

## PACIFIC SBR TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE

We came out to PSBR in Stamford (my original triathlon stomping grounds) from NYC on the recommendation of a friend, only returned because we figured our first (poor) experience must have been an anomaly, and almost walked out on our second unfun visit—we only stayed and went through with the sale because the same friend came to see us at the shop. Then, after two more visits to address technical issues, they were unable to properly tune the new Cervelo S3. (I have over 20 years of triathlon experience, my boyfriend has been tuning his several high-end bikes for longer)

VISIT 1, 6/21/2014: (able to test only 2 bikes, incorrect information, appointment=?, long wait, push to buy)

Their website suggests “shopping by appointment,” so we made an appointment for 4pm on Saturday, June 21st, since we were planning on buying a high-end bicycle and knew it would be full retail price. That day, there seemed to be no record of this appointment, although Julie Gabay (her card says “President”) remembered my friend mentioning that we were coming in at some point. I was debating between a tri bike and a road bike (I’ve always happily raced with a roadie and clip-on aeros, now frowned upon, I know, but wasn’t sure a tri bike would suit the rest of my riding), and had researched a bit on the Cervelo P2 and P3 and a few road models (hadn’t shopped for a new bike since ’93 and was admittedly out of the loop on the latest anything). She pointed out the Cervelo S-line, saying that they had tri geometry but with the road handlebar/shifting/brake setup (\*this is incorrect\*), and that my familiar clip-on setup would be a great option. She said Jason would better be able to help us, and that he’d be right with us. Forty-five minutes later, Jason Twedt (“Director”) spoke with us about options, saying that the Cervelo S-series actually had a mixed geometry between tri and road angles (\*this is incorrect\*) and would be the obvious choice for me, but that I should not put aeros on it. Throughout, he was cocky, patronizing, and an unclear communicator, but seemingly knowledgeable. I got to spin a bit in the parking lot, and decided it was a good option, but wanted to see what other choices might feel like, including a P-series model. We had to ask repeatedly before he very grudgingly let me get on a P2 in the lot, and didn’t want to let me try anything else; they seemed ready for us to make the purchase (we’re talking about bikes in the 3-4k range).

That didn’t sit right with us; we put down a refundable deposit (Julie made up the number of \$500 on the spot) on the bike and made an appointment for the following weekend, Saturday the 28th at 11am, and left to think, discuss, and research. Neither of us felt good about the shop but decided my friend’s recommendation indicated that surely everything would be fine the next time. In the meantime, we did our homework, and learned that plenty of experienced athletes are putting shorty aeros on the S-series, that the S-geometry is exactly the same as the Road-series (not tri, not in between), contrary to what Julie and Jason told us. Some pro friends, however, agreed that it would be a good bike for my riding circumstances.

VISIT 2, 06/28/2014: (Unprepared for fitting, more incorrect information, poor-to-zero selection, condescension, lack of communication, mismarked prices, no mechanical once-over, then poor tuning, customer’s money is no object)

So we headed back. We got double-parked in NYC and then delayed by three accidents on the way; we called to apologize and see if they could still fit me on the bike if we arrived late, and they said it would be okay, no problem. Upon arrival, we were greeted as if we were being difficult and throwing their whole day off. Julie waved vaguely at a drawer of pedals at her feet and said that whichever would be fine—but couldn’t offer comparison info. Then, after 45+ minutes of waiting in the fitting area without word from anyone about anything, Jason appeared to work with us. “ARE YOU EXCITED?!?!?” (Um, yes?) He was not, however, set up for a fitting, so we waited as he left without a word for ten minutes at a time, several times, for whatever he needed (also apparently for a bike-related call) (We understand that bike shops can be busy on weekends, but there were very few people there and the waiting was way beyond reasonable and went unexplained).

We’d been keeping our mouths shut, but at this point we were just unhappy to be there and during one of his later disappearances had a conversation about cutting bait and starting again somewhere else. But Jason just then came back and finally put me on the bike. Throughout the fitting, he was more and more condescending to us both (as opposed to standard bike-shop banter or sharing knowledge or riding experiences or people in common or anything even remotely cordial or professional). He was unclear in his directions to me about pedaling on the bikestand, snapped at me when I didn’t do what he’d meant, and was...well...*mean* about my having an imperfect pedal stroke (it’s probably as imperfect as most people’s; I do just fine). He measured me and said that if it were his decision, he’d go with the narrower handlebars and a different seat, but that it was up to us—in a weird way as if we’d been resisting this idea. We said that we wanted the bike to fit me, including those things. He started with the handlebars, and was choosing from the *three* options they had there (same brand and model, I believe, just different sizes); he returned to the first ones he’d looked at, having rejected them on the first round (least bad option?). Same situation with the seat. Also, no mention that you’re buying these in addition to the cost of the bike, let alone what those prices are. We tried to discuss adding shorty aerobars and how the fit might change for that situation, but he rolled his eyes and said they’d be too wide for the bars he *just* put on, insisting that the stack and reach were different from a road bike (\*incorrect\*) and made this a bad idea, and that they didn’t have any shorty aeros anyway. I pointed to the set I’d seen there (Profile T2 DL), and he held them up to

the bar to demonstrate that they wouldn't fit, apparently aggravated that I was wasting his time asking about them (I bought the same bars elsewhere, the width is adjustable and they are fine, I don't even lose the top hand position—I do understand it isn't technically the optimal fit/position for the setup).

Finally, the bike was set up. We chose handlebar tape (minuscule selection) and a cage (same) and wanted an 11-28 cassette instead of the standard 11-25. They didn't have any other cassette options in stock, though (!?), so I'd have to come back for that; they were expecting a shipment...soon. After some more waiting, Alex (the only mechanic there on a Saturday) put the tape on and sent us off, but when I spun in the parking lot, the chain wouldn't even shift to the big front ring, so I brought it back in; he clearly hadn't checked the gearing. More waiting, then he made an adjustment (and told us that the cassette-swap later wouldn't cost us anything, since it wasn't our fault they didn't have it in stock and they could re-use the 11-25).

Jason assigned Alex the task of ringing us up, which Alex seemed untrained to do; it took well over half an hour. He couldn't process the previous deposit, didn't know how to ring up the 15% discount for stuff bought with a new bike, the PRICE TAG ON THE BIKE WAS WRONG ("yeah, that happens all the time, it makes me crazy, too!") and he charged us the HIGHER price on their computer, not the one on the tag. They gave us a 5% discount for all the waiting, which brought us more or less back to the price we'd seen. (???) We had to ASK for the original bars and seat that came with the bike after paying for the new ones.

That afternoon, I went for my first ride. I wasn't generating enough power in their parking lot to discover that it wasn't at all properly tuned: in the big front ring, the chain was grinding in the biggest five rear rings (not the one, maybe two, that would be normal) and that I was getting a funny (frame? crank?) "clack" noise. I called them to report what was happening; I was leaving the next day for a six-week out-of-town job and I'd have to wait and call when I was back to get those looked at and the cassette switched. I did, and set up a time to make a trip to CT for that to happen on Monday, August 4th. Meanwhile, I rode with a noisy bike, avoiding 4 gear combos.

VISIT 3, 08/04/2014 : (more poor communication, more poor behavior, more poor tuning)

I got there, Julie said that Sean (another mechanic) was expecting me, to go on back to the workshop. Sean was clearly not expecting me, was pissed off that I needed it done that day, went to look up on the computer whether I could even ask to have the cassette switched on the same day, then finally decided he would do it. He gave it a test in the parking lot and sent me on my way—via the cash register, where I had to pay for the swapped-in cassette in spite of what I'd been told when they had nothing else in stock (my asking about it was met with derision by Julie and especially Jason: "yeah, YOU can reuse it").

I rode that afternoon, and the gears were grinding in the same way, but worse, plus the same noise with each pedal stroke, especially out of the seat. I called immediately, left a message saying that I was so frustrated and needed to get back to the city the next day for a busy week before being out of town for another two weeks and could something be done? Jason emailed to say that he'd be there to look at it the next morning (Aug 5<sup>th</sup>).

VISIT 4, 08/05/2014: (outrageously condescending, totally misinformed, bike still makes noise and needs tuning)

I rearranged my departure so I could get there, and WOW, was Jason all over me. Totally condescending, rude, obnoxious, you name it. I sucked it up and took the abuse in the interest of hopefully getting my bike fixed and out of there for good. "I EXPLAINED to you guys when you bought this bike, that the rear center tube is shorter than on the road model" (\*incorrect, it's exactly the same\*) and that I therefore had to expect to sacrifice some cleanliness on either the big or small gears in back (what?)—and that any frame/crank sound was probably due to my imperfect pedal stroke (okay, that's completely ridiculous). He rode it and deemed it fine. I persisted that the sound just didn't seem right and that surely some fine tuning could fix it? He grudgingly put it on the workstand and tinkered, as if humoring me out of generosity. He pointed to the cassette and said I couldn't complain about those small rings...and I said no, no, I'm talking about the BIG rings, and he said (with off-the-charts condescension): "Well, I was just testing you. You've told me totally different things." (I hadn't, but even if I had...really?) He sent me out for a test, and nothing was improved. So he went back and forth between "These new bikes are really tricky / even I have mechanics work on my bikes" to "that's the best you're gonna get" and variations on how the issues were to be expected or my fault or figments of my imagination.

Then, happily, this friend-of-the-shop guy who is in the business shows up and super nicely agrees to look at my bike (there was no mechanic there). (Commence standard bike-shop banter, what a relief: Yay, bikes! We all like riding bikes! What nice bikes! I've ridden at this place! Ooooh, really, I love it there! It reminds me of this other place! Awesome! It's been twenty years since I've had a new bike! Oh, MAN, you're gonna love this! I know! I'm so psyched!) He rides it, tinkers (doing nothing resembling what Jason was doing), rides it again, still isn't satisfied, comes back, tinkers (Jason: "how much does it have to do with the rear center?" Hero: "Absolutely nothing," followed by many other contradictions of Jason's previously hurled pearls of wisdom), and realizes that Sean had put a 10-speed cassette on the

11-speed bike. Yes. YES. Both of PSBR's mechanics and their "director" test rode and were satisfied with an entirely mistuned (MISASSEMBLED, even) bike. I thanked Hero profusely and got the hell out.

The bike is still making a weird noise and the gearing was better but has settled a bit and needs attention--but there's no point in having PSBR's people look at it, and why on earth would I go back for more abuse? I'll call Cervelo and see how they advise me to deal with it...elsewhere. It's a beautiful, beautiful bike and I'm going to love it for a long, long, time—but with the awful experience of and no thanks to PSBR. They fail in bike knowledge, mechanical skills, communication, professionalism, and attitude. This was a major purchase for me, and I regret every time I ride that I made it at Pacific SBR.