



[WickWerks 'cross rings are designed for smooth shifting](#)

- By Michael Robson

These brilliantly designed rings might be one of the best innovations in shifting in years

Reviewed: WickWerks cyclocross chainrings

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- Published Dec. 24, 2013



Every ramp on WickWerks chainrings is designed to lift the chain onto specifically designed teeth, which leads to ultra-smooth front shifting. Photo: VeloNews.com

I have always run double chainrings for cyclocross — I don't really know why. I tried a single ring setup at the beginning of the season once. It was lighter, cleaner, and simpler, but I just didn't bond with the concept.

The reality in 'cross is that most racing is done on the big ring with short and rare forays to the granny ring to navigate something steep, slow, or technical. In the past, front shifting, at least for me, was risky business. It was less reliable and more likely to have issues. Even on a perfectly tuned bike, there is a risk of throwing the chain and the penalty for failure is high. In pre-ride, I always identify the places where I will need a front shift and practice that section not only to get the technical nailed but also to perfect the shifts so they are most likely to succeed. It looks like I might be able to scratch that task off the list.

WickWerks rings represent not so much an “aha” moment but a resounding, “Duh, why did nobody think of this before?” Upon first inspection, the outer ring is obviously very different and clearly designed to move some serious chain. There are at least eight shifting ramp sections, depending on the type of rings (there are 11 ramps on the 44t/34t), as opposed to just four on a standard ramped and pinned ring. The ramps are broad and aggressive and specifically designed for each combination of rings to support and transport the chain up to the larger ring.

Even the teeth on the big ring have been called in for attention. Every tooth is sized and specifically machined to guide the chain off the ramp and flow it seamlessly to the upper chain track without stressing the chain or over-shifting to the outside.

What this all adds up to is front shifting that feels almost like rear shifting. Hit the left shifter and there's no scratching, scraping or crunching. Instead, the chain picks up a ramp almost instantly and lifts onto the big ring. This took me by surprise — initially when I would shift, I thought something had gone wrong because I heard none of the trademark front shift sounds. But when I looked down I could see that the chain was already on the big ring. WickWerks has also addressed the issue of wear. Using a process of “true hard” anodizing instead of standard color anodizing helps the ring look and perform as new for longer. I spent this whole cyclocross season on one set and they look like new. There aren't even any places where the anodizing has worn off.

This is the part of technology that I love, when someone makes a component that is brilliantly designed, works as intended, and represents a significant improvement over existing products. WickWerks rings might be one of the best innovations gear shifting has seen in a long time.

WickWerks rings are made entirely in the U.S. and come in matched pairs that will set you back anywhere from \$130 to \$160 for CX rings, depending on the cranks you're running.

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