undeniably fun about a 1.5" tire that is light and low in rolling resistance. When combined into high performance frame geometry you can have lots of speed and lots of comfort. Riding any of our dual 26 bikes with this combination has proven very roadworthy. We found this out during the Stratus XP development, our first dual 26 LWB bent. The Primo Comets make it easy to maintain speed, yet give you that extra bit of cushion that makes it easy to push the bike without being hammered by the road.

The essence of the Xstream 26 is the same exact frame used on RAAM 2009, but with a disc brake fork and rear drops; however, the bike comes with canti brakes. Some may want to option for a frame set knowing you could build it with disc brakes of your choice, but one important and critical element of the stock brakes is crank clearance.



We pushed the geometry to the limit, so it requires the brake spread to be closed to less than 100mm. This is done by swapping the washer stack on the brake shoes.

Because of the versatile nature of the frame we see the bike addressing several roles. During the Xstream testing I went hunting for muddy sloppy dirt roads, just to see how the bike would fare, and was happy to report I could stay upright and do decent speed, even on skinny 650 tires. For me personally I favor the stock tires... On mushy roads the wider tires would have fared better, both in control and speed.

There is enough clearance to go as big as 1.75", but at this point you must be willing to push some mass in the wheels. Those would be some cushy tires though, and offer up a different ride, more for mild trails or even deeper loose sand or gravel roads, or beaches. We have not tested beyond the 1.5" but I imagine such big tires would suck some speed but still be impressive - it takes a lot to slow down an Xstream!

As a touring machine the bike should excel in stock form, but again one has the option to disc it. Touring on this bike might become a popular role. The miles do roll off with ease, which any touring cyclist would love. And the ride is all long wheelbase: cushy and low, with predictable handling. As far as the frame goes, loading it up for extensive touring should not present any issues, since the rear rack

will load the rear wheel. However, if you do set one up for touring and you are near the weight limit, consider a heavy-duty rear wheel.



An under-seat rack would be my choice of gear, although the street is near, so select panniers of medium height. Loaded this way will enhance handling, although it will pick up some drag.

The Xstream was designed to go fast, so being the best bike to carve through rush hour traffic it is not. However, we are finding the bike becoming popular for everyday use, and some will commute. I guess it really depends on the commute, because here in Hays it would be at home even during the worst traffic. It is lower than many short wheelbase and other long wheel base bents, so keep that in mind, but you should still be close to eye-to-eye level with car drivers. The powerful rim brakes and larger tires support about any role you choose for the bike, short of muddy hill climbs! It should be pleasant enough on chip sealed roads, which unfortunately, are becoming more common. And like I mentioned before it will be at home on hard packed sand or gravel.

We chose the new very light and comfy Sling Mesh seat for a number of reasons. One it is made in Hays Kansas, two it is very light, and three it allows a wide range of seat tilt, with no problems reaching the ground. With the Sling Mesh seat in a more upright position it reduces tiller. This

effectively de-tunes the racing nature enough to become a great first timer's bike, and as experience is gained, the seat can lean back enough to really slice the wind.

The Xstream 26 makes sense as a great investment into a bike that has performance breeding. The versatile nature will make it fun to configure, and the core of the bike will always be a racer. An area where we are seeing some configuration creativity is in the handle bar set up. On mine I trimmed off 1" from the grip end of handlebars to allow more knee clearance; this did not impact the reach, since I run the bars pretty vertical. I tried several bar combinations and always came back to the B-37's. What others may come up with will be interesting, and there is quite a selection of bars, not only from us, but others, that could make it the optimum fit for you. The good news is the bike needs very little displacement to turn, since you are usually moving at a good clip



We are in ship cycle with Xstream 26. It comes in a dazzling yellow, and the silver sparkle clear coat gives it a candy apple effect. For durability and a classy touch, we clear coated over the decals. In summary the bike has a lot going for it: strong brakes, comfy and light seat (the sling mesh seat has been getting very positive reviews), and the bike is a mere 31 pounds with pedals (amazing for a sub 2K longwheel base!). What is not to like about a variant of a racer that will work for everyday hard-hitting riding?

Until next time stay safe, and stay into the ride!

The Xstream. The name says it all. From a blistering 6 Day 3 Hr 40 min victory time at RAAM 2009 to a peaceful, relaxing nocturnal gravel road adventure, the Xstream can do it all.

I recently had the pleasure of taking the Xstream 26 on a post-sunset excursion. Albeit relatively short, it was one of the more soothing gravel rides I've experienced.

My buddy Dan and I started at my house near 27th and Fort at around 6:15. The cruise through town was short but streets were teeming with automobiles, which always makes for stressful negotiation. Being new to the recumbent ride, I found the Xstream 26 was relatively easy to control, making the journey to gravel a comfortable experience.

The ride continued down 27th to Hall and North on Hall out to Feedlot road, the second test of the evening. Anyone who has ridden feedlot road knows what a test the gnarly asphalt can be. Although the Xstream 26 is a completely aluminum frame, the length and box truss configuration of the frame allowed for pertinent vertical compliance making the traverse of Feedlot Road almost pleasant! With the right air pressure, one wouldn't even know they were even near cragged asphalt.

Next, Dan and I headed south on 210th Ave. 210 is a gravel road with plenty of rolling hills and deep sand. At this point traffic was at its lull so Dan and I decided to use the moonlight to light our way. This decision proved to provide the third test of the evening for the Xstream 26. The ruts and deep sand, now shrouded by darkness, crept up on us from time to time to test the handling of my ride. I was thrilled to find that cutting through the deep sand proved to be no issue. The small proportion of weight on the front end allowed me to turn the bars with little effort while the voluminous 20 x 1.5 inch tire found just enough grip to bring the front end around to keep me upright. The experience was the same when hitting even the deepest ruts!

As our journey continued, Dan and I came upon the hilly stretch of 210th Ave. The first thought through my head was, "How am I ever going climb lying on my back?" I soon discovered why the RANS team never even broke out their short wheel base steeds during the mountain sections of RAAM. The Xstream climbs like a champ! Just like the previous miles of the ride, I just kept the pedals turning. Soon we were at the top of the first hill. I coasted down the back side, gapping Dan, and started up the next. This continued until we reached Golf Course Road where I stopped to wait for Dan to regain his position beside me.

After a couple of minutes, Dan caught up and we continued to Spring Hill Road. The stretch of Spring Hill east of 210th Ave contains 2 large hills and one very long, steep decent. It was during this decent, that I lost track of Dan. I reached the bottom and looked back to find my friend. To my dismay I couldn't see him so I started back up the hill to find him. I continued for 100 feet or so when I glimpsed his shadowy figure. Apparently, through my rapid ascent of the previous hill and my enormous onset of speed from coasting down the back side, I gapped Dan enough to put him out of sight!

Once Dan was again along side, we continued down 230th Ave back into town. Our moonlight adventure was complete and another gravel road conquered.

By Tanner Marshall



The Xstream 26 is definitely my stallion of choice when gallivanting the country side in search of gravel.

INTO THE RIDE