



Adjustable Seat Post Revolution

by Charlie Summers, PCI #512

*Illinois State University Police Department
IPMBA Industry Liaison*

Over the last few years the adjustable seat post has taken the industry by storm. Many bike manufacturers are designing their frames to be spec'd with an adjustable seat post or placing braze-ons on the frame to accommodate a swap.

This article highlights some of the top-of-the-line adjustable seat posts on the market today.

Turbo

The Gravity Dropper, the “grandfather” of the group, has been around for more than seven years. The Gravity Dropper Turbo is the company’s newest and lightest version. There are a variety of lengths and sizes from which to choose, along with different drop options, including two, three, and four inches. The most impressive one featured four inches of travel and three different ride-height positions. The Turbo comes with a handlebar shift lever to adjust the height position. The shift lever is very crisp, and is accompanied by a loud click. The post action is very smooth and has very little saddle wobble. If you prefer to use American-made products, this one is! The company is also well-known for their customer service. The Turbo retails for \$299.

Command Post

The Specialized Command Post is one of the newer four-inch seatpost on the market. It uses a unique, collet-locking system. Basically, you use the well-designed handlebar-mounted lever, and the collet contracts, allowing it to slide into one of three grooves in the seatpost. It uses an air spring system which raises the saddle and can also be tuned with a barrel adjuster to vary return speed. The Command Post had no saddle wiggle at all, which was very impressive. Specialized claims this seatpost holds up very well in adverse conditions. They will soon be releasing a new five-inch version as well. The Command Post retails for \$300.

i950-R

The Kind Shock i950-R is KS Suspension’s top-of-the-line seatpost. It is also one of the sharpest-looking in the group. KS claims it is as rugged and performs as well as it looks. The i950-R is available in a variety of sizes and lengths as well as travel settings. One of the best features about this post is the ability to adjust the saddle height anywhere in the range of travel of the post. There was no side-to-side saddle wiggle. This seat post also had the best-designed lever of the group. It has an ODI-compatible lock-on grip clamp, which puts the lever inside the grip, where it was easy to locate and operate with your thumb. The i950-R retails for \$309.

Joplin 4R

The Joplin 4R is Crank Brothers’ new four-inch version with all new and improved inner workings from their three-inch model. You can get the Joplin 4R in two different settings – with a remote switch lever or a lever which is mounted under the saddle. One problem I noticed with the under-saddle lever is that you have to take your hands off the bars to adjust the height, which could be tricky if you are descending a set of stairs. I preferred the remote bar-mounted lever for



I P M B A

that reason. I also liked the remote shift lever because it does not matter which direction you push it to activate the seat post. Finally, the hydraulic internals were very smooth with very little side-to-side saddle wiggle with compared to last year's model. The Joplin 4R retails for \$285.

Black Mamba

Rase Black Mamba outdoes the competition when it comes to travel. This model boasts a full nine inches of adjustability compared to five for the rest. This gives it at least 20 different height settings, which offers the rider a multitude of options, but I'm not sure I would ever need that many! Having the advantage in travel, however, did not outweigh the side-to-side saddle wiggle. It was much more prevalent compared to the rest. The Black Mamba retails for \$349.

Reverb

The new Rock Shox Reverb offers a purely hydraulic system. It also has infinite travel adjustments with an adjustable return speed, and a simple handlebar remote. You just push the button down to adjust. The one weakness which I'm sure they will be improving for future models was the side-to-side saddle wiggle, which was certainly noticeable in this model. The Reverb retails for \$295.

Fox Prototype

When Mitch and I stopped by the Fox Racing Shox booth to check out all the new models of shocks, we were pulled to the side and given a glimpse of their new adjustable seatpost prototype. This prototype was nice. It had absolutely no side-to-side saddle wiggle and was very smooth in its functions. They still have some testing and work to do on the prototype, so it is not expected to debut until 2012. When it does, it will no doubt be another quality product from Fox Racing Shox.

So there you have it: a list of what we found to be the top models out on the market today...and perhaps the future.

Charlie is the sergeant responsible for ILSTU Police Department's bike patrol. He was certified as an IPMBA Police Cyclist in 1998 and an IPMBA Instructor in 2001. He serves as industry liaison on the IPMBA Board of Directors and can be reached at cesumme@ilstu.edu.

© 2011 IPMBA. This review appeared in the Winter 2011 issue of *IPMBA News*.