

Cane Creek Double Barrel

Cane Creek chose to go right to the top when they decided to finally put a coil over shock on the market. They teamed up with Öhlins Racing of Sweden to bring a new technology from motorsports to cycling (for background and tech breakdown on the Cane Creek/Öhlins Double Barrel partnership, see issue #115). This new technology comes at a price; try $650 for a steel sprung model and $850 for the Ti version. Although price is a consideration for the average trail rider, the avid racer tends to look more at performance and what will shave those valuable seconds off the clock.

I chose to test the shock on the new Turner RFX sporting six inches of travel and a dual ring setup. I thought this would be the ideal testing platform for the shock due to the ability to take the bike on long climbs as well as steep rocky descents. The shock I abused was the 7.5" length / 2" stroke with a 550lb. steel spring. This may sound a bit high for a spring rate, but with the 3:1 leverage ratio on the Turner frame, Cane Creek reassured me that was the ideal spring rate for my 175lb. body. After it was all mounted up, with only a half a turn of preload on the spring, the suspension sag was a perfect 30%. Cane Creek also provided some base settings to start with according to my riding style and the terrain I generally ride on. After a month of riding and tweaking the settings for different trails and conditions, I finally had it dialed and it wasn't too far off from where I had started. Since the low speed and high speed circuits are separated I could dial in one particular setting at a time without affecting the others. Low speed set-up took a bit of studying to find exactly when the suspension would squat under my pedal stroke and the right setting to counteract this problem. Once you find the correct setting the shock will barely move even under hard, seated pedaling. This setting will likely be different for everyone based on individual riding styles and bike set-up. High speed settings were a bit easier because I mostly went by feel over long, fast rock sections where the RFX killed it. Without having to worry about the correct air pressure or air volume like most other high end coil over shocks, I only had to focus on the rebound and compression. This made tuning the shock a bit easier to understand and allowed for a more accurate set-up.

On the maiden voyage of the RFX I noticed the Double Barrel had a bit of a dead feeling to it. I don't mean the shock was undersprung or didn't suck up hits, it just didn't quite feel as springy or active as other shocks I've used in the past. The pedal induced bobbing that most of us are used to on longer travel trail bikes was almost completely negated by the adjustments on the low speed compression and rebound. Less energy exerted over a long climb with a 35lb. bike is always a welcomed benefit. The rear wheel stayed planted to the trail quite a bit better, giving me increased traction to keep my forward momentum up (very important on a heavier trail bike).

Where the shock really shines is in pointing it downhill. That same dead feeling I initially felt when I jumped on the bike finally made sense to me. It wasn't that the shock *felt* dead, it's that the wheel was staying in contact with the ground and picking up every little imperfection and nuance on the trail!

Most of us, including myself, are so attuned to feeling the back end of our bikes kick or float a bit over obstacles at high speed that we never notice how much the rear wheel isn't contacting the ground. With the Double Barrel, this enhanced contact with the trail came in handy on high speed turns where the wheels needed to drift and I had to feel where the tire was at all times. Pushing into turns harder and braking less were direct benefits of being able to feel exactly where the rear wheel was on the trail. –Sean Methven