

INTO THE RIDE #27

Force 5 Seating Options by Randy Schlitter



Seating options left to right:
M-5 Hard Shell, Zephyr w/narrow carbon pan,
Std. Zephyr seat, RANS Std. mesh

With the introduction of the Force 5 the request for a hard shell seat option followed. The Force 5 LE and XP can now be ordered with the M-5 for an additional \$185, or \$100 respectively, in place of stock seats. We offer the M-5 in fiberglass only. The difference is .25 pounds over the carbon and was not deemed worth the cost. A greater benefit would be to put that cash toward lighter chain, wheels, crank, or a cassette.



Riding the M-5 Seat

My first impression of the hard shell seat was, well, it was hard! That stiff feeling does invoke a sense of solid power transfer (although I have not seen any difference in my average speeds or ride times). The seat itself is not compliant in any way to your body, so if there is a contour miss-match you will feel it either instantly or over time, depending on the level of mismatch. I feel as if I am being molded to the seat, I look forward to someday having an “M-5 Back”.

The cushion on my bike is the dual density type. A layer of .5” gray closed cell foam is bonded to the 1.5” air-filter foam. This 2” combo layer does a pretty adequate job, however comfort is not measured

by cushiness alone. There is a lot of body heat bouncing off the hard shell seat. The resulting sweat fest was reminiscent of our early hard shell “bucket seats”. But something else was bouncing off the hard shell seat, sound. My nice and quiet F-5 was now this rickety sounding machine. The back of the M-5 seat acts like a backboard for the sounds waves, which have always been present, but now are thoroughly pronounced. It took a few seconds to realize it was not a mal-adjusted drive train. We are working on a solution to the sound problem, I am sure my vast knowledge of sound waves gained from owning Bose headsets will aid in finding a solution.

So the testing began, that was back in July. Many miles later, and hours on the wind trainer the M-5 seat is still on my Force 5. What is it about this odd seat that I like?

- 1.** The look. It is a sexy seat (except the cushion). It and Zephyr seat compete well for that sleek look. We need that, according to some, to make our bikes look more “road bike”. I guess the M-5 does that. The good old mesh seats do look less road bike, but they are more comfy.
- 2.** While I am on comfort, this seat has enough for the intended use. For short rides, less than 3 to 4 hours, racing, or short groups rides, it will do fine. How about touring? I suppose you could live with it, but to best answer that, ride the M-5 for about 3 hours, then sit on our stock mesh seat, you will understand.
- 3.** I like the compact nature of the seat, this was also so something I love about the Zephyr seat, that little bit less width helps in moving the bike in and out of doors, and seems to overall make the bike more manageable. I notice this mostly when out doing errands and getting on and off the bike a lot.
- 4.** The narrow seat width at the base is very nice. This shines big when stopped at light. On a high-racer seat heights are up there, and reaching the ground when stopped is an issue for legs of less length. A narrow pan width helps. In fact this has inspired a hybrid version of the Zephyr seat that we have just started testing. More on this later.

Dislikes:

- 1.** That cushion is plain ugly. You get used to it, but what can be done? Looking into it, a lot of riders have tried a lot of dress-ups, none to date have made it into the mainstream. Covers have been tried and some do ride with a fabric sheath over the foam, but it looks just a shade above draping a towel over a couch.
- 2.** Beause you sweat more, the cushion needs to be cleaned often. A hosing off after a ride works fine in the warmer months, other wise a dip in warm soapy water in the kitchen sink will do. Roll it up in a towel to dry the cushion. I have washed the cushion in a clothes washer. The unit is one of those front loading hi-tech types, that use considerably less water. Placed on low spin and short cycle it actually cleaned the cushion like new!
- 3.** Over long rides I feel a little pressure on the shoulder blades. The lumbar bend is too much curve for my back, but I have not yet fully molded to the seat. These are highly individual takes.
- 4.** Riding shirtless the foam cushion leaves an interesting “rash”. Although not permanent it evokes comments from my girlfriend who already thinks I am “rashed”. I tell her it is no different than scrubbing with sea sponge.
- 5.** Don’t expect the cushion to stay on during transport on a car, or in the back of a pick-up...not that *we* experienced such loss, but we were forewarned.

Mounting the M-5 Seat

Our mount uses a 2" Rad-loc custom made for the seat. The sprint braces are attached directly to the stringers. This has not been the recommended practice, but we feel it is better due the perfect alignment of the sprint braces. A large bearing pad serves to fan out the load into the stringer, and so far no one has reported a problem. The custom Rad-loc works great; not only as the seat clamp, but the seat itself is 1" lower to the ground.

Four countersunk screws set in special washers secure the Rad-loc to the seat front. Angles make up the mounts and allow the whole unit to pivot. Location of the holes could be moved a bit forward or aft for tweaking frame to seat fit.



When ordering the M-5 seat as an option it comes with sprint brace mounts, Velcro glued in place to both seat and cushion, and Rad-loc assembled to the seat. We only offer the single layer foam cushion, since our testing showed no real benefit over the dual foam.

M-5's On Other RANS Models

We have tried it on all 2" tube frames, the V2's, Rocket, and Tailwind. The longer wheel base types did not fare well, since the M-5 seat needs to be laid back to feel right and stay in the saddle. This means you are reaching a long way to the bars. The Rocket however was fine, as would be the V-Rex; if the interest builds we will offer an adaptor for the V-Rex.

A Hybrid Zephyr Seat

Our line of crank forward bikes uses a seat much less in width. After using the M-5 seat and enjoying the lack of width at the seat base, why not try it on the Zephyr seat? The seat off the Zenetik worked great! The less wide base allows the legs to reach the ground that much easier. Is this combination perhaps the most ideal form Zephyr seat yet? I will let you know in a few months, until then stay into the ride, and ride safe!



Adapting the Zenetik seat base to the Zephyr seat drops a few grams, and adds a new sleeker look. This is an option we are testing and may offer. Keep in mind it is quite a bit more narrow over our standard pan.

Until next time stay safe, and stay into the ride! -RJS

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