

# GOLD WING GL1800 FARKLING PROJECT

**B**efore I bought a Gold Wing GL1800, I owned a 1986 Gold Wing GL1200A and a 1991 Suzuki GSX750F. I loved the comfort of the GL1200 and the unflappable handling of the Katana, but was looking for something that embodied the best of both. Then Honda introduced the GL1800. Finally, the comfortable “sporty” touring bike I’d been seeking. I ended up buying a Hotrod Pearl Yellow 2002 for Christmas. It only needed some minor ergonomic modifications for days-on-end comfort and a few functional farkles for competitive long-distance riding, but that’s half the fun! During the first two years of ownership I installed a few farkles, made some appearance enhancements, and rode in several IBA individual challenges as well as a few rallies.

By Dayle Martin,  
aka “Quickdraw”



Unfortunately, I crashed it and eventually ordered a 2005 GL1800ABS in Hotrod Pearl Yellow. While I waited for the new bike to arrive, I rebuilt the 2002 and collected all of the accessories I thought I'd ever want for my 2005. Having almost two years of ownership, I was pretty sure I knew which accessories worked best for long-distance riding. My goal was to build a fully farkled LD bike with a unique look. Except for the three-stage painting and powder coating, I completed all the upgrades myself, including all of the wiring and metal fabrication.

Many of the parts I used can be purchased at almost any motorcycle retailer, many are specialty items, and some are no longer available. I have invested almost as much in farkles and upgrades as I did in the new bike! But in doing so, I also think I've finally created my ultimate 900lb long-distance *sport-bike*. The bike cost \$21,751.66 with Gap Insurance, a three year maintenance contract, and a four year extended warranty. The accessories listed in this article (not including the discarded, failed and replaced items, nor 250 hours of my labor) cost about \$19,000.

## REPLACEMENT SPEAKERS



The original OEM front speakers in my original 2002 GL1800 were replaced with some Alpines that are no longer available. The rear speakers were replaced with Sony Explodes, but I've since found that Polks, in particular, are much easier to install and are a significant improvement over the anemic stock items.

You'll need a wiring harness for the rear speakers and it helps deaden the sound of plastic resonance if you stuff the speaker boxes full of Polyfill. For those who don't like using a helmet headset, this is the best solution I've found.

**Polk Front Speakers (RSK-GL1815); [www.electricalconnection.com](http://www.electricalconnection.com); \$89.95**

**Polk Rear Speakers (SKRE-GL18); [www.electricalconnection.com](http://www.electricalconnection.com); \$100.00**

**Rear Speaker Wire Harness; [www.electricalconnection.com](http://www.electricalconnection.com); \$19.95**

**Polyfill for speaker boxes; Local Fabric Store; \$10.00**

## CB RADIO

It's very nice to be able to talk to other riders when out together for the weekend or to talk to truckers, about traffic or weather conditions when riding cross-country. A CB radio is the most common and compatible way I have found to stay informed. The Honda Unit is expensive and although a lot of plastic has to come off the bike to install it, operation and integration with the stock switchgear is seamless. I considered the Honda CB antenna, but installed the Sierra combo antenna since it actually works and looks better.

**Honda CB Radio (08E95-MCA-101); Local Dealer; \$593.25**

**CB/Radio Antenna; [www.sierraelectronics.com](http://www.sierraelectronics.com); \$108.95**



## PASSENGER AUDIO CONTROLS



I don't carry passengers often, but when I do it's nice for them to be able to adjust their headset volume. The Honda unit did not work well until I replaced the potentiometer. The Honda unit also gives the passenger a push-to-talk switch for the CB. Additionally, if I'm using my Shure E2 Earbuds (absolutely the best accessory purchase I've ever made) and

my passenger is using helmet speakers, I have to turn the system volume up so they can hear, but then the Earbuds volume is way too high. I solved this issue, when needed, by adding an in-line volume control in my helmet cable.

**Honda Passenger Audio Control; Local Dealer; \$150.00**

**Potentiometer Upgrade (Piher 531-PC16DC-1K); [www.mouser.com](http://www.mouser.com); \$3.00**

**Rider In-Line Audio Volume Control; [www.airrider.com](http://www.airrider.com); \$31.00**

## GPS AND SATELLITE RADIO



I put a Garmin Street Pilot III GPS on my first Gold Wing and loved being able to route a trip on the computer at home, upload it to the GPS, and receive audible route guidance. No more fiddling with maps or trying to interpret written instructions while riding. Although the Street Pilot III was a good unit, it had a very slow processor. Upgrading to a Garmin 2730 with an integrated satellite radio was a significant improvement. I did have to add an additional switch in order to hear the GPS prompts while listening to the CD player and installation was relatively complicated — both integrating the GPS with the audio system, using Kennedy Technologies equipment, and making a mounting bracket for the XM radio/antenna. But voice prompting GPS on a bike is the best thing since sliced bread!

**Garmin 2730 w/GXM Radio; [www.getfeetwet.com](http://www.getfeetwet.com); \$450.00**

**GXM Mounting Plate; Home Made; \$5.00**

## RADAR DETECTOR

Of all the accessories I've installed on the bike, the Passport 8500 radar/laser detector is the only one I can say for sure has saved me money. There are upgraded



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versions with more features now, and I will eventually replace it with the more sensitive Valentine One, but the 8500 works! For me, it has the best balance of price, features and quality. A waterproofing cover from Legal Speeding keeps it functioning in heavy rain.

**Passport Radar Detector (8500 X50); [www.escortradar.com](http://www.escortradar.com) ; \$339.95**  
**8500 Cover; [www.legalspeeding.com](http://www.legalspeeding.com); \$5.00**

## FARKLE MOUNTING SYSTEM

I looked at various dash and handlebar mounting systems. Being able to relocate, adjust and put farkles closer to my hands and face than a dash mounting system made RAM mounts the best choice for my short arms. I also wanted to use a BarPack map/receipt holding pouch which eliminated a “between the bars” mounting system. RAM Mounts makes a nice mount that attaches to the stock lever clamps and allows the use of up to four RAM mounting balls (2 per side).

**RAM Mounts; [www.rammounts.com](http://www.rammounts.com); \$383.31**



## HEATED ACCESSORIES

Honda's heated grip kit is a bit overpriced, but I really wanted the rheostat that comes with the kit. One of my grips eventually failed and repair was impossible, so I bought a Hot Grips kit and wired their grips to my Honda rheostat. I

switched the wiring from series to parallel, which was time consuming, but will make any future troubleshooting easier. I also have Gerbings heated clothing and found a nice place to mount the temperature controller — under the left switchgear. It looks like a factory piece and is very convenient to use. But it does require some trimming of one drain boss and time is required to properly route the wires.

**Honda Heated Grips; local Dealer; \$260.00**

**Hot Grips ; [www.hotgrips.com](http://www.hotgrips.com); \$124.95**

## TIRE PRESSURE MONITOR

Even if I check my tire pressure every morning, I really want early warning of tire failure in case I get a puncture while in motion. (I do check them before each ride, but as you know,



a single ride might take eleven days.) I feel that a TPM is a very valuable addition to any bike, so I installed a Pressure Pro system. It uses sensors that screw directly to the valve stem of each monitored wheel. Although the Pressure Pro does not monitor nor compensate for temperature like other systems, it will alert me if a tire is losing pressure. And the TPM has diverted several disasters.

**Pressure Pro — TPM (MOTO6); <http://advantagepressurepro.com>; \$150.00**

## DRIVING LIGHTS: EC PLATINUM ION, PIAA 1100X AND PIAA 910



Although the GL1800 has excellent stock headlights as it arrives out of the box, I wanted more lighting for safety and hunting bonus points in the middle of the night. I first installed a Platinum Ion Amber Fog Light Kit from Electrical Connections that remain on 100% of the time because they give the bike a unique visual signature that helps keep it from blending in with other traffic. To aid visibility in heavy traffic, I installed a

Kisan headlight modulator on the stock high beams. I installed the kit with a toggle switch instead of the daylight sensor it comes with because I don't want it on all the time. And for extra light at night, I added the PIAA 1100x kit, which fits under the nose cowl. The 1100x lights do make a very bright round area in front of the bike and light up the sides of the road well, but do not outshine the high-beams. So after doing some research, I next installed a pair of PIAA 910 pencil beam lamps that seem to light the road for a quarter mile! Both sets of PIAAs are switched individually and both relays are triggered by the high beams so I only have to flip to low beam to turn them all off at once when I approach oncoming traffic.

**Platinum Ion Amber Fog Light Kit; [www.electricalconnection.com](http://www.electricalconnection.com); \$149.95**

**Headlight Modulator Pathblazer; [www.kisantech.com](http://www.kisantech.com); \$149.95**

**PIAA 1100X Driving Light Kit; [www.piaa.com](http://www.piaa.com); \$329.95**

**PIAA 910 Lights; [www.piaa.com](http://www.piaa.com); \$425.00**

## TRUNK LIGHT AND SAFETY LIGHTING

It's nice to have light when and where you need it. I don't like rummaging around for stuff in the trunk at night with a flashlight stuck in my mouth. The little LED unit from Electrical Connection is plenty bright and won't need replacing for years. Using the Honda trunk light harness makes it easy to plug in the light, rather than having to splice wires. Saddlebag lights are available too, but I haven't found a need for them yet.

I also added a few lights for safety. I wanted yellow LEDs on my mirrors for additional turn indicators — most are red. I tried the V&P units, but I liked the look and fit of the Addon units better. While I was working on the mirrors, I installed some Multivex mirrors from Electrical Connection. They nearly eliminate the blind spot one would normally have to check with a head-turn. Not to discount the head-turn, but it's nice to see more with less work.

Although relatively expensive, the Honda spoiler makes the back of the bike look a little racier while adding an extra running/brake light up high. And it's a real safety bonus when pulling a trailer! A Kisan unit I mounted above the inner trunk lid flashes the spoiler light when the brakes are used, hopefully getting the attention of everyone behind me. A V&P outer trunk light converter is a good safety addition for pulling a trailer. It turns the outer brake lights on the trunk into a turn-signal/brake combo. It works great, but it is fair amount of work to install since many wires have to be spliced. It is switched with a toggle mounted in the trunk so the outer brake lights can also function normally.



**LED Trunk Light Kit; [www.electricalconnection.com](http://www.electricalconnection.com); \$47.50**

**Honda Trunk Inner Light Harness; Local Dealer; \$40.95**

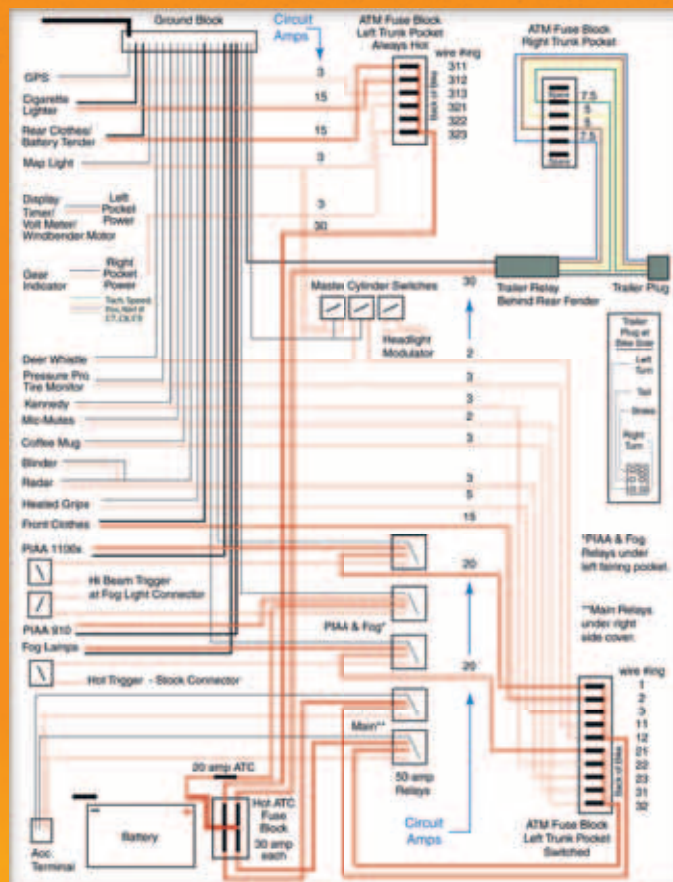
**LED Mirror Turn Signal Lights ; [www.addonaccessories.net](http://www.addonaccessories.net); \$57.02**

**MultiVex Mirrors (01013LH & #01014RH); [www.safetymirrorsonline.com](http://www.safetymirrorsonline.com); \$59.95**

**Honda Rear Spoiler w/Brake Light; Local Dealer; \$265.97**

**Spoiler Brake Flashing Controller (25LED-D); [www.kisantech.com](http://www.kisantech.com); \$79.95**

**Outer Trunk Brake to Turn Signal Kit; [www.vpaccessories.com](http://www.vpaccessories.com); \$59.95**



## HOOKING IT ALL UP

While various aftermarket fuse-blocks are available for getting power from the battery, most of them use ATC fuses. I wanted to use the same ATM (mini) fuses that are used in the stock fuse panel so I only had to carry one style of replacements. I like Waytec Wire ATM fuse blocks. They work great and are available in multiple capacities. They also come with some nice waterproof covers if you have the space. They are built to have one single circuit per fuse so I had to build a buss for a common hot side lead. I also didn't want to stuff my auxiliary fuses under a side-cover or in the bottom of the trunk where they would be hard to get to, so I used the trunk pockets. All my wires are numbered or color-coded for trouble shooting purposes and there is a connector (AMP or Hitachi) anywhere the new harness may have to come apart for servicing the motorcycle. I always carry my schematic and fuse map in a small bag with extra main and auxiliary fuses, just in case.

Tip: There is not much space under the plastic on a GL1800 to put electronics and wiring. Wires must be routed carefully, but more space for relays and motors can be found if the ankle-vent tubes are removed. These vents don't pass much air anyway.

**ATM Fuse Blocks (3); [www.waytekwire.com](http://www.waytekwire.com); \$22.85**

**Fuses, Wire, Terminals, Connectors, Relays, Heat Shrink Tubing ; [www.waytekwire.com](http://www.waytekwire.com); \$430.00 >>**



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## ERGONOMIC MODIFICATIONS

A few ergonomic modifications were needed for my old back, boney butt, and short arms to make the bike suitable for long days in the saddle. My first consideration was a backrest and the Utopia was the best choice with its built-in factory look, lack of around-the-seat mounting hardware and great adjustability. The pouch on the back is also handy for quick access to small items. I then had to get the handlebars moved back so I could actually use the backrest. The stock bars are nonadjustable and would not be replaceable without a great deal of machine work. I tried some wedges from V&P and then an MBL bar relocation kit, but neither worked well for me. I ended up with a set of REG blocks that made the handlebars fit perfectly.

The stock seat did not fit my butt well enough for fifteen hundred mile days, so I made an appointment at Rich's Custom Saddles in Kingston, Washington. It worked great for well over 100,000 miles before I had it rebuilt. The new seat is taking more time to break-in with its stronger, pebbled leather, but using lots of Lexol and logging a few thousand more miles, should make it perfect.

My feet needed an alternate place to rest. In my opinion, the Kuryakyn highway pegs are the best looking units available and I didn't want ground scraping floorboards. I recently broke one of the arms on my highway pegs and found that Kuryakyn now makes a 1.5" arm that is wider. I put a pair of those on and the comfort level has risen considerably. My wife has short legs, so just in case I ever got her on the bike, I installed some passenger floorboard risers that also put the



passenger boards in a perfect place for some extra cargo bags.

**Custom Saddle;** [www.richscustomseats.com](http://www.richscustomseats.com); \$698.90

**Riders Back Rest Utopia;** [www.utpr.com](http://www.utpr.com); \$169.00

**Handlebar Risers;** REG; Local Dealer; \$74.99 Highway Pegs with 1.5" arms; 4073; [www.kuryakyn.com](http://www.kuryakyn.com); \$199.99

**Passenger Floorboard Risers;** ADD-18541; [www.addonaccessories.net](http://www.addonaccessories.net); \$45.00

## WINDSHIELD

The windshield on the GL does an OK job of controlling the majority of windblast, but there is still considerable helmet buffeting at freeway speeds. Since I'd rather look over the top of the windshield all the time, it was difficult for me to find the right "sweet spot" with the stock plastic up (even though the OEM windshield is "adjustable"). So when Firecreek Accessories introduced an electrically adjustable Windbender for the GL1800, I had to give it a try.



Even with the screen all the way down, there is very little buffeting. If I want still air or to block moisture from pounding my helmet, I simply touch that switch. Perfect. This is what Honda should have designed when the GL1800 was first introduced. It is also the most functional accessory I've installed on my bike.

**Windbender Windscreen;** HPS-D; [www.firecreekacc.com](http://www.firecreekacc.com); \$279.95

**Windbender Electric Option;** ElecOp-W; [www.firecreekacc.com](http://www.firecreekacc.com); \$399.95

**Windbender Rake Kit;** Rake-E; [www.firecreekacc.com](http://www.firecreekacc.com); \$169.95

## SUSPENSION ROUND ONE

Although the stock suspension is relatively well designed, it's better suited for comfort on smooth super-slabs than for spirited curve carving or rough-roads. Replacing the stock steering head bearings with tapered roller bearings allowed for higher torque settings on the steering stem and makes the bike feel more stable at speed, and more planted when leaned over. Tapered bearings also eliminated the dreaded Wing Wobble (headshake under deceleration). The tradeoff is slightly higher pressure required on the handgrips to get the bike leaned over, but the adaptation comes quickly.

In attempts to get a bit more ground clearance and firmer suspension, I first tried Progressive Suspension components front and rear. They give more ground clearance with the preload set at minimum than the stock springs did at full preload. The bike tracked better, soaked up the sharp edges bumps better, and bottomed out far less frequently. A Super Brace fork brace, while not the most handsome piece, added consistency to tracking a line while leaned over in a bumpy corner. These are hugely recommended upgrades for those trying to get better handling out of their Wing without breaking the bank, but you'd better have a shop manual and be good with tools or have a competent mechanic at hand. If you decide to try this upgrade, also look at springs from Race Tech. I've been told that unlike Progressive, they can give you a spring rated to your weight and riding style.

**Tapered Steering Head Bearings (ALL-221037);** [www.goallballs.com](http://www.goallballs.com); \$54.00

**Fork Springs (PRO-11-1521);** [www.progressivesuspension.com](http://www.progressivesuspension.com); \$83.38

**Rear Spring (PRO-01-1179B);** [www.progressivesuspension.com](http://www.progressivesuspension.com); \$89.95

**Fork Brace (SUP-2318W);** [www.superbrace.com](http://www.superbrace.com); \$169.95



## SUSPENSION ROUND TWO AND BRAKE ROTORS

With the exception of being a little harsh, I was relatively happy with the suspension upgrades I'd made, but I decided to upgrade to the full Traxxion setup. Now, with cartridge dampers and new springs in both forks, a new shock and spring on the back, and a fork brace, the ride is much more compliant at all speeds. Changing the rear shock on a GL1800 is a lot of work, but it can be done with a factory shop manual and decent mechanical skills. Installing the cartridge forks requires some machine work and should be done by an authorized installer. At the same time, I also bought a pair of Galfer wave rotors for my front wheel. I can't say they increase stopping power, but they sure look good.

**Traxxion Dynamics Suspension Upgrade, Front & Rear; [traxxion.com](http://www.traxxion.com); \$2500.00**

**Traxxion Dynamics Fork Brace; [www.traxxion.com](http://www.traxxion.com); \$299.95**

**Front Brake Wave-Rotors; [www.galferusa.com](http://www.galferusa.com); \$576.95**



## INCREASING FUEL RANGE

As I began to get more serious about long-distance riding, I discovered the benefit of carrying extra fuel. I wanted to carry 11.5 gallons on board, but could find nothing on the market that would hold 4.7 gallons of fuel without preventing me from fully opening the trunk when mounted on the back seat, and using my beloved backrest. So, I built my own. My Quicktank is a tad expensive, but it must be a good design because I've sold twenty-seven of them. Fuel fittings are Holley Earls and Sampson Sport Touring. They are a bit expensive compared to brass fittings from the hardware store, but they don't leak.

**QuickTank Fuel Cell; [www.firecreekacc.com](http://www.firecreekacc.com); \$1099.00**

**Fuel Line and Fittings; [www.holley.com/division/Earls.asp](http://www.holley.com/division/Earls.asp); \$175.05**

**Bulkhead fitting and dry quick disconnects; [www.sampson-sporttouring.com](http://www.sampson-sporttouring.com); \$99.00**

**DAYLE MARTIN**, a self-employed graphic designer for 25 years, is also a long time Iron Butt rider having completed his first SS1K in 2003. Since then, he has documented other SS1K rides, as well as successfully ridden in the Solstice Rally in 2003, the GBU, the 36-hour Spring Fling Rally in 2005 where he took first place, and in 2007, a BBG. In December 2009, Martin was given the opportunity to buy Firecreek Accessories. He was already building QuickTanks and installing accessories for a few riders and as he states, "If I didn't buy the company, Windbender may have died. It was just too good of a product to let die and I wanted spares." Since then, his efforts have been geared toward making product improvements and developing Windbenders for other motorcycles, principally for the Harley Davidson FL model (which he hopes will be in production before spring of 2013). He's also developing an adjustable, fork-mounted version for cruisers and adjustable shields for the BMW GS line (all with electric capabilities). For more information on products available from Dayle or custom farkle installation, please visit [firecreekacc.com](http://firecreekacc.com). 🔧