

## Curvy Style: The Sun EZ Sport Limited

by Bob Bryant  
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The Easy Racer-designed Sun EZ Sport is the affordable classic LWB ASS recumbent we've been waiting for. The original EZ Sport (CroMoly version) is priced at just \$899. The new aluminum EZ Sport Limited is \$1,199. These are by far the best LWB values the recumbent world has ever seen. Thanks to their Easy Racers heritage and Gardner Martin design, they are very refined for brand-new bikes. The use of a curvy-tube cruiser-type frame was originally motivated by style. This new aluminum version sheds a few pounds while improving performance.

### Systems

The extended cruiser-style frame is a work of kinetic art. Long have we waited for such a frame. If you're like me and have fond memories of Schwinn Stingrays and beach cruisers and are now drawn to the Easy Racer look and style, this is your bike. A few years back RCN's John Riley wrote an article about how cool it would be to have a cruiser-framed recumbent—and now we have one!

Both the CroMoly and aluminum frames are built in Taiwan in the same factory that builds the durable Sun EZ1 and EZ1 Lite. Our EZ Sport aluminum is more refined than the EZ1 Lite we had here just one short year ago. Most

notable are the seat, seat slider mechanism, and frame build. Perhaps it is the round tubes that add to the visual appeal.

The frame design is unique. From the head tube, twin smaller-diameter top tubes come back and down to create the seat stays. The front derailleur tube rises vertically and is bent rearward where it comes in between the twin top tubes. A few inches rearward, the derailleur tube goes from round to square and becomes the seat slider. At the end of the square tube is the rear rack mount. The seat sits on top (and slides on) the square tube.

The build, paint, and finish quality are excellent—on a par with recumbents costing much more. The EZ Sport and Limited frame quality appears to be every bit as good as the USA-built Easy Racer models. The Limited gets a slick two-tone paint job that has a very retro look—the available color combinations are silver/blue and silver/red. The Limited also gets an Aluminum frame (Sport is CroMoly), upgraded components and an improved, lighter seat.

Our EZ Sports had two water bottle cages, one mounted on each side of the handlebars. For water bottle fans, this is an ideal and handy mount. I've always had trouble reaching behind the seat for water. A hydration pack could

be mounted on the seat back.

The EZ Sport weighs 39 pounds (CroMoly frame). The EZ Sport Limited weighs 35 pounds (Aluminum frame). The CroMoly version will be tougher and easier to repair if you tweak the frame. The aluminum is lighter.

### Steering

The Sun Easy Racer bars are a bit wider in stance than those of the Tour Easy and Gold Rush. They are undoubtedly more comfortable, though riders don't tuck in behind a fairing as well. The handlebars and stem are very simple and straightforward designs based on over 20 years of building experience. The tall stem can be raised up or down to refine the handlebar position (and help direct airflow over the fairing).

### Drivetrain

For such an affordable bike, the EZ Sport aluminum has great componentry. The Shimano 9/27-speed Tiagra triple crank is shifted by a Deore XT derailleur (the CroMoly Sport is an 8/24 speed). About the only component enthusiasts may not like is the SRAM Verio twist shifters with the dial indicator. Though rather loud (clicking into gear), they worked perfectly for our review, though I question the long-term durability of such parts (for serious enthusiasts). This bike will take just about any kind of shifter, so it's not that big of a problem.

### Chain Management

The EZ Sport does not have a spring-loaded chain idler like the Tour Easy and Gold Rush. Instead there is an Easy Racer skate wheel mount. It is quiet and smooth, but it doesn't offer as wide a gear range as the upper-line Easy Racer models.

### Braking

The Tektro V-brakes offer exceptional stopping power. These affordable stoppers work better than some higher-spec brakes (e.g., ESP 7.0) and are easy to adjust. The LWB format makes full-on braking power a no-brainer.

### Wheels and Tires

Both the EZ Sport and EZ Sport Limited have a 26-inch rear wheel and 20-inch front wheel. The wheel quality and build was very good. The wheels held true during our review. The hubs are Shimano LX and the tires are new Kenda Kwest 1.5" 100 psi. These are perfect all-around tires for the bike.

### Comfort

**Seat**—The Sun recumbent seat is an imported version of the popular Easy Racer Kool Back seat. It has a mesh back laced to an aluminum frame, with a composite seat base with Lycra-

covered foam. The EZ Sport seat is lighter and more refined than the similar EZ1 seat. The mounting system is similar but also more refined. The two simple quick releases locked the seat down firmly. Adjustments were very easy, and we had riders of several heights riding the Sport with ease. This is one aspect of the Sport that is even better than the Tour Easy and Gold Rush—no tools are needed for seat adjustment and removal.

The Sun seat is not quite as comfortable as an Easy Racer seat. Rather than the contoured, layered, and glued foam from Easy Racers, Sun uses a more generic molded foam. Lighter and medium-sized riders shouldn't have any problems, but those over 200 pounds or those who like to take long rides might find that they bottom out. Modifications appear to be doable. I had thought of adding a piece of closed-cell foam but opted to go on a diet instead.

Like the Easy Racer Kool Back, the Sun seat has a dramatic lumbar bend in the seat frame. Though I love these seats, the bend is too much for my back, and I find my back separating from the seat just above the midpoint of the seat back. The seat has several sliding strap/buckle tension adjustments. After an hour shakedown ride, I had them all loosened up to where they fit my back perfectly. Compared with laced or zip-tied seat backs, the strap/buckle type is vastly superior for the simple reason that not everyone can agree on a lumbar placement (or if a lumbar is necessary at all—a la Vision).

**Ergonomics**—The EZ Sport has a fairly upright riding position—even more so than the Tour Easy or Gold Rush. If you recline the seat too far, the position will be inefficient and you may have a problem reaching the controls.

At 25.5 inches, the seat height is higher than that of any of the other Sun or Easy Racer bikes. The bottom bracket height is 15.5 inches (10-inch differential between the two); the EZ1 has a 24.5-inch seat height and a 14.5-inch bottom bracket height (10-inch differential); the Tour Easy/Gold Rush has a 22-inch seat height and a 13-inch bottom bracket height (9-inch differential). Despite the closeness of the numbers, the EZ Sport seat feels taller.

### On the Road

**Ride and Handling**—Despite the new frame design and higher seat, recumbent enthusiasts will know right away that they are on an Easy Racer. The Sport handles confidently and tracks well. The tracking was spot-on, and better than its competitors', but not quite as good as the pricier Easy Racers. The handling seemed optimized more for all-around low- to medium-speed riding. The bike was easy to handle in traffic and felt very maneuverable, even with a trailer.

The Sport is a great choice for riders who, like me, ride on varied terrain. I rode the Sport down trails, on singletrack, on rail-trails, and



*Our EZ Sport Limited prototype was a refined and attractive.*

on about every type of pavement you can imagine.

**Maneuverability**—While not as maneuverable as Sun's EZ1, the Sport is fairly compact for a LWB. With its low bottom bracket, the bike is surprisingly maneuverable. Some shorter riders may have a difficult time with the rather high seat, though this is the only aspect worthy of criticism as far as user-friendliness is concerned.

**Performance**—The EZ Sport Limited's high-speed manners were not as good as those of the Tour Easy/Gold Rush, but that is to be expected. It was not as rock solid at speed as a Tour Easy or Gold Rush. There is still a reason to upgrade to the upper-line Easy Racer bikes. In saying this, I will also add that the Sport's handling traits surpass those of any other LWB in this price range.

The higher seat position makes the bike slightly less aerodynamic than a Tour Easy. The seat height/bottom bracket height differential is a less efficient riding position. The bike is also a bit heavier than a Tour Easy, so it won't perform quite as well. Despite all of these Tour Easy/Gold Rush comparisons, the Sport is no slouch. In fact, it should eat most compact LWB/MWB recumbents for breakfast.

**Climbing**—The Sports do not climb as well or as fast as their Easy Racer cousins. Despite the other differences, it seemed mainly to be seat height and aerodynamics. I also found the low gears to be too high for steep hill climbing (especially when towing a trailer). One climbing benefit of the Sports is that the shorter wheelbase makes low-speed zigzags on steep hills a bit easier.

### Owning

The EZ Sport can do most anything. It is stylish, fast, ready for a long tour, and can also be

considered a sport bike. The EZ Sport is our first choice of any Sun or Easy Racer model for a commuter or utility bike. It is possible to put panniers on a rear rack, some more on the underseat rack, throw more junk in a rack bag, some more in a seat bag, and even tow a cargo trailer with ease. Front panniers would probably mount as well. Next to a cycle truck, this is the most utilitarian LWB recumbent we've ever reviewed. While most manufacturers like to build skinny-tire faux racers that barely have room for a patch kit and a banana, Sun has really come through for us utility cyclists.

The Sports are shorter than the (larger sizes) Tour Easy and Gold Rush. Combined with the taller seat height, this makes for better urban and off-road (rough terrain) handling and low-speed maneuvering.

### Options and Accessories

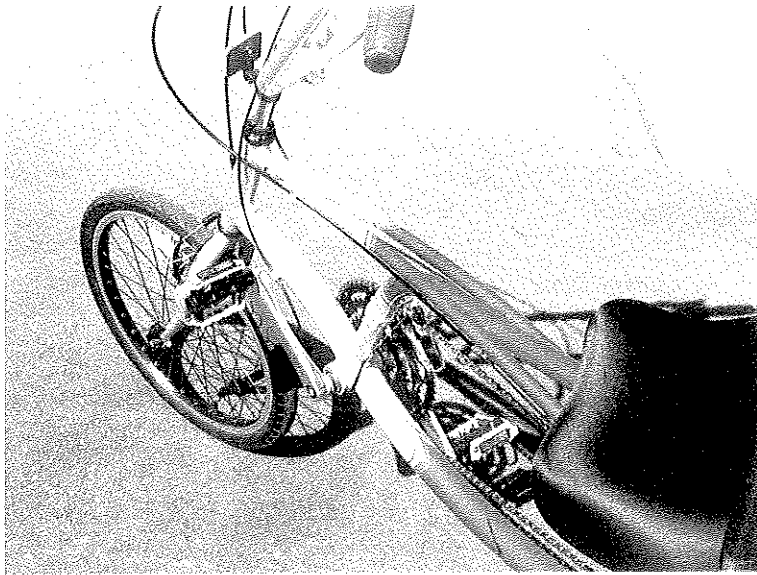
Sun, in conjunction with Easy Racers, is developing an excellent suite of accessories for their bikes. There is a new universal seat bag (Pyramid Pro seat bag) that fits all Easy Racer/Sun recumbents and should fit most recumbents with a mesh-back seat and enough clearance between the seat back and rear wheel (won't fit Burleys).

Easy Racers offers a small Zzipper fairing for the Sports model (\$229). A Super Zzipper with T-brackets and clamp-on lower mounts (purchased from Zzip Designs) will mount without much problem.

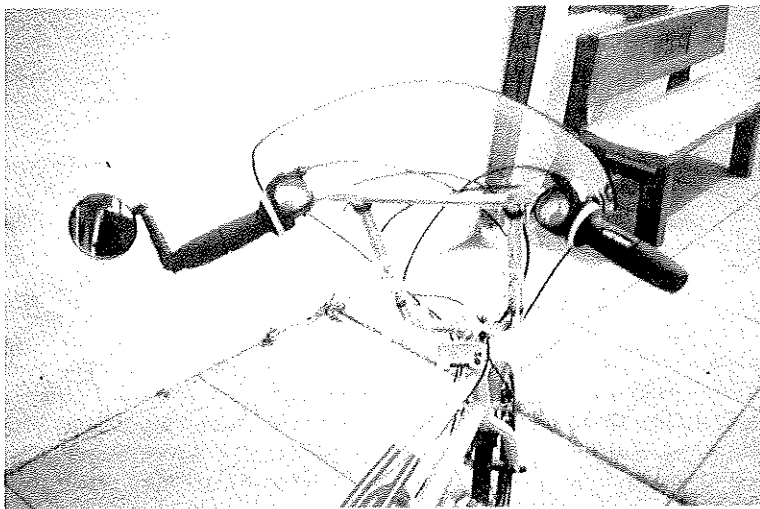
Our test bike came with a Pyramid Pro computer (\$45), an underseat pannier rack (\$29), a rear rack (\$29), and a kickstand (\$19).

### Market Competition

The EZ Sport's closest competition are the RANS Tailwind (\$995) and the Burley Canto (\$1,295). The Sport has them both beat in style,



Note the curved top tubes and front derailleurs tube that turns into the seat tube.



This shows the optional computer and Zipper fairing. The computer on our test bike stopped working during our test. A Super Zipper will fit this model, but you'll need Zip Designs' T-bracket upper mounts and clamp-on lower mounts.

looks, and design refinement. The Tailwind is a bit more compact with its 20/20 wheel combo, but the smaller drive wheel has tradeoffs (a 26/20 Tailwind is rumored for 2003). The Canto is a different animal altogether, with its higher bottom bracket, much more laid-back seat, and linkage steering.

The EZ Sport is such a good value that we'd suggest that those looking at RANS Stratus, Tour Easy, and Cannondale recumbents check it out. It is a worthy competitor for all of them. The Sport doesn't need suspension because of its larger wheelset, and it will perform better than a small-wheel CLWB.

While not direct competition for either the Tour Easy or the Stratus, the EZ Sport Limited may suit some riders even better—for a lower price.

Buying such a recumbent has never been easier. The Sun EZ Sport is distributed by J&B Imports. Most all bike shops deal with J&B and have a catalog. In the back of J&B's cata-

log you will see photos of the Sun recumbents. Most any bike shop can order them. If you don't have a dealer who will order it, you can also call Easy Racers and order a bike from the man himself, Gardner Martin.

**EZ Sport vs. Limited**—These are both great bikes. Certainly the CroMoly model is tougher and more durable. The difference between the two is \$300-\$400 and four pounds. The fork, seat, handlebars, stem, pedals, headset, and tires are the same on both bikes. The Limited brings you better rims, bottom bracket, shifters, hubs, and brakes. The most notable upgrades are the hubs and brakes, which move from Shimano Alivio to LX.

**How to Decide?**—If you're a beginner, commuter, or urban rider, the standard EZ Sport is the way to go. If you plan to keep the bike for awhile and care about performance, buy the Limited. Serious performance riders should consider the Tour Easy and Gold Rush as well (both are faster than either Sport).

## INFO AT A GLANCE

### Specifications

Model—EZ Sport Limited  
Type—LWB  
Steering—ASS  
Wheelbase—63"  
Wheel sizes—26/20  
Seat height—26.5"  
Bottom bracket height—15.5"  
Frame sizes—One size fits most  
Weight—35 lbs.

Frame—7005 TIG welded Aluminum  
Fork—CroMoly  
Seat frame—Aluminum  
Seat material—Mesh back with foam base

### Components

Crank—Shimano Tiagra 30/42/52  
Bottom bracket—Shimano sealed  
Headset—1" aluminum  
Derailleurs—Shimano Deore XT (rear) and Shimano 443 front  
Shifters—SRAM Verio twist (with dial)  
Cassette—9-speed, 11-32  
Chain—KMC Z  
Gear inch range—24-118  
Pedals—Wellgo platforms  
Wheels (f)—406 mm 20"  
Wheels (r)—559 mm 26"  
Rims—Alloy black CNC sides  
Tires—Kenda Kwest 1.5" 100 psi  
Hubs (f/r)—Shimano Deore  
Brakes (f/r)—Shimano Deore LX V with Tektro levers

### Incidentals

Price—\$1,199-\$1,299 (varies by dealer)  
Warranty (frame)—5 years on frame (lifetime for steel frames)  
Colors—Red or black

### Critique

RCN Rating—★★★★

### Pro

Most stylish cruising LWB ever  
Frame is nearly as nice as a Gold Rush  
Fully adjustable seat (including mesh back tensioning and Q.R. slider)  
Great accessories: fenders, rear rack, underseat pannier rack, computer and seat bag

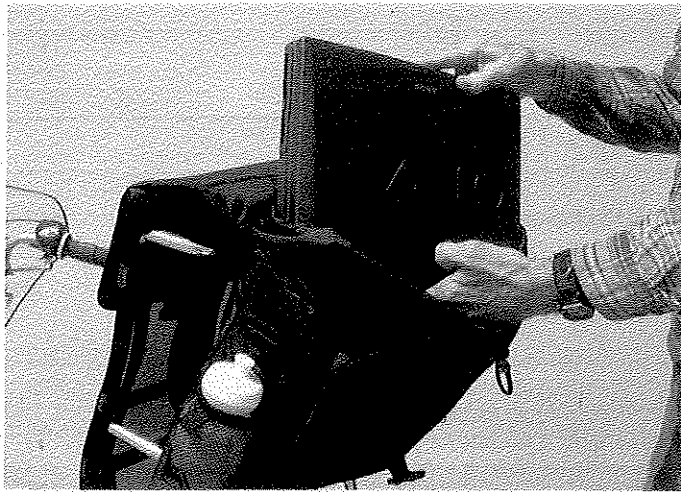
### Con

Not a lightweight  
Tall seat  
Low gears not low enough  
Lumbar placement incorrect for me (though straps are adjustable)  
Seat foam not as comfy or layered like Easy Racers models

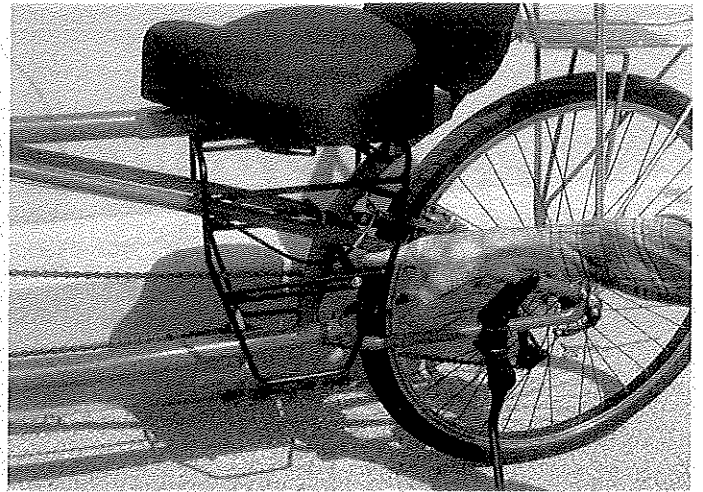
### Contact

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Web: [www.sunbicycles.com](http://www.sunbicycles.com)  
[www.jbimporters.com](http://www.jbimporters.com)

Easy Racers, Inc.  
Tel. 831-722-9797  
Web: [www.easyracers.com](http://www.easyracers.com)



The new Sun seat bag is very nicely made and will accept your laptop computer.



The EZ Sport underseat pannier racks. Be sure to get the EZ Sport model and not the EZ1 model, which will make for some chain slap.

### Verdict

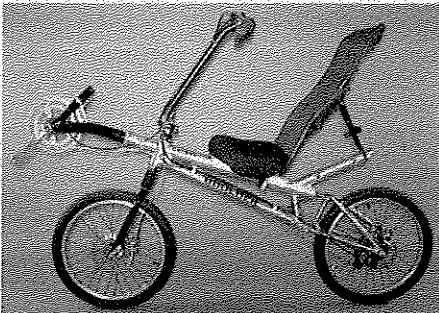
I haven't been this excited about a new recumbent in years. The Sport is the LWB for everyone. It's stylish, affordable, and of excellent quality. While nobody was looking and while some other manufacturers are apparently having problems, Sun and Easy Racers are quietly becoming the industry powerhouse. The new EZ Sport and Limited are certainly the most popular new recumbents of the season. Though they are not getting the buzz of some more extreme designs, lots of people are buying Sun recumbents. With BikeE now gone, they are certain to become the driving force in entry level/recreational recumbency. Watch for a new Sun LWB tandem coming very soon.

I knew Gardner Martin was a smart man, but I never really understood the Sport until it arrived here. The combined lines of Sun and

Easy Racers are carefully spaced in price, component level, and performance. The bikes are durable and mostly trouble-free. The designs are refined, not radically changed every few years in a "back to the drawing board" sort of way that outdates previous models. If there is a downside to the Sport it's the weight of the bike.

Customers can just wander into their local bike shop (though we still recommend looking for something resembling a recumbent specialist) and look in the J&B catalog for color photos and specs.

These recumbents are exceptional values. This means good resale as well. There aren't many recumbent riders out there who wouldn't enjoy having a Sun recumbent for themselves or somebody in their family. I give the entire line—especially the new EZ Sports—two thumbs way up! ♦

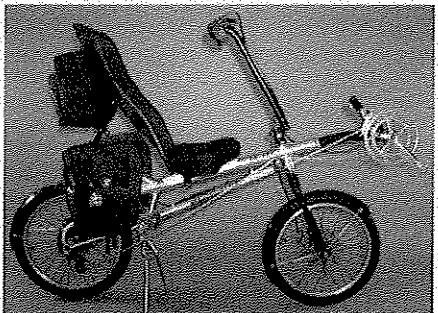


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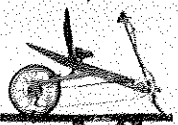
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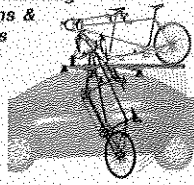
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