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BY KIRA SALAK

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TWO-TIMER v

Cyclocross teamsters aren't the only guys in need of a versatile machine. Whether you're a weekend rider, a daily commuter, or both, chances are you'll be mixing some trail with road. The **Scott Cyclocross Team** is faster than a mountain bike and burlier than a thoroughbred roadie. Key ingredients include a straight-blade carbon fork to take the edge off rattling, slightly knobby tires on 700c road wheels (for traction in the dirt), and caliper brakes for stopping in all conditions. True, this 20-pounder doesn't roll as quickly as a pure road racer—but it will always get you from A to B (\$1,930; scottusa.com).

**PRIZED POSSESSION** ^

An all-carbon dragster that even a newbie could pilot, the **Specialized S-Works Tarmac SL2** definitely isn't your first road bike and probably isn't your second—but if you crave speed and comfort, it is unequivocally your dream machine. Engineering sets this 14-pound rig apart from other featherweights: Specialized has stiffened the frame laterally to resist side-to-side forces and increased what bike geeks call "vertical compliancy" (up-and-down flexibility). Meaning? You can climb hills like an express elevator, then bomb down bumps without losing a filling. A Tour de France trophy you'll want to ride all day (\$8,500; specialized.com).

BEST BUY >

You're ready for a serious road bike but not a second mortgage. Consider the **Schwinn Peloton**. Its all-carbon frame is nearly identical to Schwinn's \$4,300 race model, the Peloton LTD, and it delivers snappy performance without finicky brittleness. Expect consistent steering as you swoop into fast, high-angle turns. The trade-off: Despite Shimano 105 shifters, most components are uninspired. We suggest dropping a few hundred extra greenbacks on stiffer wheels (\$1,700; schwinnbike.com).





SECOND SKIN >

Its retro appeal is nice, but the soft, merino-wool embrace of the **Vintage Velos Gray Tri-Colore** will win you over. The jersey fits seamlessly, with elastic at the sleeve edges and an aerodynamic, body-hugging silhouette. Three rear pockets stash small essentials, from pump to energy bar (\$99; vintagevelos.com).

PEDAL POWER >

With the best road shoes running around \$400, it's a relief to find a high-performing model that won't break the bank: the **Pearl Izumi Attack Road**. This two-strap, one-ratchet shoe features an ultra-stiff nylon sole—not quite as rigid or sexy as carbon, but most of us will never notice the difference (\$120; pearlizumi.com).



HEADGEAR ^

Was the name "Helium" already taken? At eight ounces, the **Specialized S-Works** is the world's lightest helmet; a reinforced Kevlar frame makes it safely sturdy. Padding is spare, but the piece's Pro Fit 360 suspension ensures a snug fit (\$210; specialized.com).



VISUAL AID ^

The **Giro Havik** sunglasses might seem an odd (and spendy) departure for the California helmet maker, but they're the real deal, with lenses certified by renowned camera-glass manufacturer Carl Zeiss. Fit-wise, these shades work better with a helmet than any we've tried (\$139; giro.com).

WEATHER GUARD v

Perhaps you've heard of **Gore**? Makes this waterproof-breathable fabric called "Gore-Tex." In addition to supplying myriad outdoor companies, Gore offers its own bike apparel. The lightweight **Alp-X** jacket has sleeves long enough to reach for the bars (plus, they zip off to make a vest) and an extended drop tail to protect you from drafts. Needless to say, it's made of Gore-Tex (\$139; gorebikewear.com).



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THE HOT SPOT >> Hello, Athens (Ohio). Country roads wind through the Hocking Hills region, and 20-plus miles of trail lead straight from town (athensbicycleclub.org).