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THE GREAT COLNAGO

COLNAGO'S C50 ROAD IS THE RESULT OF DECADES OF EXPERIENCE, INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION. BY MIKE CUSHIONBURY

The long-lasting friendship of Italians Ernesto Colnago and Enzo Ferrari was the foundation for Colnago carbon-fiber bicycles. When the two legends discussed composite materials, Ferrari suggested working with his engineering team to develop a carbon bicycle for Colnago. The first prototype appeared in 1986, when Ferrari Engineering brought the bike maker to its key composite fabricator, ATR Composites, an Italian company specializing in making carbon fiber for high-performance autos, motorcycles and aerospace projects. The resulting legacy has spawned what the Colnago faithful consider some of the greatest bicycles ever made.

1 Ernesto Colnago's frame-building career began in 1954 near Milan, Italy (although he had been an apprentice bicycle welder in 1945, at age 13). He has five decades of frame-building experience, including many important innovations and a history of fitting frames to cycling's all-time legends.

2 At left is the fit sheet made by Colnago for our test rider (whom he hadn't met before the fitting), and the overall package came close to matching our tester's typical setup. The only deviation was frame size. Colnago went much smaller than usual. Despite a relatively long top tube for the size, the reach from saddle to bar was 2.5cm shorter than our rider's common measurement. (Colnago chose a more upright position.) Our test rider prefers a 130mm stem and 175mm crank.

3 Colnago's unique HP chainstays have a diamond-shaped cutout, which Colnago claims helps the stays retain structural stiffness while absorbing vibration. In test rides, the C50 proved compliant, yet there are watts of instant acceleration on tap through the crank, bottom bracket and stays.

4 The C50 frame is made using high-modulus carbon-fiber tubes and compression-molded lugs from ATR Composites. The increased strength of the material, compared with previous versions, allows less tube overlap within the lugs. This allows Colnago to use shorter lugs and thinner-walled tubes throughout, resulting in a light yet torsionally stiff race bike—one that has seen victories at Paris-Roubaix, as well as in stages of the Grand Tours. In addition to Ferrari, ATR also builds carbon components for Aprilia, Ducati, Lamborghini, Maserati and Porsche.

5 Colnago's Precisa straight-blade fork was a revelation when it debuted in 1987. According to Colnago, the standard curved fork of the time didn't absorb road vibration as well as a straight blade. Colnago sticks with the concept with the C50's Star carbon fork. It's noticeably stiff without chatter in high-speed turns.

PRICE: \$4,200 (frame and fork) WEIGHT: 16.56 lb. (50cm, as tested) SIZES: Sloping: 45, 48, 50 (tested), 52, 54, 57cm; traditional: 51 to 65cm in 1cm increments
FRAME: Colnago high-modulus carbon fiber **FORK:** Colnago Star carbon w/ carbon steerer **COMPONENT HIGHLIGHTS (as tested):** Shimano Dura-Ace STI shifters and brake levers, derailleurs, brakes, crank, wheels; Vredestein Fortezza TriComp tires; Colnago carbon handlebar, stem, seatpost; Selle Italia Era saddle **INFO:** veltecsports.com

