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Geax Neuron Tire Review

Last Updated on Friday, 06 November 2009 19:01

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Wednesday, 04 November 2009 17:27

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Geax, for those of you who are not familiar with the brand is Italian tire manufacturer Vittoria's mountain bike tire department. Vittoria, who has been making bicycle tires for over 50 years created the Geax name in 1997 even though they have largely remained unknown in the United States compared to other manufacturers. My first introduction to the Geax lineup was last year with a set of Lobo Mas Loco's, which quite honestly didn't impress me one bit and ended up taking a deep gash through the sidewall after only 2 rides, but since then Geax has introduced several new products and if the new tire offerings such as the Neuron and DHEA are any indication, their name is about to make a big splash in the game of DH/FR tires.

Background:



For the past couple years of my "riding career" I have been a pretty dedicated Maxxis tire user. Of course I have dabbled with other tires like the Kenda Nevegal's and Blue Grooves, but was never a fan of their weight and slow rolling characteristics, and quite frankly, their somewhat unpredictable traction characteristics for desert riding. Each time I kept coming back to Maxxis and have run everything from Minions, Mobsters and High Rollers to the newer Ardent, which quickly became one of my all time favorite tires for the simple fact that it's an aggressive tire that rolls very very fast. With a full year on Ardents and Maxxis' recent price hike to nearly \$80/tire, I was understandably

excited to see Geax making a push into the US market with newly designed tires like the DHEA and the Neuron to give Maxxis some competition.

Technology:

The Neuron features some of Geax's newest technologies such as "TNT" which stands for "Tube No Tube" and allows you to run the tire either as a standard tubed tire, or as tubeless using either the "ghetto" or "Stans" method or on full UST rims. Along with the TNT they also feature the "UST Talon" bead which gives the tire some serious grip onto the rims (as noted later in the review) and come in a variety of compound and size combinations. For this review we are using the TNT model with a dual compound of 50-60-50 Sha.

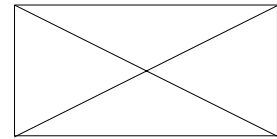
Testing Conditions:

Since 90% of our riding is done in the desert, or desert like conditions, that is what I will be focusing on in this review with the caveat that I am using the Neuron for both DH and AM riding on 2 different bike set ups. The first bike being my 8.5" travel DH bike, which is running a Neuron 2.5 in the front and a DHEA 2.3 in the rear. The second test bike is the 5.5" Soul Cycles Vegas prototype which we reviewed earlier. For the AM setup I am running 2.3 Neurons in both the front and the rear. Test trails consist of a variety of trails on South Mountain in Phoenix AZ and include everything from the mostly smooth and sandy XC flow of Desert Classic to the AM flow of National and the relentless rocks on DH runs of Geronimo and Holbert. Trail conditions have been very dry and dusty as of this review, so no use in muddy or wet conditions as of yet.\

Mounting:

As a lot of people in AZ do, I am running tubeless setups on both bikes used for this review. On my DH setup I am running an Azonic Outlaw wheelset which has been converted to tubeless using the Stans "No Tubes" Strips. For the AM setup, the rims are Mavic 823 UST rims, so no rim strip is necessary. For both sets of wheels, Stans "No Tubes" Sealant is used. Starting with tubeless converted wheelset, the tires fit on the rims snugly and beaded nearly immediately after adding some sealant, spraying the bead of the rim with a little windex and the air compressor was applied. With the UST wheelset, I installed the tires first with no sealant added and hit them with the air compressor to see if they would bead up totally dry, which they did extremely easily. A quick addition of some sealant and both wheelsets were ready to roll. One thing to note, when these tires bead, they really really bead with a nice hearty "pop" thanks to the "UST Talon" beads and since then, no noticeable air loss has occurred from either wheelset.

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The first area of the Neuron's performance I would like to address is their rolling resistance which feels minimal. Coming off the Maxxis Ardent, I am used to a very fast rolling tire and the Neuron is right up there with it. Just letting off the brakes on the DH bike and you can feel just how fast these tires roll and pick up speed. On the AM bike, pedaling efficiency is noticeable higher and these tires seems to carry speed better over more ground which helps in those areas that are nearly flat and especially when trying to carry momentum through a section and into a climb. Granted, most Dher's aren't going to be doing much climbing, but this accelerating characteristic will definitely help out in sections where speed is being obtained by pumping rather than pedaling and on the AM side, it can make a big difference in what gearing you can carry into a climb. As for climbing, while this will not apply to DH riders, anyone using the Neuron as a rear AM tire will be happy to know that even for its aggressive tread pattern it climbs surprisingly well on the loose over hard-pack and rocks that we have so much of. There were a few instances where the rear end broke loose, but only when I was standing up and really hammering on some steep inclines. With my ass in the saddle where it should be, the Neuron hooked up well for being a "DH" tire. I would suggest to anyone who plans on doing any extended amounts of climbing to take a look at the Geax DHEA which has a more "paddle" like tread pattern and climbs very very well when used as a rear tire. (We will be reviewing the DHEA separately in 3 different sizes and compounds later on).

Cornering:

The big question that everyone wants to know about any tire is "How does it corner?". Well, this is the characteristic that the Neuron excels at. Using a staggered multistage side tread, the Neuron will dig in on hard corners and sling you out the other side like you are riding on rails, but this comes with one "gotcha" in my opinion, getting the tire over to those side knobs. The Neuron's high speed center knobs are fantastic for ripping fast straight lines and the side knobs are like Velcro when you are on them, but when making the transition from the center to the side knobs the tire takes on a feeling of "floating", which at times can be quiet un-nerving. Dropping the pressure helped the situation a bit, but not enough to warranty the risk of cutting a tire on the rocks at low pressure. After a little more experimentation with the stock tread pattern, I plan on using the tire cutter and removing the outer most portions of the center knobs in order to make the center line tread narrower. This would be similar in design to the Maxxis Ardent tread pattern where you have a narrow row of high speed center knobs then an area mostly devoid of any tread as a transitional point over to its large side knobs. The results with the Ardent is a tire which you can ride like flipping a switch, straight and fast or laid over in the corners, but not in the middle or as I began to refer to it, the "Jebus Point" because if you didn't get out of the transitional point of the tire, you were praying to Jebus that the tire would bite back in and get you back on track. A smoother transition from center to side on the Neuron would make this my dream tire, so a little experimentation is worth the effort.



Rocks Rocks Everywhere!:

Geax touts the Neuron as a tire designed "to withstand modern World Cup racing levels of punishment", and in my opinion, there is no better way to test this statement than plowing them through some of the nastiest rock gardens that South Mountain has to offer on the Geronimo and Holbert trails. Any local knows that both of these trails are basically continuous rock gardens from top to bottom with everything from tire biting crevices to off camber faces and lots and lots of square edge rock hits. So the first run of the Neuron down Geronimo was something of an interesting experiment to see how they would respond, and while they did an admirable job of taking what was thrown at them, but I will say it wasn't without another caveat. These tires were designed to be ridden aggressively and doing anything else with them in the chunky stuff will produce some somewhat unwieldy results. What exactly does that mean? Well it boils down to this, the aggressive tread pattern and profile on Neuron demands it to be ridden aggressively. In order to get the full potential out of this tire, you basically have to pick it up and plant it on the line that you want it to go, it is definitely not a "plow" tire like a Maxxis Minion or the Neuron's brother, the Geax DHEA. If you ride the Neuron "lazily" through the really rocky stuff, it tends to skip across the rocks, which at first may make you think something is horribly wrong with your suspension set up, but in reality the tire is skipping on the surface like a stone across water. By showing them who's boss and putting them where you want them to go, something magical happens, they become Velcro like and stick like very few other tires could ever hope too. This held true on Holbert also, plowing headlong into perpendicular square edge rock edges and water bars caused the tire to get a little squirly as it deflected, but by simply picking up the front end and helping the wheel over the edge, the tire was able to stick to everything flawlessly. A lot of this has to do with the overall contour profile of the tire, which is very round compared to many tires which have a somewhat flat contact surface. In making the Neuron's profile much more round, it enables it to roll extremely well, but since it has a smaller contact point it also causes the "skipping" I referred too since less rubber is on the ground for that split second of contact. This is not a negative point for the Neuron, just more of a trait for the rider to be aware of and to consciously ride these tires to their full potential.

Overall Impression:

What can I say other than these tires are FAST. They really are designed to be a World Cup contending tire and need to be ridden that way. They excel at high speeds on loose over hard-pack as well as helping you keep that speed through the straight aways. For AM use, the 2.3" size is a great tire for the more aggressive AM rider, or for the DH'er who also gets out and pedals on occasion with solid handling and climbing characteristics. As I stated, the Neuron is not quite the perfect tire, but with some slight modifications, Geax is going to have a solid contender on their hands as they move into the DH/FR tire market.

Specs:

Geax Neuron
 Sizes: 26" x 2.5"- 2.3"
 Variations: Wire Bead TNT, Wire Bead UST, Wire Bead TNT Triple Compound
 Casing: Heavy Duty/TNT DH
 EST. Retail Price: \$45-\$50

Written by :



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