

CT / Bias Tire Upgrade *For GL1800 and Valkyrie's*

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Fortunately the Valkyrie comes delivered from the factory with bias ply tires, unfortunately most owners do not understand much about tires - they are more concerned with brands not types. So they do the unthinkable and degraded to the hard MC radials tires. On the other hand the GL1800 comes factory direct pre-downgraded with radials. The biggest complaint vs. the GL is harsh ride even after the anti-dive is disabled. This is a given, the standard motorcycle equipped with the more common bias tires will have the tires set at 32psi average. A MC radial will not survive long at such low pressures so 40-44psi is the norm for MC radials. It is just common sense that a tire running 10 to 12 psi less will ride softer - and it does. Also the very construction of the bias vs. MC radial accents this difference even further. The MC radial has a very very stiff and nonflexible sidewall (non use steel belts) much like a tricycle solid rubber wheel. The bias like the Car steel belted radial has a very thin soft and flexible sidewall which further softens the ride. Keep in mind the #1 function of tires is suspension. The tire should absorb the majority of road deformities prior to the remaining energy moving to the 2nd suspension component, the spring / shock assembly. This is most evident on small to midrange bumps like tire snakes, concrete seams and small potholes. Also Bias plys tend to lay down a larger footprint and conform more accurately to surface variations, this leads to greater grip and traction than a hard unmovable MC radial can provide. Where the MC radial had it's only advantage is during very high speed cornering where the lack of sidewall flex will enable greater control given the rubber is of the correct formula. How often does a GL rider or Valkyrie rider oval race at 100mph plus? Fact is bias plys have been around for over 100 years and have been refined and improved immensely to the point they are in the same league as the modern Steel Belted Car Radials. MC radials are prone to cupping, out of round construction and typically require several wheel weights to correct for deformities. The bias ply typically do not require balancing and tend to stay round and cup much less (all MC tire cup due to profile). So this takes care of the front of the MC but what about the rear?

On these large bikes sporting 5-1/2" x 16" rims a standard 195 or 205 radial will not only fit but setup correctly the handling will be "transparent". Also these tires tend to last about four time longer than MC radials or even bias ply rear tires - and cost 50-60% less!

On the Valkyrie I run HUMHO Solus 205x65x16 which is slightly larger in diameter than the stock tire so at 70mph the rpm is down approx 200. A 205x60x16 would be perfect.

On the GL18 I just installed a HUMHO Solus 205x60x16 which is as tight a fit as you can get without rubbing. The tire is the perfect diameter however due to the non-convex tread profile the front right edge of these tires will rub if you go with a brand that sports a wider

less round cornered profile. This is why the Solus just happens to work. I run 28psi on this tire which is perfect for one or two up riding. 35psi on the front is also perfect.

The Valkyrie is much lighter than the wing so I run 32psi in the front tire and 22psi on the rear - the tire should exhibit the standard radial tire squat in order to perform correctly. While a MC tire has a convex profile and tends to "roll" in a corner the CT has a flat tread and one must rely on the tire sidewalls to collapse and expand to enable the lean to occur. Running a CT at 40psi or really anything 30 and over will destroy not only the handling but also greatly reduce the longevity of the tire itself.

Now both Wing and Valkyrie have exactly the same tires front and rear - how do they compare? Well the Valkyrie is lighter than the wing so air pressure needed to be tuned in, while the ride is obviously much better and it does have that "car radial feel" front and rear. The big wing still out rides the Valkyrie. The front suspension on the wing is about the best I have ever experienced (once the anti-dive is removed) four stage progressive springs (not brand) do a much better job than the dual progressive springs on the Valkyrie. The rear mono prolink style suspension on the wing also does a much better job than the Valkyrie. While the Valkyrie can be extremely comfortable under most conditions the wing is simply premium and cannot be improved once the tires are upgraded.

Handling - with the tire pressure set correctly - no difference from stock. The only place I see any change is low speed as these CT's seem to assist in very low speed handling. I can pull to a complete stop and never put a foot down, plus making a U-turn is noticeably easier. High speed / normal riding I see no change and the upgrade is totally transparent. Some have reported improved cornering however I will simply say it is as good as stock. The larger tire on the wing gets the speedometer back to normal and the ride height increases slightly and is also good for headlight aim. On the Valkyrie it dropped the rpm slightly so the mileage jumped 2mpg.

Downside? If you don't like the tire you are stuck with it for at least 30k, other than that I have not discovered a downside to a CT yet. Downside to the bias is if you get a flat on the road a dealer will install a Cement Radial and you will have to replace it with a good tire as soon as you get home.

Pictures.

Original Dunlop 195x55x16 on my GL18 - this tire has about 16k on it and still has about 80% of the tread depth left. I replaced this tire today (9/19/07) with a Solus in order to get the ride height back to normal and correct the speedo error.



KUMHO Solus 205x65x16 on the Valkyrie - new tire with only about 1k on it so far - no mods required to fit this tire.



Bridgestone Battlax BT45r front tire used on both bikes - the r stands for rear not radial. This is fairly common on the Bias tires, the mark them as front or rear but normally the rear tires work better on big bike rims. There is no difference in the construction or design.



Stack of recently removed MC radials - all show typical wear and self destruction all Cement radial experience. Top tire was the front tire on the ST1100 and the bottom tire was the rear.

These tires have about 7k on them. Middle tire was off the Valkyrie and mileage is unknown however I would guess 5k.

