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# BH CRISTAL

## *ProTour-ready and female-specific*

By RaeLynn Milley



**B**H is Spanish for speed. The Beistegui Hermanos (Beistegui Brothers) have carved a reputation for it on the ProTour, most recently with seven stages of the Tour de France in the Yellow Jersey. The BH Cristal is the female-specific model, inspired by the completely new G5—

the brand's Tour-dominating, carbon fiber racing frame. The Cristal shares the G5's wild tube profiling, rigid power delivery, phenomenal light weight and smooth riding qualities. Instead of the G5's molded monocoque frame, however, the Cristal's frame uses the more versatile, tube-to-

tube carbon construction method. As tested, the Shimano Dura-Ace Cristal costs \$5999. The frameset runs \$2350, and sizes are XS, S and M.

"Female-specific" means a lot more to BH than pink paint and a short top tube. The Cristal's tube profiles are dif-



**The BH downtube channel has Di2 battery mounts.**



**Nice paint and flowing lines.**



**Rear stays are manipulated to provide a compliant ride.**

ferent, its frame geometry is specific, its carbon layup schedule is designed to work with lighter riders, and its components are chosen to better fit the female anatomy. The size small Cristal frame weighs a mere 890 grams, and our Dura-Ace-build test bike weighed 13.8 pounds. We called upon RBA test pilot RaeLynn Milley to ride and report on the BH Cristal, and as such, we are deviating slightly from our standard test format in order to capture a different perspective.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

I ordered the Cristal in pink, although the blue is also very nice, and it is a good option to have both colors. I love the look of the pink—not a “hot” or “fuchsia,” it is a very sophisticated soft pink that reminds me of cashmere. Naturally, the first thing I noticed is the weight—or the lack of it. The Cristal is so light that I almost forgot I was sitting on a bike, even on the hardest part of the climbs. I never felt dogged down by its weight, and the BH is so stiff that the responsiveness is amazing. I was really impressed that the bike moved forward with the first push of a sprint

or climb. (My other bike flexes, so I feel a slight lag before it goes forward.)

## THE PARTS

**Top tube:** The very slim, tapered, sloping top tube may look stylish, but it is done with a purpose. I move around a lot over the bike, and so I found it great to sprint hills or do standing climbs and not contact the top tube. This is especially wonderful on a flat sprint, where I would get a little wild trying to stay up with the pack or surge to the front of the other riders.

**Saddle:** I admit to taking off the San Marcos seat and using my personal Terry Damselby saddle. I find the San Marcos to be an uncomfortable seat, but saddles are unique to each rider, so the Selle San Marcos may be perfectly fine for others.

**Handlebar:** At first, I was leery of the flattened, anatomic design of the FSA SLK Compact Carbon handlebar. But as I rode the bike, I began to realize how comfortable it was, and more importantly, the secure feel of the handlebar alleviated one of the biggest

problems I see for women riders: the “death grip.” The FSA Compact bar was helpful for climbing and added stability on the front end when drinking or simply stretching the palms after a long, fast descent in the drops. Riding in the drops was easy, as the curves were made for smaller women’s hands and allowed for easy reach of the brakes/shifters.

**Wheels:** The Vittoria open tubular tires are light and fast, but they seemed to flat easily. I loved the Shimano Dura-Ace wheelset—awesome.

## THE RIDE

I wasn’t expecting my first ride to be a hard 40 miles of climbing with a group of guys who are all great riders, but that is exactly what it was. The bike is pretty enough to make the guys take notice, and fast to enough to make them nervous. I had an excellent first ride—absolutely no pain, and I enjoyed myself immensely. Sure, the company was good, but the bike made me feel competitive, and my performance that day surprised most of the regulars.

RBA

**bh cristal****Price:** \$5999 (Dura-Ace)**Weight:** 13.8 pounds**Contact:** [www.BHbikes-us.com](http://www.BHbikes-us.com)

**Geometry:** What I found amazing was how much of a difference the seat angle made to my riding. The 74.2-degree seat tube angle changed my position on the bike, and although I wish I had power meter data to measure the improvement, it doesn't matter—I have more power and less pain. I am faster and more comfortable than on any bike before the BH. That's all the data I need. My climbs are faster, and I can push harder gears from this new position. Technically, I don't know why, but the Cristal makes an unbelievable difference for me. My hip flexors are loving it.

**Downhills:** Going downhill is a confidence-builder. The BH holds a line like no other bike. Although it's really light, there was absolutely no twitch or vibration, no "skipping" on the road, and I rode my fastest downhill on it with total confidence. Even on the roughest of downhills with wind gusts (like Lower Latigo Canyon in Malibu, California), the bike never became unstable.

**Uphills:** Climbing with the BH was a thrill. I've been able to do some of my training climbs with new personal bests. It's easy to move, it's super-lightweight and the Dura-Ace group never missed a shift, even under full-climbing torque. Just to be sure, I did a session of hill repeats on the infamous Rock Store climb (the final stage of the 2010 Tour of California), and the bike never flexed, never missed a shift and moved uphill willingly and with ease. It's a rare day for me to say I enjoyed hill repeats, but I did.

## THE VERDICT

The BH Cristal is a perfect bike for women who want high performance and serious engineering without compromising on design and style. The stiffness and stability of this bike will give confidence to riders who race and/or train hard, without sacrificing comfort for long-distance or endurance riders. On another note, the Cristal is an attraction for both men and women. I've been stopped so many times and asked about it. BH



bikes are not seen a lot, so it surprised me how many people knew about their reputation for design.

Basically, you'll have to pry my cold, dead fingers off the bike to get it back. I am like a new person on the Cristal. It makes riding a total joy. I just want to go faster, harder and farther every day on the BH. **E**