

{MOD SQUAD}➔



"Through his" Paul Foster was pumped with the new manners that the CRF450R displayed. Here, he rigs a Perris Racewear suit around the better-looking red jacket.

//RG3 SUSPENSION & CLAMPS

BY THE TESTING STAFF OF ENR'S PHOTOS-GASTON-HILAR

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APPLICATION: All bikes (tested here on the 2007 Honda CRF450R)
RATING: 9

WITH VIRTUALLY ALL THE PRODUCTION BIKES coming out of the box with competitive motors, one of the most important modifications a rider can make to their bike is a personalized suspension setting. When it comes to bike setup, one size does not fit all, and proper handling is vital to keeping your bike going straight and the power to the ground. In an effort to optimize the performance of our '07 CRF450R, we enlisted the help of Rob Henriksen and RG3. Aside from being one of the coolest guys in the pits, Rob is a legend when it comes to bike setup and is the go-to guy for Team Suzuki's race efforts, as well as top privateers like David Vuillemin and Mick Wey.

While the Honda has a good stock suspension setting, for faster and/or heavier riders, the bike bottoms out pretty easily on hard landings, and the rear end has a harsh feeling in the mid-stroke on mild bumps. Although Honda has made vast improvements over the past few years in the cornering department, the CRF still has a tendency to push a little and under steer in the tight turns. Though the mighty Honda's symptoms aren't too bad, we welcomed any improvements that Rob and the fellas at RG3 could make.

When we handed her over, we told RG3 that we would like it set up for a 185 lb. pro-level rider and were hoping to obtain a plush action throughout the stroke and good bottoming resistance, but wanted to be careful not to go too stiff. In addition, we were also hoping to take some of the stubbornness out of the front-end when it came to initiating corners.

With an emphasis on plushness, RG3 replaced the shock's stock valve stack with a new setting that added a little firmness to the low speed, opened up the flow in the middle to alleviate the harsh point, and increased the high-speed damping to control bottoming. The forks received a firmer valve spec, and they went up one spring rate on both ends to accommodate a 185 lb. pilot. Topping off the package was the exchange of our stock 24mm offset triple clamps in favor of the RG3 20mm setup. RG3 highly recommends the 20mm clamps on the '07 Honda, as it tightens the steering and puts a little more weight on the front end, giving the rider a more positive feel in the corners. In addition, the patented four-post bar mount system helps reduce vibration and rider fatigue. When we took delivery of the bike, we asked Rob if they had accomplished our goals, and he just gave us his patented, "Bob's your Uncle!" Huh? Must be a New Zealand thing...

As expected, Rob did not disappoint, as the first thing we noticed on the track was how incredibly plush the suspension action was over the bumps. The bike ended up a very smooth, supple feel on the light chop, providing very little rider feedback, and the harsh midrange was now smooth as butter. The forks had a very progressive action that counterattacked everything we threw at 'em, including some pretty harsh landings. On the big hits, however, the rear end bottomed a little more than we would have liked, so we asked Rob if it was possible to keep the same smooth action, but bump up the high-speed resistance a little out back? Rob knew exactly what we needed, and the guys at RG3 got our shock turned around and back to us in no time flat. The result? Spot on! The supple feel had been retained, and we now had the bottoming resistance to attack those big hits with authority.

While the suspension package was a huge improvement to the overall handling, we can't say enough about the impact the triple clamps made on our bike. Our CRF feels like a completely different motorcycle entering corners, as we now confidently slice through berms like we are riding a lightweight 125cc. We were a little concerned that by going with a tighter offset that we may sacrifice some front-end stability, but that wasn't the case at all.

Overall, we came away very impressed with the work RG3 had done with our Honda. The bike works fantastic, and their customer service was top notch! We're not sure exactly how it works, but maybe Bob will be your Uncle, as well! ☺

Call 714/905-0439 or visit www.rg3suspension.com

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