

One hundred and ten not out

This year Wilier celebrates 110 years in the business, and what better way to mark the occasion than by redesigning its flagship aero bike?

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here is this great photo of Fabian Cancellara on the start line at the Giro d'Italia, looking under the handlebars of Pippo

Pozzato's bike,' says Claudio Salomoni, Wilier's international sales manager.

'I love this picture, because Cancellara is so puzzled with the bike. He cannot work out where the Di2 box is hidden!'

The bike in question was this, the Wilier Cento 10 Air – or *chen-toe deet-chaè* as the Italians say. It's the sixth addition to the burgeoning Cento family, which until this summer was led by the Cento 1 Air (see *Cyclist* issue 21). Like the 1 Air, the Cento 10 takes its design cues from angular NACA and Kamm tube profiling and low-slung seatstays, but the difference is about more than just a lick of paint and some new bars.

'The fork and stays have been widened to make the bike faster,' says Salomoni. 'There are two ways you can look at aerodynamics on a bike: the track way, where everything is super-skinny and very close together, with the wheels nearly touching the frame; and the road bike, where you need clearances for wider tyres and brakes.'

'On a track bike the gaps between the wheel and frame are so small almost no air can get through, which is good as this air would otherwise create areas of high pressure, which causes drag. Go a bit wider, like on a normal road bike, and the air can go anywhere, so you get more pressure and more drag. But go wider still and you start to reduce the pressure again, so it becomes more aero. So this is what we tried to do with the Cento 10. It's a simple concept we learn in school!'

As such, the rear seatstays flare proud of the seat tube to create a wide gap between the wheel and the stays. Up front the gap between the legs of the integrated fork is also appreciably wider than most, so to accommodate these

characteristics Wilier has employed direct-mount brakes fore and aft.

Wilier claims this wide stance makes the Cento 10 Air 8% faster than the 1 Air. The new Alabarda handlebars also play a part, though Salomoni says Wilier doesn't yet have the precise numbers to indicate by how much.

Frank engineering

Like a slew of other brands, Wilier has gone down the one-piece stem-bar combo, cast in the in-vogue T shape. Viewed from the front, the Alabarda's silhouette is wind-cheatingly thin, but from above it's a mighty-looking piece that looks more like a jet wing than a bike handlebar.

A combination of proprietary spacers and a neat internal clamp means the ensemble sits gratifyingly flush which,

Wilier Cento 10 Air £4,599, atb-sales.co.uk

given its size, lends itself nicely to housing the Di2 internals.

It's a slick piece of engineering made all the more aesthetically pleasing by colour-matched graphics – each of the Cento's four colourways has its own complementary bar. For those wishing to push the palette still further, Wilier will also be offering custom paint through its *Infinitemente* programme.

The Cento 10 is essentially bigger than its forebear, yet it's lighter – a claimed 990g for a medium frameset compared to 1,120g for the 1 Air. That's as you might expect for a next-gen road bike – after all, when was the last time a manufacturer claimed its bike was *heavier* than before? However, Salomoni is refreshingly blunt about how such feats were achieved.

'I tell you China is like the Silicon Valley of carbon, in that anything new

'There's a great picture of Fabian Cancellara at the start line Giro looking puzzled as he cannot work out where the Di2 box is hidden!'

comes from there. If you can show me an Italian factory that can make frames like they can in China, I want to know!

'We achieve this new weight working with our factory to refine the lay-ups: how much carbon to use, where to overlap this piece, the orientation of the strands in that piece, and so on.'

Carbon copy

'It has very little to do with the carbon fibre itself,' Salomoni says. 'Anyone who says they have access to special carbon is talking nonsense. We all have access to the same stuff, it is the lay-up where we save the weight, and where

it gets incredibly complex to save even just a few grams.'

In this day and age one might question the absence of disc brakes on a bike such as the 10 Air. Salomoni, though, is yet to be convinced. 'Disc brakes are not aero. Maybe with covers, yes, but the UCI does not allow this yet.'

For now we're happy with the Cento 10 as is, direct-mount brakes and all. Our first ride in the Dolomites highlighted an incredibly adept road bike with the bonus of aero qualities. For more on our initial impressions of the Cento 10 Air, go to cyclist.co.uk/cento10, and look out for a full test in an upcoming issue. 🚴

