

LAPIERRE HMXLITE [TDF]

This frame is built with tube to tube technology using high modulus (HM) carbon. Basically each tube is designed for its location in the frame and is mitered to fit. Then the tubes are glued and wrapped with carbon fiber to connect it all together. This creates a strong frame yet keeps the weight down because no lugs are used. This also lowers the overall cost of producing frames since a \$30,000 mold is not used like it is on a monocoque frame. Guided by computer software that determines the vector analysis' needed, each tube is designed with the desired characteristics. Less glue ends up in the frame, since each tube is created with a mandrel and bladder. If you have seen monocoque frames cut apart you will notice that a lot of glue ends up in corners and tight spots. Extra glue is just waste product and weight sitting in your frame.

HOW DOES IT FEEL?

First and foremost the HMXLite is stunningly attractive. The use of white as the predominant body color is quite chic these days and is seen throughout the industry whether it be on a frame or handlebar, stem or post. Interesting how color ways change from year to year. Go back a short time and the Cinelli XLR8R4 seemed to be on the fringe when it went with the white. Now, it seems, everyone is doing it. Accenting the white is some grey and dark blue (has a hint of purple in it) and sponsor logos on the chain stays. As a font junkie I am particularly fond of the Lapierre logo and the type they use. It has that Euro flare and modern structure to it and though it's huge on the down tube, it's not annoying because it's broken up by combining letters together. Overall a tight package that is timeless.

At first glance the geometry slopes a bit with a noticeable slack to the seat tube. It makes for a long top tube, but because of the tall head tube and slack, it creates a more upright position. Right off, the position for me was superb. The geometry was ideal for my style of riding which is primarily on the tops.

Instantly I noticed the stiffness of the Lapierre. There are a few bikes like the Scott Addict and Cannondale System Six that feel as stiff if not more so than the HMXLite, but that's about it. This bike is responsive from the get-go. On the flat it gathered speed quickly. The rear triangle, for lack of a better description, is small, and it's my guess that this small size contributes to the power transfer from the crank to rear wheel (no science behind my opinion). Every transition area on the frame is beefy, with particular "chunk" dedicated to the bottom bracket area and particularly where the chain stays "connect" to the bottom bracket. Rock the bike back-and-forth and it generates speed without hesitation. You might assume that because the head tube is so tall that there would be a fair bit of "nervousness" at the front, but this was not the case. In fact, the stiffness in the front end is one of the strongest attributes for this bike. It made for safe, quick descending no matter the terrain. Point and shoot could be a proper analogy as tight curves were handled as easily as the big, wide sweepers. Climbing was responsive too and I found myself ascending in the saddle more than out both due to the smooth power transfer and sloping geometry. Though I am not a big drops riders, I was in the drops for miles at a time because the position the XLite afforded me. With the bar sitting higher because of the slope and tall head tube, it turned out to be a comfortable position, considering that the drops are dread for me.

The specification on the HMXLite was top-level. In particular, the Easton product dotting the landscape was a perfect match. The EC90SLX fork likely contributes substantially to the stiff front end along with the bar and stem. Because I am a seat post adjustment freak, I have become quite fond of the

ANGLES

Measurements in centimeters [TT= top tube; SA= seat angle; HA= head angle]

SIZE	46	49	52	55	58
TT	52	53.5	55	57	59
SA	74°	73.5°	73°	72.5°	72°
HA	71.5°	72°	72.5°	73°	73.5°

EC70 post because of its painless one-bolt design. The clamp and bolt is burly enough to keep my mind at peace and, of course, the aesthetic is spot-on. The Dura-Ace componentry always works good, and while there is some debate out there regarding the levers/hoods and their size, I quite like the feel. In a world of carbon aftermarket cranks, the Dura-Ace set still continues to maintain its position at the top. No muss or fuss, just simplicity, stiffness and strength. If it ain't broke, don't "fix" it! Making the Lapierre go 'round are the Ksyrium SL's and Michelin Pro2 Light's. A nice combination for everyday use. Let's face it, having a set of light, strong, durable wheels is ideal for a daily driver. You can bet these wheels will last and be suitable for any discipline whether you race or not. The Michelin's are a solid, every day tire that are supple and durable at the same time. I ventured off road for some fire road action and felt comfortable with grip and control. The Selle Italia carbon-railed saddle is "hot", but too small for my liking. It offered plenty of padding and at 125g is lighter than most. I found myself often "wiggling" about to find the sweet spot.

LAST CALL

The overall package is tight and given that a ProTour team uses this frame lends something to Lapierre's credibility. While they are a bit "obscure" in the US, the quality should not be overlooked and should be considered. Most machines on this scale hover above \$6,000 in most cases, so the "low" \$5,300 price tag is yet another reason why this complete package deserves a serious look. *R*

THE LOW DOWN

Price: \$5300
 Weight: 14.7 lbs. (55cm)
 Sizes: 46, 49, 52, 55, 58cm
 Color(s): Team Francais des Jeux
 [Tour de France edition]
 Information: lapierrebikes.com

Chassis
 Frame: High modulus carbon fiber
 Fork: Easton EC90SLX

Wheelset
 Wheels: Mavic Ksyrium SL
 Tires: Michelin Pro2 Light

Cockpit
 Brake levers/shifters: Shimano Dura-Ace
 Brakes: Shimano Dura-Ace
 Handlebar: Easton EC90 Equipe SL
 Stem: Easton EA90
 Headset: Ritchey WCS Carbon
 Saddle: Selle Italia Carbonio SLR
 Seatpost: Easton EC70

Drivetrain
 Crankset: Shimano Dura-Ace
 Bottom Bracket: Shimano Dura-Ace
 Cassette: Shimano Dura-Ace
 Chain: Shimano Dura-Ace
 Derailleurs (F/R): Shimano Dura-Ace

