

Windshields and Head Buffeting

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The discussion of whether or not to have a windshield will always go on but for those who already have one, you may or may not like the results because of our good friend known as buffeting. You may be one who recently purchased a windshield only to come home with your head feeling like a punching bag, here's why.

First let's look at wind pressure on a rider and why some of us may have elected to purchase a shield. Assuming that most readers here are cruiser owners, we sit in a rather upright position. Naturally this makes us a natural sail in the wind we experience at higher speeds. We can usually sit relaxed around town but quickly find ourselves holding on tight at highway speeds. The reason for this is the wind pressure we experience is non-linear. This means that the pressure at 50 mph is not twice what it is at 25, but four times as much! You can do the math and figure that by 70 mph or more the pressure is really starting to mount. So, some of us quickly place that order for our shields but after some time some of us notice there's something not quite right.

What we've done with our shields is to block the wind in front of us but we're then subjected to the air attempting to regroup behind the windshield where we're sitting. This regrouping of air results in turbulence and we're usually sitting right in the middle of it. It'll come from the side of the shield and also from underneath. With many riders this turbulence seems to concentrate all its fury right around our heads leaving some with symptoms as bad as blurred vision at high speeds. We've removed the pressure on our chests but we're paying the price elsewhere. Its not too practical to make the shield wider but it is easily possible to make the shield lower with the use of lowers.

Lowers (see pic) are an extension of our windshield at the bottom. It'll force this regrouping air far enough down to where it attempts to take place near our shins and the engine. A much better place than our heads for sure. The end result seems much like riding in a convertible to me. There is swirling air around you but nothing that packs the punch of full blown buffeting.



Sources of lowers that I'm aware of are the ones like mine made by Topcop (volusiaowners.com member), Nationalcycle (made of chrome) and Memphis Shades. There are other methods of cutting down the wind on us such as the Air Wings made by Bakerbuilt. I have not tried them myself but they can be used along with lowers or without.

Every rider knows the debate of windshields on bikes. A shield can drastically change the look of a bike. In some cases they just don't fit with the custom design someone may have chose. If shields are your thing though, check into lowers. You may not be getting all you can from that shield afterall.