Rider Education Report

In March of 2018 I replaced the stock saddle on our 2004 Gold Wing with a gently used stock saddle from a 2008 Gold Wing. This saddle includes the heating elements installed by Honda. For the temperature controllers, I used Gerbing heated clothing controllers and powered them by installing a relay connected to the battery and cycled by the accessory port in the Gold Wing fuse panel. This modification has worked very well for us during the eight years and 40,000+ miles since. In late fall of 2025, I noticed the seams of the front rider's cushion were starting to separate. As the weather continued to get colder, the gap in the seams appeared to grow wider. I tried a vinyl fluid
repair, which much to my surprise seemed to work acceptably on small sections, but the seams in other areas also began to split, presenting a much larger project. After searching the internet for available repair/replacement options, I chose to purchase a replacement seat cover set.

Made here in North America, the cover arrived after a few days. It is made of special cold resistant outdoor 4-way stretch marine vinyl material with a cold crack rating of -65 degrees Fahrenheit. The installation instructions were relatively simple in that one must remove the existing cover and replace it using the existing fasteners just like the original cover. In reality, this process was a little bit more involved.

The original cover is fastened around the edge of the seat pan with many ½ inch staples driven directly into the plastic pan itself. These fasteners are installed to make the cover fit tightly to keep a smooth surface when not covered by a person. Removing these staples carefully is important to minimize any damage to the seat pan so that the new staples will have a good foundation to fasten the new cover securely. Next, the loops of thread that are attached to the original seat cover seams must be removed from the plastic clips that hold them after being pulled through holes in the seat foam and the seat pan. After 18 years of weather and vibration, these clips can become fragile and require careful attention while removing them. Due to the tension from the foam of the seat, the thread loops are best cut before the clips are gently compressed and removed from their recess in the seat pan.

Installing the new seat cover was easier than I anticipated. I started in the middle by sliding the cover onto the "horns" of foam that wrap around the back of the front rider's hips. Next, I located the thread loops in the middle of the saddle and pulled them through and onto the clips, gently pressing each clip into its recess before releasing the tension of the thread loop onto the clip itself. I then alternated working forward and backward one row of loops at a time, until all the loops were pulled through and secured. The last step was to stretch the seat cover over the edge of the seat pan and fasten with new staples. I started again in the middle of the saddle and alternated sides carefully pulling the material taut and working to keep the seams along the edges of the foam beneath it. This operation is best performed with a pneumatic stapler and requires firm pressure to prevent the tool kicking back and not driving the staple fully into the seat pan.

I am pleased with the results and with the seat cover itself. The material looks good and matches the original Honda design. I think the seat feels a little bit softer, and I find that I do not slide forward so easily as I did with the original cover, perhaps due to the softer/more stretchy material. One thing I do notice is that the seat stays wet for a long time after rain. In hindsight, I think I should have treated the seams with a vinyl sealant like VLP and sprayed the backside of the seat cover with a water repellant. Maybe next time.

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