

MINI GROUPTEST

HYDRATION SYSTEMS

An on-bike fluid system that keeps you hydrated without compromising aerodynamics or riding position? **Nik Cook** tests out three...



PROFILE DESIGN AERO HC DRINK SYSTEM

£39.99 www.madison.co.uk

Just about scraping in as our middleweight contender at 284g, this is the cheapest system on test. The integrated bracket and velcro mounting system is fairly hassle-free and fits all but the narrowest set-ups. An additional bracket over the top of the bottle adds belts-and-braces security on rough roads, but neither of the other systems ejected their bottles so this could be overkill. Unlike our other two systems, there's no bite valve and the straw sticks upright right in your face. It also bucks the usual refilling valve design and instead has a simple, effective and easy-to-use flip-top lid. We also like the removable nose cone lid, which makes adding energy powders and cleaning far easier. It certainly looks aero, but doesn't have the extensive data of the X-Lab. It does have a computer mount but, being rear-mounted, does require a significant shift in head position to view.

» VERDICT



Well-priced, easy to set up and a decent design... just a couple of minor niggles

85%

NATHAN AP PRO AEROBAR HYDRATION SYSTEM

£47.50 www.2pure.co.uk

The biggest plus point of the Nathan system is its ease of fitting. Looking like a cross between a child's sailing boat toy and a robot lizard, its four ratcheted articulated legs simply clip onto your aerobars. No velcro, no zip ties, just secure and instant fitting across a wide range of set-up widths. The straw has a bite valve, which is easy to use and delivers a decent-sized gulp. There's a token aero fairing for its bottom third, but it stands very upright and waves in your face when you're riding. The double-flapped refilling aperture works okay, but does suffer from a bit of bumpy road splash-back. There's a clip-on full cover, with a security tether, but it's a little fiddly to attach and not something you'd want to try at speed. By a mere gram it's the heaviest on test at 285g, it doesn't have a computer mount and it is a little Fisher Price-looking compared to its competitors.

» VERDICT



Not bad for non-refilling short course, but aesthetics are iffy and no computer mount

75%

X-LAB TORPEDO SYSTEM 100

£49.99 www.multisportdistribution.co.uk

At 267g the X-Lab Torpedo system is the lightest on test, but if weight's a real issue, you could spend almost double the money, upgrade to the carbon-base-plated 400 and shave off another 20g. X-Lab certainly hasn't skimped on R&D, with extensive Computational Fluid Dynamic (CFD) analysis and velodrome testing with three-time Ironman world champ, Craig Alexander. According to its data, the system is aerodynamically 'invisible' and it certainly looks slippery. Velcro straps mean versatile tool-free fitting while the foam-surrounded refill aperture is one of the best we've tested, giving almost no splash-back. Plus there's an optional solid cap and a computer mount, which, when putting the computer out front, means no neck bending to check your data. The dolphin tail straw holder, which holds the straw flat, is a simple touch of genius and its bite valve makes for easy, spill-free gulping.

» VERDICT



Proven aerodynamic prowess and packed with practical race-day features

95%