

## NeilPryde Diablo Shimano Ultegra 6700

There are so many factors that go into creating a commercially successful bike, and unfortunately, the majority of them have very little to do with power transfer, handling, and ride quality. Marketing, dealer networks and all-important name recognition play a huge factor in determining if a rider ever gets to learn about a new bike—no matter how great it may be. What's a new brand to do?

What if that new brand has a huge amount of name recognition, incredible marketing prowess, and massive amounts of engineering ability with aerodynamics and carbon fiber? Great, right? Well, it's not so great if all that notoriety and expertise happens to be in another discipline, and, in the case of NeilPryde bikes, that discipline is windsurfing.

For over 40 years, NeilPryde has been pushing the envelope in the windsurfing world, creating sails that turn wind into speed, and carbon

fiber booms that precisely control that speed. The company's products are responsible for numerous world titles and speed records, as well as being the windsurfing rigs for the Olympic Games. They have built a fanatical following by constantly pushing the boundaries of what is possible.

So why bikes? Mike Pryde, the son of Neil himself, heads up the project and is an avid cyclist. He took a look at the type of technologies NeilPryde had on hand, technologies that most cycling companies are only now beginning to use, such as Computational Fluid Dynamics and Finite Element Analysis. They also had manufacturing and carbon materials know-how on-site, which allowed them to easily clear many of the hurdles a new brand must confront.

Perhaps the most important factor in NeilPryde's decision to enter the cycling world was not very obvious. They knew they had incredible brand loyalty in the windsurfing world, and they knew that more than half of their rabid windsurfing customers are also—you guessed it—avid cyclists. So to a large extent, they get to bring their name recognition with them into

an altogether new arena of product design, research and development—a vital component in getting off to a strong start in a new line of business.

NeilPryde earned all that customer loyalty because they have never put their name on a product because it was commercially convenient—just a label. Their gear simply works, and in the windsurfing world that means it's fast and gives you precise control of all that speed. Sounds a lot like a good bike.

To create products like this, a company needs to be humble but also focused on functionality and great design. This led NeilPryde to the front door of BMW subsidiary DesignWorksUSA, a design company with experience creating products for the aircraft and yachting industries, in addition to BMW. NeilPryde had found the perfect partner to craft their first line of bikes.

Getting those bikes into consumers' hands presented another problem. With no dealer network in place and bike shop floors already crowded, NeilPryde has struck out on the direct-to-consumer path—an interesting choice for a product positioned as cutting edge and at a relatively premium price point. It's certainly a stark contrast to the rest of the direct-to-consumer brands which offer bargain prices and products advertised to be simply as good as everything else.



**The Process.** Offering two bikes for their first product year, the Alize and the Diablo, we were given our choice of test bike. While both bikes share the same geometry they have radically different tube shapes and layup. The Alize is designed as an aero bike with some comfort built into the ride. The Diablo is slightly lighter with tube shapes designed to deliver incredible stiffness and real road racing credentials.

Since a trip to the bike shop won't do you any good when buying a NeilPryde, our trip began with a trip to [www.NeilPrydeBikes.com](http://www.NeilPrydeBikes.com). As big fans of stiff race bikes, we decided to go with the Diablo and used the site's built-in fit calculator to choose a size.

An easy-to-navigate interface allows you to enter your height and inseam, and then using the "Lemond Formulas," a bike size is suggested with all the critical measurements clearly displayed. Any rider can be confident in this system's ability to provide the correct size frame; any fine adjustments are easily handled by saddle height and stem adjustments.

Our XL Diablo arrived essentially ready to ride. Carefully packed in heaps of foam and paper, the bike was unblemished and only the bars, saddle and front wheel needed to be installed. Just about anybody with the



skills to change a flat tire can have the bike built and ready to ride within 15 minutes of opening the box.

NeilPryde includes all taxes, import duties, and shipping in its pricing, so you will never be surprised by what the bike actually end up costing.

In the case of our Diablo outfitted with Utegra 6700, it's \$4,350 and that's it. Additionally, to take much of the worry about buying direct to consumer out of the equation, Neil Pryde also gives its customers a seven-day, no-questions-asked return policy and a 10-year warranty.

**The Diablo.** Aiming for a lightweight road-racing machine with great power transfer, the Diablo utilizes very complicated tube shapes to make this happen. Most notable in the design is something NeilPryde calls Exoskeleton technology. It is a pronounced ridge that runs uninterrupted along the top tube, down the head tube and back along the down tube to the bottom bracket. Created using Finite Element Analysis, the ridge uses uninterrupted unidirectional carbon fibers throughout the monocoque front triangle.

This same ridged concept is echoed in the straight blade forks and both sets of stays, with robust ribs

designed into the seat cluster and the bottom bracket. With an enormously tall and aggressively peaked down tube—which is mirrored by the top tube shape—the Diablo's striking forms suggest some incredible power transfer and even hints at a lack of vertical compliance.

A tapered steer tube resides within an extremely robust head tube. Integrating seamlessly into the straight blade forks, its flattened front section is one of the bike's most striking features. And again, it speaks to some incredible stiffness. In fact, the only nod to compliance apparent on the bike at first glance is a traditional, round 27.2 seat post. It does, however, get a slick rubber grommet to give the post quite an integrated appearance.

While the stated goal of stiffness is apparent in every tube shape, the goal of light weight may not have been as successfully met. While the advertised weight for a 56cm frame is less than 1,000 grams, at 970 grams this is not within 100 grams of what is truly considered a lightweight frame these days. Of course, frame weight is only one barometer, and, in many cases, rather misleading. What matters is overall performance and that can only be judged with long miles over varied terrain.



**The Ride.** With NeilPryde using the same geometry for both bikes, our initial concern was angles that would deliver a middle-of-the-road, pedestrian feel. We were happy to see a tight wheelbase with fairly steep and short head tubes. The short chain stays add to this performance-oriented layout by tucking the wheel right up against the seat tube.

The Diablo delivers truth in advertising. It is stiff. Every pedaling input is greeted with an incredibly rigid platform. The bike wants to go, go, go. It was the perfect ride as we upped the intensity on our long base miles. With a big helping of intervals and sprint work thrown in the mix, the Diablo helped us feel a little better about ourselves, as our meager January power numbers delivered more speed than they deserved thanks to the bike. The bike inspires you to keep on the power an extra few moments when climbing, and while sprinting, that city limit sign seems to rush up a few moments sooner.

The stiffness does not end with the bottom bracket and chain stays. The front of the bike may be the stiffest we have ever ridden. There is nothing vague about the way this bike dives into a corner. Carve the fastest, tightest line you can imagine and the bike is still ready to dive under your

riding buddies and get you out of the saddle a split second sooner as you rocket out of the turn.

That stiffness, however, is apparent in every aspect of the bike's performance. Over anything but the smoothest tarmac, the front end of the bike transmits every nook and cranny directly to the rider. It seems as though the straight blade forks are as stiff front to back as they are side to side. The tapered steer tube then delivers any impact to the head tube. Thanks to the incredibly tall cross section of the down tube and top tube, any front-to-back compliance is nonexistent.

The rear end of the bike is not quite as harsh, thanks mainly to the round 27.2 carbon FSA post. It does an admirable job of isolating your body from the stiff stays. As stiff as the stays are, they are still not as stiff as the front end, which leads to another issue. While cornering on the edge, over less-than-perfect tarmac, the front and rear of the bike don't react to impacts in a balanced, well-mannered way. The front feels more compelled to skip out while the rear tracks its line a little more consistently.

The Diablo is a great example of why bikes need to be tested over the long term—tested over multiple types of terrain, in multiple types of riding

situations. The reality is that a Diablo, while certainly stiff, is an absolute rocket ship over smooth road. It begs you to push your self further, whether it's the line you carve or the power you put out. Its shortcomings only truly rear their head in very specific situations. Fast descending in a tight group over rough road can lead to some uncertain moments. Diving into a corner and encountering a rough gutter edge or an unfortunately placed pothole can put your heart in your throat. In those situations the bike requires a steady, confident hand.

**The Rider.** You want stiff, you want fast and you want it in a very handsome package. Intervals and sprint workouts are a big part of your program and you want a bike that makes the most of your effort. You pay your tax dollars and your community fills those potholes and sweeps up that gravel. You're not concerned by a bike that earns its name, Diablo, in rough, tight corners. ]p[

## The Bottom Line.

[neilprydebikes.com](http://neilprydebikes.com)

**PRICE:** \$4,800 (as shown); \$4,350 [on website]; \$3,000 (frame and fork)

**GROUP:** Shimano Ultegra 6700

**WHEELSET:** Mavic Ksyrium Elite  
**OTHER:** FSA seat post, stem, and handlebars

**WEIGHT:** 16.10 lbs. with bottle cages and pedals

