

# FOOLSNOOK

## Bike Fit

“Yeah, that looks about right mate.”

That's what I was told when I bought my first road bike and it would appear that I am not alone. Off you go, none the wiser. You put up with the niggles and discomfort and thoughts of 'how the hell am I supposed to ride in the drops?!' as road cycling is all about suffering isn't it? You move things around with a bit of luck ending up in a position with some semblance of comfort.

Bike Fitting as a professional service is a fairly new phenomenon. Some folks are lucky and are comfortable as they are, they have found or adapted to a position that suited them. Chances are though, they may still well be missing out on the benefits.

Not only does a competent bike fit increase comfort on the bike but can get rid of any niggles that may develop into something more sinister, it can make you more aerodynamic (or able to hold a more aerodynamic position for longer) and increase your power output. All these things are, indeed, good.

There are numerous companies/specialists out there these days ranging from individuals to globally recognised 'fit systems' such as Retul or Specialized's Body Geometry which are done at their stores. Things have moved on even further now with services such as Apex where the rider sits and pedals on a self adjusting jig. Prices vary widely too. The top Cyclefit session is £500. The important thing to remember is that a bike fit system is only as good as the person using it.

I have had the benefit of using two different people, Adrian Timmis at Cadencesport in Barton Under Needwood and Richard Salisbury at Pedal Precision at the Velodrome.

A bit of background - In 2009 I broke my leg quite badly coming off at speed down the Goyt Valley. It was operated on and metalwork put in. Instead of putting me off cycling it steeled my resolve to get better. I had an issue though. I just could not get comfortable on the bike and I was at times in a fair bit of pain.

I was always toying with giving cycling up as I felt it wasn't worth the pain and discomfort but in early 2010 I did a bit of googling and happened upon Adrian Timmis who was at the time operating from his house in Barton Under Needwood. Adrian offered a bespoke bike fitting service including moulded footbeds. This piqued my interest so I went down.

Having had a good look at me and a discussion about my cycling he cracked on with the actual fit. In short, the tweaks on the bike were fairly small in terms of absolute measurements but the revelation was the introduction of moulded foot beds and cleat shims. The foot beds are moulded and produced there and then, plonk them in your shoes and prepare to be shocked. A comparison with the shoes without footbeds was a real eye opener. My feet rolled around in my shoes without the beds in and this was causing discomfort and eventually pain over longer rides, as well as causing power loss. The result was instantly a smoother, more efficient pedalling action, and a subsequent increase in power. Who doesn't like the thought of free speed?

Such was the effect of the insoles I spoke to my doctor who referred me to a podiatrist. The podiatrist found very quickly that I in fact needed inserts all the time and made me some.

I had poor knee tracking too which was corrected through the use of cleat shims. If you think how many times you pedal that's a lot of pressure on the knees in the wrong plane.

He also sorted the front end out, no more shoulder, neck or wrist discomfort either and I could actually use the drops comfortably.

I had a great year on the back of that winning the club handicap TT championship and doing ok in a few races.

In 2011 things started even better until another accident where I broke my back and collar bone.

Over the subsequent 2 years and the change in my body I developed pain at back of knees, ITB issues, lower back problems and a distinct loss of motivation no doubt in part to the rather serious injuries.

I decided it was time for another bike fit...

Due to the increased cost of Adrian's service and the travel distance I decided to try Pedal Precision at Manchester Velodrome.

Richard started from scratch, he ditched all the cleat wedges instead making an angled insert in the shoe and bolstering it up slightly, but kept the footbeds.

Then I got on the bike

My Knee/ITB issues, I was told, were due to muscle weakness in certain areas. Turns out I'd hardly ever used my glutes whatsoever, for anything, since my 2<sup>nd</sup> accident.

Over time however I noticed niggling issues again with my knees and back and I never felt as comfortable or smooth as with Adrian's first fit.

So I went back to Cadencesport late last year and Adrian sorted me out. This time in the new shop, with more equipment, technology and bling on show but still with Adrian's expert eye.

I genuinely don't think I'd be riding still had I not been to see Adrian in early 2010.

If you have any discomfort on the bike or indeed are interested in seeing if you can get faster for 'free', don't settle for "yeah that'll do mate," get yourself fitted. Do your research, word of mouth tends to be a safer bet than a flashy new system. Cyclists think nothing of spending 200 quid on a carbon fibre

seatpost and handlebars to save a few grams, whereas a good bike fit can transform your riding.