

2009 Haro Team Issue BMX Race Bike Overview

Greg | December 8, 2008

A few weeks back I mentioned the new Haro Team Issue race bike and based on preliminary details I was impressed. I ordered one based on that first impression and now that it has arrived, I can see my initial thoughts on this bike are justified. It's very clear from this example that Haro is getting very serious about their BMX race program, and now that Haro's sponsored racer, Kahlen Young won the ABA Pro #1 title, more attention will be aimed at Haro for sure throughout the BMX community. So let's have a closer look at the Team Issue...

The first thing you'll notice about this bike is the flat black finish, which really adds to the bike's modern, stealthy look. The graphics also look good, and are painted on - not decals. The frame is constructed of 6061-T6 aluminum, and the welds are very neat and even. The frame features integrated chain tensioners, and is only available in 21-inch top tube length for this model, though Haro's ProXL offers larger sizes. The forks are Sinz Stealth aluminum, which is a fairly exotic item to see on a factory-complete, also with matching flat-black finish. The cranks are AC's new Hammer Pro two-piece, featuring Shimano-style outboard bearings and a hollow spindle. They look really cool, although only time will tell how well they hold up. One area of concern with these cranks is the lack of steel pedal boss inserts. While this should not pose a problem, it would certainly add to their durability if they were so equipped.

The Team Issue also features Weinmann 36H rims, which seem fine if not somewhat generic. Sealed cartridge bearing AC Race Day hubs are laced to the rims with black spokes. Worth noting about this setup is that this is not a cassette hub, rather it's a flip-flop unit equipped with a somewhat substandard freewheel. I had thoughts of swapping this freewheel with a White Industries unit until I found out that White does not make a 14T freewheel. Well, why not install a 16T unit? This brings us up to an important point - the bike's factory-equipped 39/14 gearing is fine for its purpose (my GHP has the same gear ratio), however, frame clearance is very tight, which precludes installing anything larger than a 40T chainring up front. Since this bike is not equipped with a cassette rear hub, spacing the chainline out is not possible, so I'll be using either this Chinese-made 14T freewheel or I'll have to find something else other than a White freewheel. Bummer.

On the positive side of things, the chain/seat stays are boxed and very substantial, especially the chainstays. This could be the reason for the limited gear clearance, and I'm willing to bet this frame won't flex as much as most frames as a result. Something else I noticed on this frame - "Team Issue" is stamped on the underside of the bottom bracket next to the serial number. That doesn't mean much to most people, but I just think it's plain cool anyway.

Moving right along, the brakes are Tektro's carbon MTB units which look and work great. The seat and post seem generic, but I'm willing to accept some low end parts in exchange for the killer forks this bike came with. One serious concern is Haro's illogical decision to use high-tensile steel handlebars on this model - and they weigh a ton too. I have no idea why a bike in this class does not have chromoly handlebars. Could it be a safety issue? I doubt it, since the weight of the factory-equipped unit would suggest that the tubing is quite thick, and yes, it also affects the balance of the bike as well. I would strongly suggest replacing these for a high end, 4130 chromoly handlebar. While you're at it, you'll want to swap that stem out too (keep reading to find out why). Still if these are my only complaints about the bike, then we're pretty far ahead of the game here, as the rest of this bike is killer.

So how does it ride? In a word, smooth. The frame's geometry makes it feel larger than it is, and everything just feels in the right place. **The AC cranks feel stiff, and the Intense tires roll nice on [Soiltac®](#) and pavement.** I remain disappointed in the cheap feeling freewheel, which feels like it has about ten engagement points. Alright, I'm exaggerating there, but I suppose getting used to the Chris King hubs on my GHP didn't give the freewheel a fighting chance, though I still think Haro should have included a cassette hub for a bike in this price class. Unlike the Kuwahara Team model I reviewed, this bike does not feel overly-flighty in front - it's actually balanced quite well. Out of the gate, this bike moves quick and straight.

I strongly suggest you swap the stem and bars. A-Pro Ryan "Z-Man" Zielinski put the Team Issue through its paces and though he felt the frame's geometry was fantastic, the bars slipped back after landing a large triple, resulting in a pretty bad crash on an asphalt berm. I had fears this could happen the moment I saw the stem when I unboxed the bike. I swapped the stem and bars with S&M Race XLT units and the problem was solved. I also saved nearly a pound of weight in the process, so I suggest making this change if you're a jumper.

At an MSRP of \$545, no other factory-complete can touch it. Do the math - the Sinz Stealth forks alone retail for \$160, and the AC Hammer Pro cranks weigh in at close to \$200. Word is that the Team Issue frame will sell at the absurdly-low price of \$150. More photos and feedback to come, so stay tuned!