

EZ Sport LTD

Colorful curves ahead!

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 Shari Bernhard checks out the EZ Sport LTD!

Benjamin Franklin's quotable quote said it all: "In this world nothing is certain but death, taxes and one new bent model every year from Easy Racers and Sun Bicycles". Well, Okay, Benjamin Franklin didn't really say it like that. But if "truth" could be defined by past performance, the predictable regularity by which Easy Racers and Sun Bicycles have developed and mass produced 5 different recumbent models in the last three

years would surely redeem my "slight" distortion of Mr. Franklin's famous quote. In fact, if I were free to give you a "preview" of a certain prototype (from Sun Bicycles, of course) that's currently sitting in my living room, you may never remember Mr. Franklin's actual quote.

If you're a regular reader, you're probably aware of the Sun Bicycles/Easy Racers success story. But if you're new to our bent world, this synopsis should bring you up to speed: It all started in the spring of 1999 when Martin Gardner of Easy Racers/ Gold Rush fame started to work with J&B's Bill Tannen in order to design bikes which Sun Bicycles would build and distribute. Their first joint effort was the EZ1, a CLWB recumbent that was as user friendly as it was affordable. Though the EZ1 was a great success, the new "dynamic duo" didn't stop there. One year later, the EZ Lite, the aluminum EZ1 look-alike made its debut at Interbike 2000. The following year two new models were unveiled in time for Interbike 2001: the EZ3, a budget delta trike that could be shipped via UPS thanks to an innovative bolt-on axle and the very popular EZ Sport, a LWB recumbent that also offered affordability, great handling, good performance and a very unique/classy retro look. Ostensibly, the inhabitants of our bent world welcomed their products with open arms. Energized by the phenomenal acceptance of their initial products, Bill Tannen and Garner Martin set out to develop an upgraded version of the original EZ Sport and the EZ Sport Limited was born. In this issue we take a take a close look at this new model.

Visual "Inspection"

Bill Tannen himself delivered a fully assembled (*Thank God!*) EZ Sport LTD to my door. After a few unintelligible minutes of "Hmm"... "Nice!" "WOW!" ... and ... "Oh Yeah", I managed to put together a couple of coherent thoughts. Two questions popped into my mind. "Bill, why...eh... this bike?" – I "eloquently" asked. Bill's response was a simple: "We just wanted to offer a more refined version of the EZ-Sport with upgraded components for nicer performance and an alloy frame for lighter weight - all at a great price".

Though the EZ Sport LTD version has the same basic shape/geometry and the same



Shari Bernhard on the EZ Sport LTD!

retro styling of its ancestor, one is instantly aware that the LTD is indeed a more refined version. The bike's paint job seemed especially nice and the decorative decals appeared to be embedded into the bike's aluminum frame. Our test bike wore a two-tone Red/Silver paint coat but a Blue/Silver alternative is also available. . "How did you...eh... paint this bike?" - was my second attempt at constructing a full question. "A painstaking process is responsible for this", Bill explained. "They

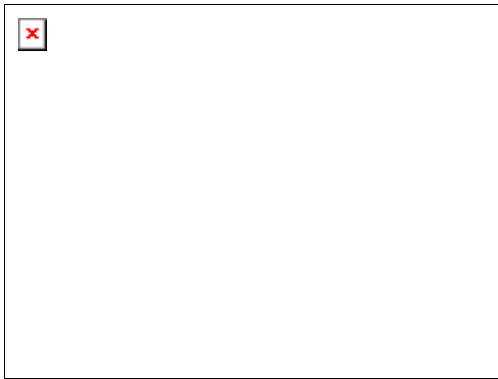
first prime the frame and since it is a two tone, they paint the front part silver. Then they apply a mask and paint the rear. Decals are then placed into a non-aqueous chemical solution and carefully affixed to the frame. Lastly, the decals are sealed as the frame is clear coated". The important thing is that this little paint trick does work and should keep the bike looking great for a long time.

Frame & Components

Deep beneath these layers of paint lies a leaner, stiffer and well-made aluminum frame, which, in synergy with an array of enhanced components yields a bike that is almost 6 pounds or 15% lighter than its predecessor. Most "techies" will tell you that a 15% weight reduction and a stiffer frame improves the climbing and sprinting performance of any bike. The table below identifies and compares the upgraded components of this bike with that of the original EZ Sport. The drive train of both of these bikes is as quiet as it gets, thanks in part to the use of skate-type chain idlers and straight chain trajectory. Shifting was smooth and fairly predictable though we did notice a few instances of auto shifting. I don't really have any issues with any of the components listed below. Functionally speaking, the components listed on the left column work as reliably as those of the right column. However, the LTD's components do offer a slight advantage in the weight and durability department and this, of course, translates to better performance.

EZ Sport	Easy Sport Limited
• Frame: Cro-mo Tig Welded Steel	• Frame: 7005 Tig Welded Aluminum
• Fork: High Tensile Blades Cro-mo Steerer	• Fork: Full Cro-Mo
• Crank: Shimano Sora FC-3303 170x52-42-30	• Crank: Shimano Tiagra FC-4403 170x52-42-30
• R. Derailleur: Shimano Alivio BR-MC20	• R. Derailleur: Shimano Deore XT RD-M750
• Shifter: Sram Centera	• Shifter: Sram Verio
• Brakes: Shimano BR-MC18 Alivio	• Brakes: Shimano BR-M570 Deore LX
• Hub Front: Shimano HB-MC18 Alivio	• Hub Front: Shimano HB-M570 Deore LX
• Hub Rear: Shimano FH-MC18 Alivio	• Hub Rear: Shimano FB-M570 Deore LX
• Rim Front: 20x1.50 36h Alloy	• Rim Front: 20x1.50 36h Alloy Double Wall Black w/CNC Sides
• Rim Rear: 26x1.50 36h Alloy	• Rim Rear: 26x1.50 36h Alloy Double Wall Black w/CNC Sides

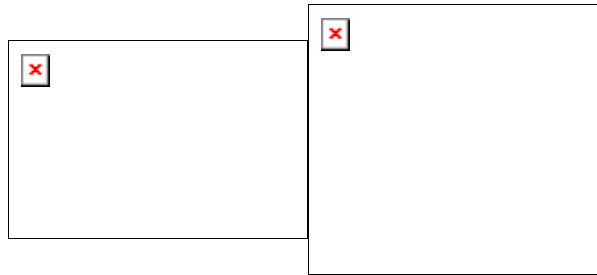
• Gears: 24	• Gears: 27
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Last but not least, I must also mention that our Easy Sport LTD featured a new improved seat base. The new seat is nicely contoured to comfortably accommodate your precious butt cheeks in place and helps prevent the dreaded recumbo butt. This newly designed seat base will be used on most of the recumbent models from Sun Bicycles.

Available Accessories

The available racks and fenders are nicely made and look pretty darn good in their glossy black powder coated finish. The rack is a welded tubular alloy rack and was specifically designed for the EZ Sport and LTD versions while the fenders are made of high-impact plastic and should prove to be quite durable.



Handling

Most of what I can say about the handling of the EZ Sport LTD was already said in [my review of the EZ Sport](#). The handling of these bikes is almost identical in nature. In short, these bikes are as user friendly as a recumbent can get. If you can ride a "conventional" upright, you can definitely ride an EZ Sport LTD! The one difference worth mentioning is the feel of the bike on different surfaces. The LTD's rigid aluminum frame does transfer your power more efficiently to the rear wheels but vibrations are also transferred just as efficiently. Fortunately, the stiffer feel of the LTD is only objectionable on very rough or unpaved trails. On a fairly decent paved road or trail, you will probably not be aware of the surface minor imperfections as the bike's excellent Kenda tires and seat cushion effectively isolate you from "normal" road vibrations. Based on this, I would have to recommend that you consider the kind of riding you'll be doing before selecting one bike over the other. If most of your riding time is spent on a fairly decent paved road, choose the LTD. On the other hand, if you must ride on unpaved and rough paths, the LTD's ancestor may be the ticket.

Performance

The Sport LTD probably does accelerate faster and climb better than the original EZ Sport but I did not have a chance to do a side-by-side comparison.

As I recall my rides, neither bike struck me as an outstanding climber or sprinter but both were excellent cruisers. As far as cruising speed goes, I think the performance of the EZ Sport LTD is in all probability pretty close to that of the original EZ Sport with the LTD having a slight edge. I had absolutely no problem maintaining a steady 17-18 MPH with either bike. I asked a friend of mine who had never been on a recumbent before to use this bike on an Intermediate club ride (14-16 MPH level). As you probably know, most of us find it necessary to condition our recumbent muscles before we're able to enjoy a recumbent bike's performance to its fullest potential. Well, my very unconditioned friend managed to cover 32 miles and easily keep up with the other riders in our club. She just got on the bike and away she went.

Collective Consensus

As some of you know, our local recumbent group, "The Broward Bent Wheelers" are often recruited to give me feedback on the bikes I test. As the result, quite a few of them had a chance to ride the new LTD. The feedback I've received from the local bent heads was mostly positive. Everyone just loved the way the bike looks and handles. Only a couple "purists" objected to the bike's low bottom bracket but we'll forgive them for they know not what they're talking about.

Overall impression

The EZ Sport LTD is a well made, great-looking bike that is worth your consideration. No, it is neither an HPRA racer nor a mountain bike but it can take you on a tour, around town or on a Saturday morning group ride in style.

Strong Points

- 1) Elegant, Beautifully Finished, Classic Style Great Looks
- 2) Handling - Very easy to ride!
- 3) Pretty decent component group

Weak Points

- 1) Size (BIG)
- 2) Very Low BB and Seat Height may not appeal some.
- 3) Not as well suited for extensive off-road use as its precursor

MSRP – Determined by LBS but will probably sell for \$1200-\$1300

