

Wahoo Elemnt Bolt GPS cycling computer

★★★★★ by [Mat Brett](#) May 9 2017

Verdict: Compact, clever and simple-to-use GPS bike computer with impressive battery life and aero credentials

Weight: 87g

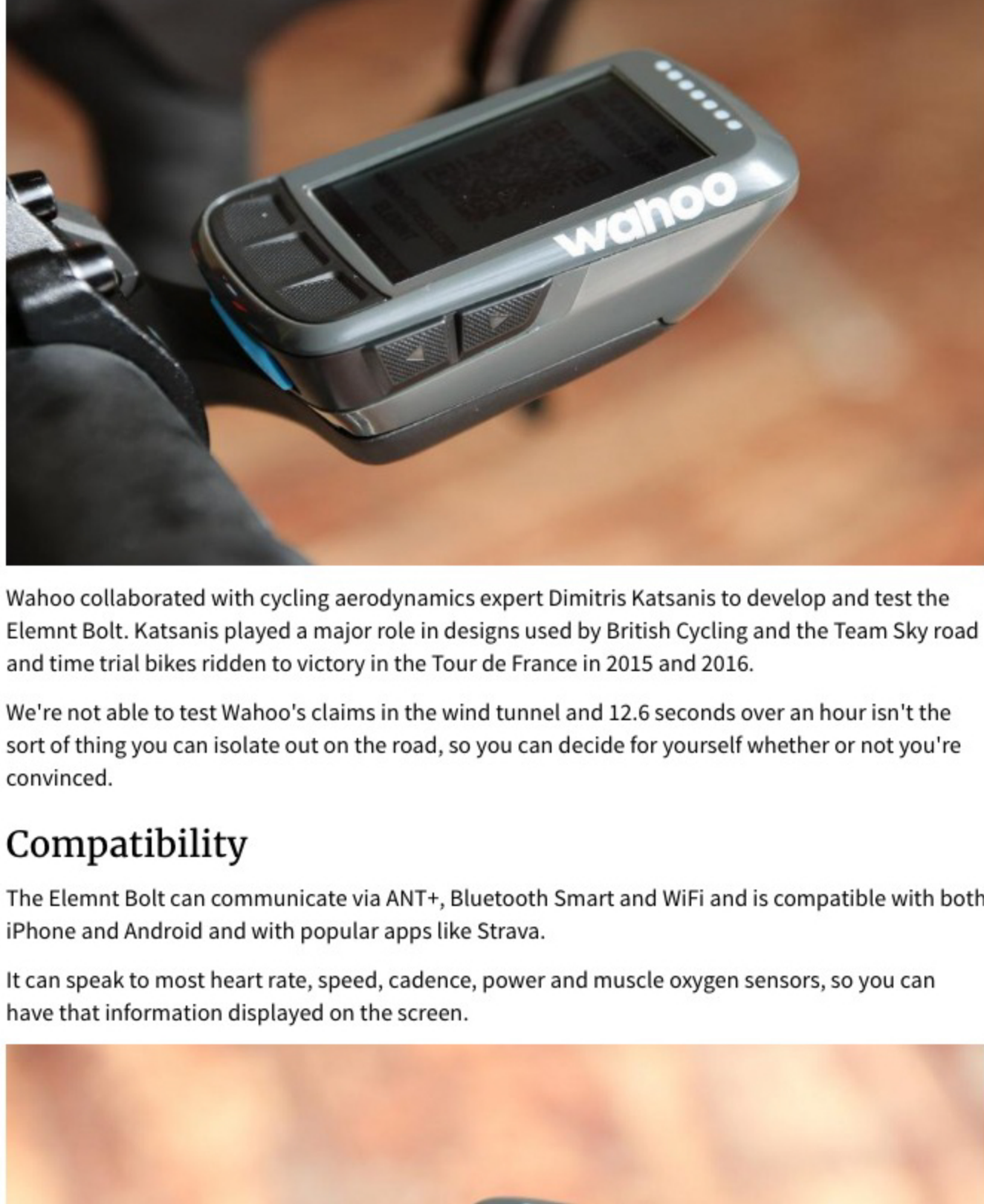


The Wahoo Elemnt Bolt is a compact and aero GPS bike computer that offers a vast amount of useable information, navigational capability and an excellent battery life at a reasonable price.

Aerodynamics

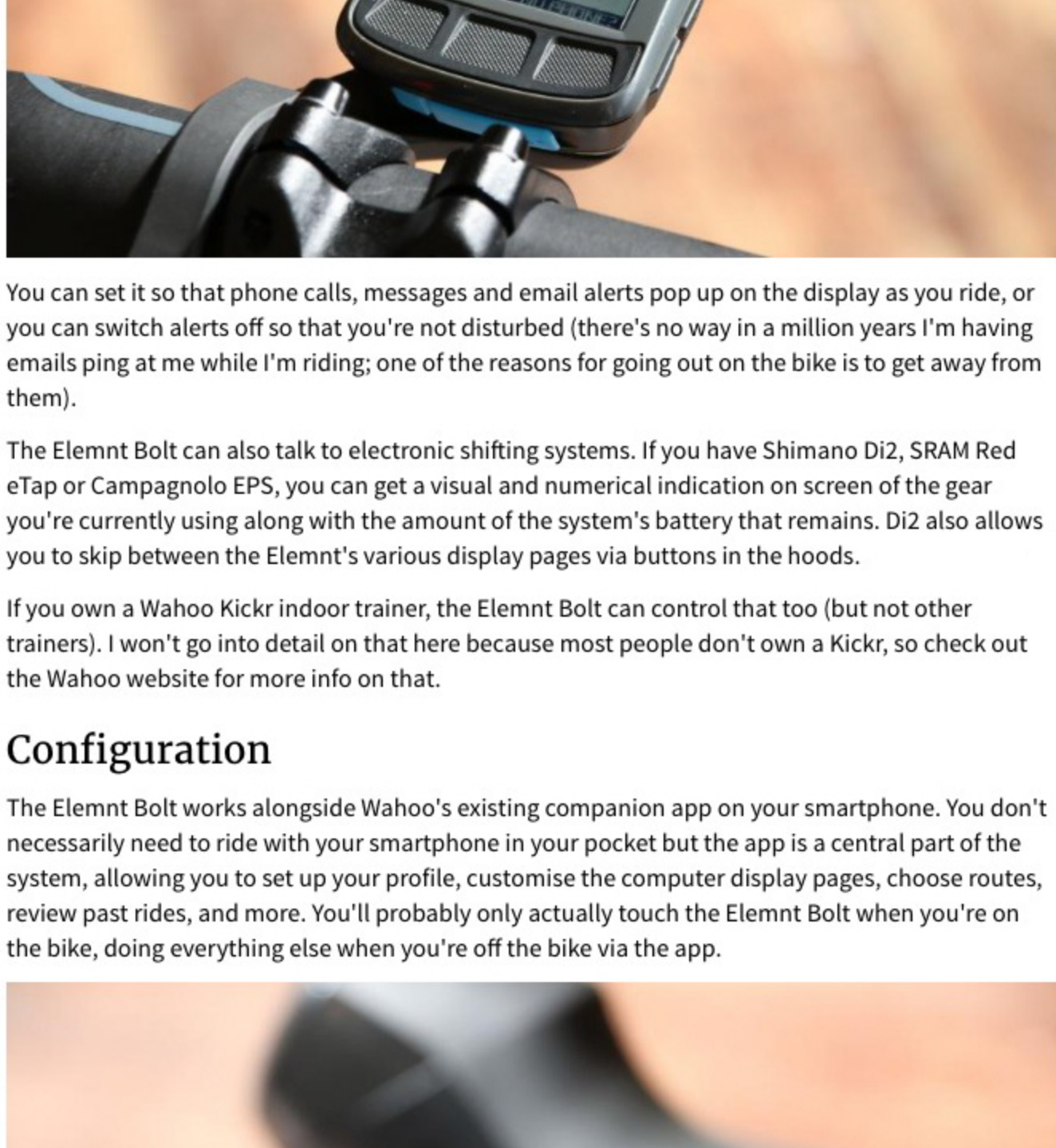
To begin with, though, Wahoo says that the Elemnt Bolt is the first GPS cycling computer and mount developed as an integrated system to reduce drag.

The head unit itself fits almost seamlessly onto a smooth-edged mount that sits directly in front of, and level with, your stem (a non-aero mount that you can fit to the top of your stem is included in the pack too).



Wahoo claims, 'When tested against leading competitors using computational fluid dynamics (CFD), the Elemnt Bolt system reduced air resistance by over 50 percent – equating to a 12.6 second time reduction over a 40km (25 mile) time trial course for a rider traveling at 21mph.'

Yes, before anyone points it out, a rider traveling at 21mph is going to cover 40km (25 miles) in the same time whatever bike computer is fitted. What Wahoo means is that the reduced air resistance will result in the rider actually going a little faster than 21mph with the Elemnt Bolt fitted for the same power output, or that they'll be able to hold 21mph at a slightly lower power.



Wahoo collaborated with cycling aerodynamics expert Dimitris Katsanis to develop and test the Elemnt Bolt. Katsanis played a major role in designs used by British Cycling and the Team Sky road and time trial bikes ridden to victory in the Tour de France in 2015 and 2016.

We're not able to test Wahoo's claims in the wind tunnel and 12.6 seconds over an hour isn't the sort of thing you can isolate out on the road, so you can decide for yourself whether or not you're convinced.

Compatibility

The Elemnt Bolt can communicate via ANT+, Bluetooth Smart and WiFi and is compatible with both iPhone and Android and with popular apps like Strava.

It can speak to most heart rate, speed, cadence, power and muscle oxygen sensors, so you can have that information displayed on the screen.

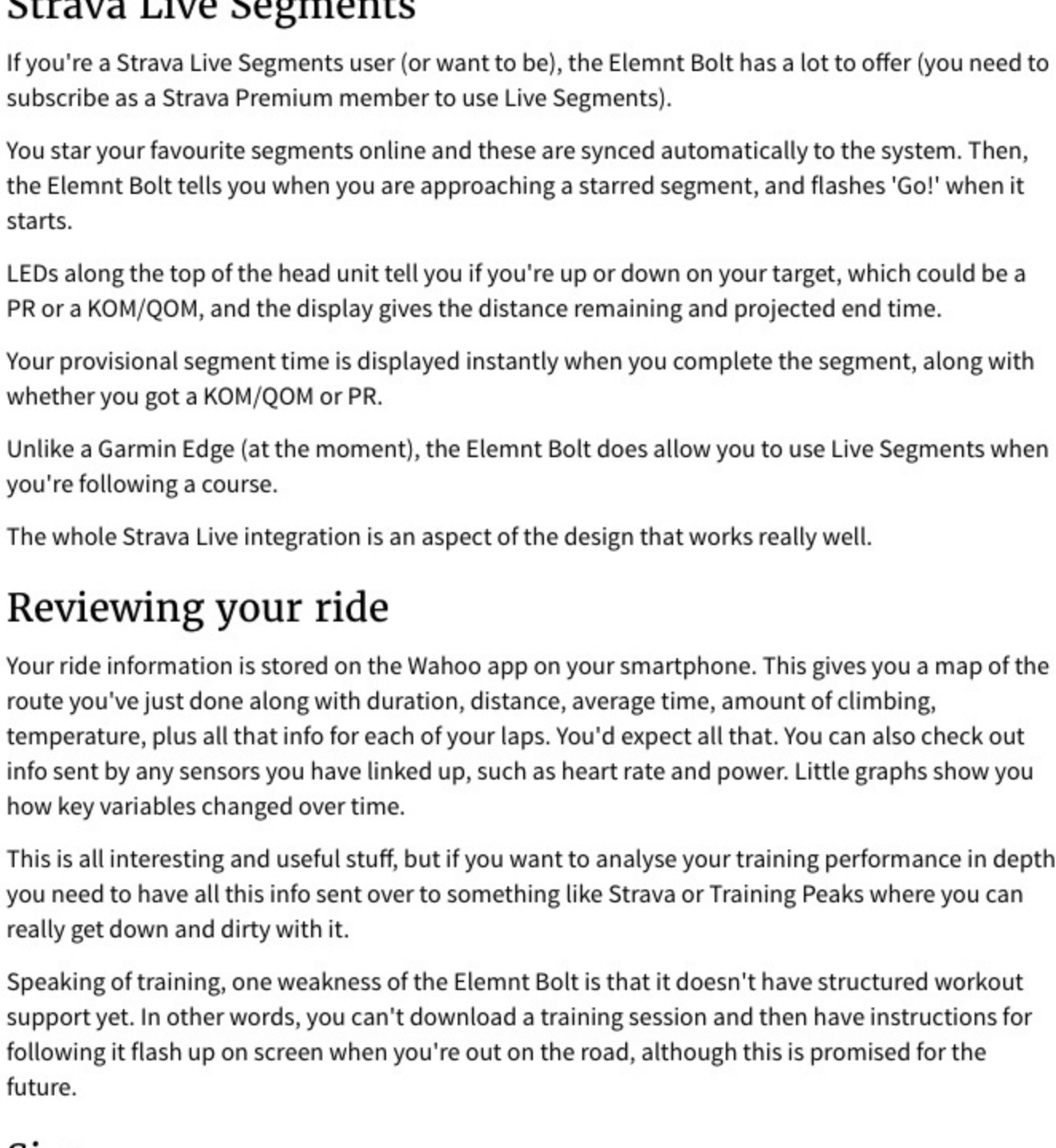


The Elemnt Bolt can also talk to electronic shifting systems. If you have Shimano Di2, SRAM Red eTap or Campagnolo EPS, you can get a visual and numerical indication on screen of the gear you're currently using along with the amount of the system's battery that remains. Di2 also allows you to skip between the Elemnt's various display pages via buttons in the hoods.

If you own a Wahoo Kickr indoor trainer, the Elemnt Bolt can control that too (but not other trainers). I won't go into detail on that here because most people don't own a Kickr, so check out the Wahoo website for more info on that.

Configuration

The Elemnt Bolt works alongside Wahoo's existing companion app on your smartphone. You don't necessarily need to ride with your smartphone in your pocket but the app is a central part of the system, allowing you to set up your profile, customise the computer display pages, choose routes, review past rides, and more. You'll probably only actually touch the Elemnt Bolt when you're on the bike, doing everything else when you're off the bike via the app.



You can set it so that phone calls, messages and email alerts pop up on the display as you ride, or you can switch alerts off so that you're not disturbed (there's no way in a million years I'm having emails ping at me while I'm riding; one of the reasons for going out on the bike is to get away from them).

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Navigation

The Elemnt Bolt comes with maps for loads of countries already loaded. I can't see myself ever going for a ride on Clipperton Island, but there's a map for it should the opportunity ever arise. You never know. If you want to add maps for Africa, Asia or even Antarctica, you can just go and download them.

The Elemnt Bolt's screen measures 55.9mm diagonally (roughly 45mm x 33mm) and its black and white maps aren't the clearest ever, especially when roads are densely woven, but they're certainly useable.

You can automatically sync routes you have put together on third party sites like Ride with GPS and Komoot via WiFi or Bluetooth Smart (you need a USB cable to do this with a Garmin Edge computer), and you'll get instructions telling you when you need to turn and distance remaining, or a map and the distance until your next turn.

Strava Routes can be imported too, although you won't get turn-by-turn instructions. You will, though, get a thick line on the map to show your route, and flashing LEDs to alert you if you go off course.

When turn-by-turn instructions are possible, the Elemnt Bolt usually gives you plenty of warning about when you need to make a change, but I found that occasionally it would chuck something at me at the last second, seemingly just to keep me on my toes. It never let me down, though. The only real issue to bear in mind is that there's no ability to recalculate a route if you go off course or a particular road is closed. That's your route scuppered.

In that situation you can use the Take Me Anywhere feature on the Wahoo app (it has to be via the app rather than on the Elemnt Bolt unit itself) that allows you to input any destination on a Google map (a single destination rather than multiple destinations) and receive turn-by-turn navigation to get you there.

If you're not using turn-by-turn instructions and you get lost, you can't scroll around the map on the Elemnt Bolt to help you get back to more familiar territory (you can just zoom out) but there is a 'Back to Start' function that'll get you home.

A live tracking feature allows you to send a link (via text message, email, Twitter, Facebook, Skype and so on) whereby others can see your current location on a map. That's all they can see, though. They don't get the route you've ridden, your speed or data from any sensors that you might have connected. Wahoo really needs to do more with this feature because it's a bit limited, to say the least. Still, dot watching might provide some reassurance to your family when you're out on a ride, I guess.

Strava Live Segments

If you're a Strava Live Segments user (or want to be), the Elemnt Bolt has a lot to offer (you need to subscribe as a Strava Premium member to use Live Segments).

You star your favourite segments online and these are synced automatically to the system. Then, the Elemnt Bolt tells you when you are approaching a starred segment, and flashes 'Go!' when it starts.

LEDs along the top of the head unit tell you if you're up or down on your target, which could be a PR or a KOM/QOM, and the display gives the distance remaining and projected end time.

Your provisional segment time is displayed instantly when you complete the segment, along with whether you got a KOM/QOM or PR.

Unlike a Garmin Edge (at the moment), the Elemnt Bolt does allow you to use Live Segments when you're following a course.

The whole Strava Live integration is an aspect of the design that works really well.

Reviewing your ride

Your ride information is stored on the Wahoo app on your smartphone. This gives you a map of the route you've just done along with duration, distance, average time, amount of climbing, temperature, plus all that info for each of your laps. You'd expect all that. You can also check out info sent by any sensors you have linked up, such as heart rate and power. Little graphs show you how key variables changed over time.

This is all interesting and useful stuff, but if you want to analyse your training performance in depth you need to have all this info sent over to something like Strava or Training Peaks where you can really get down and dirty with it.

Speaking of training, one weakness of the Elemnt Bolt is that it doesn't have structured workout support yet. In other words, you can't download a training session and then have instructions for following it flash up on screen when you're out on the road, although this is promised for the future.

Size

According to our vernier callipers, the Elemnt Bolt measures 75mm x 47.5mm x 19mm. It has a screen size (as usual, measured diagonally) of 55.9mm. We weighed ours at 61g (Wahoo claims 60g – so near enough!).

This makes it smaller than the existing Elemnt which has a screen size of 68.6mm. Of the Garmin Edge bike computers, it's most similar in size to the 520 and 820 which each measure 73mm x 49mm x 21mm. Our Garmin Edge 820 weighed 64g.

Battery life

Wahoo claims a battery life of 15hrs and that reflects my experience with power and heart rate sensors linked up.

Overall

The Elemnt Bolt is a highly capable bike computer that, along with Wahoo's companion app, is simple to set up and use. I didn't find the mapping the clearest ever, but you get good turn-by-turn navigation and an extensive battery life at a reasonable price. Oh, and if Wahoo's claims are to be believed, the design is more aerodynamically efficient than anything else out there.

Verdict

Compact, clever and simple-to-use GPS bike computer with impressive battery life and aero credentials

road.cc test report

Make and model: Wahoo Elemnt Bolt GPS bike computer

Size tested: One

Tell us what the product is for, and who it's aimed at. What do the manufacturers say about it? How does that compare to your own feelings about it?

Wahoo says: Created in collaboration with the best minds in cycling aerodynamics, ELEMNT BOLT offers the power and simplicity that originated with ELEMNT in a race worthy design proven to shave seconds off finish times.

ELEMNT Bolt is the first, fully aerodynamic GPS bike computer! It's patent pending design creates an integrated system of computer and mount which results in a CFD (Computational Fluid Design) tested, highly aerodynamic system built to be on the front of your bicycle. Equipped with Bluetooth Smart and ANT+ dual-band technology, ELEMNT BOLT pairs seamlessly with all of your cycling sensors. It works with our free ELEMNT companion app which allows you to set up your data fields, customise profiles, track performance, and share ride data effortlessly - no more confusing menus! Plus, programmable LED QuickLook Indicators provide a quick way to see if you're on pace with important performance metrics like speed, heart rate, and power. Designed for performance and engineered for simplicity - the ELEMNT BOLT GPS Bike Computer helps make every second count.

ELEMNT Integration Updates:

* Strava Live Segments! Upload your favorite Strava segments to ELEMNT BOLT via WiFi, get alerted when they are coming up on your route, track your progress against your PR, goal, or the KOM, and get a final push to be your best!

* Best Bike Split! Upload your race course and race plan to ELEMNT BOLT via WiFi to get your target power and speed, distance to next cue, and more. Your best bike split is just one race away with this integration!

* ELEMNT is the most fully integrated bike computer with the most popular electronic shifting systems including Shimano Di2, SRAM eTAP, FSA WE, and Campagnolo EPS.

Tell us some more about the technical aspects of the product?

Wahoo gives shed-loads of tech info. It's probably best that you look at <http://uk.wahoorfitness.com/devices/bike-computers/gps-elemnt-bolt@>

In short, you get these features:

- * Companion App Set Up
- * Quicklook LED Indicators
- * Perfect View Zoom
- * Call & Text Notifications
- * Email Notifications
- * Take Me Anywhere Navigation
- * Turn By Turn
- * Back to Start
- * Live Tracking
- * Pre-Loaded Global Maps
- * Auto-Syncing to 3rd Parties
- * Strava Live Segments
- * Best Bike Split Race Plans
- * KICKR Control

Rate the product for quality of construction:

8/10

It looks a bit plasticky... but, then, it is plastic, so that's probably not surprising!

Rate the product for performance:

9/10

It's a high-tech piece of equipment but one of the beauties is that it's pretty easy to get the hang of the user interface via the Wahoo app.

Rate the product for durability:

7/10

You wouldn't want to go dropping it too often – there are no rubber edges, it's just plastic all the way around.

The Elemnt Bolt has an IPX7 rating (it can withstand immersion in water up to 1 metre for up to 30 minutes).

Rate the product for weight (if applicable)

9/10

Rate the product for value:

9/10

A Garmin Edge 520 is priced £279.99 and the 820 is £369.99. Considering what's on offer here, you get a lot of performance for your money.

Tell us how the product performed overall when used for its designed purpose

This is a really good product, I'm a fan. It was simple to pick up the Elemnt Bolt and get the hang of it in no time. I've been using Garmin Edge computers since they were first launched but this might tempt me away.

Tell us what you particularly liked about the product

It's the usability of the system that I like most. It's a complex device that's easy to use via the app.

Tell us what you particularly disliked about the product

I didn't find the black and white mapping particularly clear. It's certainly easier to pick out details on a colour screen when you glance down while on the move.

Did you enjoy using the product? Yes

Would you consider buying the product? Yes

Would you recommend the product to a friend? Yes

Use this box to explain your score

This is an exceptionally good computer, especially considering the price. It's a definite 8 or 9 with the price swinging it upwards.

Overall rating: 9/10

About the tester

Age: 43 Height: 190cm Weight: 75kg

I usually ride: My best bike is:

I've been riding for: Over 20 years I ride: Most days I would class myself as: Expert

I regularly do the following types of riding: commuting, club rides, sportives, general fitness riding