

Where'd The HP Go?

I purchased a new 2001 Kawasaki ZX-9R back in March of 2002. The Certificate of Origin lists the hp (S.A.E.) at 144.0. At 1800 miles, the dealership installed a Dyno-jet jet kit and K&N filter, keeping my stock exhaust. The result was better response at lower rpm. No dyno test was performed before the jet kit and filter installation.

This October, I had my bike dyno tested. The end result was 126.4 hp (less than I expected). The mechanic said, between 10,000 and 12,000 rpm the results were flat, just a 1-hp change, and guessed that the bike was too lean in this area.

My question is, should the end result have given more hp, like the listed 140 at the rear wheel, and would an aftermarket exhaust help? Is it possible that the drive train consumed 18 hp?

Mike Kononchik
makononchik@netzero.net
Mystic, CT

Mike, the thing to remember is that manufacturer's hp ratings are taken at the crankshaft, and a rear wheel number will typically be 15% less, on average.

What you've reported makes sense. The stock exhaust may well put a limit on what can be achieved at peak, and the improvement in driveability is what you should expect with a jet kit in that configuration. But if the mechanic thinks rejetting will make it better, you might consider paying for his time to try it. A small change in jet number can often make a significant difference.

So, yes, an aftermarket pipe may help hp, and yes, the discrepancy from crankshaft hp to rear wheel hp is what you should expect to see. But remember that the aftermarket pipes that make the most hp-difference are usually so unrestrictive as to be very loud (and often trade bottom end power—where you use it most—for peak power). And you should seriously consider if you'd enjoy a very loud pipe. We'd recommend against it.

ABS Faults & BMW Battery Advice

Chuck, I saw your question about the battery in your GS in MCN.

I think you were slightly misled by both your dealer and the magazine as far as the battery and ABS issue. Here is the problem: The ABS needs to "see" approximately 11+ volts (I don't know the number exactly), in other words, a certain voltage at all times or it will assume there is a problem and fail itself. Occasionally, the voltage to the ABS will dip below the minimum when you engage the starter. This is more common with a weak battery or when it is cold outside. When this happens, the ABS lights will flash alternately, meaning the ABS is not operating. The standard cure is to ride for a

minute or two to let the bike warm up, then shut off the bike and start it again. A bit of a pity, but no big deal.

A lead-acid battery may be slightly less prone to this behavior, but I've seen it with both the OEM battery and with maintenance free batteries. In fact, I've tried a few maintenance-free batts. A battery from Westco caused pretty consistent ABS failures on startup. I have had an Odyssey battery in my RT for several months. It seems to be a little stronger than the Westco. I have had no problems so far.

Here is my recommendation. Leave the current battery in. If you start getting ABS failures on startup, There is no particular need to change the battery as long as you don't mind doing the "stop and restart" routine. Eventually, over a period of years, your battery will weaken to the point where the stop and restart will not reset the ABS. At that point you should get a new battery.

You might consider changing to an Odyssey battery. They can be purchased over the Internet for about \$75. BTW, there are lots of places on the Internet with good information about these bikes. My favorites are bmwsporttouring.com, advrider.com, and ibmwr.org

Good luck with your bike.

Jim Moore
HDBESQ@aol.com
San Diego, CA

Tire Size Calculations

I have an '03 Triumph Speed Triple with a 190/50-17 rear tire. I'd like to switch to a Dunlop D220 but they only come in a 180/50-17 size. As far as I know, the second number in the designation used to be the percentage of the tire's width. Someone told me that the second number is now directly representative of the tire's aspect ratio, i.e. 50 means 50mm tall. If that's true, could I swap the 190 for the 180 if the aspect number is the same?

Allan Howard
nomadmax@hotmail.com

Allan, the numbers 180 or 190 refer to the maximum width of the tire in millimeters. The 50 refers to the aspect ratio, but means the tire is 50% as tall as it is wide (in those cases, either 90mm or 95mm tall). The 180 tire will be slightly shorter and smaller in diameter, although the effect will be slight. But the 180 may well improve your cornering response, as wider tires slow the steering and are often fitted because they look sexier in the showroom, rather than for their handling. The D220 is a tire with a compound biased more toward mileage rather than grip, just so you know that. If you're into fast cornering, it might not be the best choice for you.

Re: CB400T Carb Overflowing

I read with some interest your response to Bob Martin in the October 2003 issue concerning his fuel overflow problem with a 1978 Honda CB400T. I used to work at a Honda dealership and remember working on a CB400 from around that vintage with the same problem. I replaced the needle (I believe the seat is not removable from the carb body) and checked the float level and reinstalled it on the bike. The fuel continued leaking from the bike. I then removed the carbs again and checked for damage to the seat, water in the gas, dirt, etc. After about the third time I did this, I closely examined the float bowl, when I found the overflow standpipe (a brass tube coming from the bottom of the float bowl rising to nearly flush with the top gasket surface) was split along the seam of the tube. This would cause the fuel to drain out of the float bowl whenever there was fuel in it, but leaked so slowly, it would let the bike run normally otherwise. I think I went over to the local boneyard and got a different float bowl, and it ran fine with no leaks. I don't know what caused the tube to split. It almost looked like a home water pipe that froze. I don't recall ever running into that problem again so it must have been a freak occurrence. I hope that I helped you get to the bottom of your problem.

Bearndog3@aol.com

Re: Drooling From H-D Air Cleaners

Here is the scoop on the drooling from my personal experience and investigation.

The breather system vents oil into the Screaming Eagle filter, and every time you twist the throttle, gas is sprayed into the air cleaner by the accelerator pump. After a period of time, the gas washes the oil out of the filter and it runs out the bottom of the air cleaner. It really makes a mess of your bike.

This doesn't happen with the stock air cleaner because the filter material will absorb much more oil and evaporation will dry it before it starts dripping. The way to alleviate this problem is simply to wash your filter element frequently.

The instructions say not to blow forced air through the filter, so I wash mine in gasoline and let it air dry. I do at least two washing/drying cycles. It then goes quite a while before it starts drooling again. If I am out on the road away from home when it starts, I go to a gas station and use their paper towels to wipe out the excess from inside the bottom of the air cleaner cover and then stuff a towel or two in there, at the bottom, to catch the drips until I get home to clean it.

I'm not aware of any real cure, but frequent cleaning of the Screamin' Eagle air cleaner takes care of the problem. By the

way, if you always roll on the throttle slowly, instead of twisting quickly, you won't have the problem, because the spraying of gas into the air cleaner won't occur.

My wife never has the problem with her Heritage, except when I ride it. If you want to see this for yourself, just remove your air cleaner cover, start the engine and twist the throttle. You will see the gas spray out of the carb. Then gently roll on the throttle and you will not see gas spraying out.

Harvey Niblack
capharv@hotmail.com

What About Tensioner Debris From H-D Twin-Cam Bearing Failures?

In your files of H-D Twin-Cam bearing failures, do you have any folks that have had camchain tensioner follower failures/fixes? What happens when ground-up tensioner particles go through the engine?

Paul Dodge
Pdodge@webtv.net

Almost all of the tensioner problems we have seen occur during reassembly of the engine, when the follower is permitted to snap back into position, as opposed to being released slowly. This kind of failure does not put any debris into the engine. If a tensioner part fails during engine operation, in all probability, the plastic from the shoe would be the main concern, and it may foul or jam the oil pump or clog a passage. But since the debris is softer than the metal engine parts, it would not likely cause damage by itself unless that damage were caused by oil starvation. If the passage to the scavenge side was blocked, the lower end could fill with oil, but that would normally be very noticeable at the airbox (oil would start to pour out).

Strange Concours Clatter

So far, I have 4200 miles on my '03 Concours. I love my Concours but I am concerned about valve noise. When the engine is cold, it clatters badly. The dealer adjusted the valves at 600 miles and said they were very loose. That helped the noise some, but the dealer mechanic said that the Concours was always noisy and that there was nothing to worry about. I adjusted the valves again at 4000 miles and this time they were very tight.

So I set the tolerance at the specified shop manual setting. Now, the engine clatter is still very noticeable when the engine is cold. Otherwise, it runs great, and the engine is quiet when warmed up. Is this normal for a Concours to have such clattering valve noise when the engine is cold?

I have been a motorcyclist for 38 years and have owned many bikes, but I have never had one with so much valve noise.

The bike was broken in according to manual instructions. Would you please give me your opinion on this valve noise and if it is likely to cause problems in the future?

robertnbc@aol.com

Since your bike has bucket and shim type valve clearance adjustment, the only places that noise could really be coming from (assuming the clearances are right) are either the chain tensioner or the cams moving around in the journals. We suggest that you Plasti-gauge the cam-to-journal clearances to make sure that they are within the specifications, and if this does not reveal the problem, inspect the cam chain and adjuster mechanisms.

Reader's Superhawk Tip

Hello, I wanted to share with you and fellow Honda Superhawk owners a great tip I got off of Factory Pro Tuning's web site. Check the adjustment of your TPS (throttle position sensor). It controls the ignition system's response to throttle opening.

The most common complaint from Hawk owners is poor gas mileage. Mine got 30-32mpg, had poor throttle response below 3500 rpm and the sparkplugs were always black, despite at least a dozen jetting changes.

Turns out you can't fix an ignition problem with jets! The manual calls for the TPS to be set to a range of 4K-6K ohms in the idle position. Mine was factory-set at 7.5K. I reset mine to 5K and the difference is incredible. I now get 38-44 mpg, crisp throttle everywhere, with a 4000-rpm sweetspot at cruise that's smooth as silk. And the plugs burn a nice tan color.

This tip could apply to any TPS-equipped bike. I hope this helps some of my fellow MCN subscribers.

Steve Louis
Consulouis@cs.com
Dayton, Ohio

YZF750 Intake Valve Appetite

I would like to respond to a letter in the October Downtime Files from Mr. Gaer who has valve problems with his '97 YZF 750. The YZF is a great bike with the best chassis and front end of its day. That said, part it out and get an R1. Let me explain.

In the Spring of '95, my wife purchased a new, leftover '94 YZF 750. She loved that bike. All was well for the first 8K miles. At the time we were both working with a track school that traveled about the country. In August we decided to trailer our own bikes from our home in Southern Calif. to the Northwest for schools in Seattle and Portland. At the Seattle school, her YZF began popping back a little through the carbs during the last track session of the day. At Port-

land it wouldn't start, and a quick trackside investigation found air blowing back into the airbox.

When we got home, we checked the valve clearances. The exhausts were fine, but the intakes were too tight with some not closing at all. We set all the valves to the wide side of tolerance and did a leakdown test. The leakdown was good so we adopted a keep-an-eye-on-it approach, but we had doubts. Other owners had the same problem.

Sure enough, my wife soon became very adept at pulling cams and changing shims. She still loved that bike.

At 14K miles and two adjustments later, the intakes were tight again. We took the bike to a dealer with a good service department and they found the exhaust side was healthy but the intake seats were sinking and the valves were tuliped. Yamaha had not seen this before and had no explanation, but ponied up for a whole new top end (persuasive service manager). Well, the second head was no better and my wife changed more shims. Finally, at 17K miles on the second head, the intakes could no longer be adjusted and it was back to the dealer. Yamaha gave her another head (very persuasive service manager). The intakes started to tighten at 7K miles on the third head. The bike now had 38K miles and she had ridden my R1. My wife no longer loved that bike.

We now have 85K+ R1-miles between us without having to change one shim.

Keep up the good work.

Ken Chapman
in.coming@verizon.net



Downtime Files

is a joint service of
Motorcycle Consumer News
and the American Motorcycle Institute
of Daytona Beach, Florida.

Please keep in mind that since the AMI staff has not seen your motorcycle, the answers given are best-guess assumptions based on prior experience and education, and may not necessarily be correct. When in doubt, take your motorcycle to a qualified shop.

Send your typewritten questions and photos if possible to:

MCN Downtime Files
P.O. Box 6050
Mission Viejo, CA 92690

Send e-mail questions (with any attached images in jpeg format) to:

editor@mcnews.com
Subject Line: Downtime Files