

We review the Never Summer Eclipse

Contributed by The Longboard Consortium
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Out of dormancy, our crew of skateboard reviewers, wreckers and tuners is back with a review of the Never Summer pintail.

A Pintail for All Seasons

The Longboard Consortium has spent nearly a year of hard riding on the "Never Summer Eclipse, and we're here to tell you that the snowboard wizards are onto something with their flagship board. If you don't know, Never Summer started production of snowboards in 1983 and have established themselves on the high-end of the market with a reputation for extremely well-built, technically advanced boards. Well, last year, the same two guys that started the company decided to apply their skills and designs to longboards. When the smoke cleared, they had produced the Eclipse, an eight-layer, wood and composite deck with P-tex nose and tail inserts.

We took the Eclipse across the country, from the Pacific waterfront, to the hills of Colorado, the streets of New York City and the roads of Los Angeles. One board, but many sessions, styles and skaters. We found the Eclipse to be a reliable, lively performer and a solid entry into the longboard market for a buncha summer-hatin' snowboarders.

First Impressions. When you first see the Eclipse, a few things stand right out. First, it's mildly concave and has P-tex plastic tips on the nose and tail. This is the same stuff on the rails of snowboards and we're hearing the "08 versions of the Eclipse use a perimeter of the white P-Tex all the way around the deck. It's there to absorb impacts of the sort that occurs when one member of the Consortium invariably launches test boards into the solid walls of parking garages. The stuff holds up, and it's got a mildly translucent look to it that stands out. A keen eye will detect what appears to be a pair of carbon fiber plies in the wooden core. In fact, although they've got carbon fiber stays in the deck, what you're seeing is the rubberized plies used for dampening. More on those later.

The P-Tex impact barriers hold up to hard hits.

The graphic is impressive and catches the eye with depth of the color and a strikingly glossy nature. The finish is clean and there are no bubbles or seam separation along the edge of the rails. With the sublimated graphic, the image on the board's underbelly pops with color depth and durability that most decks lack. The image is an Asian-inspired graphic reminiscent of Japanese wood block prints and displays a mountain and tsunami wave with an off-center NS logo; it seemed to impress quite a few of the people that saw it.

Handmade in Colorado.

Statistics ‐ Never Summer Eclipse

Length 47”
 Wheel Base 35”
 Nose 3 ½”
 Tail 9”
 Width 9 ¾”
 Static Flex 10/16” (165lb)

Trucks
 Randal 180 ‐ Stock Bushings Rev Bushing Cup
 1/8th Soft Riser

Wheels
 78a
 Side Set 3 Spoke
 Core Depth 1 ½”
 Core Width 1 ½”
 Width 2 13/16”
 Contact Patch 1 14/16”
 Urethane Depth: ½”

Also Tested With:
 Abec11 Gumballs, 69mm Manx
 Biltin7s, Oust Moc 5’s, Swiss Ceramic Labyrinth
 Randal 150s, Paris 150s (stock and w Abec 11 bushings)

Retail: 199.00
 Purchase: your local shop

Dig that camo-insert. Not on every deck.

Inside the guts of the thing. The entire Never Summer skateboard lineup shares a great deal of design heritage from snowboards. Not only is this evident is looking at the deck from a side on glance but also in the nice little informational tag that comes with the deck. The materials in the deck top to bottom are; Grip tape, Pretensioned Fiberglass, Hardrock Maple, Carbon Strips, Rubber Dampening on the truck mounts, Wood Core, Hard Rock Maple, Fiberglass, And Co Ex with the Sublimated Graphic with nose and tail P-Tex Bumpers. Yeah, say that ten times fast! Okay, so it’s made out of some pretty high-tech stuff, but when it gets down to it. we really don’t care about newfangled construction now do we? We care how it rides and holds up under the feet of our testers, so let’s get down to it.

A look inside.

Skating the Eclipse. Upon riding the board, our test skaters were surprised by the amount of flex compared to the feel of the deck in hand. The flex was reliable down the spine and the response to compression in return, while quick, was not too forceful as to buck the riders during carving or pumping. Within a short number of runs, the skaters were comfortable enough on the deck to accomplish very tight carves with little concern, even though the terrain was a hazardous mix of snow, wet, salt and sand. The compression allowed for reliable carves and deliberate pumping of the deck.

The more advance riding involved pendulum slides, minor cornering and drifts at speed. The reliability not an issue as the deck performed as should with little lead in time to maintain an understanding of the amount of compression rebound. Riders were laying drifts on either side, using the rebound of the deck between front side and backside carves.

Mild concave, loved by many, hated by few.

When cornering at higher speeds, the deck performed well with the minimal concave locking in adequately. As noted below, however, we think that either more concave or a different rail-edge contour is merited. The Eclipse demonstrates a suitable level of stability for tight cornering at speed without bucking or any jarring response to the decks compression.

The board was also tested as a slide deck with 99a wheels. In this configuration, the board was quite agile for its size and the rails were ample for the basic maneuvering of deck down sliding. Even with the basic exertion of pressure on the deck during slides the board's return was considered smooth enough to allow edge transitions without any undue force on the rider.

All riders enjoyed the extremely forward placement of the front truck. This lends a very precise feeling to the Eclipse. Carves were surgical and drifting slides were executed and returned with a simple swing of the arm. This truck placement is not unheard of, but is uncommon and will set the Eclipse apart from many other boards. In terms of the rear truck placement options, it got down to riders' weight: our heavier skaters demanded the shorter wheelbase option for a stiffer, more controlled ride. Our lighter skaters liked them both.

One thing every skater noticed was the dampening the deck provides on rough surfaces. Manholes, gravel, salt and broken glass was all consumed by what we presume is the rubber dampening layer. We ran 1/8th" shock pads, which we're very used to, and noticed the dampened effect coming from the deck. An understanding of the impressiveness of this is made only that more significant by the minimal urethane and large hubs of the test NS wheel running on the deck. It was supposed that the wheels would enhance the chatter of the deck as most large hub wheels tend to do, especially during sliding and traversing wretched terrain. In the case of this setup that was not the result. Even when the rider was visually confirming that the decks path was through gravel the response of the deck was silken smooth.

The deck durability was tested a number of times. Our most extravagant "test" was a Wilson-inspired flight the board took off a ramped curb. The skater lost it, launched the board over the curb and the trajectory took the deck into a rocky hillside. The rider was slightly shaken and the deck less so. The deck in this instance suffered no damage. The deck also tail tapped a curb, a slight separation of the top and bottom lams occurred with some fraying but the bumpers prevented the more drastic damage that is common with composite decks and collisions at that speed.

An Eclipse with 180's and some X-Bolts.

Building out the Eclipse. The crew at Never Summer build out the completes with 150mm trucks and their name-brand, sideset 72mm wheels. The wheels feature a large hub, .400" bearing spacing and a flexible outer lip. They're 78a and we found them to be fast garage wheels and solid carvers but a little rough on coarse asphalt. This isn't so noticeable on the Eclipse, but becomes apparent when the wheels are skated on a solid-core deck. In terms of trucks, our Eclipse came with Randals, but current versions include the excellent Paris trucks. They tune just like Randals do, and perform very well with this deck.

Okay for Summer, too. Wrapping it all up, the Eclipse is a stand-out first entry into the longboard market for Never Summer. With an excellent build quality, snappy ride and killer appearance, it's a great choice for a first longboard deck. When sold as a complete, the Eclipse comes dressed nicely, and will definitely earn your upgrades and tuning with new wheels and bushings as you wear things out and make it your own.