

Keep those shoulders back/good posture on a bike (or "Things I learned in Fit School")

So after spending a lot of quality time with people who make their living exclusively fitting people to bicycles, I did take away something that helped me on yesterday's ride. Keep those shoulders wide! Seriously, make an effort to "square up" those shoulders. Do not allow your arms to pull them forward. You'd be surprised how much better you'll breathe, and feel overall, if you don't let them roll forward. Who knew. Well, probably everyone else in the world but me. I've always seen rolled-forward shoulders as a reason to bring the bars in closer, but for comfort reasons. I never thought about how much better you can breathe if you're not essentially squeezing your lungs.

It's something you'll need to work on a bit; there's a natural tendency to let them move forward, kind of like slumping in a chair. Why fight it? Why spend the effort to bring them back? Aren't you supposed to "relax" on the bike? Well, yes! You should be relaxed. But the truth is, you can easily make those slight modifications to your posture without feeling like you're contorting yourself or spending any effort at all doing so.

Truth be told, most reading this probably have a longer stem, or perhaps lower, than is ideal. We get this idea in our minds that racers look a certain way, so that's the way we're supposed to look. But if you study racers, you'll find they don't all look the same; they're all over the map. Short stems, long stems, tall stems, low stems. And wherever they are, they do not look stretched out. They might look long but they don't look stretched. Their shoulders are squared up, so they can breathe. So many of us want that "long" look, but can't manage it because we're just not built for it.

There will be some of us who, frankly, are going to look like we're "perched" atop our bikes when properly fit. My son, Kevin, fits into that camp, because, while flexible (or at least far more flexible than I am, but then again, that describes most people on the planet), his legs are proportionately much longer than his arms & torso. Me? I ride in a position that's at least questionable, given my lack of flexibility. And yet it's comfortable. Film at 11 after I work it all out.