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What is a Good Bike Fit Worth to You?

This is a question that I hear a lot and see more on discussion forums and I have had my opinions about them in the past but I am here to tell you that it is worth a lot. I spent last Wednesday up in Waitsfield Vermont at Fitwerx with Ian and Sarah getting the fit that I wish I had gotten a long time ago. Read on to find out what a good fit entails or [click here](#) to see the details.

First a little history on my experiences with bike fits. I started out with the first fit at Cycle Loft in Burlington doing the 50 dollar fit where they really just scratch the surface of fitting. They measure the standard angles and look at knee over pedal but they did very little to the bike. Fast forward a year to two years ago when I was told that FastSplits in Newton had a great bike fitter. I spent 150 this time and got a better fit than I did for the 50 bucks but the guy who did it was the only person in the shop so we were constantly interrupted by people for long periods of time. He gave me the usual pitch about fitting the bike and the angles etc and I thought it was good since he seemed to know what he was talking about. He still made very few changes to the bike and pointed out that I needed to buy a new bike to really get the fit right. Let me guess, you have something that you want to sell me right? Yup.

I bought a new bike last year and I set it up the same way that the previous one was done so that my position on the bike was the same and I raced pretty well last year having PR's in both of my A races. This is good right? Yeah but I still did not feel right on the bike so I spent some time in the offseason this year tweaking things, trying new positions etc and still could not get it right. Enter Ian and Sarah. Fit Werx is a mid to high end shop that specializes in road and triathlon. Ian worked for SoftRide for several years and then went on to working on fitting people on bikes and building up his business so his experience in the area of fitting is as good as it comes. I decided to see what I could get out of what they refer to as the Performance Analysis" fit. The cost of the fit is \$350 to which you might say ouch right. I might have thought that before I had the fit but after I rode the same ride I had ridden the previous weekend, I was willing to go back and spend more. When I got to Fit Werx, we spent the first 45 minutes to an hour going through athlete history and general questions about my training and racing. Ian took down all of the information and then we went on to measuring all of the various body lengths that are important to fits. Not one of these things had been done in my previous two fits, no measuring and very little about my own experience. We then went on to flexibility and range of motion. He stretched my hamstrings to find my range of motion along with looking at my ankles and some other flexibility tests. An hour plus have passed and I am not even on the bike yet. Thorough does not even come close to describing Ian. He is writing notes on his pad and pushing, pulling and tweaking my body to see what it can and can not do.

He then set up the Serrotta fit bike with my current geometry and had me warm up the Computrainer. After that, we ran through a series of small tests to find an effort that I could work at that which was high enough to really work me but something that I could hold for 7 minutes at a time for 8-10 reps. Basically this meant about a 14 on the Borg scale. Once we had that, we started the 7 minute reps. The first in the aeros in my current geometry and then the second sitting up in the same setup. Once we had these two tests, he kicked me off the bike and went to work changing things. He changed my cleat position and pretty much all of the measurements of the fit. The third test interval was a pretty big change from my old position but Ian was in charge so I got on and rode. Felt better, I could breathe easier but the legs felt a little odd. As we went along, he made smaller and smaller tweaks to the fit. Some worked out well and some not as well as we wanted. He did not show me the results of any of the tests while we were working, he just had me focus on my cadence. Keeping the results from me kept me from thinking about or trying to compensate for things that he was doing. After each tweak that was made, he would remeasure things to make sure he had it right and then we would do it again. I was whipped by the time we got done but it was a good LT workout to say the least. He then took the measurements from the fit bike and transferred them over to my bike and then I got on that to see how it felt. Still felt a little odd but good. I could tell that it was an improvement but I still had no idea. He then told me that we had dropped my heart rate down 8 beats per minute from the first test to the last one. That is a pretty significant sum isn't it?

Well I wanted to put a little more context around it so I went home after a couple days of skiing and got on my CompuTrainer to see what really was the difference. The previous Sunday on my longer ride of the week I went 18.5 miles in 1:01:30 which translated to a 138 BPM average heart rate, 150 average watts and an average speed of 18.0 mph. This is a base building ride that I do primarily in zone 2 to work on endurance.

This time around, I wanted to add a few minutes to the ride to increase the time on the bike so I bumped the distance up to 19.5. Still the same course, flat and no wind. I started out after warmup and felt pretty good. So good in fact that I was having a harder time keeping my heart rate up where it was the previous week. My legs felt different but I was engaging some new muscles due to the changes in the fit. At the end of the ride I was left gawking at the following data: Time 58:02, 136 BPM average HR, 191 average watts and a whopping 20.2 mph average speed.

Let's look at this side by side to see the changes.

Details

	Time:	Avg HR:	Avg watts:	Avg Spd:	Distance:
Before Fit(BF)	1:01:30	138 BPM	150	18.0 mph	18.5
After Fit(AF)	0:58:02	136 BPM	191	20.2 mph	19.5

The obvious thing here is that I went a mile farther in less time. The next thing you see is that I added 40 watts power while I was working on a lower level than I did in the first test. The last thing and it is the thing that matters when racing the most is average speed. 2 mph faster. What does that translate to on a half IM course? Almost 15 minutes. For a full IM, a half an hour. All the while not even working as hard as I was in the previous test so it could be argued that I could have gone even faster or harder to match the previous effort.

Next time you are thinking about investing a bunch of money in new wheels that cost \$1500, think about getting a fit like I did. You are not going to get 2 mph out of a new set of wheels, I can assure you. Fit Werx has several different options for a fit if you want to start a little lower on the price scale, here is a link to their page with the options: [Fit Werx bike fits](#) Nobody in the Boston area is as thorough as they are and nobody else is worth the money in my opinion. Fit Werx also comes to the Boston area from time to time so call them and see when they will be down here next or head up to Vermont and get fit and make a ski vacation out of it as well. Ian and Sarah will also be at the Multisport Expo at Regis College on the 5-6th of March.