

Forward thinking

TitanFlex Transition

By Jay Prasuhn



John LeonfFu/warmfocus.com

The sport of triathlon was borne of outside-the-box thinking. It started with Boone Lennon's Scott aerobars, then Dan Empfield came in with the goods: steep, tri-specific bike geometry and wetsuits. The evolution continued with the advent of the beam bike. While TitanFlex's premise 14 years ago—comfort—was obvious, secondary benefits to the bike's design quickly became apparent: enhanced aerodynamics and increased rider efficiency. With that, TitanFlex has steadily maintained a loyal following, and the new Transition continues the heritage.

It's all thanks to the qualities of this unbeatable metal in the Transition's titanium beam. Titanium is remarkably light yet exhibits an uncommon strength-to-flexibility ratio. The result in the Transition is a beam that flexes when the bike is jarred, typically by bumps in the road. That said, the Transition is targeted at two types of consumers: those requiring day-long comfort for the sake of speed and efficiency and those simply desiring comfort for comfort's sake.

The first group consists of long-course athletes, and there's a reason this bike has been ridden to RAAM wins. When you're in the saddle for five, six, seven hours in Ironman training (or for days in RAAM), comfort is important, but economy of movement is real-

ly where it's at for these guys. The beam flexes to absorb high-frequency road vibrations, meaning your body is spared from an asphalt-induced beatdown. Over the course of a long day, that equates to less fatigue—invaluable when you've a marathon to run off the bike.

The second group, those with flexibility issues or bad backs, benefit greatly from the bike's design. As a former shop rat, I can tell you there're heaps of these 50-and-up consumers. The comfort provided by the shock absorption and fit variance of the Transition make it a bike that, for many, makes a sprint, a 70.3 or an Ironman a possibility instead of a dream. Nothing like a bike that can get or keep people in the sport.

Fitting the Transition is simple, as a standard 26.2 seatpost handles your seat height, and the boom is adjustable horizontally. The ride was just as promised. Through the chunky sections of road the Transition takes up the hits. The uninitiated will experience an initial light bobbing during the pedal stroke, but the rider, in an effort to reduce the bob, will by default gravitate to a rounder pedal stroke. The bike, in fact, improves your pedaling style and efficiency.

The titanium booms are available in four different internal diameters to create a uniform vertical deflection whether you're a 145-pound pixie or a 305-pound Clydesdale. As a

160-pounder, I was fitted with the lightest offering, the Vanilla boom, which caught all the little jabs the road had to offer. The aluminum mainframe, of course, was as stiff as needed on the climbs, and the fit was as balanced and as aggressive as I desired.

Finally, we can't forget how aero the Transition is, and the absence of a traditional seat tube makes for a frame that cuts through the wind. Without a seat tube, airflow can travel past the frame unabated, and the parallelogram design allows for minimal crosswind deflection. TitanFlex designer Tom Pizkin, a veteran of the wind tunnel, knows it all too well. He even added a clever little invention—the CleanBrake—as a \$25 add-on. Available only for the front brake, the CleanBrake consists of two cable stops welded onto the base bar between the bar-end and stem-clamp area, with the brake cable stretched between these points on its way to the caliper; a pull on the rubber-housed cable actuates the brake. What's cool is it's invisible from the front. The looks it draws are priceless, and it worked great, even on fast descents. If all things aero are paramount to you, you gotta take this option.

Forward-thinking technology remains timeless and relevant. Whether your priority is comfort, efficiency or aerodynamics, the Transition is the cure to all ails. You can find more at ttinet.com/tf. ▲