

Time

LEADER

TO CLIP OR GRIP:

THAT IS THE QUESTION

Testing the Time pedal & Power Grips toe strap

With SPD pedals dominating the clipless market, you would think that Shimano has the OEM and aftermarket stuffed away in its back pocket. Not so! The latest offerings from Look, Speedplay, Time and Power Grips show that the times aren't through a changin'. Shimano is no longer the only kid on the block with a clipless, off-road pedal system. Over the last several months the MBA boys have been eagerly and enthusiastically testing the latest pedal offerings. The pressure is on Shimano, not only from Look and Speedplay, which we tested two months ago, but also from two not so new players.

Power Grips have been available the last few years, while Time has been a major mover in the road bike set. We put plenty of backwoods miles on both systems and here is the full scoop.

IS IT TIME FOR TIME? TIME TMT PEDALS

• If you have ever come across mountain bike traditionalists who cringe at the slightest mention of road bikes, chances are they would never admit to the crossing over of road and mountain bike technologies. From Gilbert Duclos-Lassalle's Rock Shox-equipped win at Paris-Roubaix to the preponderance of clipless-pedal victories at the NORBA Nationals, it's obvious that each discipline is borrowing ideas originally conceived for the other. Clipless pedals, a road bike find, have undoubtedly played a big role with mountain bikes these last few years.

Mainly known for its aggressive efforts in the world of professional road racing, Time Sport USA has been hard at work on an all-new clipless pedal system dubbed the TMT (Time Mountain Bike Technology).

◀ *Double the pleasure: Power Grips (L) and Time TMT (R) represent the yin and yang of the pedal wars. Power Grips is designed for riders who aren't ready to be locked in but still want to be secure. Time's TMT is designed for guys so hardcore that SPD won't do.*

WHAT THEY ARE ABOUT

Time's pedal system has been in development for the last two years and consists of both shoes and pedals. The designed-from-scratch concept allowed Time the freedom to come up with whatever they wanted. Up to now, Shimano has set the design standard which everyone has come to accept, but it's a benchmark that has existed because few have tried to improve upon it. The end result is that shoe manufacturers have incorporated Shimano's two-bolt cleat patterns to stay competitive and other pedal manufacturers have had to make their cleats compatible with the Shimano-style two-bolt shoes. Most manufacturers have felt that they had to live with the two-bolt cleat to attract buyers, but Time has broken the mold. Time cleats, shoes and pedals can only be used with one another. No two-bolt SPD pattern on Time. Though this is a limiting feature, we came to realize that this curse was really a blessing.

PEDAL FACTS

Time's Extreme Carbon pedals are made from a molded composite which is comprised of polyamide plastic and carbon fiber-reinforced fiberglass. With the fancy body and chromoly axles, our test pedals weighed in at 484 grams a pair. Time's pedal body is designed to sit right next to the crank arm, which eliminates the possibility of using a standard pedal wrench. Instead, you tighten the pedal by using a 6mm Allen wrench inserted through the back side of the crank. This feature allows for a wider platform on the pedal, but it prevents the pedals from being used with one aftermarket crank (Topline, which is completely solid on the backside).

The rest of the Time TMT Extreme pedal is relatively simple since it has only a few moving parts. The most noticeable moving part is the steel loops known as the retention bars. The front retention bar is fixed in place while the rear retention bar, which moves as the cleat enters the pedal, is actually an extension of the hidden tension spring. To restrict rocking, the platforms next to the retention bars

support a pair of rubber pads on the shoe. Sealed and needle bearings, along with an integrated counterbalance, keep each pedal hanging at 20 degrees from vertical to facilitate entrance. A round, molded piece at the rear of the pedal also allows the shoe to slide up onto the retention bars.

To get into Time pedals you merely glide your foot into the toe slot and step down. The rear retention bar swings backward and snaps over the lip of the Time cleat. To get out, you give your shoes the traditional outward "heel thrust" just like any other clipless pedal.

A close look at the Time cleat reveals an extension at the front part of the cleat hooks under a small slot on the bottom side of the pedal. While riding in technical sections, this feature allows the rider to stay partially attached to the pedal without being completely locked in. We liked this feature and feel that it can benefit new and experienced riders alike. One of our problems with SPDs is that you are sometimes unable to disengage at the most inopportune moments, such as on rocky descents or climbs.

FANCY FOOTWORK

Just as with the pedals, the Extreme shoes are well thought out and include a few features that we haven't seen in other shoes. First off, the sole uses three different rubber densities, all having a specific purpose. The softest grade is used on the outer edges to aid in traction while walking, while the heel uses a firmer rubber for shock absorption. The hardest density is used for the two pads which help guide the cleat and shoe onto the pedal. The recessed part of the shoe has numbers to assist you in adjusting the cleat fore and aft. Because the rail supports the cleat from side to side, if your cleats were to ever loosen you could still click out. We have had SPD cleats loosen during muddy rides, making it impossible to click out. The Time cleat feature doesn't allow for lateral adjustment, but the cleats provide five degrees of lateral float in either direction and will disengage at 17 degrees.



Once our tired dogs were inside the Extreme shoes, we were treated to a nice, comfortable feel. Most of the shoe is double-stitched for durability and the synthetic heel strap keeps everything secure. When it comes to tightening the shoe, Time uses two interlocked plastic pieces which slide down as you pull the laces apart. The two pieces will automatically hold the strings tight. Once the laces are tucked in, zip up the flap and you are done. The two plastic pieces are easily un-

New and self-reliant: Time pulled out all the stops when designing and building its new Extreme pedal system. Instead of having to rely on a Shimano-style, two-bolt cleat pattern, Time created its own cleat-bolt spacing. This maneuver prevents Time buyers from using any other shoe or pedal.

done just by grabbing them with two fingers and pulling them up. The shoes also feature Kevlar-reinforced overboots which are supposed to defend against foliage snags.

IT'S TIME FOR TESTING

As with Time road shoes, you have to slide your foot onto the pedal from behind with this system. That's the whole idea behind the guiding zone on the shoe. Old habits are hard to break, and when we tried stomping down onto the pedal, as we would with Shimano pedals, nine times out of ten we wouldn't engage. The mindless approach doesn't work here. Once we learned how to finesse the shoe onto the pedal, entrance was easy, but it took prac-

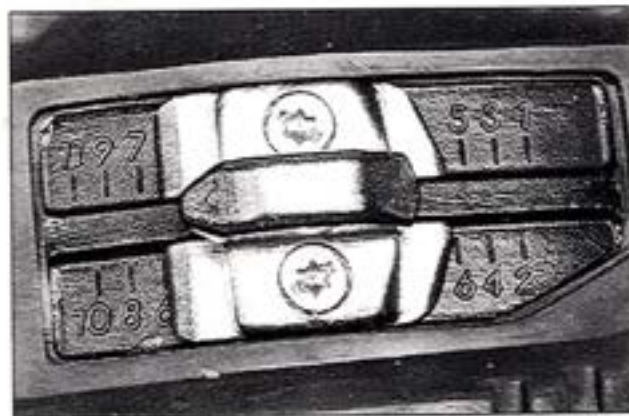


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tice. The cleat hooks under the front retention bar while the rear part of the cleat pushes the rear retention bar back. As the cleat passes the retention bar it snaps back, holding the shoe in place. We liked the ten degrees of actual float, but any time your heel twisted beyond this point, you would begin to work against the spring tension. This is where several test riders had a problem with the limitation of lateral cleat adjustability. Even with the floating pedal system, we preferred having adjustment to allow us to find our neutral pedaling position.

We were surprised to find that there is no spring-tension adjustment on the Extremes. Time told us that, with the cleat hooking onto the retention bar and because of the float, spring tension and cleat retention have nothing to do with each other (with the SPD and Look systems, spring tension and retention are directly correlated). Time's stock spring is of a medium tension when compared to SPD or Look shoes. However, when we tried to "accidentally" exit the Time pedal by pulling up as hard as we could, it held tight. In fact, we never came out of the pedal under hard pedaling loads.

Besides float, each pedal has 10mm of side-to-side movement. This feature is there to help line up a rider's hips and an-



Not completely double-sided: Time's Extreme pedals use two retention bars that hook onto the cleat once it's engaged. The black, molded piece at the rear of the pedal allows the shoe to slide onto the retention bars. The bottom side of the pedal has a slot that interfaces with the cleat.

◀ **Full floater:** Time's cleat allows for a 10° total of lateral float. The numbers on the shoe allow for easy adjustment reference. Because of the rail down the center of the recessed area, you could still click out of the pedal should the cleat ever come loose.



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kles. We have done fine with other clipless systems lacking this feature, but we noticed with the Time system that our feet would slide outward when climbing out of the saddle, and inward when we were seated. Your feet are freer than with any other clipless systems, and at first it feels like you are sliding around on ice, but the sensation goes away. This feature takes a little getting used to. Some of our testers liked it, some didn't.

The large open space between the cleat and pedal, in addition to a minimum of moving parts, allowed the Time Extremes to work amazingly well in mud. Two thumbs up.

SO WHAT DO WE REALLY THINK?

In a lot of ways the Time pedals are better than Shimano SPDs. The Times are a little lighter, but the way the shoe and pedal work together is what really impressed us. Time paid close attention to the details with both the shoes and the pedals, and it shows. Would we race with them? In a heartbeat.

Time sells its Extreme Kevlar shoe for \$175, the Extreme carbon pedal for \$150. The 444-gram Carbon Titanium models have titanium axles and sell for \$240. If this sounds a little pricey to you, Time also offers its Sierra line of shoes and pedals, each of which sells for \$99 a pair. A lightweight racing shoe will be made available in January. Time is also working on a plate that could allow its shoe to be used with SPD pedals but not vice versa.

For more information contact Time Sport USA, 890 Cowan Rd., Burlingame, CA 94010; (415) 692-0272. ●