

2008 HAWAII IRONMAN PREVIEW

GEAR >> TRAIL RACE SCENE >> LIFESTYLE

Triathlete

NO.295 | NOVEMBER 2008

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By Brad Culp

Inviscid Design Speedfill \$100

If the Bontrager Speed Bottle and Profile Design Aero Drink had offspring, this is what it would look like. The new Speedfill is designed to combine the aerodynamics of a narrow downtube-mounted bottle with the convenience of a hands-free refillable hydration system.

The bottle mounts securely on any downtube and the straw runs up between your aerobars. The straw is covered with a wire-guided "sleeve," which means it will stay in place.

The bottle holds 40 ounces of fluid, so with a few refills, you can make it through any distance—even Ironman—without a spare bottle. The refillable cap is made with two splash guards and can be filled even while you're in the aerobars.

OK, so there's a lot going on with this bottle, but does it really all work? Hell, yes. I gave it a go at Ironman Vineman 70.3 and avoided all but one congested aid station. I also

enjoyed the bite valve at the end of the straw, which made sure I was only slurping water—not GI stress-inducing gulps of air. The only splash back I experienced was while bombing over some elevated railroad tracks at high speeds.

I'd recommend it for everyone except for those who ride really, really tiny bikes—like 47 cm tiny. The bottle occupies quite a bit of a bike's front triangle, and on a pint-sized frame this could cause some handling issues in crosswinds.

That said, the Speedfill is more aerodynamic

(especially against a headwind) than a conventional bottle, as demonstrated at the San Diego Low Speed Wind Tunnel. InviscidDesign.com

Toyota Highlander Hybrid \$34,200-\$40,450

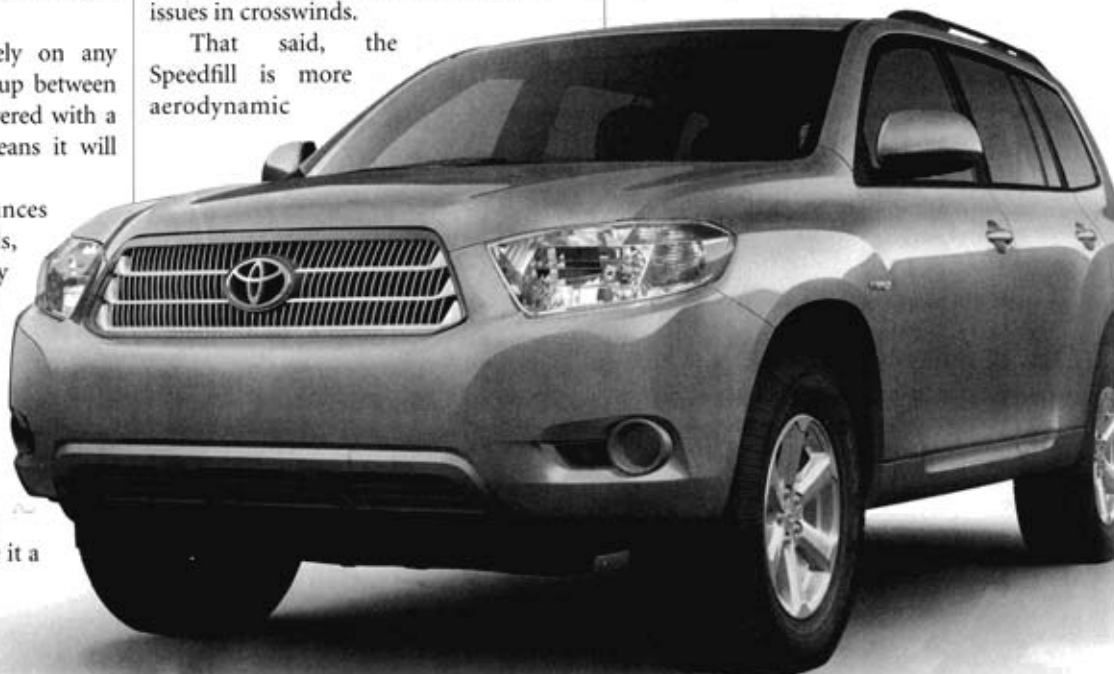
Before I could try out the Speedfill at Vineman, I had to get two people, two bikes and a ton of gear from San Diego to Santa Rosa, Calif., (550 miles). I decided to help the environment (and my wallet) by rolling up to NorCal in the 27 mpg Toyota Highlander Hybrid.

While it doesn't get quite the mileage as a tinier hybrid (like the Prius) does, 27 mpg isn't bad for a full-size SUV with a third-row seat. I made it through the first eight coffee stops before filling up the gas tank.

The Highlander Hybrid operates on a 270-horsepower V6 engine coupled with a 123 kilowatt electric battery.

The engine relies almost entirely on gasoline while accelerating, which is particularly beneficial when you're merging onto the seemingly speed-limitless I-5 freeway. Once you level off the battery kicks in and provides a smooth, quiet ride.

If you're looking for a little more bling in your hybrid, the limited model offers plenty of bells and whistles. For a little more coin, Toyota will pimp your ride with navigation, rear entertainment and even Bluetooth compatibility through the sound system. Toyota.com ▲



Images Courtesy the manufacturers