

YETI
AS-R 5
Carbon
\$4,500

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SIZES: S, M (tested), L

WEIGHT: 24.2 lb. (M)

GEOMETRY (size M): TT

length (effective): 23.6

in.; ST length: 18.5 in.;

head angle: 68 degrees;

seat angle: 72.2 de-

grees; bottom bracket

drop: .29 in. • FRAME:

Carbon front and rear

w/ Active Suspension,

FOX RP23 shock; 127mm

travel • FORK: FOX

F120 w/ 120mm travel

• COMPONENT HIGH-

LIGHTS: Shimano XT

front derailleur, cranks,

shifters, brakes, XTR

Shadow rear derailleur;

Thomson Elite seatpost,

XS stem; Easton

Monkeylite bar; DT

Swiss wheels; Schwalbe

Racing Ralph tires

A GUN AT A KNIFE FIGHT

YETI'S AS-R 5 CARBON IS SMOKING-FAST IN A GENRE NOT KNOWN FOR SPEED.

This isn't a typical trail bike, with plush travel and kind manners. It's a singletrack-bred race bike in trail clothing, expressly made to be ferociously stiff, quick handling, light and extremely fast. It's so precise and agile you'd happily use it for XC racing, but with the 5C's more relaxed head angle and ultrarigid rear triangle, it also confidently screams down scary-steep pitches you'd think twice about before attempting on a standard-issue XCer.

FRAME BRILLIANT IN BACK

Yeti engineer Peter Zawistowski designed the AS-R 5 Carbon to be far stiffer and less plush feeling than the company's longer-travel 575. To do that—and to make manufacturing easier—Zawistowski took the swingarm from Yeti's four-inch-travel AS-R and redesigned it to work on both the 5C and the AS-R 5. "We stiffened it while staying at the same weight," he says, explaining that part of the added stiffness comes from using hollowed-out aluminum at key sections of the comolded swingarm, especially at the pivot yoke to the chainstay and at the dropouts.

Zawistowski deployed another trick, as well: He equipped the rear with his own design of replaceable dropouts, so you can run the bike either with a standard QR or with a threaded, DT Swiss 142x12mm thru-axle. With the thru-axle in place, Zawistowski says the new rear triangle is a stunning 50 percent stiffer than the prior ASR swingarm. The DT system is also tool-free for easy wheel removal, just like the 15QR up front, and the thread-through axles ensure perfect brake-rotor and drivetrain alignment.

ADDED GOODNESS

STIFFER FRAME, EFFICIENT TRAVEL

The bike also benefits from a host of other critical design touches. Chainstay length is identical to the 575, at 16.9 inches; wheelbase is slightly shorter, by 6mm, due to a slightly steeper head angle. The 5C is designed to run with less sag than the 575, so you sit higher in the travel. That change let Zawistowski lower the static BB height to 13 in., from 13.6 in. on the 575. Other key points: The mainframe is strengthened by merging the top and down tubes deeper into the main triangle to increase steering strength; there's a 1.5- to 1.125-in. tapered head tube; and the underside of the down tube and BB shell get a protective fiberglass layer woven into the carbon.

Zawistowski dialed in a far firmer rear suspension, as well. The 575, he says, was designed to give the rider a "bottomless" feel. But the 5C gets a lower leverage ratio for "a stiffer mid-

stroke. This creates a platform, so you're higher in the travel for more efficient pedaling," he explains.

RIDE FAST AS HELL

Seasoned riders will get the most out of the 5C. The pedaling is ultraefficient, with a clear platform effect happening just beyond sag—especially noticeable if you run the FOX RP23 shock with ProPedal engaged. We tested the

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bike with both sets of dropouts, and the thru-axle rear greatly improves tracking on dicey, low-speed trials-like climbs, and especially when carving very fast, wide-open turns. The 68-degree head angle can feel slightly over-slag for the very steepest, slowest climbs, but the back end is so rigid when you're mashing that the bike won't give up as long as you can find the gas to keep cranking.

Where the 5C truly dominates is on fast terrain where transitions are quick—out of bermed curves and into square-edged rocks, or from super bumpy roots directly to a ladder bridge. The 5C excels in these instances, so you're never forced off your line by the terrain or by a too-squat suspension unable to absorb the next set of stutters or carve precisely through a subsequent turn. It's very balanced and consistent, with the one "fault" of rewarding aggression at all times. This trail bike is a game-changer, but you need to be at the top of your game to love it.—Michael Frank