EPIC RIDES

EXPERT TIPS, TRICKS & RACECRAFT

Inside this Issue:

- *Race Winning Suspension Setup*
- *DIY Ding and Scratch Repair for Suspension Fork Stanchions and Rear Shocks*

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MTB Repair

Expert Advice Worth Keeping

How to Repair Mountain Bike Fork & Shock Dings & Scratches

Did you know you can repair the dings and scratches on your mountain bike fork and shock? My riding buddies couldn't believe the results when I did this for my own gear. You'll love the results, too.

You don't have to be very handy or mechanically inclined to pull off this MTB bike suspension miracle. It's surprisingly easy.

Tools You'll Need:

1 piece of 1000 wet & dry sandpaper
1 piece of 2000 wet & dry sandpaper
1 bottle quality brand acrylic nail polish (clear or match stanchion color)
1 small container filled with water for dipping your wet / dry sandpaper
1 small bottle rubbing alcohol (only a few ounces needed)
1 rag

This is worth doing to avoid tearing up your mountain bike fork and shock seals. Doing the repair will save you lots of money, grief and downtime. Once I performed this repair, there was no more apparent damage occurring to the seal.

Warning: Use care to follow my instructions carefully, as you do not want to sand any more of your suspension fork or shock coating than you need to in order to make the repair.

(continued)

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Step 1 –

Identify the scratches and dings to be repaired. I recommend starting with dings or deep scratches, for two reasons. First, it is easier to get the nail polish to build up and stick better when there are multiple layers applied in a ding. Second, dings are most likely to destroy your MTB fork / shock seals. Light scratches might be cosmetically ugly, but they may not do any harm. You may do more harm by attempting to fix them, so start off by fixing more catastrophic damage.

Step 2 –

Tear off a small piece of 1000 sandpaper, the smallest you can manage to actually sand with. The goal is to work with a small enough piece to avoid scratching off more MTB suspension coating than necessary. Remember to wet the sandpaper. I find having a little container of dipping water works the best. Just dip it as it starts to dry, and put a rag around your seals to keep anything from dripping down the leg. Sand the area gently at first. Apply more pressure if you feel comfortable. Remember, the sanding is just to clean the area so the nail polish can stick. You do not have to remove every ounce of coating. Just do some mild cleanup.

Step 3 –

Apply some rubbing alcohol to clean the area. Do not let it drip all the way down the stanchion legs, just apply it to the area surrounding the damage. Next blow on the area to remove any debris that might have been introduced when you used the rag to apply the alcohol.

Step 4 –

Grab your nail polish. Be sure to read the back of the nail polish bottle's directions to see how long it takes to dry. You can apply multiple layers in a day based on dry time in your climate. Apply your first coat of nail polish. Be careful and avoid applying excess around the surrounding area of the damage. You do not want to have to sand more than you need to in order to avoiding removing coating that is in good condition. Keep applying coats until the area is built up just slightly above the mountain bike's fork or shock factory coating. Before step 5, allow an additional 24 hours dry time.

Step 5 –

Tear off a tiny piece of 2000 sandpaper. Keep the sandpaper wet. Sand just the raised acrylic nail polish area so it becomes dead even with the factory coating. The 1000 sandpaper may be required first if the 2000 is taking too long. You're finished -- hit the trail hard!

M.S. aka - "Booter"- rider, racer, crasher & mechanic since 1986

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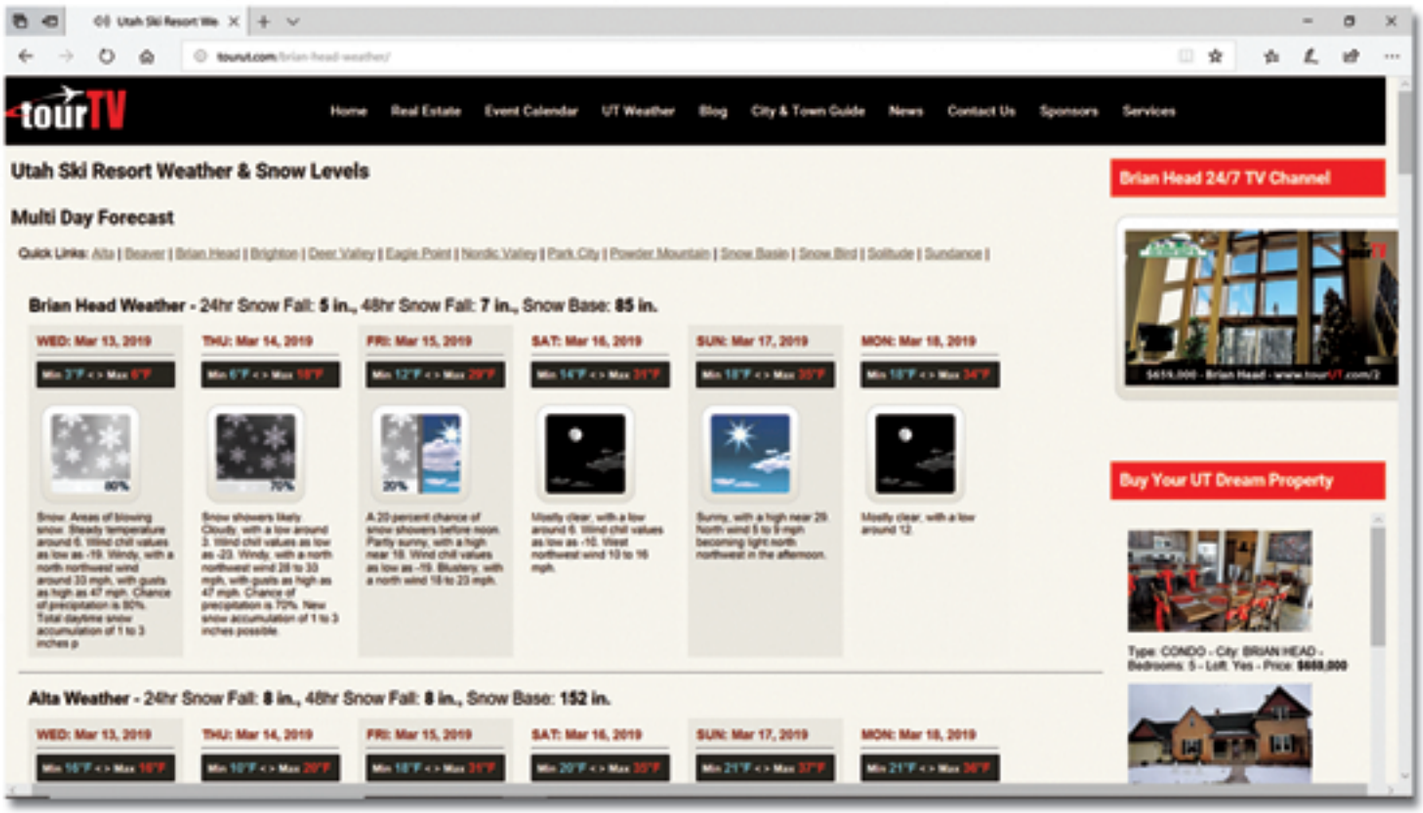

The weather report provides minimum & maximum temperatures, day and date, percentage chance of precipitation, image icon, plus long description including wind, temperature, precipitation, etc. The winter weather report includes all of the above plus the snowfall for 24 hrs., 48 hrs. & base.

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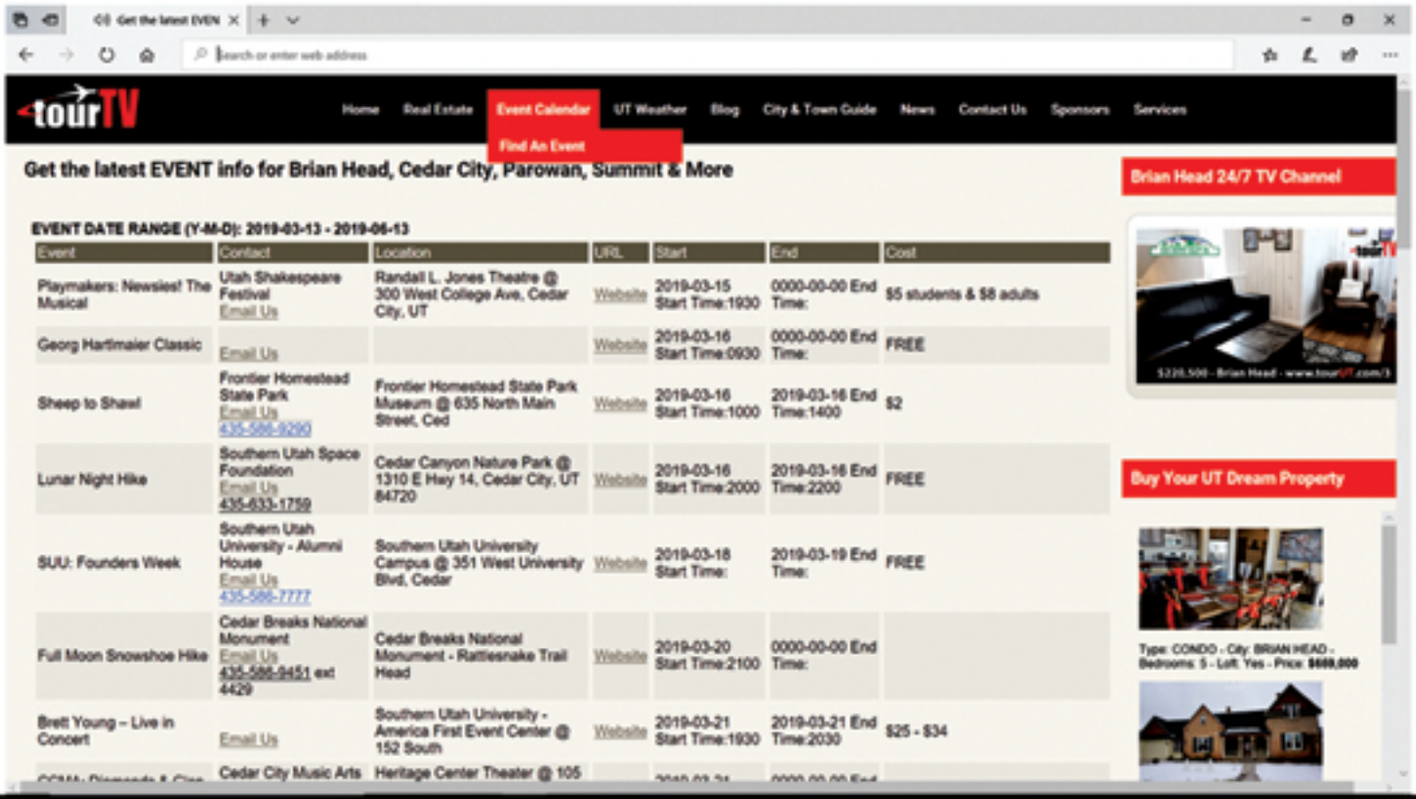

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MTB Racecraft

Expert Advice Worth Keeping

How to Set Up Your Mountain Bike Suspension to Win Races

Who wants to rely on your local shop, a friend, or some monk that lives at the top of a faraway mountain every time you want make a small adjustment to your mountain bike suspension? Now you won't have to.

Setting up your suspension isn't some black art that only a few people in the world are qualified to do. We'll teach you the basics of how to do it yourself.

First you need to understand some basic principles of how your mountain bike suspension actually works.

Mountain Bike Suspension Sag

Sag on mountain bike suspension applies to both your mountain bike's front fork and the rear shock. If you have 100mm rear shock with about 4 inches of suspension travel, it isn't actually all useable travel. Let me explain by focusing on your mountain bike's rear shock suspension first.

You might have heard people talking about sag percentages. On mountain bikes, it is common to set up your rear shock to 15-25% (XC), 20-30% (AM / Enduro) & 25 -35% (FR/DH).

Less sag is typically used on a less aggressive race course, i.e. less jumps, less rocky, etc.

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Less sag (more shock air pressure) can make the bike accelerate quicker and expend less energy when your shock is in trail mode. However, it will create a rougher ride. It requires more force to compress the shock and more upper body strength to control it in rougher terrain like a rock garden.

Less sag (more shock air pressure) setup can help with repeated bottoming out, assuming your compression is set up correctly. The upside is you gain a little more travel the less sag you use. On a race course that is mostly fire roads, 15% would be ideal. Here is how sag uses up some of your mountain bike's rear suspension. If you have a 100mm fork and you set up 25% of sag, your actual remaining useable suspension travel is now only 75mm (about 3 inches of travel). This assumes your rear shock has no bottom out system that prevents it from giving you the full remaining 75mm of travel. In order to set the sag, it takes two people to perform the operation.

First, use a bike stand to raise the rear tire off the ground, or have your assistant hold the rear tire off the ground with the saddle. You do this to make sure your suspension is fully extended. Now measure the distance from the center of the top to the bottom eyelet of the mountain bike's rear shock. The eyelet is where the bolt goes through the top and bottom of the rear shock to connect it to the mountain bicycle. When performing this on your front fork, you are measuring full stanchion extension from the top of the leg just below the crown to the bottom just above the fork seal. Let's use 6.5 in. as our eyelet example of a fully uncompressed XC mountain bike's rear shock. You can also check your manual or the bike spec to see what the shock eyelet should be.

To adjust the rear shock to 20% sag, here is the simple calculation:
In case you're rusty on math: 20% = . 20
Then to get .8 below, 1 -.2 =.8 (You don't need the zero)
6.5" x .8 = 5. 2"

Next you should sit on your bike with all the gear you normally wear, keeping the bike upright by holding onto a wall or similar. Your assistant will now measure the the XC mountain bike's rear shock, from the center of the top to the bottom eyelet. If the measurement is below 5. 2" you need to add more air pressure to the main chamber of the rear shock. If it is greater than 5. 2", the reverse is true, you need to let out a drop of air. Now you know the secret to setting up your sag.

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How to Set Up Your Mountain Bike Suspension to Win Races

Remember, some people find a sag setting they like, and never adjust it, while others tweak it a bit based on the demands of the racecourse. ***Tip*** – Changing your sag will affect both your rebound and compression settings, so you may want to keep notes on your base settings for various conditions so you can quickly get to the settings that help you win.

Use the same application to set up the sag on your mountain bike front fork as well. On an XC mountain bike try not to ever exceed 30%, as the amount of remaining useable suspension is only 70mm (2.75") and without good bottom out protection you could damage the internals hitting a 3-4 jump based on rider weight.

Mountain Bike Suspension Rebound

Almost all entry level mountain bike suspension allows for external rebound adjustment, usually in the form of knob / dial. It is often located at the bottom of the fork and many times red on the rear shock. Like the name "Rebound" implies, this adjustment helps offset how fast the suspension recoils back when it is compressed. If you hit a rock and your XC mountain bike's front fork compressed 2", a slower rebound setting will force the fork to return back to its full 100mm of travel slower, than if you have a very fast rebound setting. Slower rebound can make the fork feel sluggish over consecutive, very closely spaced obstacles like powering through a rock garden. If it is set too slow, after hitting the first rock the fork will still be attempting to return to its maximum suspension position when you hit the next rock and so forth.

Slower rebound does have its advantages. On courses with lots of jumps, slower rebound sometimes feels better on the landing, than being recoiled quicker. Examining these two examples above, it becomes clear there is a tradeoff in settings based on the terrain, how aggressively you ride, and of course the feel you prefer. To initially set up your rebound, you should start in the center of your rebound. If you have 10 clicks, start in the middle at 5. Be careful not to force the knob past the available clicks Check your manual if you need to. Pick a trail you ride often, with a variety of terrain. Attempt to slow the fork down at first and see how that works. If that isn't working, go in the opposite direction to make the rebound faster. You may have to ride the trail several times to get it right. Also if you have a higher end fork with compression settings, you may want to set these dials to the center position as well. Complicating the adjustment of rebound is the fact that both different sag settings, and compression settings have a direct effect on rebound. That's one thing that keeps mountain biking interesting.

(continued)

MTB Racecraft

Expert Advice Worth Keeping

How to Set Up Your Mountain Bike Suspension to Win Races

Mountain Bike Suspension Compression

There are two kinds of compression settings, high speed and low speed. Some mountain bike suspension offers neither externally, some offer one adjustment, while others have both adjustments. The compression system, like the name implies, is how fast the suspension compresses. High speed affects compression over fast, bumpy terrain. Low speed compression is the opposite and can affect bottoming on jumps or drop offs. The same suggestions for settings apply based on rebound as well, but each adjustment can affect the other settings, so it can be a bit tricky. Tips – if you are on a racecourse with big drops, increasing your low speed compression can help with bottoming out. If you are very aggressive over rock gardens, it can also help to prevent bottoming. You may have a built in or adjustable bottom out system on very high end suspension. Sometimes high speed compression settings will benefit from slower rebound speeds to counter the forces.

XC Mountain Bike Suspension Lockout

Most XC mountain bike suspension offers a lockout. It might be located on your handle bar, or you have to manually flip it at the shock. I highly recommend a handlebar system for both safety and efficiency. Obviously it's preferable to have a lockout on both the XC mountain bike's front and rear shock that work simultaneously. The lockout system on XC mountain bikes has improved dramatically over the years, as the systems now release a little on big hits to avoid suspension damage.

I damaged an older system with my lockout engaged many years ago. I crashed and didn't realize it flipped the lockout switch to active. I took off on an aggressive part of the course and damaged my internals. A real bummer! That kind of damage is hopefully a thing of the past, because even with a handlebar system, sometimes you forget to make the switch and hit something aggressive.

Conclusion

If all of this is just too overwhelming, ask a competent riding buddy, or trusted shop mechanic to get you up to speed. The moral of the story is, you will have a lot better chance to win races when you have the confidence to understand how your mountain bike suspension is reacting to different input, and how to adjust it accordingly for maximum efficiency.

M.S. aka - "Booter" - rider, racer, crasher & mechanic since 1986

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