

Sun Bicycles EZ-1SC Lite *"The EZ-1 Gets Gold Rushed"*

By Bryan J. Ball
Editor



Sun Bicycles has found their collaboration with Gardner Martin on the entry-level EZ-1SC recumbent to be a very profitable one. The little Easy Racers designed compact has attracted many buyers due to both its low price and docile handling. There are truly very few recumbents in existence that are less intimidating in any way than the EZ-1SC.

While the EZ-1SC has done a lot to introduce many 'bentheads' to the sport, many owners have had rather short love affairs with their bikes. The words "For Sale" have been attached to many EZ-1SC related posts on the Internet. Most of these owners loved the bikes handling, but were a little disappointed by its performance. Our own review of the little Sun found it to be overweight and under-geared for serious road riding.

Slow is not an adjective that is often connected to any product designed by Gardner Martin's California-based company. Martin and J&B Importers (parent company of the Sun Bicycles label) got together and decided to give the EZ-1SC a boost using a method that has worked exceedingly well for Easy Racers in the past.

When Easy Racers wanted to supercharge their tour easy long wheelbase recumbent many years ago, they did so by giving it an aluminum frame in place of its chromoly steel one. The treatment was successful beyond their wildest dreams and this bike soon became known as the legendary Gold Rush Replica, named after Easy Racers' record-setting streamliner. The bike is now an icon in the recumbent world.

CAN LIGHTNING STRIKE TWICE?

When it was deemed necessary to give the hot-selling EZ-1SC a shot in the arm, Sun and Easy Racers decided to go the aluminum well one more time. The bike's high tensile steel frame was pushed aside in favor of a new aluminum alloy structure. The bike's handlebars and seat mount were also replaced with lighter, alloy versions. Sun kicked it up a notch further by replacing the bike's original Cheng Shin tires with high-pressure 1.75" Primo Comets. Thankfully, they knew when not to mess with a good thing and left the bike's handling and ergonomics unchanged.

The difference that a little metallurgy can make is nothing short of remarkable. The EZ-1SC has been transformed from a cheap and loveable, yet portly entry-level bike into a truly capable do-it-all recumbent and has instantly made it one of the best bargains in the industry.

The shear reduction in weight is astounding in itself. Our original test bike weighed in at nearly 40 pounds. The new EZ-1SC Lite is barely 30. Easy Racers conservatively claims that the weight difference is only five pounds, but our scales said differently.

All of this weight loss is accomplished only through the liberal use of aluminum in place of steel in the seat, handlebars and frame. The bike's components remain nearly unchanged. The only changes are the addition of one more cog on the rear cluster (giving the bike 24 rather than 21 gears) and a different crankset that features a larger 53-tooth chainring.

The rapid weight loss program has made a big difference in the way the EZ-1SC performs. Acceleration has improved dramatically. Not only is the bike lighter, the new frame is much stiffer and less power is lost to frame flex. This gives the Lite a very enjoyable, zippy feel around town.

This newest version of the EZ-1SC is also noticeably faster in the wide open spaces. While riding with my friends, I noticed that it was much easier to hang on to the back of the pack than it was with the old version. The lighter weight probably helped here as well, but the new rubber probably helped the most.

The aluminum frame really didn't make the ride that much more harsh compared to the original EZ-1SC. This is also probably due in part to Sun's choice of the fatter version of Primo's Comet.

STILL SOME ROOM...

One of our biggest qualms with the original EZ-1SC was its lack of any high gear. The old bike would easily spin out at around 23-24 mph. The new Lite does have a slightly larger chainring that helps a little, but even this set-up spins out at around 25-26. This is hardly an issue on the flats but while racing down descents, you are purely at gravity's mercy. Bear in mind that I am not known to spin as much as I should. Some of you that aren't "cadence-impaired" like me may not be as bothered by this. At any rate, larger chainrings aren't expensive if you decide to fix it. And on the plus side, the Lite does still have plenty of low gear to power up the climbs.

With the substantial increase in MSRP we were hoping to see an equally substantial increase in component specs. We were a little disappointed to see the same Shimano Acera and no-name parts on the Lite. One of the few components changed were the shifters. The SRAM MRX 7-Speed shifters were replaced with Sun Race 8-speed units. We found this choice to not work nearly as well as the old stuff. We usually had to adjust the Lite's derailleurs after every third or fourth ride. The bike's no-name V-Brakes worked fine, but both rims had noticeable flaws at the seams that could be felt through the levers while stopping.

Fit and Finish on the Lite was average. The paint and welds on the bike were about what you'd expect on current Taiwanese aluminum frames, but were nothing to rave about.

We only had two real quality control issues with the bike. First the holes weren't correct on one of the seat braces and the cotter pin wouldn't go all the way through. Also, one of the water bottle cage mounts on the handlebars was drilled crooked and caused the cage to sit at a noticeably different angle than the other.

All of these flaws may have been acceptable on the \$500 Ez-1SC, but I would have liked to see some improvement on the \$750 Lite.

THE ULTIMATE IN LOW IMPACT

At \$750 the Lite is much more expensive than its predecessor, but still very inexpensive for a recumbent. It's also very easy to ride and very easy to live with, yet isn't so slow that you'll be looking for a faster bike in three month's time. If you do find yourself wanting just a little more refinement in the way of components, the Lite's frame is worth throwing some money at.

Not only does the Lite have a very low impact on your wallet, it also appears to have a lesser effect on the passerby. I still got a few open mouth stares on the Lite, but not nearly to the extreme that I do on other bikes. If you want to travel in recumbent anonymity, the EZ-1 (in either version) is the bike for you.

I have a stable full of exotic 'bents and I still found myself using the Lite for commuting, running errands and on shorter group rides. All of the flash and variety of my ever-changing quiver of recumbents couldn't distract me from the capability and versatility of the EZ-1SC Lite. We plan on keeping it around for a while for my wife to ride and to tow our trailer. I'm sure it will get used for much more than that.

- **HIGHS**
 - Good performance for CLWB at a good price
 - Easy Racers comfort and handling
- **LOWS**
 - Still lacks refinement compared to BikeE
 - Still undergeared
 - some quality control issue on test bike
- **MSRP**
 - \$749
- **More Info**
 - www.sunbicycles.com

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