



BLUE AC1SL by Nick Legan

\$7,950
14.9LBS
56CM

BY THE NUMBERS

USER FRIENDLINESS



VALUE



SUBJECTIVE RIDE QUALITY: 21 OUT OF 30



SCIENTIFIC TESTING: 24 OUT OF 30



WEIGHT



“THE AC1SL IS CLEARLY DESIGNED FOR SPEED.”

After I returned from wrenching at the Ironman world championships in Kona last year (don't hate me, my road racing roots are strong), I was eager to try a Blue. I had met several of the Blue Competition Cycles staff, and their enthusiasm for cycling and their bikes was contagious.

Blue shipped its first bike in 2004, and in a short time they've sponsored successful professional cycling teams, elite cyclocross racers and Ironman podium finishers.

Blue entered the aero road bike market last year with the AC1SL. With internal cable routing, an aero frame, fork and seatpost, and subtle graphics, the AC1SL is a sleek-looking machine. Happily, it rode much like it looked.

SCIENTIFIC TESTING: 24 OF 30 POINTS

As the second stiffest and second most aerodynamic, the Blue scored well in our scientific testing. The results speak for themselves.

SUBJECTIVE RIDE QUALITY: 21 OF 30 POINTS

The Blue was one of the most comfortable bikes in the test, which is amazing considering that it was the second stiffest in the test. I rode the bike up and down Colorado canyons and over frozen chip-seal roads in Indiana and I never felt abused. The supple Vittoria Open Corsa tires may have been the perfect rubber for this bike; more than almost anything else, tires and tire pressure can transform a bike, and this

brought the comfort score to 9 out of 10 points.

The AC1SL is clearly designed for speed. Its stiff bottom bracket, BB30 cranks and light wheels meant that the Blue was ready to move. Strangely though, the AC1SL wasn't overly eager to rocket into low-earth orbit. It took some coaxing to find cruising speed. The Blue made me think of the steady fast pace of a time trial instead of the violent thrashing of criterium sprints, meriting 7 of 10 points for acceleration.

Handling is where the Blue lost ground on the competition. Like a time trial bike, the AC1SL seemed to enjoy a straight line. It doesn't lend itself to hard cornering, and it doesn't turn in eagerly. Some riders may view its stability as a plus, but I found it a tad too slow for my liking. With a 72.5-degree head tube and 44mm of rake, it had the most trail of any bike in the test at 59mm; 5 of 10 points for handling.

USER FRIENDLINESS: 10 OF 15 POINTS

The Blue has shift-cable housing stops on the top of the top tube. After that a bare cable (or Gore cable liner) runs through an internal frame guide that makes cable routing smooth and easily repeatable. The 25mm setback aero seatpost is easy to use, but I wasn't able to get my saddle far enough forward for my normal position. (I run a zero-setback seatpost on my road bike.)

VALUE: 15 OF 20 POINTS

Blue made some good decisions on spec. They also made a mistake. All product managers try to save money without impacting the overall quality of the bike. Blue chose a Wipperman Connex chain and it was a good call. Shifting was great and I didn't notice the substitution. The Aerus handlebar is nice, too. The TRP brakes, on the other hand, are a miss. They look great, and white is en vogue, but the lack of a real quick release and the weak return spring made for sub-par braking performance. For \$8,000 you should expect a lot from the AC1SL. A \$3,200 aero carbon frameset, Zipp carbon clinchers, SRAM Red shifting and BB30 cranks deliver on the investment, but the brakes don't just slow the Blue down, they hold it back.

WEIGHT: 5 OF 5 POINTS

As the lightest bike in our test, the Blue gets the maximum five points for weight. Not only did it beat the other three bikes on the scale, it came in at an impressive 6.8kg (14.9 pounds) without pedals or cages.

BRAD KAMINSKI