

Words **JACK ELTON-WALTERS**

Merida

Reacto Team-E

Built for pros and anyone who wants to go fast

A bike that comes painted up in WorldTour team colours needs to deliver the performance to match, and for the most part the Merida Reacto Team-E lives up to its colourful billing.

In truth, the paintjob on this bike most closely matches last year's Bahrain McLaren team colours. Since then, the team has morphed into Bahrain Victorious and the orange jerseys have changed to be mostly red. Still, the orange paintjob is attractive without being garish, and you'll simply be going too fast for anyone to notice the now outdated 'Bahrain McLaren' written along the top tube.

Speedy by design

The Reacto has always been Merida's pure aero road bike, and in an age when many brands are blurring the lines between their lightweight and aero racers there is no doubt this latest version has both feet planted in the aero camp.

As well as the usual sharp angles and deep, aerodynamic tube profiles, the new version comes with fully integrated cabling inside a one-piece Vision Metron 5D ACR cockpit to keep the front end tidy and reduce drag. Plus it comes with fairly aggressive geometry.

The stack height of 571mm twinned with a reach of 400mm (size large, 56cm) puts this bike firmly in long and low territory with regards to the ride position. The integrated bar-stem is slammed onto the fork crown, which sits in a recess in the head tube – a new design that Merida says saves two watts. There's no chance of adapting the position to be an upright cruiser, and to my mind the bike is all the better for it.

One of the biggest changes over the previous version is weight, with Merida claiming to have shaved an impressive 244g off the frame and fork. This brings the overall weight to 7.7kg for a size large, so it's still no featherweight climber's bike but nor is it resistant to going uphill.

Merida also says it has made improvements in comfort, but once again this is relative. A new carbon layup in the frame is claimed to provide vibration damping and a cutaway section in the seatpost adds further flex, but the bike's overall stiffness means you'll feel all but the smoothest roads. There is clearance for up to 30mm tyres, which could add a bit of extra cushioning, but really no one who buys this bike is looking for a comfy ride – it's all about speed.

Lockdown restrictions ensured much of my testing was conducted in the post-1965 borders

The spec

Model Merida Reacto Team-E
Dura-Ace Di2 Disc

Price £9,000

Weight 7.7kg (L)

Groupset Shimano Dura-Ace Di2 Disc

Deviations Shimano power meter

Wheels Vision Metron 55 Clincher TL Disc

Finishing kit Vision Metron 5D ACR integrated bar/stem, Merida Team CW seatpost, Prologo Scratch M5 saddle, Continental GP5000 25mm tyres

Contact merida-bikes.com

Highlights

- 1 A cutout in the seatpost aids flex and comfort, with space for an integrated rear light
- 2 This spec comes complete with a Shimano power meter in the chainset
- 3 Merida says cooling fins on the brake calliper mounts reduce heat for better braking





Pick of the kit

La Passione PSN Thermal bibshorts, £135, lapassione.cc

On cold days – and we're not shot of those yet – these PSN Thermal bibshorts are a great choice for keeping legs spinning comfortably. The fabric feels plush and protective, and the large panel covering much of the rider's back adds warmth and comfort.

The subtle branding is welcome because it means they can be paired easily with a range of other kit without clashing – the only concession to a logo is a line of small reflective rectangles on the side that help with visibility in bad light. It's form and function.

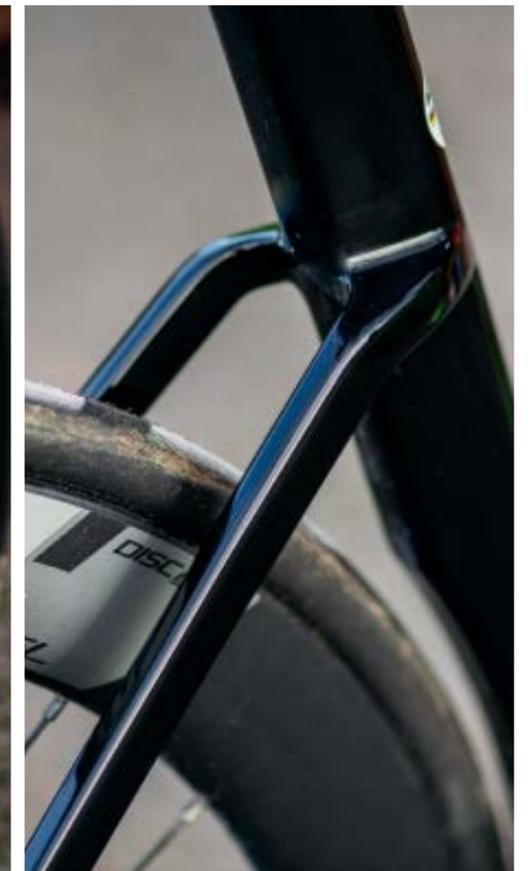
Short, sharp blasts are what this bike excels at – all that stiffness ensures rapid acceleration and it holds speed superbly

of Greater London, and more specifically in Richmond Park. It suited the Merida Reacto down to the ground.

Short, sharp blasts are exactly what this bike excels at – all that stiffness ensures rapid acceleration and it holds speed superbly. Handling is on the reactive side, although on gusty days the bike could feel wayward as the frame's tall, sheer tubes and 55mm-deep wheels were caught by side-winds.

Small climbs, such as Richmond Park's Dark Hill, were dispatched with ease by powering over them in the big ring, while even longer hills proved to be perfectly manageable when sitting in the saddle and knocking out a steady cadence. That's the beauty of a bike like this on longer, shallower climbs: the slippery design helps offset the extra weight, while the frame's stiffness ensures efficient power transfer.

To keep track of that power, the Reacto Team-E comes with a Shimano power meter



The Reacto is as fast as you'd expect from an aero bike decked out in WorldTour team regalia, although the handling is on the reactive side

as part of the package. It's a nice touch and something that helps to make it worthy of consideration when being compared to similarly priced competitors.

Other neat additions include the disc brake cooling fins (like little alloy radiators attached to the callipers) that purport to stop the discs overheating, and the integrated rear light in the seatpost, which makes use of the space provided by the flex-inducing cutaway. Said light isn't USB-rechargeable, albeit you could happily fit rechargeable AAA batteries. It is also easily obscured by a saddle bag, so I simply stuck my usual light onto my saddle bag and forgot all about the one that came with the bike.

Rich pickings

This is a bike that looks fast and rides as fast as it looks. Some people may take issue with the pro colour scheme on the grounds that it should be reserved for members of the team only, but it is done with enough class and subtlety that even the naysayers should find it just about acceptable.

It's hard to see what the Merida Reacto does that sets it apart from other WorldTour-level aero bikes, except perhaps when it comes to the price. Admittedly, £9,000 is a significant chunk of anyone's money, but you could be looking at an extra grand or two for similarly specced bikes from any of the other big-name brands. If speed is what matters most, the Reacto is certainly worth a look. 🚴

Alternatively...



Save a packet

Drop down to the Shimano 105-specced Reacto 4000 model (£2,250) and you can save yourself a whopping £6,750. Merida claims it has the same stiffness as the Team-E frame but just a bit more weight.



Worth the weight

If you'd rather have something lighter, Merida's equivalent pro-specced climber's bike is the Scultura Team-E (£8,600), which swaps straight-line speed for a UCI minimum-nudging weight of 6.88kg.