

COMEUP SLIM SEAL 12.5RS

When you are done gambling on a bargain

ComeUp winches, like our Slim SEAL 12.5rs, come with everything you need to confidently winch, with the convenience of both plug-in and wireless controllers, as well as integrated electrical disconnects, which makes wiring a breeze.



By Ben Crockett

In the world of recovery, it is very safe to say that not all winches are created equal. I have been wheeling long enough to experience 50-year-old PTO's turning over like new on rusted out FJ40s, and five-week-old electric winches shorting because of cheap electronics in a damp environment. I have also come to the painful realizations that you don't always get what you pay for, you can't always trust references, and with so many knockoffs and start-ups flooding the market, you may be more likely to slide that credit card back into your pocket than risk your hard-earned money on a "deal". So how do you find a winning winch when a quick search will pull up dozens of recognizable names? Allow me to walk you through my process to getting a ComeUp winch (www.comeupusa.com, 503-783-6142).

WHY I NEEDED A WINCH

When I started shopping, I had three vehicles and three dead winches. To be fair, two were solid winches and the third was trouble from go. The bad winch was sent to us to test and before we could even write the story, the company had closed up shop. The other two clocked eight and

ten years with regular use, ultimately succumbing to moisture penetration and corrosion. One I was able to temporarily fix with fresh wiring in the control box, the other internally devoured by corrosion beyond the reach of serviceability which I only found after cutting the winch open. So, of the three, one

had the lure of affordability and was ultimately junk and the other two failed after respectable lives due to moisture penetration even with regular servicing.

TOO MANY RIVER CROSSINGS?

Contrary to popular thought, most moisture doesn't get into a winch from submersion, although it surely doesn't help. I have lived in California, Washington, Vermont and Utah and the moisture found in my control boxes and serviceable areas of my winches is rarely after taking

my trucks swimming, it is at its greatest during months of wide temperature fluctuations, causing condensation and evaporation. This slow, yet persistent introduction of damp air, creates an endlessly humid environment where corrosion thrives. Quality seals and weather protected components are a must.

WILL IT FIT?

This is often the hardest category to fulfill as the winch you often want is rarely the one that will fit. All winches used to mount on the top of bumpers, so that made shopping easy. Now it is rare





Seeing ComeUp winches in action on "Burning Snowman" runs with the Mule Expedition Outfitters crew really influenced my opinion of their products. Long, repetitive pulls through hood deep snow and they never missed a beat.



When the gang is either swimming in the Sea of Cortez, or planted in a beach chair in the shade, the line is pretty short when it comes to recovery help. Opportunely parked, the Slim SEAL 12.5rs made an easy pull of Evan Dehaven's bogged Tundra.

Tried and true, it is really tough to beat the ease of use a gated hook offers frequent winchers. With one gloved hand it can be hooked direct to winch points, D-shackles, soft-shackles, hitches and more, without the worry of it dropping off when unloaded. Simple and very effective, time proven design. Partial to plug in controllers, for no valid reason at all, other than I don't set them down on the hood and drive off, I was able to guide my kid through winch assisted driving out of a tough spot, since he was the one who got it stuck after-all.



to find a modern vehicle with a top mount winch, as most are at least partially if not fully tucked behind the bumper and between the frame rails. This is another sign I look for in a reputable brand, when they offer a variety of winches to suit different mounting locations and configurations. Features like; clockable feet for mounting at almost any angle,

multiple line-out points to suit the fairlead location and the ability to remote mount the control box are all things to consider. It is also a good sign when brands offer winches for specific vehicles, showing they are invested in innovation.

LOAD AND FREQUENCY OF USE

When deciding on the load rating on your winch, I always lean on the age-old math of 30% over GVW. It is pretty simple and with the help of a snatch block or two, you could winch yourself straight up a tree if need be. So, for my 2007 Tacoma, with a GVW of 5450 + 1635 (30%), a 9000lb winch would easily cover my 7085lb total.

NARROWING THE FIELD

Narrowing the field can go pretty quickly depending on your wheeling network. And by wheeling network, I don't mean the people in your forum, unless you actually wheel with them. Talk to the people you see in action and winch in a manner similar to your expectations. For example, crawlers tend to do shorter but often more complex pulls, racers need speed over precision and overlanders lean towards long and potentially frequent pulls. Find your niche, or combination of them and look for people who fit that

style. Those are the opinions you want. It is important to know who your advice comes from, because the winch I mentioned above that never worked because of poor quality, could also be found with rave reviews by "influencers".

MY SELECTION

Doing the math, I needed a reputable winch, with strong considerations of waterproofing, slender enough to fit behind my DeMello bumper, capable of long, repetitive pulls and fulfilling the most important line item, the recommendation of my winching peers. It was of little surprise that ComeUp winches (www.comeupusa.com) were the #1 winch recommended by my wheeling peers on all fronts, from retailers to full time overlanders.

Taiwan-based ComeUp has been in the exclusive business of winches, hoists and recovery gear since 1975. Much as I learned the hard way, through winches failing when I needed them the most, ComeUp built their business on the idea that not all winches are created equal and set out to be the benchmark. They realized that if any component fails, the blame landed squarely on them, so they moved the manufacturing of all key components in-house. This includes motors, contactors, brake assemblies and planetary gear sets.

While at its core, the concept of a winch hasn't changed much since its first literary reference in 480 BC, where human power was compounded via pullies to move and secure a pontoon bridge in the Peloponnesian War, the technology is forever being pushed forward. ComeUp is one company that never stops innovating. "Our patented Cone Brake Structure is the primary way we differentiate our winches from our competitors," said Rod Bogle of ComeUp. "It is mounted outside the drum.



The intent was to jump up this small rise, but the soft incline sapped speed and instead we ended up firmly planted on the BudBuilds with all four tires spinning. When you have solid recovery equipment, it's all a laugh. The low-drag clutch and high unloaded spool speeds of the ComeUp mean running line and respooling is quick and easy. We have all been there, fighting line drag up a slippery hill, adding frustration to what can already be a challenging, or even dangerous situation.

This keeps the heat out of the drum and makes them ideally suited for synthetic rope." This design not only allows for more rapid and secure brake engagement on steep angles, it also

means less heat created overall during stop and go winching. In years past I have seen synthetic lines melted by heat accumulated in the drum during heavy use. As synthetic lines evolve into a

standard, it is great to see ComeUp evolve along with the demand.

Looking for something specific? ComeUp offers more than 40 automotive winches to suit a variety of load needs,

mounting locations, line speeds and even vehicle specific applications for challenging fitments. While my needs were far from "challenging" I was looking for a more powerful 12.5K winch

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IP68 rating means the worst of the rain and snow stays out of the innards of the ComeUp SEAL Gen2 winch. Recovery always seems to become a spectator sport, so it is always a perk to be able to recover and get back to wheeling without putting on too much of a show—especially in the snow.

@family.overland.adventure backed his heavy, overland built Tundra into the soft, wet sand for a photo and got stuck on the incline, without another full-size rig in sight to pull them out, or motivated soul to try, I was able to dig some holes to back my rear wheels into as anchors, and easily straight line them back up onto the flat sand.

The next trip out turned into an unexpected mud bog while heading out to mountain bike on the backside of Escalante, Utah. While we expected some rain, we didn't expect the roads to turn into Slip and Slides, causing two vehicles, including a park ranger who had stopped to help, to slide to the low side of the road and drop tires into a deep rain rut. These recoveries required some more complex angled pulls to get the vehicles up and out, without dragging them down the rut. Once out of the rut and on a set of MaxTrax, we were able to give them a little momentum advice and get the back up on the flat where they could regroup and follow the Park Ranger out.

And because when it rains, it pours, I hadn't even finished washing the mud off the truck before I accepted an invite on an impromptu hot spring and sand dunes run. Now, getting stuck in the sand is easy to do, but recovery is typically a reverse or a snatch strap away. Unfortunately for me, I tried to ramp up a dune for a jump shot, nosed into the soft sand of the incline a bit harder than I would have liked and instead, belly planted with all four wheels spinning helplessly. Unable to pull from the back or snatch it the rest of the way up and over, the winch was out again, and I was eagerly made fun of by my friends as the SEAL barely broke a sweat.

IN SUMMARY

While my kid may believe it, I don't in fact know everything about everything, but I do fall somewhere between idiot and savant. I am familiar with

to fit the same space as my previous 9K winch, so options are nice to have. The goal was to ease the workload during my typical long, repetitive, straight line pulls and offer a little more recovery aid to the larger/heavier rigs I tend to wheel with. While more powerful winches tend to be larger/taller, ComeUp offers both DV and Slim series winches to suit tight spaces. With more and more bumpers tucking neatly into the body lines of vehicles, ComeUp recognizes the need for these options.

With the long-term failures of both my previous winches being moisture penetration, the SEAL line from ComeUp was top of my list. While many winch companies take steps to prevent moisture from entering the winch, ComeUp took the next step to ensure the SEAL series winches were IP68 rated. What does this mean? *"They have heavy duty seals at each housing joint and at the drum flanges to create a water-proof seal, allowing them to be operated fully submerged."* And what of the control boxes? The problem with moisture in the control boxes isn't entirely that it can get in, but rather that it can't get out and corrodes the contacts. To address both problems ComeUp applied sealed contactors inside the box, so it can be operated submerged with drain/vent holes to prevent the build-up

and entrapment of moisture.

I am a believer that toilet paper is the only thing that unarguably needs to wear the "DISPOSABLE" label. Mechanical things are built and thus should be able to be rebuilt, so why invest in parts that are unserviceable? What sealed the ComeUp brand for me was that their winches are designed with long term service and repairs in mind. Even the water-proof SEAL winches are designed to be disassembled without compromising the waterproof nature of the winch. Repair features such as a combined motor/support rack for the SEAL winches allows for replacement while maintaining the factory sealing, meaning this could be the last winch you ever buy.

PUTTING IT TO USE

Installation of a winch is rarely plug and play anymore, but this is by nature of where we are mounting them, not the winch itself. The benefit with the ComeUp Slim SEAL 12.5rs I was mounting, and all others in the ComeUp line, is that they are designed to accommodate this. On my ARB bumper, my clutch lever needs to face upwards, in the standard position, but in my DeMello bumper, it needs to face forwards, so it can be accessed through a cut out. To suit this, the winch can easily be clocked to achieve the mounting angle and line out position necessary to

align with the fairlead.

The control box can also be clocked accordingly, or if desired, remotely mounted. ComeUp also offers plug extension kits for the manual controller for quick and easy access. Wiring is very simple as the Slim SEAL 12.5rs has an integrated cut off switch, which means with the push of a button, you can disengage the winch from your electrical system. This meant I could actually reduce the wiring under my hook, removing the mechanical isolation switch from my previous winch. With wireless and waterproof wired controllers, synthetic line and a foolproof gated hook, this winch is ready to rock out of the box.

As I said before, it is impossible to say when you will require a winch. It may be today, or it may be a year from now. All you can do is wheel and when the time arises, then you can give it some real-world reviews. I installed mine about six months back and promptly headed off to Baja for the Camp 4Lo Fiesta (see this issue for that story). While there are plenty of places one may require a winch in Baja, there were also plenty of people around at this event to help if you do get stuck. What I forget to factor in is the motivation a remote stretch of beach, a cold beverage and an awning will suck out of a group to try out their recovery toys. So, when Evan DeHaven of



Made to truly rigorous standards in Taiwan, ComeUp has a wide variety of winch options, types, pull ratings and more. Check out their full line at www.comeupusa.com.



the benefits of cone brakes in other mechanical applications but had to do a deeper dive on the winch benefits and do some cross referencing of my own. The most helpful research I encountered was an independent research paper by Advances in Mechanical Engineering. Here I learned that all methods of braking create heat. No duh, right? But what I didn't know is that all methods of inner drum braking also create heat, even when the brake is not engaged. While this heat can be nominal, it is trapped inside the sealed drum and can prime the drum for heat, generated by braking. In most cases, there is not a lot of braking being applied (every time you take your thumb off the actuator), but in technical heavy load applications, requiring short bursts of pull power while watching lines, roll over angles and such, enough heat can be generated to melt a synthetic line and blister skin.

stopping/holding power. That is innovation I can stand behind...but I still won't because it is a poor winning practice. So, let's just say, it is innovation I can stand safely to the uphill side of.

And there you have it, a typical years-worth of winning in just a few short weeks. I had decided to upsize to the 12.5K winch on the off chance I had to help out my full-size friends, and opportunely was able to help out two heavily weighted full-size rigs with the ease I had hoped for. Is a 12.5K winch like the ComeUp Slim SEAL 12.5rs overkill on a Tacoma? Absolutely, and it can get you into a heap of trouble if you are not careful as it can easily overpower the mechanics of a mid-size truck, but used wisely, as with all winches, it can be a huge help, reducing the time and complexities of compound pulls.

Overall, the out of the box inclusions and simple set up leave me happier with the ComeUp than any other winch I have owned to date. The integrated isolation switch is super easy and saves you additional wiring, components and potential fault points in the system. The 225:1 gear ratio and 5hp motor give you a full 12.5K pull rating on a straight line, a number not dwindled by specifics as with other winches we have encountered. The synthetic rope is lighter, safer and easier to work with than cable, comes stock on the Slim SEAL 12.5rs, complete with a gated hook and hawse fairlead, and has a working length of about 75ft, meaning longer and/or more complex pull options. How about an 89-pound gross weight? If you haven't lifted many winches lately, this makes it lighter than most of its competition, and with more pull power. Box all that up with a lifetime warranty on mechanical components and a three-year warranty on electronical components and you have a great product with great coverage. www.ComeUpUSA.com, 503-783-6142. ✓

To resolve this, ComeUp patented their Cone Brake Structure outside of the drum. While cone brakes by design produce almost no unloaded friction and only generate a fraction of the active braking heat, their location outside the drum helps keep the heat away from the synthetic line. The location also allows for a larger brake, which paired with the huge interface of the cone design, means quicker engagement, longer wear life and greatly increased

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