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The Straight Dirt

Featuring: HydraForm Reservoir

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The short-and-sweet review: The Osprey Hydraform 3-liter (100 ounce) bladder is the best thing to happen to mountain bike hydration since the bottle cage. Next time you're in the market, do yourself a favor and buy. You won't be sorry.

One longtime backpack maker —Osprey—proved to be a contender when it entered the mountain bike market with a vengeance in 2009, bringing its now-35-years of experience to bear on making some seriously high-quality packs in its Raptor, Manta and Viper lines. But its biggest contribution to the category may well be this Hydraform reservoir, a bladder that boasts a rigid spine in front, a structural plastic plate in the back, and a no-fuss/no-muss wide screw-top opening.

The Hydraform bladder is worth talking about at such length because, well, no one else is doing it. First, the simple pre-ride act of topping off with water has never been easier. Just grab the Hydraform reservoir by its rigid handle and hold it under the lowest, most awkward of faucets (imagine kitchen sinks overflowing with dishes), and filling it up is a cinch. But the real beauty of the design is how it interacts with a pack—no more wiggling and gyrating to get a full reservoir to fit inside. Forget the SCUBA-tank effect of a filled-to-capacity traditional bladder. Rather than roll around on the rider's back, the Hydraform reservoir lays flat and stays put. What more could you ask for?

Yes, this is in fact a Nalgene product, and the company sells a version of this design with a rigid plastic handle, but Osprey product managers designed and patented the Hydraform aspect in-house. While Nalgene's quick-connect introduces an unnecessary failure point, its simple bite valve—with Osprey's own twist—worked consistently well. Osprey uses an effective little magnetic sternum strap clasp to take care of hose management. The accessory comes standard on Osprey packs, and can be retrofitted to most packs. They are available at shops and online online for just \$6 per 3-pack.

Bottom line: Osprey's Hydraform 100-ouncer is worth a look. They come included with any of Osprey's bike packs and also are available aftermarket at retailer.

