

FELT F1 PR

A MODERN
CLASSIC

PRICE \$4,999

The abbreviation, PR, in this bike's name is an allusion to Paris-Roubaix. Felt developed this frame to be used in the 2007 edition of the cobbled, one-day race also known as the Hell of the North, and the bike landed on the podium that year. The F1 PR also shares a lot of features with the previous version of Felt's more thoroughbred road racer, the F1. This heritage, combined with several key changes, optimizes the F1 PR for the diverse rigors of the spring Classic races and make it a versatile companion for any kind of spirited riding you want to do, on any sort of road.

To help the frame perform well on brutal terrain, Felt relaxed its typical race geometry, slackening the head- and seat-tube angles by a little more than one degree. (The exact amount differs from size to size.) Coupled with a slightly lengthened wheelbase and lowered bottom bracket, this is intended to improve stability when the bike hits bumps at speed on pocked or cobbled roads. These changes generally allow a rider to be more relaxed, saving energy—having to pay constant attention to the road surface and correct for every deflection can cause cyclists to tense their hands, arms, shoulders, and neck, leading to fatigue.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

→ PRO TOUR BIKE WITH MORE RELAXED GEOMETRY THAN FELT'S F1 RACE BIKE → COMES WITH 27MM TIRES, CAN FIT UP TO 33MM → SEATPOST FEATURES SPLINED SLEEVE AROUND THE CLAMP TO PREVENT THE SADDLE FROM SHIFTING OVER ROUGH ROADS → DOESN'T HAVE DISC BRAKES, TO MEET UCI RULES → 17.1 LB (54CM)

The technology and pedigree are impressive, but at BICYCLING we've learned that these qualities don't always fulfill a need that really ought to matter to amateur riders: fun. In this case, the mix works. Some of the characteristics that make the F1 PR a great bike for pros also made me want to launch off curbs, bunnyhop railroad tracks, and generally act like a kid who just ate five pounds of sugar. Gravel roads, dirt paths, sidewalks, and a towpath along a canal—it all became my playground.

The bike rolls on sturdy, Mavic Ksyrium Elite S wheels shod with Challenge Paris-Roubaix open clinchers. The tires are a generous 27mm wide, and the frame can handle up to 33mm 'cross tires (though the F1 PR was not intended to race cyclocross).

Run the stock tires at 80 to 85 psi, and they'll romp through just about anything, allowing you to be a little more carefree and to follow the path less traveled. But when you ramp up the pressure, the bike's road-racing capability becomes more evident. Stomping

on the pedals out of the saddle yields a sharp acceleration—the frame and fork are decisive in translating movements. The bike responded to my steering predictably and with precision, so that I could maneuver deftly when tucked in a tight, jostling group.

At 17.1 pounds, the F1 PR isn't a featherweight, but that's not to be expected of a classics bike at this price—nor does it significantly harm the ride. The bike has a light feel, rocking easily beneath me on steep climbs.

The parts are solid: Shimano Ultegra cranks and mechanical levers; Dura-Ace derailleurs; TRP long-reach brakes; and a handlebar, stem, and vibration-damping seatpost from 3T. Put together, they make the F1 PR a good value that is also eminently raceable. Eschewing the superlight in favor of sturdier, more durable components makes a lot of sense for most riders, especially if you're going to get your money's worth out of this bike and use it for what it does best: have a blast on all sorts of gravel, dirt, and adventure rides.—BRAD FORD



CLASSICS BIKES

The term refers to the European spring Classics, brutal one-day races that patch together dirt farm roads, narrow lanes, ancient Roman cobblestone streets, and modern pavement. Traditionally, a "classics" bike was basically a road-racing bike with durable, high-spoke-count wheels and wider tubular tires. That was when all bikes were pretty much the same in that they were made of steel tubing with steel lugs. Wheels and tires were key to surviving the punishment dished out by rugged courses.

The shift to carbon frames and aero shapes has caused tire clearances to diminish—in some cases 23mm tires are the largest that will fit certain frames. Wheels and tires remain key to a classics bike—tires still generally need to be 25 to 28mm to run lower pressures and mitigate hits and bumps, both for comfort and to avoid flats. But modern classics bikes also combine the best of carbon's damping capabilities along with clearance for wide tires (and any mud that gets flung around), with the performance characteristics of Pro Tour race bikes.—B.F.