

Product Review ~ Selle San Marco Regale Saddle

By TRP Staff



I met my wife when I was 26 years old. By that time, I had been on my own for 8 years. 8 years of coming and going when I wanted and doing what I wanted how I wanted to do it. Let's just say I wasn't particularly looking for marriage (or interference with what I considered my lifestyle of freedom) when my wife first caught my eye on a September night some 12 years ago. But, these things have a way of happening, and it wasn't but a year or two later that she began to talk things like rings and weddings. It was an attractive idea, I'll admit, but one that seemingly required me to abandon my comfortable existence. Fear of the unknown swelled over me like lactic acid in an over-weight hill climber's legs.

I have to admit, that's basically the same way I felt when The Racing Post approached me with an opportunity to review the 2010 Selle San Marco Regale saddle. Let's just say that saddles are a very personal issue. Compound that with the intricacies of fit, and the very thought of removing my saddle was enough to conjure up visions of my early fears of domestication.

No big deal you say? Let's think about it. A different saddle means different lengths, heights and widths. We aren't just talking about taking one off and replacing it with another, we're talking about rediscovering proper seat post height, tilt, and even set-back. That's right, the dreaded set-back. My fit was hard won. After much trial and tribulation, I finally succumbed to the pressure and drove down to see Dave Wenger who showed me the way of a wonderful fit. I guard my fit like a Michael Rasmussen guards his travel plans. Tamper with my fit? Nooo way!

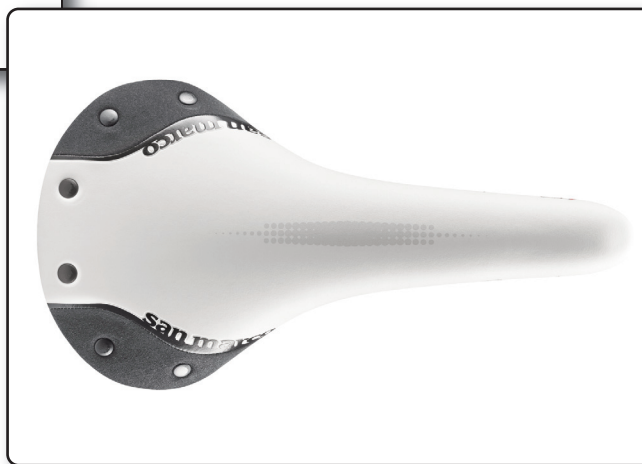
A week later, I received the Selle San Marco Regale saddle. Like my wife, it was a thing of beauty. A rich smooth black Microfeel cover graced its nylon shell and suede-like abrasion resistant corners gave it a durable yet elegant appearance. And then there are the rivets. Rivets, you ask? Yes, rivets, I say. The Regale saddle is a modernized version of the original Regal saddle, which has seen more Spring Classic cobbles than George Hincapie's backside. Keeping in line with this rich tradition, six rivets adorn the rear of the saddle and hold the cover in place.

I was intrigued. As any aspiring bike racer knows, the only tangible area of control one has is appearance, and were I to show up at the start line of any race riding a saddle with rivets, there's no mistaking that my fellow Category 4 racers would recognize me as a misplaced Euro-pro. Instant race cred, indeed.

Convinced, I painstakingly marked and measured my existing saddle fit. The Regale was a looker, but I still viewed this as a temporary affair. My current saddle was a very flat, extremely minimalistic model from another manufacture that I had rode for years. Early on in

that relationship, I had engaged in an afternoon rendezvous with a Fizik Aliante, which you may recognize as offering a more hammock style seating area. While this is a popular saddle, I quickly realized I was more of a 'sit on' versus a 'sit around' kind of rider. The Selle San Marco Regale is a bit of a cross between these two styles, so I was initially leery of its compatibility with my nether regions. This concern quickly proved unnecessary.

Once mounted, the difference was immediately apparent. The Regale's contours provided enough grip to allow me to feel like I was one with my bike, but its wide base supported my sit bones so completely that the relationship did not become too intimate. The contrast was significant – while my old saddle wasn't uncomfortable, the image it harkened was one of being perched atop a 2x4. The Regale reminded me of settling into the cockpit of a Ducati.



Even more apparent than the increased level of control, was the perception of increased power. I don't train with power, so I have no data to confirm this sensation, but there is no doubt in my mind that the wide base of the Regale provides me with a more efficient and stable platform from which to pedal from, which trans-

lates to more energy directed to the pedals. Speaking of that wide base, my previous saddle, which I'd been measured for, was 133mm wide. So, I was a bit concerned that the Regale's 148mm's might be too wide. Surprisingly, this has not been an issue, a characteristic I can only attribute to the Regale's shapely contours.

Let's talk technical. The Regale features Biofoam padding to cushion the sit bones – just enough to provide comfort, but not so much as to induce friction. The Regale does not include a cut-out, a feature I usually demand, but it does have something Selle San Marco calls the Core Zone – basically an area of increased padding and less resistance that serves the same function. Their website can provide the specifics, but apparently, it works as advertised, because I've not had problems with unwanted pressure. The Regale features Xsilite rails and weighs in at 220grams. There are lighter saddles to be had, but give me comfort over a few grams any day. Largely because of this, saddles have been one of the true holdouts for professionals, and while sponsorship dollars have recently started influencing the selection of some, you'll still see quite a few selecting the Regal line to carry them through 21 days of grand tour. For the unconvinced true weight weenies, a carbon fiber railed model is available that will knock that down to 179 grams.

My old minimalistic saddle sits on a shelf in my bike room and I admit to seeing it occasionally and feeling sentimental. There were also times early in my marriage that I missed the simplicity of single life, but let's be honest, what we are really talking about here is saddles, and who really misses a sore arse? With the Regale, it only takes a pedal stroke to know I'm happy with the change. If you have any doubt as to your current selection, are up for some change, or just want to see if something better is out there, give the Selle San Marco Regale a shot. It's been a fantastic switch for me.