

Mountain Biking in Carlisle and Kudos to Belmont Wheelworks

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Now that I'm on my sabbatical, I've started doing **more road biking** every day, and I realized I wanted to hit tougher trails, too, but my Mongoose hardtail was a little out of shape. Thus was the impetus for visiting Belmont Wheelworks, on Trapelo Rd in Belmont, MA and my purchase of a new **Trek Fuel 80** full suspension mountain bike. After researching hardtail and entry level full suspension mountain bikes online from Giant, Gary Fisher, Cannondale, and Trek, I settled on the Trek Fuel model

since the price was lower among full suspension models, although it seemed to have very good components including tires, rear suspension, brakes, and derailleur.

Belmont Wheelworks is a local Trek retailer, and a friend highly recommended them, so I stopped by the store this weekend while they were having a summer sale. The store was huge with hundreds of models right in the showroom floor, and what surprised me even more was the number of people shopping there that afternoon. The place was absolutely swamped, and the selection was great. First I purchased Shimano bicycle shoes so that I could use the clipless pedals

that ship on the higher end bikes rather than the flat pedals and stirrups. Knowing nothing about bike shoes, I asked for help. The level of service I received was fantastic. The amount of detail that goes into selecting and fitting a shoe is really very high, and the sales person walked me through all the information very patiently, taking measurements, comparing the feel between brands, and testing the movement. She definitely knew her stuff. Although I purchased the Trek on Saturday, I had to wait until Monday to pick it up. With summer sale, I saved over \$200 on the Trek, and quite a lot on all the other supplies.



Upon returning Monday, I was assisted by a sales person named Michael, and again I was very impressed with the level of service provided. The staff at Belmont Wheelworks are very, very knowledgeable, and very helpful. Initially I thought I would just hand a clerk a receipt and haul the bike out to my truck, but Michael spent over a half hour customizing the bike to my height and body weight. He adjusted the rear suspension to have the appropriate amount of pressure and *travel*, and

taught me the important aspects involved in this so that I could do it myself later. Michael continued walking me through how to adjust and maintain the front suspension, and how to use the cleats that attach to the shoe for mounting on the pedals. Without even asking, I was provided with a personal tour of my new bicycle, helping to make me a much better bike owner, and ensuring that I would return again to this great store. I highly recommend it, and this is the only bike store for me from now on.

This morning was spent reading the owners manual, attaching the cleats, and testing things out. Frankly, I had a hard time with using the cleats initially, since I was always so used to getting my foot out of stirrups so quickly, and I was concerned



that the cleats mounted too firmly into the pedals. When stepping on the pedal, the cleats attach to the pedals and there is a noticeable click which locks them in, and to disengage the pedal you twist the foot outwards. Some quick research turned up a website that advised that the pedals have a screw to adjust the firmness of the cleat when locked in, and that you could just loosen it to make it easier to get out of the pedal in a hurry. So upon closer inspection of the pedal I found a screw that was directionally marked with (+) and (-), so I turned them towards (-) until they stopped. I found that I could still lock the cleat well and it really was a lot easier to get out.



Feeling it was time to put it to the test, I headed up to **Great Brook Farm State Park** in Carlisle, MA for an afternoon of riding through this multi-purpose, 950 acre park. There are miles of single and double track trails through out the park, where the double track trails usually have a sand and gravel surface with some rocks, and where the single track trails are generally somewhat hazardous with tree stumps, fat tree roots, and sizeable rocks strewn across the track. If the rocks are intimidating, the mosquitos will keep you moving! I found that the pedals weren't bad at all, and I quickly adjusted to using them.



In a very short time I became comfortable with getting my feet off the pedals quickly, and was able to mount them on the pedals again while riding rough terrain without much trouble at all. The ride on this full suspension bike was remarkable since I hardly felt the rocky trails, and was a noticeable improvement over my former Mongoose hardtail mountain bike.

One aspect of the Trek which felt a little uncomfortable was the distance between the seat and the handlebars. They were far enough apart that I had to keep my arms fully extended at all times, so even though the 21.5 inch bike was right for my legs, I felt I had to extend a little too far forward. Going downhill on loose terrain is where the value of this configuration was obvious. Since I leaned forward so much it kept me low in the saddle, more stable, and able to put my weight forward on stiffened arms locked at full length. I think this is why the seat is so far back because it definitely helped keep me low and stable. The disk brakes are much more reactive than regular bicycle brakes. The wheel actually has 6 or 8 inch disk mounted to the side of the wheels and this is where pneumatic brakes mount. They stop on a dime, and when braking on downhills they produced a audible whine due to the friction. The owners manual says that they get very hot and you shouldn't touch them for 30 minutes after riding.

Well, here's **a short photo gallery of my day** in Carlisle's Great Brook Farm State Park...