



THE LOW DOWN

WEIGHT: 14.2 lbs. (w/pedals & cages)
 COLOR: White, shade of green & black
 CONTACT: kirkleebicycles.com

CHASSIS

FRAME: Carbon fiber monocoque
 FORK: Easton EC90SLX

WHEELS

WHEELSET: Edge 38 Carbon Clinchers
 TIRES: Continental Grand Prix 4000S

COCKPIT

BRAKE LEVERS: SRAM Red
 BRAKES: SRAM Red
 HANDLEBAR: Easton EC90SLX
 HEADSET: Cane Creek
 SADDLE: Selle Italia Carbonio
 SEATPOST: Easton EC90
 SHIFTERS: SRAM Red
 STEM: Easton EA90

DRIVETRAIN

BOTTOM BRACKET: Rotor SABB
 CASSETTE: SRAM Red (not shown)
 CHAIN: SRAM
 CRANKS: Rotor Cranks Agilis RD
 DERAILLEURS F/R: SRAM Red
 PEDALS: Look KEO
 CAGES: Elite Custom Carbon
 TOTAL PRICE: \$8770 (complete); \$4000 (frame/fork/seatpost/headset)

KirkLee Custom

It was exactly one year ago that I stumbled upon the guys from KirkLee Bicycles. At the time John McGuire and Brad Cason (KirkLee is a combination of their middle names) were in the infant stages of getting their custom bike company going. It was Interbike 2007 at the Rotor Crank booth and Brad gave me the tour of John's bike. "Are those lugs?" I asked. "Nope" said Cason. I was instantly intrigued and a story of their company soon followed in *ROAD*. As time went by they began to evolve like any small bike company does. Orders came in steadily and eventually they hit what could be called "the mother lode": a custom bike for Tyler Hamilton. He raced it at the Tour of Elk Grove a couple months ago.

In the meantime I approached the "boys" about a project bike. Not long after our conversation we had a conference call and emails back and forth regarding geometry, style of riding, components, color and construction. I indicated I "dug" the look of lugs but not lugs. The geometry for this bike is based loosely on the Specialized S-Works Roubaix with its more upright/sloping geometry and longer wheel base. The feel of such a dimension is pure comfort for me without the connotation of what we associate the word "comfort" with in cycling.

Both McGuire and Cason took notes, did some computer drawings and quickly returned a diagram both on paper and a simulated computer graphic version. After I signed the plans, they went to work with the construction. They aren't 2 wrenches turned frame builders, but instead 2 guys with a wealth of engineering experience both at the aeronautic and cycling level and what you see here is pure masterpiece that blends the engineering nitty-gritty with pure art quite seamlessly.

The paint was also discussed in the pre-planning stages. They can do anything you like, but I chose to stay earthy and clean. With McGuire's help, we came up with a color palette that matches my personal style. The subtle green color on the top and down tube has a hint of olive in it, while the white is on the creamy side and combined with the black





“No, those are not lugs in the typical sense. Those are hand laid layers of carbon fiber. Depending on what the customer likes we can taper the ends which blends the hand laid carbon into the tubes being joined together or we can stop the hand layup all at once which simulates the look like a lugged bike. My choice is a blend of each, lugs on vertical tubes (Seat Tube) and blended on horizontal tubes. No pre-made lugs exist for these bikes, it is all done by hand. Who says carbon has no soul?”
 – Brad Cason [KirkLee Bicycles]



and red on the Easton components, it's one of the cleanest machines I have seen or used. Certainly I may be biased, but when was the last time you saw such a green on a road bike? Only on a custom rig.

A couple months after our conversation, the bike came in a box to the office. Kitted in SRAM Red and pimped to the gills with Edge 38 Carbon Clinchers, Agilis RD cranks by Rotor, and Easton from toes to nose, the KirkLee rig looked mean, clean and fresh. All I did was clamp on my Selle Italia Flite Kit Carbonio saddle, Elite Custom Carbon cages, Look Keo pedals and pumped some air in the tires and she was ready for the maiden voyage.

Since I haven't ridden this type of sloping geometry in a while, it took a few miles to get used to the position. First off, I noticed the overall stiffness. It's a solid machine that while stiff, it's not overly rigid and combined with the slack position it came across as a fast-charger. Immediately, the energy I put to the cranks came "out" through the rear wheel. This was the first time I ever used the Rotor Cranks and immediately felt the impact of the ovalized chainring. The Agilis RD is Rotor's conventional road crankset with hollow arms, adjustable length and a semi-integrated axle and self-aligning bottom bracket cupset, while the chain rings are the Rotor Q-Rings. The genius of this set is that the consumer can adjust the spindle length by way of the double-threaded bolt. In the end, you can align the bottom bracket according to the actual dimensions of your frame, which allows the rider to get balanced strength distribution. The Q-Rings are the icing and eliminate the dead spot and are adjustable to the rider's needs or strengths. For someone like me who teeters on the fitness edge of good and decent, the cranks were a welcome addition.

It's also the first time on the Edge 38 Carbon Clinchers. The Successful Living pro cycling team rides them, and immediately I was struck by the weight of the complete wheelset. They reside somewhere in the neighborhood of 2329 grams with

skewers, tires, tubes, and cassette. They are fast and quiet wheels, similar in feel to Zipp 202's. I thought for certain they would waiver a bit under my weight, but they were as stiff as a board for me and braking was strong. I would guess that we will be seeing more of these guys as time goes by on high-end rigs.

Some of the highpoints of the rest of componentry is the Easton gear. The bars are traditional with no funky ergo slants, while the standover is the post that uses a one-bolt system that is simple and quick to adjust. The saddle of course is the epitome of creative design. No other saddle on the market looks as good as this one from the cutout on the rear to the swooping design that starts from the nose to the tail. The SRAM Red is always flawless. The refinement from the Force of the previous year has taken the group to the next level, one that has little to bitch about. It just works, is solid as a rock and when you need it most, in times of stress or to build speed, shifts seamlessly.

This is the complete package combining the best of components with an incredible frame and fork combination. On the road this bike is a rocket ship on the straight and flat, climbs aggressively with its sloping design and is a hard-charger in the turns. The stiffness and slack geometry makes for one of the more comfortable rigs I have ridden. In a nutshell, it does all things good with a nod toward the general ride out on the open road. It's an energetic bike that takes your power and generates momentum without hesitation. Most of my time is spent on semi-flat roads and this is where I need the most from a bike. While my bike is based on a pre-existing machine, KirkLee is equipped to handle any type of dimension you may throw their way. You can go for the lug look or steer toward the true monocoque-like aesthetic we are accustomed to. The paint options are endless too. There's no need to be a prisoner to a few color choices when you can explore the entire color wheel. Mine has my name on the rear of the top tube, a truly custom detail that you can only get from a small shop like KirkLee. *KL*



kirkleebicycles.com [frame]; eastonbike.com [stem, post, fork, bar]; rotorcranks.com [crankset]; edgecomponents.com [wheelset]; sram.com [gruppo]; proneticycling.com [saddle & cages]; lookcycle.com [pedals]; conti-online.com [tires]