

XPC Racing Custom Seats

By Rod Stallings

There are a number of factors that can affect your ride, especially if you are posting big miles. At my age, fatigue ranks at the very top of that list and that is directly proportionate to my comfort level. If I get uncomfortable my level of fatigue starts to rise and pretty soon my only desire is to get off my bike before I fall off.

There is, of course, any number of ways one can change their bike to facilitate a reduction in fatigue. However, anyone who has ridden big miles will tell you that the first place to start is the seat. For many of us it is the first modification that gets done to any bike.

We have to take into consideration that stock seats are built for the masses, often gauged to be a bit softer so that initial impression is one of comfort. Nothing wrong with this, but over time that soft seat can create "hot spots" that can be very uncomfortable. For the general public the softer seat is a better choice for town riding. For the harder core of us these hot spots can create a real challenge over thousands of miles. The bottom line (pun intended) is that this is where you begin to feel fatigue creeping up on you, and impacting your riding.

There are a host of aftermarket seat makers out there. Each has their own pro's and con's. For me, I really wanted a truly custom seat for my '07 R1200 GSA. I put a lot of commuter and trip miles on this bike. I am also 6'5" with a 38 inch inseam, which makes for a real challenge when you start looking for a custom seat. Most custom seat manufactures make one or two seat options. They are custom, but tailored to be a standard custom design. What I was looking for was someone to work with me on a seat that met my, let's say unique, needs.

Enter Mitch at XPC Racing.



Mitch and I began talking some time back about what I really wanted for my Adventure. I was looking to remove the "pitch" of the seat. The stock seat tends to pitch toward the front of the bike. Many bike seats are set up this way and I am sure there is good technical or riding technique reason for this. However, as tall as I am, it just made me feel like I was constantly sliding up on the tank. Second, I wanted to try to blend the front and rear seats a bit more allowing me to shift my riding position further back with both seats installed. I am tall enough that I can sit on the pillion and easily reach both pegs and bars without much body lean at all (yea, my arms and legs are freakishly long). Lastly, I wanted to widen the seating area a bit, use custom material colors and get my ministry logo stitched on the seat as well.

XPC provides the customer with a plethora of options. Here is a short list; they have many others you can discuss with them when you start to design your seat;

- **Foam Density** – this is important for the long term feel of the seat. You can choose from medium, medium firm and firm comfort foam. I chose the medium firm so that around town the seat is soft and for longer trip the denser material holds up well to long rides.
- **Seat Top & Side** – Can be had in Vinyl (single and two color), Performance Suede and Vinyl combo or Performance Suede in a single color, they also offer a Carbon Fiber Vinyl and a Gripper Vinyl
- **Color Combo** – They have just about any color combo you want. Check their web site seat designer (www.xpcracing.com/OrderNS) for the various options. Each material has its own unique color variances
- **Stitching** – Stitching can be done in a variety of colors as well. I like the ability to off-set stitching colors and did so, as you can



see on my seat

- **Custom Embroidery** – XPC can either take a picture and have it converted or can take your own custom embroidery file to stitch onto the seat.
- **Custom Dual Seats** – Like with my bike, XPC worked both seats together to make me a setup that allows me more flexibility in my seating choice while riding, while still giving me the ability to remove my rear seat
- **Covers** – as I note, XPC has a few options on cover material. I took the lighter neoprene cover that fits nice and snug and provides good protection for my seat while making it light and easy to roll up in my pannier

After I got a good feel for what I wanted I shipped my stock seats to XPC with an enclosed form from their web site with my selections (you can also do this directly online).

Mitch was good enough to send me some samples of the materials I was wanting in a few colors for me to put up against the bike. This was a really good thing because the initial color and material I chose did not work well when I put the sample on the bike. It was going to be too much of one color and not a good combo. The other samples he sent lead me another direction and with choices made they began their work.



During the wait Mitch called me and asked if I wanted a cover made up as well. They make neoprene covers that keep your seat clean and dry. I thought “Heck Yea” that’s a great idea. I am a stickler for things looking new, as most will assure you after you see my '05 Harley and my '07 GSA. Both look like new, even though I put a lot of miles on them. Neither stays dirty for very long.

Mitch and I kept making subtle changes to the design and he was good to suggest improvements to my ideas, but in pretty short order I had my completed seats back.

Putting both in place I was really impressed with the look of them on the bike. The colors were great and really compliment the bike in my opinion. The Biker Chaplain logo looked great and the color matched the blue on the bike much better than I expected. General first impressions were good, but I had yet to sit on them.

Seat of the pants, no matter how good something looks, is the real test. Throwing a leg over I was immediately struck with how the gripper material and suede really cling. I had to get used to lifting up to move around. This is good, as some of the seats I have had you could literally slide right off of. It meant that I could easily keep my place even over rough terrain when it was raining. This lack of slip takes some getting used to and created some uncomfortable feelings at first. But I found that it was mainly due to not taking a good seating position when I got on the bike and after a few adjustments while rolling I found my sweet spot.

I began putting miles on the new seat to see how it would feel in the long run. Hot spots are what occurs when the foam in a seat is either too soft or has broken down to some extent. Using the medium firm foam made the first impressions of this seat very positive. It begins soft but the firmer lower levels hold up well after many miles of riding.

The removal of a majority of the seat pitch was immediately noticeable. While the general tilt of the bike frame is higher in the back, building up the front of the seat allowed me to run the seat in the high position, level with the pillion and still be relatively level. This allows me to shift back further and even ride on the pillion should I get overly tired. Mobility on a saddle, for me, is important. No matter how good the seat is, after hours and hours of riding, you just have to move around.

Even though I was not in “shape” for the riding season I quickly became accustomed to the new design and material of the seat. I think the firmer foam really helped this. Seating was positive and comfortable, I was not sliding forward during hard stops and could easily move my position if I became uncomfortable. Getting off the bike at stops I was impressed with the look of the seat

on the bike and my friends complimented the general look, color combination, materials and workmanship. It really added an additional custom touch to the bike and gave me a totally custom setup for my aging and tender derriere.

After putting a pretty good number of miles back and forth to work and around on the weekend I am very impressed with the XPC Racing rework of my stock seat. After many years of running almost exclusively with Corbin seats, I am now suitably impressed with another manufacture. The additional benefit of having a seat tailored to my specific needs at a very competitive price point puts XPC at the top of my list in this category.

I now believe that I can run cross country in any terrain and be both comfortable and maintain a greater amount of control over my bike. That may seem like a bold statement, but I had enough fatigue from my other seating options to believe that I was compromising on one end of this spectrum or the other.

In the end, it is imperative that dealing with your level of comfort and ride manageability be a top priority. I think that XPC has fit that bill for me as it relates to seating.

There are many other aspects of rider ergonomics that each of us can address to our individual needs. But few that directly impact every aspect of your journey like your seating.

XPC can be reached at;

www.xpcracing.com

XPC, Inc.

41795 Elm St, Ste. 401

Murrieta, CA 92562

(951) 698-7707

