

Reviewed: the Bustin Strike

Contributed by Silverfish
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Here's the latest from the masters of unconventional concave and curvacious contours...

The Bustin Strike: Right on target, or does it strike out?

Even though the days of winter are finally upon us, ushering in shorter days, colder nights and generally less skating opportunities, some companies like Bustin show no sign of hibernation. Hot off the presses is the latest addition to the Bustin family, the Bustin "Strike". It's a "drop through deck" that comes with some distinctive looks and interesting features. Naturally, we at the Fish just had to check this one out.

With the Strike underfoot we skated all over Brooklyn, traversed into the heart of Manhattan and took on some serious technical runs in an all out effort to find its true north. We found the Strike to have the soul of a runner, making for an excellent "sprint" deck, great for getting around the urban jungle as quick and easy as possible.

Poaching School Playgrounds on the Strike.

About the Deck/First Impressions.

The Strike is an 8-ply Canadian maple deck that features a drop through design, new school mounting pattern, a 13 degree up-wedge at its front and a 7 degree up-wedge at its rear. The widest point on the standing platform of the Strike is located at the front third of the deck, and comes a bit shy of 9", the narrowest point being 4.5" at the very rear. The Strike has a small kick-tail as well. When we first took it out of the box, we were pleased at its light weight (around 3 pounds) and intrigued by its profile. It has a forward camber (think of camber as an arc) towards the front of the deck, and we wanted to see how this would affect the ride.

The Strike has that Bustin shape.

The Setup

We setup the Strike with 42 degree pink Randals (and the new black Randal bushings that come stock with the pink trucks) at the front and rear, as recommended by Bustin. Bustin claims that the Strike has a "zero wheelbite shape" so we decided to put it to the test by mounting 83mm flywheels. The final geometry of the deck was 55 degrees for the front and 49 degrees for the rear. The deck stood 3" off the ground at its lowest point with this setup. Head-on into the Strike.

Specs: Bustin Strike
Wood: 8 Ply Canadian Maple
Length: 38"
Width: 8.75"
Nose: 3.60"
Tail: 5.25" ...usable area around 4"
Wheel Base: 27"
Front Wedge: 13 Degrees
Rear Wedge: 7 Degrees

The Ride

When we first stepped on the deck, we were a bit perplexed as to what exactly the point of the front-third camber was. After riding the deck for a few days, it became apparent that as we pushed off the ground, the foot that remained on the board would "dig" into the cambered area, cause the board to flex and then rebound with an upward force that made it easier to take the next push. We found this to be a neat aspect of the deck. During cruising, the deck soaked up road vibrations fairly well. Locked into the front position. Color coordination optional.

As for the overall flex, our ~155 pound rider found the Strike to have a "small amount". It's stiffer than a Trylam and softer than a flex 1 Dervish, right about optimal for a pushing deck. We found that, while in most situations the Strike cleared 83mm flywheels without a hitch, we were in fact able to get the deck to bite, albeit barely, during very aggressive leans. With that being said, the wheels never came to a point of locking up throughout our testing.

83mm Flys clear the cutouts, but don't go any bigger.

The Strike has most of its concave (which is very mild) right around where the area of camber is. The concave then tapers off both in the rear and front sections as you move further away from the cambered area. On flat land we found the amount to be entirely satisfying, but we would like to see more concave applied throughout the rest of the deck. The addition of more concave to the front and rear sections would lock the feet in better during hard carving, cornering on mild downhill runs and sliding in general. Overall Concave

Concave near the front of the deck Apex of Concave Performance on Flats:

We initially had the Randal trucks setup fairly tight and noticed that the Strike had somewhat of a delayed response while turning. It also didn't turn as well as we expected it to when making quick leans into tight corners.

We switched out the Randal stock bushings with some Jimz Speed Bushings, and found the deck to have a quicker response, but on hard leans the turning of the deck still felt somewhat restricted. The Strike was then setup with 90a barrel Venoms all around. The Venoms definitely felt the best out of all the bushings we tried, but there was still the issue with the deck not turning like we expected it to.

Our skaters decided to flip both of the hangars, and were glad they did. They immediately reported that the deck seemed to become much more lively and the turning actually felt great. The only problem was that due to the flipped hangars, wheelbite became an issue with 83mm flywheels at this point (for the front trucks), since the "flipped Randal" sets the axle closer to the deck. Flipping just the rear hangar and leaving the front non-flipped seemed to provide a good bias toward front-end steering. Hills and Sliding:

We took the deck to the small hills of Prospect Park (possibly the only real hills in Brooklyn), which top out at 30mph, for some sliding and minor DH. At this point, the deck was setup with Jimz bushings somewhat tight. To be honest, before the first downhill run was taken on the deck, it didn't seem like Strike would be particularly comfortable considering its narrow, nearly concave free rear standing platform would not allow for an easy time adjusting the rear foot placement in tuck. We were definitely caught by surprise after taking a few runs, because the deck felt quite manageable in tuck, and pretty damn fun to bomb on. The Strike is widest at its front standing platform, and its rails were in fact easy to grab during toe-side cornering. The main problem as expected was that the narrow rear made it a bit sketch adjusting foot placement. We'd perhaps like to see a Strike with a slightly wider rear in the future to make foot placement a non issue.

The Strike also saw some intense action in NJ, triple hairpins on steep roads, where a lot of shutdown slides were attempted. We were able to pull off shutdowns, pends, and colemans on the strike just fine, but slid off a few times. During slides we like to place our feet at the very front and rear of the standing platform...on the Strike there was no concave/very little holding our feet in during these maneuvers. The deck took a few hard slams and came out perfectly fine, minor dents in the wood, no delaminating or anything of the sort. The kick-tail:

The Strike has a kick-tail located right next to the base plate. We let a couple people try it out to see what they thought, and the overall consensus was that the kick-tail was somewhat functional but needed to be wider for easier use. We agreed with this sentiment. When riding, it was at times a hit or miss on getting our rear foot placed on the kick-tail, at times we misjudged the location of the narrow kick-tail and stepped on the back wheels instead. Since the tail is right next to the base-plate it's also easier to have your foot slip off when attempting to use the tail. Graphics:

According to Bustin, each deck is hand printed in their studio. The Strikes underside contains four angled rows of the Bustin name along with a Bustin logo on the lower right side of the deck. It's a simple graphic design, but we felt it works out nicely. The colors of the underside text and background can be highly customized to your preferences on the Bustin site. On the very rear, near the base plate cutout, is another small Bustin logo with the signed name of the person who painted the deck, the deck number, and the date it was painted- a nice touch that adds a more personal aspect to the deck.

Crisp graphics.

...signed by the builder. Issues and Recommendations:

At the initial setup of the Strike, we attempted to use 1.5" mounting hardware for mounting the Randal trucks dropped through. The Strike had somewhat of a disagreement with the 1.5" screws so we switched out to 1" mounting hardware. The hangar continued to make quite a bit of undesired contact with our pink trucks, literally grinding against them and restricting the decks turning ability. We called Bustin and they acknowledged the issue, called it a "design compromise" and told us to let the nut wear into the hangar! They also said that perhaps in the future a 7-ply strike would be released that would address this issue. This isn't unique to Bustin, but metal-to-metal contact gives us the willies, so our rider alleviated the issue entirely by flipping the " hardware upside down, so that the nut would sit on top of the base plate. The mounting issue we experienced is uncommon, but does happen on other decks, even with some 50 degree setups on other trucks. Just pay attention to it with your setup. Hardware bite. ...even with no bolt extension. Voila! Muy Zer Gut!

Another thing we noticed is that both base plates did not sit flush with the deck, since the wedged sections were pressed in an arced fashion. This might create problems in the structural integrity of the deck after long term use. Then again, according to Bustin they have tested the deck for a year without any issues, and our aging "Complex" has the same situation with no ill effects so far. Never mind that. We want a flat mounting position. We recommend the mounting areas be flattened out in future releases. This comes from a constantly-curved mold.

On our top-mount Complex, a 1/8" soft riser solves this. Conclusion:

Overall, we feel that Bustin has a winner on their hands. With its light weight, low to the ground drop-through design, the Strike makes for an excellent pushing deck in any city environment. It's also quite a fun deck to take on moderate hills, making it a versatile board. With this being said, minor tweaks such as a slightly wider rear platform, improved kicktail, less wedging and more strategic concave would make the strike even more appealing.