



RECUMBENT & TANDEM RIDER

SUN TOMAHAWK

M A G A Z I N E

Review #162

By Rob Templin

I wasn't sure what I was getting into when RTR asked me to do a review of the Tomahawk. Sun's new price-point recumbent. After all, I'm old enough that the first thought that comes to mind when you mention 'Tomahawk' is a long-range, all-weather subsonic cruise missile introduced by General Dynamics in the 1970's. Hmmm ...

But it doesn't take a rocket scientist to grasp the marketing strategy behind the naming of Sun's newest 'bent offering. The Tomahawk's sleek aerodynamic profile sort of looks like a Tomahawk cruise missile in flight - without any of the high-powered munitions the only way you're going to get the afterburners to kick in on this machine is with pedal power). However, you won't mistake the multi-million dollar price tag of the Tomahawk missile with the \$995 your local bike shop will charge you for the Sun Tomahawk.

To say that the Tomahawk has a prestigious pedigree would be an understatement. The long wheelbase Tomahawk is based on the Easy Racers Javelin (\$1,600), with the cost savings of the sub-thousand dollar Tomahawk coming from a Taiwanese frame and SRAM SX4 components. But, as I quickly learned on my first test rides, the less-expensive spec isn't going to impact your fun on the Tomahawk - whether it

is a short trip around town, or your next century.

The Tomahawk also receives some of the legendary Tour Easy geometry pioneered by the late "Fast" Freddy Markham and Easy Racers. Fast Freddy won the DuPont prize for exceeding 65 mph in 1986, with that recumbent ending up in the Smithsonian Institute. I was curious to see how much of the racing heritage translated into the Tomahawk's performance.

I have to be upfront and say that my own 'bent pedigree is a little less stellar - being more of an enthusiast than an expert in the recumbent field. While I've been involved in the cycling industry for over 35 years - including stints at Shimano, and as a partner of Burley Design Cooperative (while they were still producing recumbents) - the majority of my riding has been on 'traditional' road machines. (Editor's note: Rob has raced RAAM four times, so he knows something about long miles in the saddle).

Since my 'bent credentials might be a bit suspect for some of you, I enlisted the assistance of Rob Walton, owner of Spring Creek Recumbents in Fort Collins, Colorado (www.springcreekrecumbents.com). Rob is a recumbent expert and one of the top retailers of 'bents in the U.S. Based on years of

working with Rob while at Burley, I can honestly say that you won't find a more passionate recumbent pro around. Rob's comments, peppered throughout this review, are noted in italics:

"I have been interested in the Tomahawk for a while but only recently bought one. I was a bit leery because we hadn't had good luck selling the Rans V-2 (at Spring Creek Recumbents) which is also a high crank long wheel based recumbent ... (a) customer's interest in it finally encouraged me to get one for the shop".

But that's not to say that I don't have a lot of miles on recumbents - having taken Burley's self-described lawn chair models on many sales/promotional road trips through the years (such as the Midwest Recumbent Rally, RAGBRAI, Solvang Century, Hotter 'n Hell 100; as well as dealer visits to shops like Rob's in Fort Collins). At some of the bigger gatherings - like RAGBRAI - I was always a bit surprised at the wide range of attitudes when it comes to recumbents: while kids and more casual riders gave a thumbs up to my recumbent ride; others, like many traditional 'roadies', definitely had a chip on their shoulder when it came to socializing with 'bent owners. More than once or twice, I had to explain to this mainstream group that any and all human-powered two-wheel

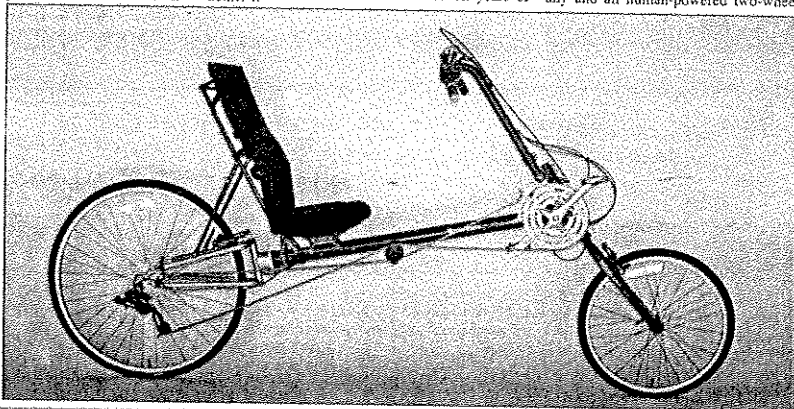
transport is a good thing; after all, it means one less car on the road. O.K., I'll get off the soapbox now ...

The Tomahawk utilizes a design I'm somewhat familiar with as Burley's models were based on a similar mono-tube design that had a fair amount of sizing adjustability (Tomahawk's x-seam range is 35 to 44); at 5'8" I had no sizing issues. Rob had a slightly different take, noting, "It has a limited size range. It fits average sized folks. The seat struts seem too long for taller riders. At 5'10", I was unable to angle the seat far enough back to where I wanted it. The position was good; but with higher cranks, I like to have the seat reclined a bit more".

The 700c/451mm (20") wheelset would be a first for me, and I was looking forward to seeing how this compared with my previous rides that utilized a 26" rear wheel configuration. Another

SUN Tomahawk

MSRP	\$995.00
Frame	2" Chromoly
Fork	Chromoly
Headset	Threadless
Stem	SUN
Rims	FAL 36h
Hubs (flr)	Aluminum
Tires	Keirida Kwest 20x1-1/8 (28-4510) 100psi/700x28c (28-622)
Spokes	36h Straight Gauge
Rear Skewer	Generic
Derailleurs (flr)	Shimano Top
Shifters	SRAM Grip Shift
Chain	KMC
Crankset	170mm Forged Cranks
Bottom Bracket	
Cassette	13-37
Pedals	Aluminum Platform
BB Height	24"
Seat Height	23"
Seat Const.	Foam Cushion
Handlebar	Aluminum
Stem	Adjustable Aluminum
Brake Levers	Avid
Brakes (flr)	Tektro FX11/Avid Single Digit
Color	Black/Grey
Wheel Base	67.25
Overall Height	45"
Bottle Cages	2/Seatback Frame
Weight	36 Lbs.



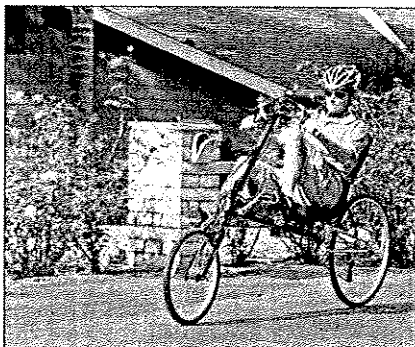
IMPRESSIVE, FAST & FUNCTIONAL

important consideration for heavier folks is that the Tomahawk weight limit is 225 lbs.: while most other Sun models have a higher limit. It didn't look like my meager 140 lbs would be a concern. The only other red flag for setting up this recumbent for its inaugural test ride was making sure to be careful about cutting the cable housing to the right length so that the cranks didn't get hung up in it when turning sharply - something that Rob also took note of at his shop.

My first rides on the Tomahawk were to run errands locally here in Orange County, California: such as grocery shopping. This gave me a feel for stop 'n go 'city' riding. As a testament to the design, I was able to get on the bike and, after a few miles, feel very comfortable and stable. In those situations where slow speed, or sharp turns, were called for - such as entering and leaving a parking lot at the store - I didn't experience any balance or handling irregularities. This was a pleasant surprise because I thought the 700c wheel might be a challenge for my limited recumbent skills.

"From my very first time out on it, I was very impressed with the ride of the Tomahawk. It is fast and feels very good. The Tomahawk is peppy and responsive and yet has a very smooth ride. It accelerates well and is easy to maneuver. It has good quality components, front forks with eyelets in place to support a full fairsing, and Sun's improved seat base and attachment system."

After a few weeks of familiarizing myself with the features of the bike - including the excellent stopping Avid V-brake (rear) and the Tekuro U-Brake (front) - I was ready for some longer jaunts (60 to 80 miles). The monotube design delivered as promised, being quite comfortable for long hours in the saddle - the only drawback to this bike being the cro-mo steel frame that I found a bit on the heavy side on extended climbs (but, hey, what do you expect for a sub-\$1,000 machine?!). This is Sun's first long wheelbase recumbent with a high bottom bracket, and I think that adds to the all-day comfort factor. For



some reason, the use of a Sram 8 speed freewheel surprised me - I thought 8 speeds had already become passé in the cycling community. However, the shifting was crisp and performed flawlessly; couldn't ask for more than that.

"The Tomahawk is a good entry level performance recumbent bike. It's a very good value at \$1000. If you like the ride of the Tomahawk and either don't fit it or want a nicer version, the Javelin, which is EasyRacer's version, is a better choice." But keep in mind, 'bents like the Javelin command upwards of a 60% premium for the "upgrades" of a nicer spec, optional colors and sizing. It's fortunate I really liked the two-tone black/silver color scheme as this is your only color choice with the Tomahawk.

The Tomahawk is a classic example of getting what you pay for - in this case, maybe, a little bit more. You're not going to find a lot of high-zoot components on this recumbent or the option of custom sizing - but this is a bent that Fast Freddy would be proud to ride. I'm sure. It's a smart spec that offers great value for your hard-earned dollars; a real price-point sweet spot so to speak. And, as Rob notes, *"Overall, I like the Tomahawk a lot and am excited to have one in the shop. It is nice to have a performance recumbent that is still relatively inexpensive."*

I was curious to get Rob's take - as the owner of one of the premier recumbent shops in the U.S. - on the future of the 'bent market and here's what he had to say: *"I think that the future of recumbents is good. I am excited that Sun is interested enough to produce bikes and trikes that are much more affordable than what was available in the past. I don't think that everyone is going to ditch their regular bikes and get recumbents. However, I think that recumbent bikes and trikes are positioned well for steady growth as baby boomers get older."*

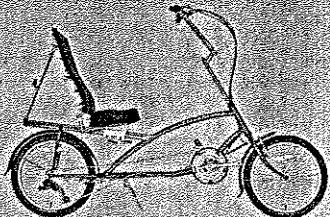
And on that positive note

Rob Templin owns and operates Second Summer Tours which offers bike trips to exotic locales:

Rob Walton owns Spring Creek Recumbents in Ft. Collins, Colorado.



Cycle Genius Recumbents



Visit www.cyclegenius.com or Call (800) 901-5101
To Find Your Nearest Cycle Genius Dealer

The Largest Source of Recumbents in the Tri-State Area since 1999

is conveniently located in the Heart of New Jersey!



1637 Route 28
Hamilton Square
New Jersey, 08510

(732) 747-6712

JERSEY "BENTS" LLC

www.jerseybents.com • Pn/Fax 609-256-1404
Bacchetta • RANS • Vision • Quetzal • Haluzak
Ali Bacchetta and RANS Models in Stock.

Jays Pedal Power

www.jayspedalpower.com

Featuring Cool Recumbents From
BikeE - Burley - Easy Racers -
GreenSpeed - Haluzak - Hot
Mover - Lightning - RANS also
Tandems by Ibis - KHS - Santana.
And Road Bikes Too!

512 E. Girard Ave. Philadelphia, PA 19125

Call Toll Free 888-777-JAYS

KNEESAVERS™ PEDAL EXTENDERS

RELIEVE PAIN!

If you are experiencing knee, hip, ankle or foot pain while cycling, you may be suffering from the condition known as "Q Factor Syndrome." This arises from riding with your feet too close together, which compromises optimal cycling biomechanics. Kneesavers are available in differing widths (25, 25 or 30 mm) and will work on any road, mountain or recumbent bicycle.

They come with a money-back guarantee that your cycling pain will be relieved.

Bikelce@aol.com
(800) 548-4447

www.bikescor.com
SCOR Productions