

BH CONNECT

BH bikes was started in Spain by two brothers, Juan and Cosme Beistegui, hence the moniker Beistegui Hermanos. Originally BH was a firearms manufacturer in the Basque region of Spain. They moved away from firearms and in 1923 started producing bikes. While BH has been a player in Europe and has been under the legs of some of the strongest climbers in the peloton, State side they were pretty much unknown. That is starting to change as BH bikes are being imported into the U.S. with five different models. And to keep their Euro street cred, AG2R has continued to race BH bikes. In the Tour de France, BH can claim two stage wins and second overall in the team classification. And in fact while the G4 model is the team bike their larger riders prefer the Connect. Here in the States, BH supplies bikes to select teams like Metro VW who were recently battling it out at the national championships in Orange County. On the domestic pro side the Vanderkitten ladies take the line on the BH. It's apparent that the boys from the Basque region know a thing or two about how to make a bike.

Like many bikes built today the Connect is designed in its mother country of Spain and then constructed in Asia. This is not an issue with the strict quality controls that are in place. The Connect model is one step below flagship bike G4 rig but still shares many of its qualities. The Connect is constructed from a high modulus carbon fiber. Some bikes are either tube to tube, lugged or a monoque. The BH Connect uses a combination of monoque and tube to tube construction. The reason for this blend in styles is to fine tune the ride. The tube to tube is done for better control of the carbon layup of each tube

[better compaction results in lighter, thinner, stronger tubes]. The one piece molded nature of the seat and chainstays sets works better with the curved shapes, smaller diameters and slightly thicker stays (compared to a top or down tube). The graphics of the Connect are sharp looking. Clear coated with a slight shiny look it stood out from the rest of the matte black bikes in my morning ride. Look underneath the clear coat and you can see the 12K carbon fiber weave pattern. The tubes of the Connect are, as many bikes are, oversized, however not in the traditional rounded sense. Squared off and very angular, the Connect's pipes are so big that they look like they would rattle the teeth out of your skull if you hit a rough patch in the road. Bigger pipes allow for the design to be lighter, without sacrificing stiffness. According to BH, their 56cm frame weighs in at 900 grams. The geometry of the Connect also sets it apart from the field. The Connect, with its laid back 72° seat tube and relaxed 73° head tube with a 40mm chainstay is, on paper, a nice combination of steady handling and yet still responsive when the situation is called for.

HOW DOES IT FEEL?

When a bike hails from a region that is known for mountains you can expect the bike to excel in those types of conditions. So in order to get my fitness back after a busy summer, I headed to my local hills to see what I could do. The relaxed geometry does indeed make this a bike for those who enjoy climbing. Seated a little further back and over the rear wheel I focused more on pushing the pedals forward using my recently neglected thighs. There is a steep 180 degree uphill turn that is a momentum killer on my

ride. It is at this point, without fail, that I need to get out of the saddle and pound the pedals to keep my speed constant. And this is where I can detect if a front end of a bike is stable or not. When I popped out of the saddle the front end of the bike was solid. The top tube length for my test bike and the other bikes in the Connect line are fairly standard, which is something I like and allows me to get comfortable on those four-hour rides. The relaxed geometry is a nice touch for doing some of the simple things that are necessary when riding, like reaching into your jersey pocket without the bike swerving or taking both hands off the bar as you zip up your vest for the descent. The shorter chainstays push the wheel back toward you for that responsive feel. At first the bike felt a little too relaxed, but after several rides I didn't notice and bombed through the corners like I typically do.

LAST CALL

While riding the BH Connect I had a revelation. After a couple of weeks off the bike don't jump back into riding four hours. It's just dumb. That said those longer rides were made a little more palatable with the relaxed geometry and compliant nature of the frame. The relaxed geometry does not mean that it is a lazy handler. The compact frame design allowed me to lower my center of gravity and counter-steer the bike confidently and the short chainstays kept things tight and responsive. If road races are your cup of tea than the BH brothers have the bike for you. Our test rig was kitted with Shimano's 7800 Dura-Ace group and no big surprise there; it worked fantastically as always. *R*

ANGLES

Measurements in centimeters [TT= top tube; SA= seat angle; HA= head angle]

SIZE	51	54	56	59
TT	51	54	56	59
SA	72.5°	72°	72°	72°
HA	70°	71.5°	72.5°	73°



THE LOW DOWN

PRICE: \$5500
 WEIGHT: 16.2lbs. (no pedals)
 SIZES: 51, 54, 56, 59cm (tested)
 COLOR: Black/Red
 CONTACT: bhbikes-us.com

CHASSIS

FRAME: High modulus carbon fiber
 FORK: Carbon fiber

WHEELS

WHEELSET: Shimano Dura-Ace
 TIRES: Vittoria Rubino Pro

COCKPIT

BRAKE LEVERS: Shimano 7800 Dura-Ace
 BRAKES: Shimano 7800 Dura-Ace
 HANDLEBAR: FSA SLK Carbon
 HEADSET: FSA
 SADDLE: Prologo Nago Ti
 SEATPOST: Carbon fiber
 SHIFTERS: Shimano 7800 Dura-Ace
 STEM: FSA OS99

DRIVETRAIN

BOTTOM BRACKET: Shimano 7800 Dura-Ace
 CASSETTE: Shimano 7800 Dura-Ace
 CHAIN: Shimano 7800 Dura-Ace
 CRANKS: Shimano 7800 Dura-Ace
 DERAILLEURS F/R: Shimano 7800 Dura-Ace