AeroGeeks

TriTech for the Masses

FLO 60 – First Ride

February 1, 2013 · by aerogeeks · in By Devon, First Look, Wheels. ·

(http://aerogeeks.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/img_20130130_102643.jpg)

Editor's Note: We here at AeroGeeks (strongly) believe in the idea that going fast shouldn't involve weight reduction in your wallet, and to that end, we started planning a series on Affordable Aero. This is the first in a long series of reviews, comparisons, analysis posts and editorials on how to go fast on the cheap.

When Mike and I first discussed the Affordable Aero series, one name shot to the top of our list: Flo Cycling. He and I have a longstanding debate on whether you can get wheels that perform as well as their expensive counterparts; I have maintained that the costs associated with producing a wheel that isn't simply another open-mold re-hash of five year old designs is prohibitively expensive for anyone but the big guys to undertake – and even then, most prefer simply to go that route and throw their own hubs and stickers on it.

Let me say it, now: I was wrong. (Mikes Note – Told you so)

Flo Cycling has been working on their 60, 90 and Disc for about two years, using Computational Fluid Dynamics to engineer as fast a wheel as they can without donating their life savings to the A2 Wind Tunnel. What CFD allows you to do is simulate the wind tunnel using highly specialized software, essentially saving you trips to the tunnel and producing a remarkable number of iterations over an incredibly short amount of time.

I had the opportunity to get some miles in on a set of Flo 60s this week, and my first impression is a fairly simple one: Wheels this cheap just shouldn't be this good.

(http://aerogeeks.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/img_20130130_100550.jpg)
(Nothing like Florida farmland for a test ride. Even the cows seem impressed.)

In a somewhat unfortunate twist, the rides I have been able to get in thus far have been less than optimal for deep-section wheels: 18mph sustained winds with gusts up to 30 make even the most stable wheels turn into sails that will jump at the slightest provocation. And yet, these 60s were remarkably calm in all but a few cases – a gale that moved the entire bike a foot over on the road and a particularly vicious, and sustained, head-on gust that required judicious control over the

front end to keep it from going sideways. Neither of these instances can be attributed to the wheels – any aero wheel would have been a handful in these conditions – but what can be laid at their tires is exactly how predictable these were. Riding at 30 to 45 degrees to the wind, even in full tuck, was drama-free. There was a noticeable pressure against the wheel, but it was never sudden or sharp; like someone putting a hand on your shoulder and leaning versus a shove. For anyone wondering if toroidal faired wheels work when the conditions are less than optimal: they do.

But what happens when the wind dies down and you're creating some wind of your own? When the wind finally died down for a bit and I got to put the hammer down, Flo did not disappoint. At time trial speed, three things happened. First, I found that not only are these fast wheels, they are supremely comfortable in terms of road feel. Second, the ease of steering at speed and maintaining your line in a tuck is an absolute joy to experience. Third, my bike sounds like it is powered by dilithium crystals at 30mph. There is a not-exactly subtle hum from the rear wheel that sounds, to my ears, exactly like the warp core from Star Trek: The Next Generation. If this doesn't interest you, seek psychiatric care.

The only real disappointment for these wheels is not in what they are trying to be, a flat-course speed wheel, but in what they aren't: simply put, you cannot climb with these wheels. At 1936g claimed weight for the pair, you will be fine on a rolling course, but if there's anything like a serious climb; swap your friend with the road bike for his wheels that weekend. I did a couple hundred feet of climbing just to see how they'd do and my conclusions are thus: The Flos are plenty stiff, as their aluminum box internals should be, and they roll exceptionally well on the hubs, but this isn't what they were designed for and that isn't a bad thing. Flo will be releasing a set of climbing wheels in the future – and for the price of the 60s ($898 for a set), you can afford a set of Flo Climbers to swap as needed and have everything you want for well under even a single set of anything else on the market.

The last point worth mentioning is the braking performance, which is exactly what you expect from an aluminum brake track: well-modulated, responsive, and when you want to stop, they stop. There are wheels three times the price of these that haven't mastered that, even with trick brake pads and specially-engineered resins. I'd go so far as to say that I had better brake performance from these than I did my normal training wheels, Felt's TTR3, but that may have been the brake job I had to do to accommodate the wider tracks on the 60s. Time will tell.

In the end, I came away from my first real sessions with these wheels nothing short of amazed at what the Flo 60 represents for the working class triathlete and time triallist: a rock-solid set of phenomenally controllable, fast, aero wheels whose price tag doesn't just not break the bank, it won't even make the missus angry. At the end of the day, that's what Affordable Aero is all about; being fast without a second mortgage. Give us a few more rides and we'll have a longer term review up, but for now, I am hard pressed to name a wheelset I like better than the Flo 60.

Tags: FLO 60, Flo Cycling, FLO60

8 responses on “FLO 60 – First Ride”

1. *Nina* February 1, 2013 at 11:11 am · · Reply →
   Excellent article!

2. Pingback: 2/9/2013 – What’s Going on at AG Headquarters | AeroGeeks·

3. Pingback: 2/17/2013 – AeroGeeks Week in Review | AeroGeeks·

4. *Sam* February 18, 2013 at 1:08 am · · Reply →
   Great review. Can you elaborate further on your climbing paragraph. Was there anything specific? Weight? Ride quality? Very curious about this.

   - *aerogeeks* February 18, 2013 at 12:27 pm · · Reply →
     With a claimed weight (we still have to get them on our scale) of 1936 grams these are not light weight wheels. For instance the 60s come in at almost 400g more than a comparable set of 404 FCs (1525g). That being the case we have already done some climbing tests, and we have some hill workouts on the test plan to help us fully quantify the climbing abilities of these wheels. Give us a few more weeks and we will publish our comprehensive review of this wheel set including our thoughts on how they climb.

5. Pingback: 2/24/2013 – Week in Review | AeroGeeks·

6. Pingback: 3/3/2013 – Week in Review | AeroGeeks·

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