

Roadtested



ZIPP 303 FIRECREST CC

■ Price >£2,300 | \$2,700 Weight >1,519g

THE ORIGINAL 303 WAS one of Zipp's most successful wheels in pro racing, with wins in the Tour De France, Paris-Roubaix and the Tour of Flanders to name only a few. This new model is the highly anticipated full carbon clincher version of the latest 303 Firecrest.

The Firecrest rim shape widens the tyre bed and with a Zipp Tangente tyre you'll get a more rounded tyre profile that matches that of the rim's spoke bed perfectly. The forward facing edge of the back half of the wheel is the same as the leading edge, ie the tyre. This creates more balanced aerodynamics and means that Firecrest rims cope much better in blustery weather conditions – the front feels nearly immune to the effects of crosswinds. In fact, they feel even more stable than low profile aluminium rims.

The wider tyre bed also means the sidewalls are less prone to dramatic deformations when hitting a pothole

or cornering with high lean angle. Zipp claim that means fewer pinch-flats – we can't be certain of that but over hundreds of kilometres of testing we haven't had a single one. At 1,519g for the pair, the 303 CCs are also pretty light. There are lighter mid-depth clinchers around but none with aerodynamics to match these.

The 88/188 hubs have been made lighter and stiffer, and with less stress on the spokes too. Zipp claim the new 303 is 7 per cent stiffer than the previous version – again, that's difficult to verify but we haven't been able to induce any brake rub or significant flex. We did find that the bearings bedded in and needed tightening after a couple of rides, so check yours.

If your season looks like it will include plenty of hilly road work mixed up with some rough surfaces and fast, flat open ground, then we can't think of a better wheelset to be riding.

Warren Rossiter



PROS

Lightweight, unaffected by blustery wind, very robust, clincher practicality

CONS

They work best with Zipp's specific tyres which are expensive

VERDICT

One of the very best and fastest all-round wheelsets available

www.zipp.com

Tech explained

FIRECREST PROFILE



The idea of Firecrest is to control the airflow over the whole wheel by making the

leading edges of the front (the tyre) and back half the same shape. Zipp were able to manipulate the centre of side wind pressure to line up with the steering axis, which is the key to the stability. This level of control over the air is also why the Firecrest shape is fast – 8 per cent faster than the old 303.

Raced by:
Team Saxo Bank

