

Check out The Service Pavilion at the Progressive International Motorcycle Shows

The Service Pavilion in New Holland, Pa. has been on the Progressive International Motorcycle Show Tour since 2001, selling helmets and safety gear to riders all across the country. Owner Robert Miller shared about his extensive experience fitting helmets, first as a sponsored racer with Arai, and now as an Arai dealer.

You started with the Motorcycle Shows pretty early in your business.

Yes, at the time (2001) I was working for Arai helmets, and we've always had a presence in the Marketplace, back then it was called the Factory. The idea was created to give consumers a higher level of service with an Arai. We were the "Arai Helmets Service Pavilion", then about a year into it, I left Arai, and started The Service Pavilion featuring Arai Helmets with blessings from Arai.



Why did you choose to do the shows?

Ninety-five percent of helmets we sell are sold face to face, we have no online sales of new helmets. No one can do what we do. We're so detailed on the exact service and fit. That's very, very unique. I've only maybe ran into two dealerships that actually even come close to saying what's right. If we can't fit a helmet (which has only happened a handful of times), we can at least get people pointed in the right direction.

What makes your fitting service different?

It's a simple thing of getting out the tape measure and measuring the customer's head. That's such a huge starting point. That's something those dealerships won't do, don't know how to do or choose not to do. We sell people what they need, we don't sell them just what we have on the shelf. With you as a consumer, my first goal is your education and understanding about why Arai does things the way they do, using the tools and knowledge we have to apply it to what you want to do. Like mentioned before, 95% of our sales are done face to face at events. We have created a system for that other 5 percent we can't meet face to face. With an online fitment process we have developed.

Since you sell Arai, are most of your customers more experienced riders?

I would disagree with that. It's really an interesting range. We get a lot of experienced riders and a lot of new people. I would say that's because this newer market of riders are educating themselves before they buy their bikes and before they buy their other gear.

How does your racing career affect how you sell helmets?

I quit racing because I had some pretty serious head injuries. At some point, you have to stop. It's like a football player — you can't keep hitting your head over and over. I get opportunities to speak about helmet safety to many people now. I'm able to talk to young riders and racers, and talk to the parents of racers and even just talk to regular street riders. I take the fitment thing very seriously, whether it's a 6-year-old kid ready to race, or a 60-year-old guy getting back into riding after not riding for 20 years.

People spend a lot of money in racing, but I see them spend the least on their safety gear. I don't care how big a semi you drive, I don't care about how big your motorhome is, doesn't matter if you have six or seven bikes waiting in the pit area, it doesn't matter how much money you spend on that stuff. But when your kid crashes and can't come back to you to complain that his bike sucks, because he has an injury of some kind or head injury, because he didn't have the best gear you could afford, none of that other stuff matters. My racing background definitely influences the way I sell.

What are the things that riders should know about fitting?

Buy what you can afford — don't sell yourself short. I have people who walk up to me and let's say they're considering Arai and considering brand X. Because they are comparing Arai and something else, that already means they can afford an Arai. I got that point of view from a famous economist's quote that I can not recall his name at the moment. Whether buying TVs or helmets, if you're already considering multiple lines, you can already afford the best, so why sell yourself short? The proper fitting of the helmet is the No. 1 piece of safety equipment on your body.

Do you have a lot of return business from the shows?

Yes we do. I heard this from an old time car dealer who said when times are hard and economics are at their worst, return customers are everything. These past two, two and a half years, I'm still in business because of return customers. They are friends, they are part of this industry, and are part of The Service Pavilion Family. They know we're not the cheapest, they know we're not the most expensive, but they know we continue to treat them well. We do see a lot of repeat customers bringing friends and family to us, and that's huge, really huge for us.

Have you crashed with an Arai on?

Yes. In some ways I probably shouldn't be here, but still am. I've had five pretty serious head injuries that I walked away from, that's why it's so important. A video just resurfaced from the last national flat track I raced in 1999. I had on a helmet camera for a film company. We were in a practice session, and the rider in front of me, his engine locked up. They told me I was going 97 mph when I hit him. All I remember is hitting him. Then there was a mess behind me — three guys ran into me. Many of the other guys I raced with said "we thought you were gone." Everyone else was moving and kicking, but the way your head was turned and my body was twisted then tended to the other riders... then all of a sudden they heard this coughing and it was me. (He had a severe concussion and his right knee got torn apart.) I race now for fun, but I don't need to do 140 mph on the track anymore!

Your co-worker (and wife), Brianna Rauenzahn, was recently named [Dealership Superstar by Motorcycle Product News](#). Did you nominate her?

Yes, I read about the program and submitted. They sent her to Las Vegas for the SEMA event, and they awarded her. It's so interesting, once they ran the interview of her in this industry publication— we've had other motorcycle dealerships adding their names to our mailing list on our website. The editor at Motorcycle & Powersports News also just emailed her to ask her to write an article about helmet fitting.

How many Arai helmets do you own?

Have a collection in our shop and right now, there are some mid-1960 Arai's up to the latest. There's probably 130 helmets in the collection. We have on our Facebook fan page [pictures of the whole collection](#), a wall of helmets in Indianapolis at this year's MotoGP. Probably one of the best compliments I got was from the Arai Racing engineer, who said, "I built these helmets for Freddie Spencer, how do you have it?" He put his hand on my shoulder and said, "We at Arai Japan do not have such a collection." I was flattered beyond belief.



You mentioned Freddie Spencer. What other famous racers' helmets are in your collection? Nicky Hayden, Colin Edwards, Steve Eklund, Jay Springsteen and Chris Carr.

Is there anybody whose helmet you'd like to have in the collection?

Valentino Rossi. I actually have about four or five of his replica helmets from AGV. I have a Shoei Jake Zemke replica and a Shoei Dajiro Kato memorial replica. They're the only non-Arai's in my collection.

Interview and reporting by Franke Santos for the Progressive International Motorcycle Shows