

BMC Impec: Handmade by Machines

Bicycling tests BMC's new Impec, which Cadel Evans and George Hincapie are riding at the Tour de France.

By Mike Yozell



Cadel Evans and George Hincapie are riding the Impec Team model at the 2010 Tour.

Earlier this month, Bicycling attended the BMC 2011 product launch in Grenchen, Switzerland. There, the company debuted its new frame, called the Impec, which is being manufactured in BMC's new facility down the road from its corporate headquarters.

The new facility was key for the production of the Impec. BMC started with a design mandate of absolute control over its manufacturing. Robots were used to run the carbon loom for the tubes and for the assembly of the frames. BMC is one of the few companies to make its own tubes, and it is pushing the limits of the technology by tightly controlling the placement of every carbon strand on each tube as it is woven over its mandrel. This, according to company owner Andy Rihs, provides a level of tuning for carbon tubes found nowhere else.

The frame "lugs," known as Shell Nodes, are a two-piece design of injection-molded short-strand carbon fiber made down the road by a Swiss partner. Rihs explained that by making the Nodes in two halves, there is no room for error in both glue up and placement of the tubes. "Everything is able to be tightly controlled in the process of frame assembly right down to the placement of the glue in the Shell Nodes, something that can't be said of one-piece lugs," he said.

Out on the roads, the ride is silky smooth in a way few carbon frames are. Markus Eggimann, Brand Manager for BMC, led us on one of the loops used by the BMC staff on their daily lunch ride. Typical of lunch rides worldwide, the "not a race" ride ramped up as Eggimann set a stiff tempo on the opening 3-kilometer climb. There, we started to get a feel for just how well the Impec will perform. There was no perceptible sway to the frame and a welcome absence of road noise. Comfort was paramount, but not at the cost of stiffness. When standing to accelerate or carving fast descents, this machine was all business. One of the design decisions in making the frame was to have a complete bike weigh in right at the 6.8-kilogram (14.99-pound) UCI limit, so they chose not to make the lightest frame possible-but the payoff is in the ride quality. We'll see how it all measures up when we do our in-depth test in an upcoming issue of Bicycling.



BMC calls the frame "lugs" Shell Nodes

The Impec is available in two different fits termed "race" and "performance," with five sizes in each line. Both share the same geometry, with the performance fit tipping its hat toward riders looking for a less competition-oriented position, achieved with shorter top tubes and taller head tubes. There are multiple build options and two color schemes: the Team, with red Shell Nodes and natural carbon tubes, and the Noble, a satin carbon finish.

Pricing starts at \$7,999 for a SRAM Red equipped bike with Easton EC90 wheels. Look for the Impec and the rest of the 2011 BMC line-up to hit dealer floors toward the end of the summer.