

All blades were tested with rubbers XIOM Omega V Euro DF, Globe 999 National and DHS PF4, Water - Based glue.

## **XIOM Feel HX Pro & HX**

HX Pro: 7.1 mm, Kiso Hinoki outer; 89 g; stiff

HX: 6.8 mm, Kiso Hinoki outer; 88 g; medium stiff

HX Pro blade is thickest blade in XIOM Feel Series. It is about 7.1 mm thick but it is not heaviest blade, rather it is Feel SX blade. Feel series blades are being marketed by XIOM as their next generation blades. Their previous blades like Omega or Vega series are not as numerous compared to Feel series which has 8 blades to choose from! Outer plies of HX Pro is said to be a high quality Kiso Hinoki that is 200 years old+. XIOM says that they are trying to get higher qualities of their products in market compared to their past products and also can even compete with Butterfly. HX is a thinner version of HX Pro with same Kiso Hinoki outer plies. I am assuming that only these 2 blades have Kiso Hinoki outers because other blades in Feel series do not have Kiso Hinoki label in blade surface. Both blades have a slightly wider wing part compared to older models like Omega or Vega Series blades. Handles of 2 blades are thicker by a millimeter. Usually, when I measured older blades they have, handle thickness is just 25 mm+. With HX Pro it is 26 mm+ and HX almost at 26 mm. Wing or neck part of blade needs to be sanded slightly but this is not a big problem. Both blades have thick Kiso Hinoki Outer plies.

In terms of speed, HX Pro is labeled as OFF but it is as good as OFF+. It is fast enough to be OFF+ in speed. Speed is on par with XIOM Ignito but HX Pro seems to have a harder, more solid feel. Ignito that I had was 83 g. If on a powerscale HX Pro power is a solid 9/10 while Ignito is an 8/10. It is probably extra thickness that gives solidity of shots and also catapult of ball. Still HX Pro is slower than XIOM Axelo. I would put speed of HX Pro at level of Primorac Carbon which is already an OFF+ blade. Axelo is still fastest blade of XIOM in my opinion. HX is a toned down version of HX Pro and it has control written all over it. HX is thinner and definitely slower than HX Pro but still plenty fast. I would compare speed of HX as slightly faster than Stradivarius but slower than Ignito. For other brands, HX is as fast as or slightly faster than Timo Boll ALC with a more solid feel.

In terms of control, both HX Pro and HX blades have a fairly amount of control. It is not hard to control these two blades since they do not seem to be blindingly fast but rather have acceptable amount of control. HX Pro is more controllable than Ignito or Axelo and has a better control than Primorac Carbon. HX can be everybody's carbon blade because it is that just good of an offensive carbon blade. One who used it aside from me even commented that it has same control of a Timo Boll ALC but has a slightly different feel because of different composite materials used.

In terms of looping, HX Pro can still loop good but it is more specialized in power looping. Near table it seems to be fitted for loop driving and taking ball at peak of bounce or off bounce. HX Pro is good in overpowering opponent's underspin return but it is even better doing counter looping or counter spins mid-distance from table or far from table. HX Pro's speed puts it really at mid-distance to far from table if you attack ball with spin. HX is good for spinning mostly near and mid-distance from table. Near table, it is good to loop with because of control and not fearing ball overshooting table but HX is best at middle distance. If you want to play far from table, you would probably need a faster rubber like Omega V Pro. One I used for test for both blades and other Feel blades is XIOM Omega Euro DF.

Overall, I am greatly satisfied and impressed with both blades with a little bit of inclination with HX because I am type of guy who does not want very fast blades. However, people who look for power in a blade would get HX Pro version. Also, I would recommend using Medium or medium soft rubbers for HX Pro because medium-hard XIOM Omega V Euro seems to feel too hard for this blade. HX is fine with any rubber from soft to hard because it does not feel as stiff and hard as thicker HX Pro version. Both blades also have little to minimal amount of vibration.

## **XIOM Feel ZX1, ZX2 & ZX3**

ZX blades are a major improvement when compared to older Hayabusa series. ZX blades are advertised by XIOM as totally different blades when compared to Hayabusa series. While Hayabusa blades have this flashy look and design, ZX Feel series have opted to have simple yet elegant design for each blade. I would like to point out that in website of XIOM, ZX1 has a Hinoki outer ply but in reality ZX1 has a colored limba outer ply instead which I think is probably heat treated like Donic Burn blades before but not 100% sure. ZX2 and ZX3 are indeed hinoki outer ply blades. Though ZX2 and 3 do not have a Kiso Hinoki mark on their blade surface, XIOM website indicate that both blades have Kiso Hinoki. As what handles of HX blades, ZX blades also have a bigger

So what are their differences in speed? Both ZX3 and ZX2 are at OFF+ levels. They are pretty fast. ZX3 is fastest among 3 blades. If I compare it to HX Pro, they seem to be toe to toe in terms of speed even if HX Pro is a thicker blade. As what I have compared HX Pro speed before, it is below speed of Sardius or Amultart and also Schlager Carbon. So I will place

speed of ZX3 below those Butterfly blades mentioned but faster than Gergely or Primorac Carbon if not equal. ZX2 is close to HX's speed but HX is slightly faster. ZX2 is still a powerful blade. If I compare it to blades from other brands, ZX2 is marginally faster than Viscaria or Timo Boll ALC but lower than a Super Jun Mizutani blade. XIOM Ignito is faster than ZX2 or 3. ZX1 however is somewhat slower compared to other blades of XIOM Feel Series. ZX1 having a limba outerply with innermost Z-Carbon sandwiching central core (picture depicted in XIOM website has hinoki but it has limba in reality), is slower than a Viscaria but has an almost equal speed than Innerforce ALC. It is rated as an OFF blade and not an OFF+ blade. Still, it has plenty of speed.

Of 3 blades, ZX3 is one with least flex, ZX2 with some flex and with ZX1 with plenty of flex. ZX1 loops best among 3 ZX blades, ZX2 being balanced on both power and spinning capabilities while ZX3 is much better for power shots. ZX3 is particular about skillset of person using it to loop ball. If you have a skill for looping or loop driving, ZX3 will reward you with great shots and power but it needs somewhat of an advanced level to fully utilize it. ZX3 has a medium to low arc when looping. ZX2 is a balanced looping or loop driving blade. At least ZX2 can be used by players of lower levels like an intermediate level player. It is much more forgiving compared to ZX3 in terms of shots. While ZX3 needs a person to have precise set of skills to spin or attack ball, ZX2 has better control and is more forgiving if you for example have not executed your stroke full. ZX2 has medium arc when looping. ZX1 is sometimes, puzzling because it feels more woody than being a composite blade. This is not a bad thing because this is for people who want a faster blade than just an all wood blade but does not want a sacrifice of wood feel, ZX1 is an excellent blade for them. ZX1 has a medium arc when looping. I have tried both XIOM Omega V Europe and a Chinese rubber on blade. Both rubbers can loop really great when using ZX1.

For smashing, counter driving away from table and even blocking, I would give edge to ZX3 but ZX2 is slightly better in terms of control. ZX1 is above average for smashing but I can feel its power only up to mid-distance from table even with fast rubbers. ZX1 is best close to table. ZX2 is again balanced blade which is good in all 3 distances from table. ZX3 is just a wrecking machine when it comes to hard topspins and smashes. People who choose to have speed and power but do not want to lose much control will sure love this blade.

All in all, ZX3 seems to be flagship blade of XIOM Feel series. other 2 are also very good but ZX3 really stands out among rest. It is a different blade compared to old Hayabusa series. ZX2 and ZX1 blades are also way different blades compared to their older counterparts.

### **XIOM Feel SX**

95 g, 6.48 mm, OFF+

XIOM Feel SX has Anigre/Anegre top plies. Anegre is an African hardwood. When I compared Janka hardness of Limba and Anegre, Anigre is substantially harder at around 700+ compared to Janka value of Limba which is around 400+. This gives SX a bit heavier weight due to having a denser and harder wood. SX has a weight range of 95-99 g according to XIOM and I got mine at 95 g. Blades construction is superb and Anegre's surface seems to be semi smooth and not as smooth as Hinoki top plies of other Feel blades.

Blade is a heavy blade due to choice of materials made for rubber. XIOM said that they really intended SX to be heavy and for me 95 g weight is not that I can handle easily if I use it with both inverted rubbers. With a long pimped rubber then this set up is good. Blade is a solid attacking blade. It feels woody on impact. Although it is a basically a carbon-zephylium blade, it retains some feel. There are times that SX can almost be as fast as HX Pro but they kinda feel different on impact. SX feels like a classic, hard 7 ply all wood from those old Chinese blades while HX Pro feels like any modern hard-hitting blade. If SX had been lighter and thinner, maybe it would be more playable to a lot of folks. Well, it is either you really like heavy blades or you have a strong arm to play this set up fully. XIOM says their newer rubbers like Omega 7 Pro and Euro are lighter. My pro rubber is 45 g cut to 150x157 and euro is 43 g cut to same size. If I were to use blade's weight at 95 g plus 2 rubbers total set-up weight it about 183 g which is still on heavy side. So I would recommend this maybe to attacking long pip players. One inverted on forehand and one pips out rubber with thin or no sponge at all. I tried SX with a 755 Long Pips and it worked perfectly fine. It can attack and block well with LP on bh side. It can chop block near table but it cannot chop defensively even outside table due to its raw power.

This is still a high-performance blade but it is heavy for most people unless they are combination racket players.

### **XIOM Feel S7**

92 - 94 g, 6.2 mm, OFF, 7 ply all wood

Feel S7 is only all wood blade in series. It has a koto outer plies with an unknown 2<sup>nd</sup> ply and has a medium stiff feel. It feels less smooth than XIOM Solo blade wherein it shares a lot of similarities especially in construction but they are quite different blades in terms of playing characteristics. Feel S7 feels like a XIOM Solo in steroids. Solo blade is made in China and this one is made in Japan. Solo has flex especially when looping but S7 feels more solid and has less flex. In fact it feels a bit harder than a Clipper wood. I would put it in between Clipper CC's and Clipper CR's stiffness and hardness. What XIOM Solo

lacked in power being a 7 ply blade, Feel S7 has a lot and difference in speed and power is a lot. S7 is also a bit on heavy side. XIOM says they designed this blade at this weight for polyball. Again, like SX blade, if you have strong arm then this blade would be good for hard hitting strokes. S7 is just a powerful blade that you can unleash your strokes but still maintain a good amount of control. S7 can still spin very well but it is more suited more for speedy shots with a good amount of spin rather than a pure slow looping style.

### **XIOM Feel AX**

84 g, OFF, 6 mm

I saved best for last (my personal preference among all Feel blades but ZX3 and ZX2 are awesome too). This is cheapest composite blade among Feel blades and if I am not mistaken this is in range of XIOM Quad V1 or Clipper CR. It is made in China but quality is not inferior, although Japan-made blades like HX and ZX blades (with exception of ZX1) have a better quality finish. Nevertheless, what made me fall in love with this blade is that it is blade with complete package. Yes, it is not as fast as a Viscaria because I would rate it as OFF and not an OFF+ blade but speed is more than enough. I am biased about feel but among composite Feel blades, AX is one that has best feel. It has little to no vibration. It has a thin 7 ply construction and it provides enough flex to loop ball slowly and with great spin or loop drive ball. In short, AX is dynamic blade where you it can give you spin you wanted in a blade or be a powerful attacking blade but maintains a good amount of control. I really like XIOM Vega Euro blade even until today. They possess almost same speed and control but AX has more flex and surface of top plies are not as hard. AX does not feel too hard but does not feel soft that it decreases your power. Also, a good bonus is weight. Blade ranges about 84 - 87 g. Mine is 84 g and when I paired it with a XIOM Omega VII Pro and Euro rubbers, set up is light. Even with Globe 999 National and Omega V Euro rubbers before, set up does not feel heavy and not even head heavy compared to other blades I had in past. I think it is safe to say that AX is blade that was really unexpected and surprisingly good despite cheaper price. This blade made me shift to a controlled composite blade due to me wanting a less physically demanding set up.

I would rate blades objectively basing on performance, balance of speed and control, weight and feel (highest to lowest):

1. **ZX3**
2. **ZX2**
3. **HX Pro**
4. **SX**
5. **AX**
6. **HX**
7. **ZX1**
8. **S7**