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# Triathlete

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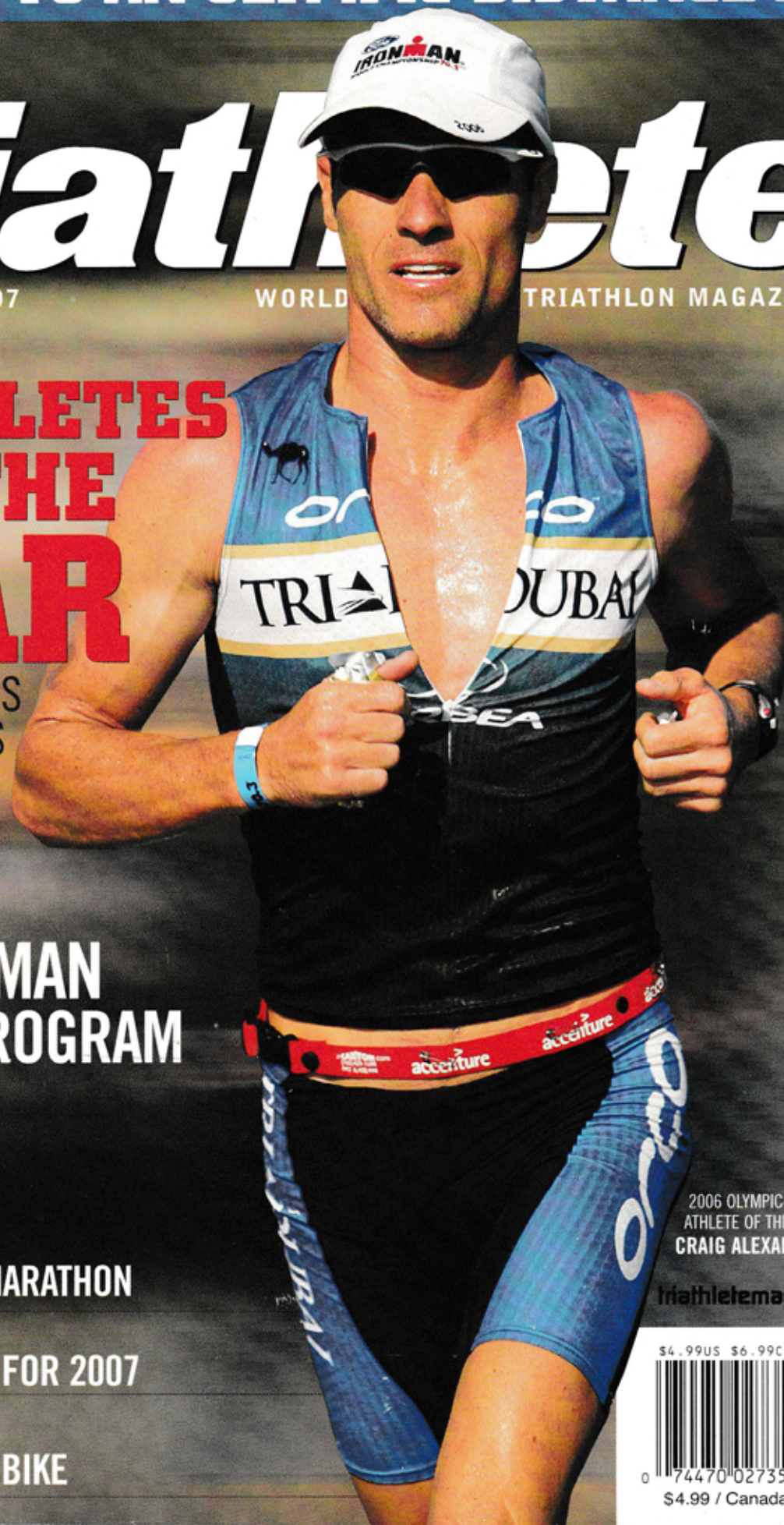
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BIKE OF THE MONTH

## Valdora PHX

*Flying high below the radar*

By Jay Prasuhn



The Valdora PHX prices at \$3,099 complete with Ultegra, or at \$2,299 as a frameset only.

In the tri-bike world full of industry heavyweights such as Cervelo, Scott and Kuota, it's easy for the little guy to get overlooked. On the flipside, you have a small brand like Valdora making a business of good word-of-mouth and grassroots promotion. Peter Olson, a frame designer in Scottsdale, Ariz., is the man behind Valdora and has been creating frames since 1997, the BP Stealth being his biggest project. That is, his biggest project to date. His newest creation, the PHX, will make waves with a full carbon-fiber monocoque compact tri frame.

At first glance, the PHX is a visual draw: With a nose cone-curved head tube, horizontal dropouts, internal cable routing and a vertically-oriented aero top tube, Valdora is aerodynamically clean and aesthetically wrapped in sexy carbon. From a design standpoint, the PHX has all the requisites for perfect triathlon fit: a 76-degree seat angle paired with a short top tube and head tube.

It was about halfway through a 65-mile day when it dawned on me: I could scarcely tell the difference between this and the nearly \$6,000 race bike I do most of my training and racing on. It's the same carbon fiber lay-up as on my own bike, same deep tubes, a similar geometry; there's no reason it wouldn't ride any different.

And it didn't. Handling was predictable and sharp when navigating cars at the requisite ID flash at Camp Pendleton's main gate after navigating coastal Carlsbad's collection of weekend warriors and holiday motorists. The PHX's fork is reminiscent in design to that of the Scott Plasma—by no means a total aerodynamic marvel, but like the Plasma's fork, one of the best-riding OE forks available. Matched with the PHX's 73-degree head angle, it made for a well-balanced front end.

Once through the gate, the PHX really shined. On the flats the geometry put me into a perfect aero/power position. Like all carbon monocoques, it was a joy over the more battered sections of roadway and a Cadillac over the freshly paved tarmac.

The first few goods climbs, however, were where I would have my biggest questions answered; would a vertically-oriented top tube be flexier torsionally than a horizontally-oriented one, and would it result in drivetrain power loss? I laid into the climb hard and happily received zero frame flex. I think the compact frame had something to do with the frame retaining overall torsional stiffness, but contrary to what I feared, the vertically aero top tube was no flexier than a round or horizontally-oriented top tube. Considering that aerodynamically, wind presentation is from the front, the deep tube

is at worst a weight penalty, but I found it's certainly no ride quality drawback.

Weight was actually where the PHX shocked us, tipping our digital scale under that of several other big brands: at 17.57 pounds complete with a Zipp 808 clincher wheelset. It's not a bonifide carbon superlight, but for the dollar it's darn light.

Our bike, spec'd with Dura-Ace, FSA SL-K carbon cranks and Profile T2+ s-bend extensions and an Easton Vista wheelset, prices at \$3,599. Go to an Ultegra group, FSA Gossamer cranks and you'll carve \$500 off for \$3,099.

Really, there's not much to crack on about the PHX. It runs an aero post on a standard 27.2 insert instead of an integrated aero or integrated frame mast. For many, having post option is a better choice. (If I had my druthers, going to a Thomson Elite Masterpiece post, for example, would further lighten the bike as well as provide even more forward saddle positions). But for most, it's moot; this bike is race ready.

You'll find Valdora offers a light carbon compact that is every bit (and in some cases, more) as much bike as is offered by the big boys, all the while leaving you less light in the wallet.

For more on the PHX and the rest of the Valdora line, visit [valdoracycles.com](http://valdoracycles.com). ▲