

## Review: Cyclocross tubular wheels

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BOULDER, Colo. (VN) — Wide rims are here to stay.

On a tubular, they allow for a larger, flatter gluing surface, and pair well with wider, more comfortable road tires or cyclocross treads. On a clincher, they improve the cross-section shape of the tire itself, rounding the profile for better handling and improved ride quality.

Regardless of tire type they are proving to be faster against the wind, stiffer, and more robust than their skinny counterparts.

The three wide-rimmed, low-profile aluminum tubulars below all fall within 150 grams of each other, but are spread over a \$500 price range. All are designed for use on the road or cyclocross circuit. But each has its own set of strengths, its own weaknesses, and, of course, its own price point.

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### Cole T24 CX tubular

MSRP: \$650

Weight: 1,546 grams/pair on our scale, without skewers

The specs: The T24 uses a 23mm wide, 25mm tall aluminum rim with a CNC braking surface, laced onto its own aluminum, 3-pawl, sealed cartridge bearing hub.

The scoop: Cole's T24 CX is hundreds cheaper and only marginally heavier than the offerings from Rolf and Hed.

Cole calls them its "workingman's cyclocross wheels," designed for multi-season durability over super low weight. On the performance side, they hold up well against more expensive competition.

Cole first developed the T24CX for Richard Sachs, who asked for a rim that would provide a better gluing surface for wide cyclocross tires. As a result, the T24s are built with wide, flat rims, and I found that they provide the best gluing surface of any of the wheels in this test. They even have a nice deep groove down the center for stitched tubulars.

The rims are light; I'd wager that most of the extra weight is in the house-brand hubs. As a result they feel just as nimble as the more expensive sets here. The high-tension spoke lacing made possible by the unique hubs improves

stiffness, but low spoke count sends them right back in the other direction on the stiffness scale. They aren't noodles, but the T24s were soft enough to fall a bit behind the Heds in hard corners.

I had zero issues with the hubs themselves, and a quick look inside shows they're sealed better than the Heds and similarly to the Rolfs. A season or two of nasty weather shouldn't be a problem, and the bearings can always be replaced.

Where the Coles lose out, and where much of the price difference between them and the more expensive Hed and Rolf options comes from, is in some of the details. The Cole skewers are atrocious. The external cam head of the front skewer broke before the wheels even touched dirt, making it impossible to clamp the wheel securely. The skewers are throwaway items.

If you're looking for a durable wheel with an excellent gluing surface and nice light rims, you're on a bit of a budget, and you already have an extra pair of decent skewers, look no further. If you want the utmost in refinement, keep saving.