



Why we should all consider buying second hand bicycles instead

Description

The bicycle industry is broken. When I first started cycling about 25 years ago, cycling was inclusive. I remember buying my first mountain bike, the Specialized HardRock, for about \$400. That was all I needed. A bicycle that I could ride daily and on trails. I remember going up and down Bukit Timah Hill and I believe there was a place around Tampines called Track 21. The latter trail is no longer thanks to Singapore's constant need to clear land for redevelopment. The Bukit Timah trail still exists. I used to cycle with a group of friends whom I got to know from the bicycle shop from which I bought my mountain bike, Tiong Hin, which still exists today. We used to gather outside the shop at Lorong Ah Soo and head off for the trails together. It did not matter what bikes we rode. It was all about making new friends and conquering the trails together.

I remember upgrading my mountain bike to an S-Works custom-built. Even then, an S-Works frame cost me \$1000. I know it cost \$1000 because my grandmother gave me \$1000 as a reward for making it to NUS. I used that money to purchase the frame and with money that I saved up, bought all the components and wheelset.



I keep this bike to this very day. Say what you may, the Specialized M5 is still one of the prettiest mountain bikes ever. I love the shape of the down tube. That slight curve just before it reaches the head tube. You know what was cool about this? The boss at Tiong Hin taught me how to assemble most of my bicycle. He was patient enough to explain to me how to put my brakes together, install the head tube and assemble the handlebar. He built the wheels though. I believe back then it was not that popular to have a ready-made wheelset. It was so exhilarating to see my bike coming to fruition.

I will not sell this bike. It remains with me always.

For those who did not know about cycling back then, Specialized was not the mega-conglomerate it is today. There were many other more popular brands. I had many friends riding Trek, Santa Cruz, Yeti, Kona and GT. Giant was a big brand then as well. The price difference between a Giant and a Specialized is not as profound as what it is today. Specialized was popular but it was never as popular as it is today.

Trek was considered very high-end. That concept has remained with me to this date. My daughter's first bike was a Trek.



I got her into cycling during the pandemic. I hope she will develop a passion for cycling as she grows up.

Mountain bikes have evolved. Mountain bikes back in my day had 26-inch wheels. Current mountain bike wheels are either 27.5 inches or 29 inches. Such a mountain bike is going to be hard to service.

Next, I got into road cycling. My friends slowly transitioned to road cycling. I followed suit. I bought my first road bike. The Specialized Tarmac. This is the very first SL model, i.e., the SL1.



I love this bike. For some reason, the geometry feels comfortable. It comes with a Shimano 105 group set. It was perhaps one of the lower variants of the first Tarmac. The reason why I bought this bike? It was on sale! It was not a popular model. I bought it because there was a good offer on a size 52. For context, size 52 is a very popular size because most riders have similar dimensions to me. I am 1.73 m tall.

The bicycle is not very advanced. I cannot even fit wider tyres. I tried to upgrade the wheelset. It would not take the carbon wheels that I chose. The fork is too narrow. The width of the current tyres is 23mm. However, this bike still works! I can do long rides on it with little to no aches. To put things in context, my long is about 80km. I know of some who think that such a distance is considered normal. However, I cannot spare so much time to ride.

In fact, most of the time, I ride virtually. I bought a bike trainer. The Wahoo Kickr Bike Shift.



I bought this from Entro Cycles. They are one of the friendliest and most helpful bike shops. I got this from Dexter. He was very patient in explaining the product to me. Vincent is also very friendly. They are located at Enterprise One at Kaki Bukit Road. If you are looking for Wahoo products, do speak to them. Oh and Reynolds wheels. I will touch on these wheels shortly.

Anyway, I always wanted to have a top-spec Specialized Roubaix. Just to put things into context, the 2025 S-Works Roubaix costs \$18,500.

Roubaix

Featured ▾



S-Works Roubaix SL8 LTD

SRAM RED AXS

\$18,500.00

Wait what??? That does not make sense! I thought cycling was supposed to be inclusive. How is it now exclusive? In the past, a top-spec bike from Specialized would cost about half of this. And I am accounting for inflation so in nominal terms it would be less than half of today's sticker price.

The equivalent of SRAM Red would be Shimano Dura-Ace. It is just a different brand of company making group sets.

Frankly, bicycle prices have gone mad. The reason why bicycle prices have shot up so high is because of demand. Back during the pandemic, there was an increase in the demand for bicycles because people were looking for things to do outdoors. You could take off your mask if you were exercising. Group sizes were limited to 5. This meant that we could not play football or team sports. Since the government supported the economy, jobs were saved, incomes preserved and one of the many things that people splurged on was bicycles. Correspondingly, the factories in China were shut. There was a supply crunch that corresponded with the high demand.

I was one of those who splurged on a new bicycle. Although I did not buy a new bike during the pandemic, I bought a new one just after the pandemic. It was an impulse buy but I always wanted a Brompton.



During the pandemic, there was a waitlist at Brompton Junction. You placed your name on the list and you were called to select your bicycle when it came to your turn. You could only purchase the colours that were available at the shop. I placed my name but somehow, I was told that I was contacted but I did not respond and hence I missed my turn. I told them I never got any call or email. They told me I lost my chance. Ok then, I will wait for a less crazy time to buy a Brompton. I am glad I did. I love this bumblebee yellow colour. I did not have to queue and I did not buy it from Brompton Junction. I will endeavour to use this bike more often...

This left me still wanting a Roubaix. Or maybe a new road bike because I want to try carbon wheels.

However, \$18,500 for a Roubaix? Nope...

Not even a chance to ride with Peter Sagan could tempt me.

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Cycling should remain inclusive and should not be exclusive. This is not some country club membership. Why should a Specialized road bike with a Shimano 105 groupset cost more than \$2500? Is the Shimano 105 not the groupset of the people? Is that not the groupset that those who want to get into cycling should get? I paid about \$2000 for my Tarmac more than 15 years ago. I believe that came with 105 pedals, road shoes and a helmet. That was the offer which got me my Specialized Tarmac.

I went to a Specialized store and was told that I could consider selling my current Tarmac and invest in

a new bike. I believe I could only get maybe \$500 for my bike. Or perhaps even less. That would be the cost of a new helmet at Specialized. How did it come to this? Specialized have gone mental. They have become the very thing that I hoped they would defeat. A huge cycling conglomerate.

My solution to this ridiculous situation? Buy a second-hand bike. I still want a Specialized. In size 52. The good thing is that 52 is a common size.

I found this and paid \$1050 for it. I believe I could have gotten it for a little less.



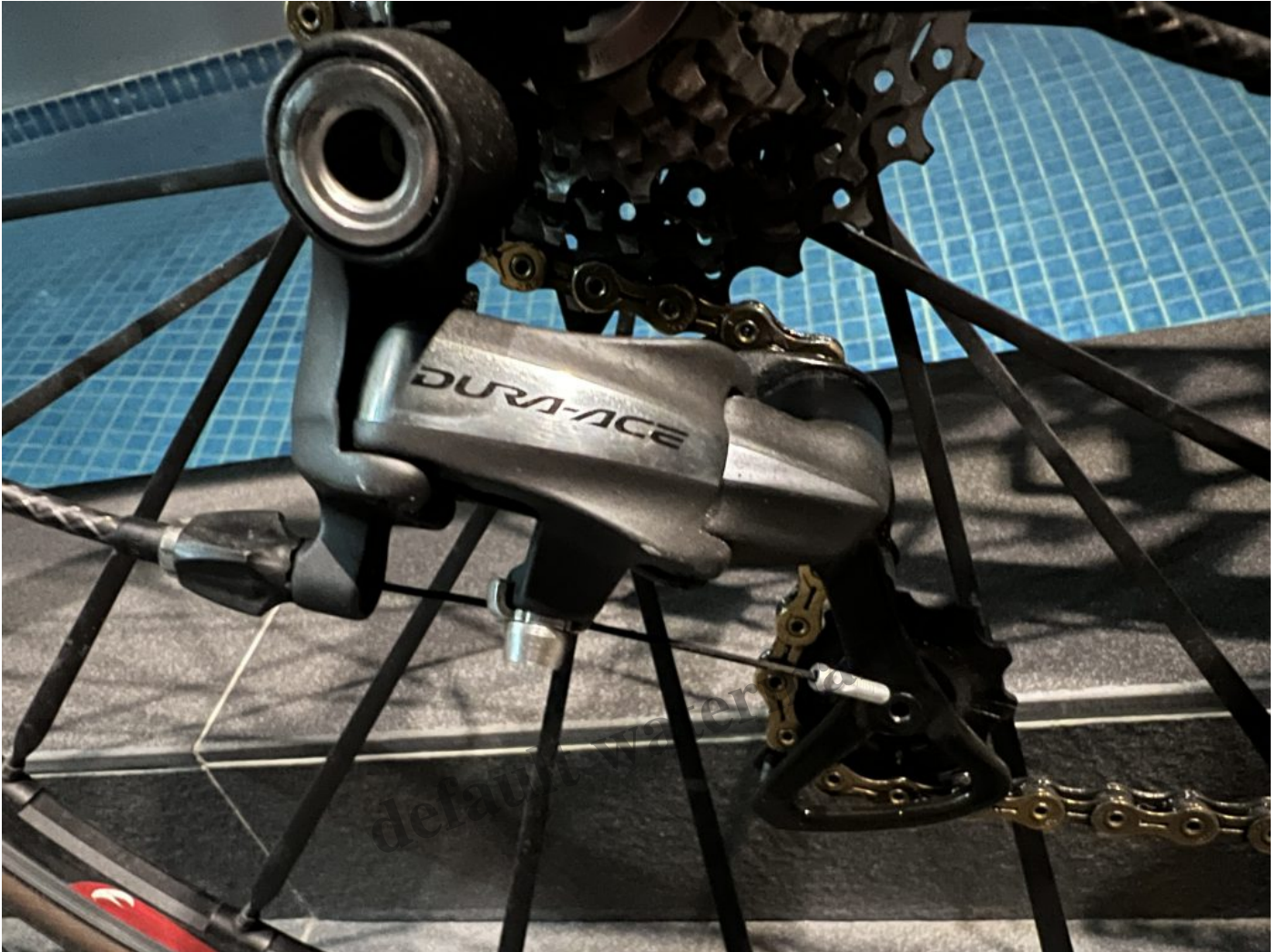
The Specialized Roubaix S-Works. Dura-Ace 10-speed groupset with Fulcrum 1 wheels. I believe the tyres are Continental 5000s with some thread left.

Some bearings were worn. The bike was rather dirty.

There were some scuffs on the crank.



The derailleurs looked fine.



I stripped the wheels and cleaned the drivetrain. I needed to do this so that I could understand what the drivetrain felt when it was clean.



Those pedals had to go too. SPDs all the way (yes mountain bike clipless system even on a road bike).



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A decent workstand helps.



I found a few issues. There was definite play in the headset. The bearings were worn. So were the wheel hubs.

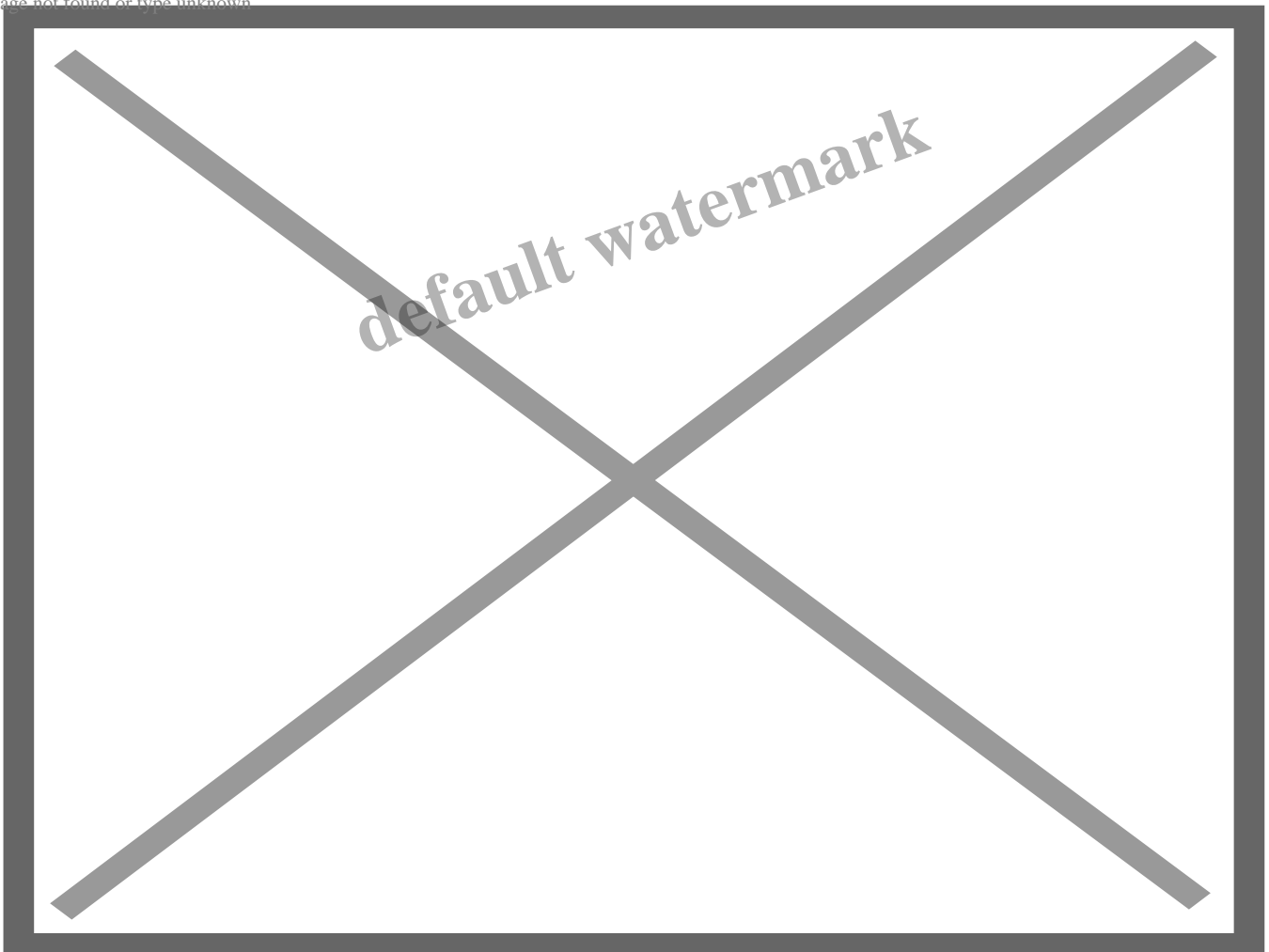
The drivetrain was still ok. The chain was still not stretched. The cassette was in good condition and the chainrings still had life in them (pew... Dura-Ace chainrings cost a lot...).

The bar tape had to go. I had an idea for new wheels anyway. Oh and XT mountain bike pedals. I like the ones with pedals on one side and clips on the other. All my bikes use that, save for my Brompton. Yes including my Wahoo Kickr Bike Shift.

The new wheels are the Reynolds AR40 X Carbon Road Wheels. The bar tape is from a brand called BTP. The tyres are Continental GP5000 700x28 (sadly I cannot fit 28s on my Tarmac).

The final result:

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I weighed the bike and it weighed 7.49kg. In comparison, my Tarmac weighed 8.9kg.

Total cost:

Bike (2nd hand): \$1050

Wheels (Brand New): \$1799
Bar Tape (Brand New): \$43
Tyres (one pair) (Brand New): \$148
Servicing: \$90

Total: \$3,130

I did the servicing and got the wheels, bar tape and tyres from Entro Cycles.

This bike rides like a dream. There is a certain plush bounce when I sit upright and hold the middle of the handlebars. It soaks up bumps so much better than my Tarmac. The Dura-Ace crank is much more responsive as compared to the 105 on my Tarmac. I need to get used to the geometry though. I feel like this bike wants me to sit up much more than the Tarmac.

I picked up the bike and took it for a leisure ride that very night. Oh yes, I only cycle at night. I want to avoid the sun and heat. So if you see someone on a black Specialized Tarmac or a white Roubaix going along East Coast Road, Tanah Merah Coastal Road, Downtown or Serangoon Road after 11pm, it could be me!

This was just before hitting Tanah Merah Coastal Road. I decided to turn back here.

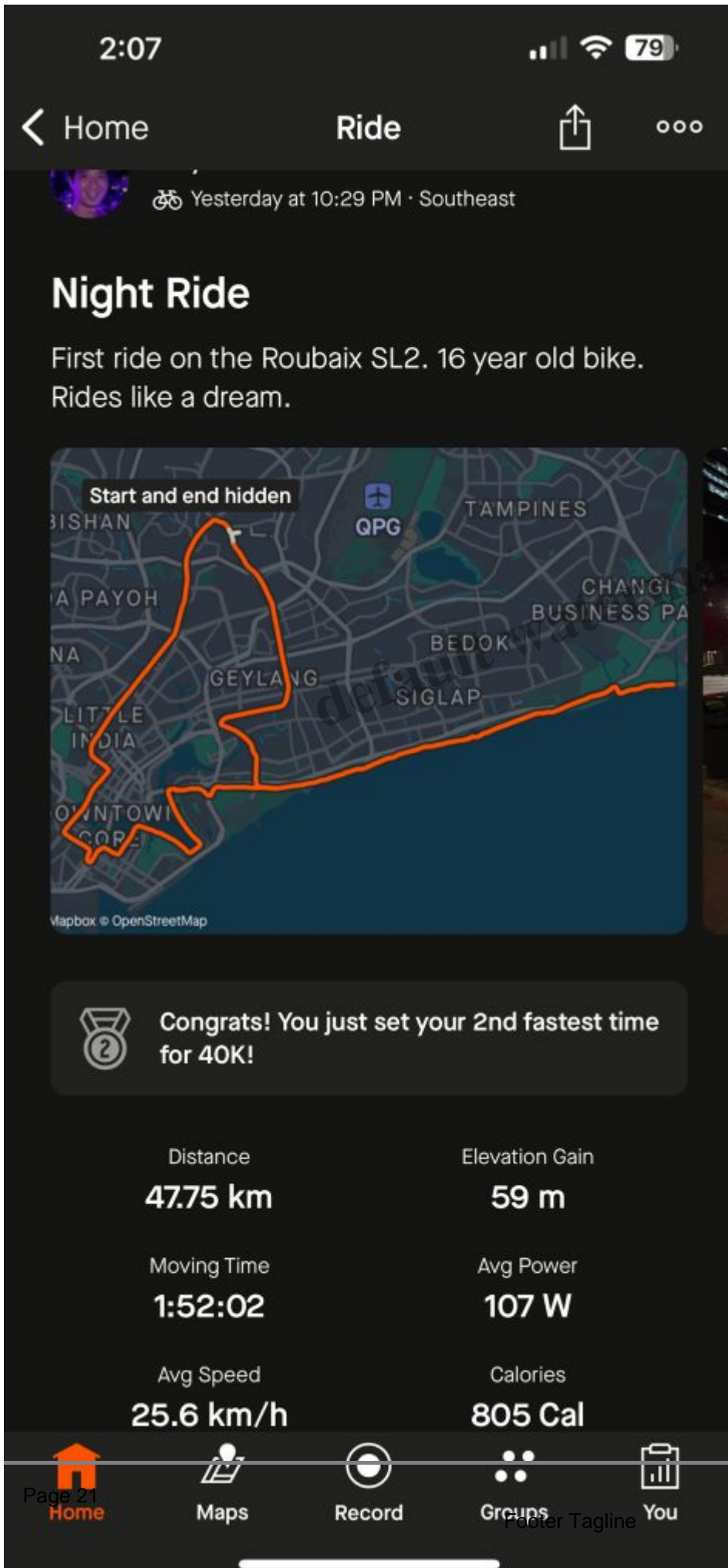
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Headed down the park connectors to reach Downtown.



Here is my ride data. The lesson I learned... the wheels and tyres make a huge difference. Even though this is supposed to be an endurance bike, the bike feels very lively. I was constantly stopping to adjust my saddle height and position as I got to know the bike. This is normal when riding a bike for the very first time. I tried putting a similar seatpost height to my Tarmac but it did not feel right. However, once I got the seat position right, the bike was a dream to ride.



This was a short test ride. I believe I could go on for at least double this distance. The bike was that comfortable. Wider tyres make a huge difference. The frame of the Roubaix helped too.

There was only one minor issue. I need to check on the seat post clamp. There was a bit of slippage. I will need to clean up the seat post and seat post clamp before reinstalling it with some carbon compound. Do not think this is too much of an issue.



Overall, very pleased with my new, old Roubaix.

If you are looking for a bicycle, do not be put off by the high prices. There is value in the second hand market. So long as you get a good bicycle frame, the rest of the components, if they can be salvaged, are a bonus. Of course there are some individuals who will be asking for a ridiculously high price for their second hand bikes. You do not have to pay such prices. I do not blame them though. Some bought when prices were at their peak. Recently, Specialized slashed down the price of the 2022 S-Works Roubaix from \$18,000 to \$12,000 but that is still 4 times of what I paid for my set up. It may be better than what I ended up with but then it will not be 4 times better. For context, the S-Works Roubaix SL8 in size 56 weighs 7.34 kg (according to Specialized on their website). My new, old Roubaix weighs 7.49 kg in size 52. That is a 150 gram weight difference.

In the end, cycling is all about riding. Let's make cycling inclusive once again.

To the bike brands, come on, most of your frames are made in China. If the Chinese brands can price their bikes at a fraction of your price, your margins must be very healthy.

This is my first second hand bike purchase and I do not think I am less excited as when I got my other first hand bikes.

Yours sincerely,

Daryl

p.s. Join me on Strava: <https://strava.app.link/YgVdDAwaPMb>

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