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# Triathlete

FEBRUARY 2010

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Set up with Shimano Ultegra, Vision aerobars and Mavic Ksyrium Equipe wheels, the GC Aero retails complete at \$3,899. The frameset prices at \$1,800.



## BH GC Aero

BY JAY PRASUHN

Yes, the GC Aero took a Hawaii Ironman runner-up finish two years ago under Spaniard Eneko Llanos. But it also serves as the TT bike for the AG2R road team. So when it comes to geometry design changes on the new 2010 iteration of the GC Aero, who gets the play and who gets the raw deal?

It looks like BH knows who butters its bread, putting triathletes first. And that's just the frame; because dressed to spec, the GC Aero is one of the greatest deals in tri bikes.

Geometrically, BH listened to the folks who actually spend money on its bikes. The company took Llanos and the bike to North Carolina for testing at A2 Wind Tunnel. BH listened to its U.S. distributor, who listened to its retailers and created a revamped frame built for the lion's share of us; it's short in top tube length, and it's combined with a three-position post allowing for range from 74 to 78 degrees, so we can get appropriately forward. But designing the front end for its true consumers (and ironically not its seven Spanish road teams), it opted for a tall headtube.

Most age-groupers on bikes with ultra-short headtubes end up placing 5 centimeters of spacers underneath, so BH opted for a few extra centimeters of headtube length to cut out that ugly spacer dilemma. Unless your name is Bjorn Andersson, you should be able to get your bars low enough.

Frame details include an aero post, internal cable routing (with fully lined guides), and with the slightly curved seat post comes one set of bottle bosses. For a long course, you'll need an

off-the-back or between-the-aerobars hydration system to complement the one bottle cage. But there is one interesting alteration at the horizontal dropouts: They're absent set screws, meaning no rear-wheel horizontal adjustment. It bottoms out fairly close with a 23 mm tire, but if you wanted to run a tight fit on a 19 mm tire, you'll have a larger gap, but can't move that tire in any closer than the bottom-out. Conversely, if you wanted to run the tire further out, only a tight skewer bite will keep the axle off the dropout bottom-out.

Up the monocoque carbon fiber frame, the most visible draw is the use of a 7.5 mm deep downtube that curves seductively around the trailing edge of the front tire, following the lead that Felt Racing did with its DA.

The difference between the two: BH tapers the tubeset at the tubeset's leading edge, flares then tapers again at the trailing edge. With most athletes in aerobars "snaking" a bit while riding (it's impossible to hold a perfectly straight line), there has to be some effect. What the wind does when moving off the front wheel to the downtube is the question. Does it eddy into that cowling, or maybe that taper serves to better transfer wind onto the downtube?

Or maybe, if we're spending less than four grand for the bike, we just aren't that concerned. BH says the GC Aero was indeed designed and tested at a wind tunnel in Spain, but getting that data has proven tough. Whatever. It doesn't seem to concern Llanos too much.

Our test rig was close to the most common consumer spec, including the new Shimano Ultegra SL groupset and Vision aerobars. Spec'd with Mavic Ksyrium Equipe wheelset. Our tester came with the shown Reynolds DV/C tubulars.

If you ride it as intended at 78 degrees and with a fair drop, the GC Aero requires little, if any,

adjustment—no shorter stems, no major saddle shifting. I wish more brands went with shorter toptubes as BH does, as it means less fiddling with stem length at the front, and less potential for steering imbalance because of readjusted body placement.

And it rode as so. Super well-balanced on the flats, and steady on rises and descents and at corners, it made for a fast, confident ride. It was also my first ride on the new Ultegra SL as well, which I found to be honestly imperceptible versus Dura-Ace under load. The weight is marginally more, but who cares? Points to the GC Aero for a killer parts spec.

For all the stout-of-bottom-bracket bikes we've tested of late, we expected the GC Aero to be a bit less than burly on its face, but it proved out much stiffer under load. The bottom bracket isn't as visibly stout as many, but it was a total surprise. Combine that with the sloping toptube (creating a tighter main triangle) and it was a stiff climber.

My guess? The GC Aero is gonna sell like hot cakes, and not just because it looks good and has true tri geometry, but because the bang for buck is unreal. Kona-tested, reliable Ultegra goods, great balance and under four G's? The GC Aero is easily one of the most wicked steals of the year. ▽

For more on the GC Aero, visit [Bhbikes-us.com](http://Bhbikes-us.com)

