

Feisol Tournament Carbon Fiber Tripod CT-3442  
and  
Carbon Fiber Ball head CB-50DC



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# F E I S O L

FEISOL has been in the business of manufacturing camera support systems since 2002. They manufacture tripods, monopods and accessories. From the markings the products are manufactured in Taiwan

As stated on their web site:

*FEISOL's mission is to design and build the best and most user friendly camera support systems anywhere and to make them available at top prices, so customers can focus their full attention on getting those great shots.*

*FEISOL utilizes cutting-edge carbon-fiber technology in crafting their tripods, ball-heads, and accessories, delivering the optimal combination of great strength, low weight, and superb portability which no aluminum tripod can compete with.*

*FEISOL is committed to employing the latest emerging technologies and carbon fiber compounds, along with top design, to continue to meet and exceed their customers' expectations.*

## **Review of the Feisol Carbon Fiber Tournament Tripod CT-3442 Rapid (Serial Number 1240655)**

The FEISOL Tournament Tripod CT 3422 Rapid is a reverse folding leg tripod that has a maximum folded length of 18.9 inches that is perfect for any traveler.

The tripod has four leg sections that fold back. Even if the optional center column is used, the legs fold over it for easy packing during travel.

The tripod I reviewed here is exclusive of the center column. In the most part I do not use a center column as it reduces tripod stability and adds incremental weight.

The tripod is shipped in its carrying case which includes a wide shoulder strap and a side pocket. The items are well packed in a strong cardboard box. Included with the tripod are a warranty card, three allen wrenches, and a threaded hook. Each individual item is well packed in a bubble wrap and/or plastic bags.

The tripod comes with a three-year warranty.

### **Specifications**

- Max. Height 54.33 inches
- Max Height with Center Column (Optional) 67.32 inches
- Min Height (legs splayed) 6.3 inches
- Folded Length 18.9 Inches
- Weight 2.31 lbs.
- Weight with Center Column 2.76 lbs.
- Max Leg diameter 1.1 inches
- Max load recommended 22.05 lbs.
- Preset leg angles at 25, 50, and 75 degrees

### **Optional Center column upgrade**

The optional center column upgrade kit is also constructed of lightweight carbon fiber and adds an additional pound to the weight. The kit is secured to the tripod with three stainless steel hex setscrews. *This review is exclusive of this center column.*

### **Body Frame**

The body frame is precision manufactured using aerospace quality aluminum alloy – quote “7057 aluminum alloy” while the legs are made of a specialized carbon fiber. Feisol claims their material composition has far superior strength compared to common carbon fiber. The tripod finish is a dark grey (near black) with a crosshatch pattern indicating carbon fiber cross strand use. The tripod does not have a bubble level.

The upper section of each leg is encased with a rubberized sheath that acts as a grip and cushioning during transport.

Each leg is in four sections (as indicated by the model number 3442 while a three

section tripod is also available a 3342). Each leg section extends and is held in place using a quarter turn grip that was first introduced in the Gitzo tripod line.

The head mounting base plate is 2 5/8 inches, large enough to support the largest ball heads and is supplied with the standard 3.8 mounting screw. The Mounting screw is removable. In addition you are supplied with a rigid center mountable hook that screws into the base of the head mounting screw. With the hook attached the folded length increases by 1 3/8 inches. I recommend removing this hook for travel. It would be nice to have a hook with a captive swivel. In this construction one is apt to loose the hook if it were to come unthreaded. (images of the folded tripod with and without the hook are shown further in the review)



The head mounting plate is secured to the body frame ring with three stainless steel hex setscrews. A wrench is supplied for removal and replacement.



### **Construction**

The body frame center casting has an outside dimension of 3 1/4 inches with three bridge sections. Each is 7/8 inches that forms the connector joints to the reversible legs. As this area will be subject to the most use, we will pay close attention to these mechanical components in the review and future usage updates.

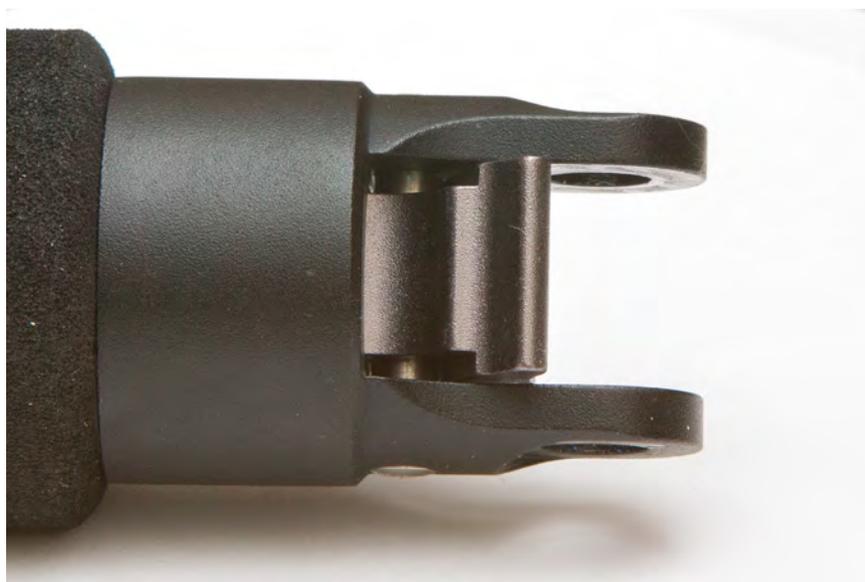
The joint area is constructed as follows: Each leg joint has two sleeved sockets that fit around the center casting bridge. The leg is mated to the center casting bridge using a threaded cylinder that allows the leg to rotate around it. A screw is inserted into the thread of this sleeve and the two are turned against each other. There is no lubrication on the sleeve and the locking is reinforced with a small quantity of lock-tight like



material on the threads. The counter turn tightening for the screw and sleeve is achieved by 5/32 hex keys also provided.

### **Legs**

The carbon fiber construction appears to be multi-layered and multi directional for



added strength. The top section of the carbon fiber leg is fixed into a cast collar. Unlike many other tripods there is no secondary screw that secures the leg to the collar. Within the mating section of the collar there is a spring loaded plunger that provides tension to the toggle used to lock the legs in the three extension angles. The extension angles are very usable at 25, 50 and 75 degrees. I would however have liked to see a 85 degree lock instead of the 75 degree. This would allow the tripod to lay nearly flat on the ground.

The leg lock toggles are well constructed. As they are spring loaded, they snap into position at each of the three stops.



The leg section locks are dust and moisture resistant, and are extremely smooth to unlock and lock.



### Removable feet

The 3442 has snap on/snap off rubber feet that expose a threaded sockets to accommodate spikes that are options. The optional spikes are available in two lengths.

### Folding Legs

The legs will fold back parallel to the center column when attached. The ball head however, should not exceed has a maximum housing diameter of 3 1/4 inches. I used the recommended CB-50 and there is no interference when the legs are folded back.



Tripod with the CB-50 Ball head mounted



Legs folded for travel



Legs folded with the convenience hook attached to the center plate.

### Usage tests

The tripod is well constructed and the leg locking mechanism holds true. With the legs fully extended the tripod was weighted with 100 pounds of dead weight and there was no slippage noticed. There is no perceptible bowing of the legs for the rated 22 pounds of supporting weight.

As far as rigidity, the maximum is achieved when the lowest leg is not fully extended.

With the legs fully extended and splayed at 50 degrees, there is about a 2 inch flex with a 5 pound camera and lens combination. At 75 degrees the flex is over 3 inches. I would not use a tripod with its legs fully extended in any splayed position. As expected with no extension beyond the first the rigidity increases and the flex is insignificant.

My next test involves mounting a medium zoom lens, a 70 to 200 mm on a mid sized body. I attach a laser pointer to the barrel of the lens and leave it switched on. I use a rubber ball on a string like a pendulum to knock the front of the lens. The time to settle after the knock is calculated. (by no means is this a scientifically accurate measurement but it is a comparison). The measurement is the amplitude of the laser pointed at a wall 20 feet away. What I want to compare is the settling time of each tripod in identical conditions. The tripod compares favorably to others in its configuration.

## **Conclusion**

The 4 section Feisol Tripod is well constructed and durable. The spring loaded levers for splaying the legs is a good feature as are the three spread angles. The use of stainless steel and carbon fibre give the tripod the ability to withstand adverse conditions. I will be using this tripod extensively and will provide an update in the future. I give this a thumbs up for prosumer camera and lens combinations excluding super telephoto prime lenses. I would like to see the addition of a leveling device on this unit.

**(Serial Number 50110920)**

The FEISOL CB-50D Ball Head is a light yet very well constructed Arca Swiss compatible ball head designed for general purpose use.

The ball head is shipped in a cardboard box. The head itself is wrapped in bubble wrap and includes a base plate (Model No. QP-144750). The head accepts a 3/8 tripod thread. As per the manufacturer the CB-50 is designed to be paired with their Tournament tripods. This combination allows the Tournament tripod legs to fold up over the ball head with full clearance between the ball head knobs and the tripod legs.



The carbon fibre construction is impressive. The locking mechanism is based on dual calipers. One dual caliper is used to lock the ball while the other is used to lock the base plate. Each caliper is operated by a rotating knob. A third flatter knob is used to maintain tension on the ball preventing any accidental flopping of mounted equipment.

**Specifications**

Height: 10.8 cm / 4.25 inches

Weight: 591 g / 1.30 lbs  
Ball Diameter: 50 mm / 1.97 inches  
Base Diameter: 70 mm / 2.8 inches  
Max. Load: 19 Kg / 41 lbs  
Thread Size: 3/8"

The supplied plate QP-144750 is approximately 2 inches by 1 7/8 inches.  
The mounting screw is a standard 1/4 inch utilizing a flat head mount.

On opening the box and holding the ball head one is impressed with the carbon fibre construction and how light the unit feels. In addition one can't fail to notice that ball itself is hollow and has non interfering holes for further weight reduction. There is no apparent loss of rigidity nor friction needed to hold the ball solidly in place. The base plate has a well marked 1 degree etched index with an expanded etch every 10 degrees and numeric markings every 20 degrees. This is a great convenience for panoramic imagery.

The unit has three different size knobs as follows. One knob to lock and add friction between the rotating head mechanism and the base plate, One knob to lock the ball itself and one smaller flat knob to maintain friction on the ball. Each large knob is etched "Release" and "Lock" with directional arrows. The Friction knob is identified with the work "Friction" and directional arrows indicating positive and negative friction. It is important to note that this friction control knob is distinct in size and shape and well placed so as to prevent accidental turning.

The mounting plate clamp is Arca Swiss compatible and allows for smooth insertion and removal of any compatible camera or lens plates. For those who like to slide the plate into the clamp, you are required to first depress and hold a safety lock plunger and then slide your plate into the clamp. Unless you use a Feisol plate, removal is no problem as standard Arca Swiss plates defeat the locking plunger mechanism. You are then able to slide the plate out with no resistance. However, using a Feisol plate requires you to depress the safety button to release the plunger, allowing plate removal.

To tighten and loosen the clamp, a non-captive knob is provided. There is sufficient friction in the new unit to prevent the knob from accidentally turning off. The clamp is mounted to the ball head using a 5/8 hex screw. This allows the head to be mounted with any center hole clamp, including quick release styles from other manufacturers. Feisol does not provide quick release clamps at the time of writing this review.

The ball in the head socket has a very well maintained smooth yet controlled movement. The manufacturer recommends the following steps to adjust the CB-50D



- loosen Ball Locking Knob to desired tension
- lightly tighten Friction Control Knob (no more than half a turn)
- friction is maintained when Ball Locking Knob is released -- no further adjustment needed!

Once adjusted, I did not find any change in the tension or setting when the ball head was put through some fairly rigorous testing and rough handling. The main tension



knob for the ball effortlessly locks the ball head into place. With the ball head and the panning knob locked the system is truly immobile.

The head has a single side slot that allows the clamp to be positioned at 90 degrees for portrait oriented imagery and for use with a product like the Wimberly Sidekick®



### Tests

To test the ball head I used three methods. For each the head was

mounted on the most rigid and stable tripod i own - legs not fully extended.

Test for ball head creep 1. A prosumer camera body, 70 - 200 mm lens with the body (not lens foot) attached to the ball head. No creep noticed after 1 hour.

Test for ball head creep 2. Same set up as before but this time the ball head was positioned at a 45 degree angle in the side slot. No creep noticed after 1 hour.

Test 1 and 2 were measured using a laser pointer attached to the lens and the beam was directed on a wall 20 feet away.

Final test was capacity. A pro body was mounted with a 500 mm f4 lens was attached to a Wimberley Sidekick. The clamp was tightened above the resting spot in the side slot. The set up was used as it would be for normal photography for over one hour. There was no slippage in the ball head and the ball support did not bottom out.

### Conclusion

This is a very well constructed light ball head that can satisfy the most demanding photographer. The capacity it can support is more than adequate and the locking mechanisms are solid. I would like to see the clamp plate include a bubble level and a captive knob. I will be using this ball head extensively and will provide an update in the future. I would highly recommend this as a very viable ball head.

## **Shiv Verma**

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### **A photographer, mentor, educator and technologist.**

**Shiv** has been photographing since he was a teenager but with the advent of digital he has evolved his photography to express his intense devotion to the art. Since 2003 Shiv has been capturing images exclusively in the digital realm and over the years has earned numerous awards and recognition both nationally and internationally.

Shiv devotes a great deal of his time to formally reviewing photography related products and to education in digital photography as well as serving as a speaker and competition judge. He conducts photo tours and workshops worldwide and is available as a commercial and destination photographer.

He belongs to multiple photographic clubs and associations. Shiv serves as Chairman, Nature Division, PSA (Photographic Society of America) and holds the position of Vice President of the Digital Circuit NECCC (New England Camera Club Council) and is a Board Member of CIPNE (Commercial and Industrial photographers of New England). Shiv is a past President of the Stony Brook Camera Club and the Gateway Camera Club, and is a member of the Greater Lynn Photographic Association, Massachusetts Camera Naturalists, all in Massachusetts.

Shiv is also the chairperson and conducts the world's largest nature and wild life photographic competition/exhibition - the Photographic Society of America's Annual International."