

MY SPECIALIZED 2025 AETHOS PRO FRAME UP BUILD

I already know what you are here for. So, let's start with the why and why not, then get to the history behind the build.

1. Would I build again?

Absolutely. Only next time I would order all of my own parts. It is far less expensive for the same thing. A mechanic build will cost approximately \$300 for external cabling. More for internal, of course. A build can truly be cheaper than a stock purchase. If you are lucky enough to have a frame that works, its cheaper to upgrade than to buy an entirely new bike.

2. Did building really save you money over purchasing a comparable stock build?

Absolutely. Even with a few hiccups that cost me money, my build came out \$1,835 less than what a stock build was selling for when I started the project. Without the hiccups, the savings would have been closer to \$2,500.

3. Do I have any regrets?

Sure, I do. First, he mistakes that cost me time and money. That comes with trying something new but next time I know better. Other than that, I do regret not understanding what I was getting into with a 52/36 chain ring. I wanted to pick up where I left off, not have to build and adjust. Short vision is that I would have built with a 50/34. Long vision says that I probably would regret that and will learn to love the 52/36. We are here now, so time will tell.

WHAT DO I LIKE ABOUT THE AETHOS PRO?

1. THE WEIGHT

My previous bike was an endurance bike and weighed a whopping 21lbs. Who wouldn't like a sub 15lb road bike? My Aethos Pro build weighs in at 14.39lbs including my pedals of choice, SPD style. *Noteworthy Fact* - The Aethos is actually illegal to use in races. The Specialized Tarmac, their actual race bike, is based off the Aethos design.

2. THE RIDE

I do not feel the weight of a bike underneath me as I ride but yet still feel safe, secure and stable on flats, climbs and fast descents. The bike is amazingly responsive and controlled to be so light.

3. THE FIT

Specialized classifies the Aethos as a race bike but it is more like a race bike and an endurance bike had a baby. It is not an aggressive race bike but not as quite as upright as an endurance. It actually is a good middle ground for either type of rider. This is especially true because there are no proprietary parts so you can set up the cockpit in whatever way best suits your style.

WHAT DON'T I LIKE ABOUT THE AETHOS PRO?

1. STOCK CHAIN RING SIZE

Personal opinion here, I am not a fan of the 52/34 chain ring size. Coming from a 50/34, I did not expect the difference to be that noticeable. I was 100% wrong. There is a definite and immediate difference in the push required to move the 52/34 size ring. Can I move it? Yes, but currently at the cost of losing about 3mph on my comfortable long-distance pace. That is the difference between keeping up and getting dropped.

In simple terms, the bigger the chain ring the smother the stroke and the more ground you cover. So, logically, you are faster and climb better but there is work to be done to move that big ring. If you have the strength or are willing to do the work to get there, the 52/34 ring is the way to go. The question for me is whether I put in the work to grow into the 52/36 or swap out to the 50/34? The bike would still very much capable of outperforming many other brands on the road with a 50/34.

THE HISTORY

At the end of the 2024 cycling season, I found myself in the market for a new bike for 3 reasons: (1) larger size, (2) more gears and (3) component upgrade. After several months of research and even 2 hard decisions that fell through because of supply chain issues (bikes were ordered and in line to be shipped), by happenstance, I came across the Specialized Aethos. Neither the brand nor the bike was anywhere on my radar. First of all, I had a budget set that generally doesn't leave a lot of options in the Specialized house of bikes. Second, the Aethos is classified as a race bike and I am an endurance rider all the way. However, one ride in the parking lot and I was immediately intrigued. For the boxes I wanted to check, the Aethos beat out Trek, Cannondale, Canyon, BMC, Bianchi, and Scott.

As I had done with all of the other bikes I was considering, I began my research. Full disclosure, I wanted to find a reason to say no. After all, it's a race bike and it's out of budget. Although there was definitely something about this bike that said this is the one, surely, I could easily find a solid reason to say no to it besides its classification or price. Independent mixed reviews about its performance would be enough for me. Written or videos, the reviews were consistent. The bike gives the rider exactly what it says it was designed to do – go fast and climb. With no reason to say no and reason on top of reason to say yes, the Specialized Aethos Pro became the bike.

January 2025 still presenting with supply chain issues, my size 56 was not available in any color with no in-stock date information available. However, the Aethos frame was available immediately. With my deadline being no later than March 2025, I decided to purchase the frame and build the bike. In no way am I a bike expert. Heck, if I am honest, I can barely change a bike tire. This would be my first bike build but I figured with any stock bike there is always the swapping out of parts for one reason nor another which equates to time wasted as well as additional cost on an already pricey purchase. With a build, I would get to pick the exact parts the first time and the bike is built for me right from the start. In addition, in this particular case, the frame color is not available in a stock build making it sort of one of a kind.

I ordered the frame directly from a local Specialized bike shop. Without taking the time beforehand to research drivetrain systems, the shop quickly ordered a Shimano 105 Di2. With parts ordered, I started my research and decided that the 105 system would not be the best choice for me. I have plans for this bike to be a very long-term investment, if not my forever bike. In addition, the cost difference between 105 and Ultegra is minimal when you are already this deep into such an investment. I canceled the 105 and ordered Ultegra. Moving forward, I ordered the remaining parts, personally which saved me almost \$2,000. By the way, these were not off brand parts. I ordered the exact same OEM parts that the shop would have ordered. I have the same Specialized or Shimano warranties.

The bike was built to match the Aethos Pro stock specifications with the exception that I am running tubeless 700x30mm tires (vs tubed 700x28mm tires stock) and my crank arm length is 165mm (vs 172.5mm stock). Is it all that I had hoped? Is it everything that the reviews said it was? Did it live up to what Specialized claimed? Well, the answer is yes, yes and yes.

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