

"Dick Frantz' Riding Position" gets referred to a lot on several forums of the BMWRT.COM Discussion Board. It turns out that when its PRINCIPLES are applied to create certain kinds of body part relationships that it applies to almost all motorcycles. I view that as a "Perspective" to share, and my words as direction toward things to look at, and seeing, to learn what might make things better for you all.

So, I thought I'd write up a "short version" of it, and SAVE it somewhere. In the next few days, I'll build it into a comprehensive Article that can be referred to anytime -- and hopefully we'll get resources to build us a FAQ particularly for those unfamiliar with the K1200RS, and place it there with the many, many things we've all found out about the K1200RS.

First, the K1200RS is NOT a Sport Bike. It is a Sport Tourer, and has characteristics that make it very strong at that task or that kind of riding. That also makes it LOOK LIKE a Sport Bike, and also DO THINGS that are considered strong points of Sport Bikes. From my perspective, the KRS is not better than "good" at being a Sport Bike, except that it rises to "very good" or even to "exceptional" at things like Linear Response; Handling Uneven Road Surfaces; Stability in All Cornering Modes; Stability Leaving Corners; and Braking. It also does All Day Sporty Riding at an elevated level, something that MASTER YODA expects from Sport Bikes (and is absent in the current Race Replicas that are CALLED Sport Bikes).

The "All Day Comfort Thing", is REQUIRED of a Sport Tourer. When someone finds that absent in the K1200RS, I question how they are operating it. True, individual physiology, our frigging size(S), and any deficiencies (I have two VERY injured knees), can effect how ANY riding configuration is responded to, and then thought about. But, I consider that any fairly healthy person who falls within perhaps the 95th percentile of sizes can be, or BECOME comfortable riding the bike. Why? IT WAS BUILT TO PROVIDE THAT.

You sit ON TOP OF a Sport Bike. You sit WITHIN a K1200RS.

Sport Bikes REQUIRE getting weight OFF YOUR BUTT so the rider can slide his/her butt inside corners to effect a different CG. CONSEQUENTLY, Sport Bikes INDUCE "weight on the handle bars".

Someone sitting on a K1200RS will note some ergonomic differences, and FALL TOWARD, positioning their body AS IF they were riding a Sport Bike. DUMB!!!! Well, not so much dumb as UNINFORMED. They've PREJUDICED, rather than EXAMINED.

They probably also CARRY FORWARD certain muscle memories DEVELOPED, NOT BORN WITH, from riding other conveyances, SOME of which can have been motorcycles. ARM CHAIRS come to mind In short, people have LEARNED... TO SIT

UPRIGHT. It is NOT in fact a FUNCTION for which the human body was designed ---- AND continued practice CAUSES DAMAGE.

AUTOMOBILES PROMULGATE THE SEATED POSITION. Only lately have they applied several things like Lumbar Support to keep that position from KILLING the user. Oh... forgive my hyperbole, but SITTING UP just is NOT good for you.

MOST motorcycles CONTINUE THE PROMUGATION. To one degree or another, they emulate "Sit Upright" (So much so that the term UJM, Universal Japanese Motorcycle, was partially defined by a riding position called "Sit Up and BEG", like a puppy.). This position became A MENTAL NORM. We THINK that's "how a motorcycle is ridden" -- HUGE numbers of us. Well, the important thing to remember is YOU LEARNED to do it that way (Remember how you BECAME ABLE to ride for longer and longer periods?): You can LEARN "something else".

The largest, developed, muscle memory is the angle between torso and thighs. This is controlled by the LARGEST muscles involved in riding. We set that PATTERN, not an "exactness" very early in American life by our caregivers "Sitting Us in Chairs". Note that SOUTHEAST ASIAN PEOPLES go about TEACHING their kids to SQUAT, and that brings on an ENTIRELY DIFFERNT THIGH/TORSO relationship. In fact, that posture is MUCH MORE COMMON ACROSS ALL OF ASIA. Anybody care to guess where JAPAN is located? People sitting on tatami mats, or with feet and legs folded beneath their butt -- and THUS, torsos leaned forward? Hmmmmmm.

Anyway, some things can be difficult to overcome for some folks --- WHEN they have become HABITS rather than cognizant, controlled RESPONSES. A great example is about leaning motorcycles in corners. The human develops a sense of danger when leaning any farther than they can do so when STANDING UP. HUGE danger signals are sent when lean angle extends much beyond the angle the neck can be bent AND STILL KEEP THE EYES LEVEL (20 to 30 degrees). It's OUR Response to BODY SIGNALS I'm referring to that can make up our "sense" of our comfort levels. Those things can CHANGE --- WHEN WE CONTROL THEM, rather than the other way round.

The K1200RS calls for, was DESIGNED TO PROMOTE a CANTED FORWARD RIDING POSITION. Yes, very much, this was done on purpose by BMW. They knew it was REQUIRED to get the K1200RS performing to the desired levels, AND, very much, KEEP the rider COMFORTABLE for LONG PERIODS OF TIME, in the regimes where the bike was intended to be most often used (i.e. NOT riding on city streets). It all starts with a LOW SEATING POSITION -- NOT high, like a Sport Bike.

BMW then set out to DISCOVER, "what else" needed to be done to: 1) ADD comfort to this position (Provide a supporting airflow); 2) SUPPORT the position (Move the pegs downward, but still allow GOOD clearance when cornering to SPORT TOURING levels); 3) Reduce effort to maintain the position (Move them FORWARD to change the "Support Vector").

THIS REMOVES THE NEED TO PLACE ANY WEIGHT ON THE HANDLE BARS. Do so if you wish, but you'll pay the price in Comfort. AND, you'll find that you MAKE THE BIKE FEEL DULL AND UNRESPONSIVE, when compared to properly, YES, PROPERLY, distributing your weight about the bike. "Properly" is appropriate here in light of GAINING the Performance Qualities BMW BUILT INTO the bike. And, this should give some insight into WHY Motorcycle Magazines don't seem to find the riding qualities we owners do when they test the K1200RS: THEY ARE RIDING IT WRONG -- Differently than it was designed to BE RIDDEN.

The keynotes to "the" Riding Position are:

Bend at the HIPS, not waist

Maintain a SLIGHT arch to the back, not allowing it ever to "curve"

Move the butt AFT so the weight is OVER YOUR FEET.

Apply pressure to the feet, using the THIGH muscles, so you are sitting "lightly"

ELBOWS BENT, now DROP the hands to the bars.

One needs to move fore and aft on the seat to make ALL those things happen. Except for the Hip Bend, they are NOT Absolutes, but rather RANGES. Move about until you can see ALL of them are happening to some extent -- and NO weight is being placed on the handlebars.

Do this when the bike is STATIONARY. Sit on the stopped bike. TAKE TIME TO do this. PRACTICE. LEARN.

In fact, one must TEACH their own body. This is called TRAINING. You'll notice all GOOD training is done by ABSTRACT EXERCISES, not "just running off to the playing field and doing what you HEARD."

LEARN to press down with the feet. Then, when riding, CHECK that's what you are actually doing. You SHOULD be able to lift your butt off the seat at a milisecond's notice: As when knowingly approaching a severe bump in the road.

LEARN to bend at the hips. Do it BOTH ways, and show YOURSELF that you CAN operate the body differently. BE WILLING to touch that frigging gas tank. SOME people are incredibly fearful of touching a gas tank -- It's almost laughable. WHO SAID you shouldn't touch the gas tank? (Afraid of scratches? Poo, poo. Get some clear tank protector.) Better to think "The gas tank is my FRIEND." It WILL be some day when you are six hundred miles into your ride and still two hundred miles from your destination. OR, while you are LEARNING to ride this bike and may be only an hour or so into your ride. Your body is NOT YET... TRAINED to operate that way.

FLOP YOUR ELBOWS. PROVE you have your weight supported, mostly by your feet, and by your butt. Do it while riding too. Even after 25,000 miles on an RS I STILL end up leaning onto the bars somewhat and need to readjust my position.

Many people will need to CHANGE the riding position they use for riding on the K1200RS. Understand one OPERATES their body to do virtually anything (except things like sleep, and even there...). Because "Sit Up" is so common in our lives, it can come to seem we are not OPERATING the body, even to "just sit". But, sit on a wooden stool for six hours and send me your impressions of what you encounter. ALL OF IT is something called WORK.

On bikes LIKE the K1200RS (Aprilia Falco and ZZ-R1200 come to mind) a MODERATE riding position is called for, but one that is still a CHANGE for some folks. What one must do, is FIRST Change One's Mind. Then, go about changing one's USE of one's body. Mind controls Body (In HEALTY people).

DO IT RIGHT. Take the time to sit on the stationary bike every day when you first get it (or go do a Test Ride). Flex, tighten, relax, and move about across a small but definite range of positions on the bike. Then, "get it right" and without moving, FLEX all your body muscles, in order, from the feet toward the hands and head. FEEL what that feels like when you relax each muscle, and are STILL holding the proper Riding Position. Close your eyes and FEEL IT. Not ALL the muscles are FULLY relaxed. You are USING some of them. How? How much? To do WHAT?

Then, when you've done that for all the body's muscles (even the ones you don't THINK you are using), Flex them ALL, and relax and FEEL IT OVER ALL. Even go so far as to "stand back 10 feet and look at yourself" if you can. Feel and See.

Now, in your ride, attempt to maintain THAT position (with appropriate changes to handle riding circumstances) for as long in your ride as you can. When you tire, STOP. Get off the bike and bend, stretch, and flex all your muscles. WALK until your walking feels normal. Then get back on the bike IN THE PROPER POSTION THAT YOU CHECKED BEFORE RIDING OFF, and repeat. You'll find you ride longer and longer, and comfort GROWS AND GROWS. Eventually, IT WILL SEEM NORMAL.

One note is that if you notice "being tense", either some "bulk of muscles are being tight", or that you have "a pain" or "a tight cord" or some other sharp discomfort, do stop. You are COMPENSATING for something that has ALREADY become tired. You should have stopped sooner, and you need to develop THAT muscle that you tired out. Right then, it will be had to find that muscle, so NEXT time you start riding, do a better job before riding off of FINDING what muscles you really need to use to hold that positions (like you hold ANY position). Then ride in perhaps a less intense environment so you can PAY ATTENTION to shifts in your muscles use, and PARTICULARLY, Elbow Flopping, Butt Lifting, and Neck Twisting. I promise, if you are doing this CORRECTLY, pains should disappear, and NOT be present. But note, that even

MASTER YODA gets tired, his MUSCLES get tired during a 14 hour riding day... and sometimes a SIX hour riding day.

USE YOUR THIGH MUSCLES. They are the most powerful in your body. And, they tire less and less quickly. Place your body weight so THEY can be doing the work. Even with bad knees and a bad back, I can ride this lovely performing machine from sunset to long past sunrise. And, many guys can ride longer than I do. Dammit.