

## Handlebar vs. Butterfly Steering

by Gordon Koppang



Recently, there was a brief exchange on the Rhoades Car Yahoo Group concerning which steering setup is better – the standard handlebars or the optional butterfly steering. The posts confirm my suspicion that the butterfly grips force the rider to pedal in a strange hands-between-knees posture.

I went to the old Rhoades Car promo video and pulled a couple of grainy images of a fellow pedalling with butterfly steering. He has to have the seat back to accommodate his leg-length but then he has to reach forward almost the same distance. Note how his arms are stretched all the way out.



The standard handlebars offer a higher rise and a longer reach. The higher rise means riders don't pedal with their hands between their knees, and the longer reach allows the operator to settle back into the seat – no need to ride in a awkward forward lean.



In my opinion, the butterfly grips greatly reduce the comfort and use-ability of the Rhodes Car, but I'll let the posts speak for themselves.

Fri Mar 14, 2008 - Archie and Terry wrote:

It finally warmed up enough in Michigan today to go for a short ride. I kept bumping the knees of the Navigator [passenger] when turning the handlebar. Is this a problem with the Butterfly steering wheel?

Archie and Terry  
4W2Pcp

Sat Mar 15, 2008 – Thomas Richardson replied:

I have butterfly handlebars, and yes, I whack my knees on them when turning. I “solve” this problem by coasting through the turn whenever possible.

Sat. Mar 15, 2008 – Holly, the Moderator of the RC Yahoo Group, wrote:

Hi Archie and Terry,

[I have used] both the butterfly and the handlebar steering. I am using the handlebar steering now. I am short so I have my seat pulled up all the way forward, and while I admit that the handlebars hit MY knees when turning, I prefer them to the butterfly. The butterfly pulled my back and arms too far forward and I could not get comfortable unless I inserted a pillow behind my back. While that worked, it meant that I had no “traction” to be able to peddle. The short of it is that while we're going to hold on to the butterfly, we're using the handlebar because it worked better for us.

Hht  
4W2PLF

With the regular handlebars, the brake levers are naturally in line with the handlebar grip. This gives the rider plenty to squeeze against when applying the brakes. It also allows

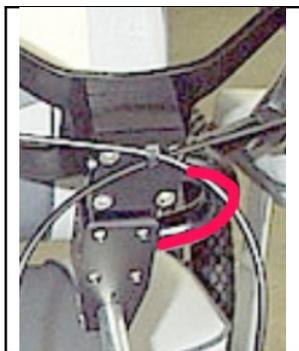
the rider to brake and steer at the same time. With the butterfly steering, the brake levers are turned 90 degrees with respect to the handlebar grips. As a result, there is little or nothing to squeeze against when applying the brakes. To brake and steer simultaneously the rider must resort to a tenuous grip over the top of the bars.



In fairness, I should say that I have not had the opportunity to try the butterfly bars, but I don't think I'd want to be doing any emergency braking with them.

In the above picture, you can see that the butterfly bars attach to the steering stem via a U-shaped tube.

Here's a close-up with the U-tube outlined in red.



This arrangement allows for a few inches of fore and aft adjustment of the butterfly bars. The bars can be pulled in closer to the rider. As they are pulled closer, they also move down slightly. The utterly inadequate Rhoades Car "Owner's Manual" has inspired many angry posts on the Rhoades Car Yahoo Group. Since this adjustment feature is not explained in the manual, it may be that many people who ordered the butterfly steering are riding around with the bars in a less than optimal position. Owners who want more height or pull-back than the factory installed U-tube provides could have a larger tube made for them at their local machine shop.