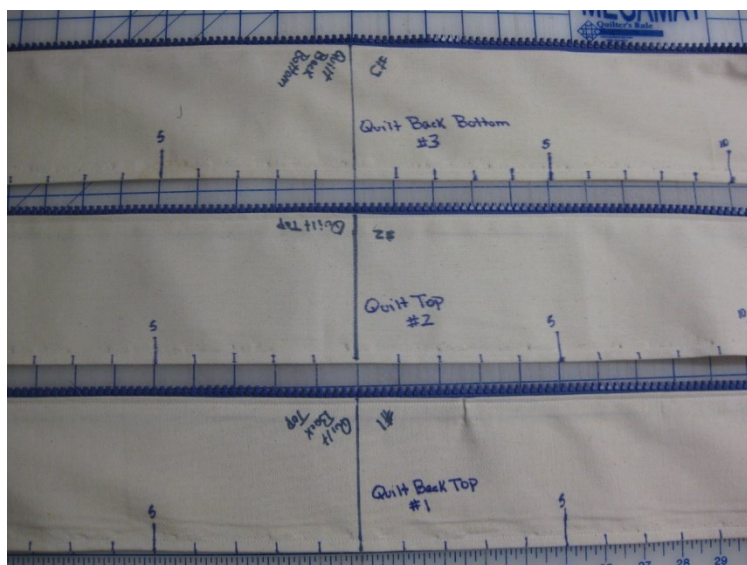


Tensionology™ 101: Loading a Quilt with Zippered Leaders

Zipper on your A1 Quilting Machine offer several advantages. If you have not installed zippers please refer to my previous tutorial on how to do so. <http://quiltsnkaboodle.blogspot.com/2010/04/attatching-zippers-to-longarm-leaders.html> (or email karen@quiltsnkaboodle.com for a PDF version) Regardless of having zippers or not, pinning or using a chain stitch, this tutorial will share how to load a quilt using your Tensionology™ feature on your A1 Quilting Machine.

Now let's begin where the last tutorial left off...

Having zippers on your leaders typically means you have at least two sets to be able to switch out quilts with the ease of zipping one off and the other on. In this photo I've shared how I marked my second set of zippers.



I've marked my zippered leaders to correspond with the take up rollers. On my machine the take up bar that is at the back of the machine is # 1, it's easy for me to remember this because it's a solo bar. The other two are on the front of the machine and may be 'stacked' or off-set – either way, the take up roller that is your batting access bar (the one that lifts) is #2 and the other one is #3.

This translates to #1 equals the top of the quilt backing, #3 is the bottom of the quilt backing and #2 is the bottom of the quilt top. With Tensionology™ you do not “float” your tops (you can, of course, but then you lose the purpose of keeping the tension on the entire quilt sandwich which is why you purchased Tensionology™ in the first place!)

On each set of zippered leaders I marked the corresponding center – doing so by actually zipping each one on to it's proper location and making the mark according to the center that was previously marked on the actual take up roller. By doing all this labeling you have not only greatly reduced any opportunity for confusion as to what part goes where, but you have also guaranteed that your centers will truly be center. In addition I chose to mark one inch increments with a zero center and going out to 60 on both sides, to save time I just labeled 5,10,15, etc.

With your zippered leaders properly labeled you are now ready to attach the quilt backing and top. This can be done by pinning or using a chain stitch. My photos will show attaching using my Janome Cover Pro, but again, pinning works just as well. For the record, I've pinned for 6 years and this is the first quilt done using the chain stitch. The choice is yours! The important thing is that you notice the proper

placement of fabric to the leader. By the way, if you are pinning this can be done both at the machine with the leaders already zipped on or unattached as described in the photos.



With a batik backing it's hard to tell which is the right and wrong side of the fabric in this photos, but it will show up in the next photo when you see a seam (grin), for now, just trust me.

I've started with the Quilt Backing Top, which is labeled as #1. For the sake of instruction the side of the zippered leader that is labeled will be called the RIGHT side and the unlabeled side will be noted as the WRONG side. Find the center of your quilt backing and place the RIGHT side of the backing to the WRONG side of the zippered leader, matching

centers and working your way from the center out, place pins about every 10 inches in preparation to sew.



My example is a chain stitch from my Cover Pro – you may have a serger or sewing machine that does this. I chose to use two different colors of thread so I'd know which was the top and which the bottom to make it easier to pull out later. Again, you may choose to pin using the pins that came with your machine package, regardless, here's the list of which side goes where:

Quilt Backing Top: Leader #1 Quilt Backing RIGHT side to WRONG side leader

Quilt Backing Bottom: Leader #3, Quilt Backing RIGHT side to WRONG side leader

Quilt Top Bottom: Leader #2, Quilt Top WRONG side to WRONG side leader (photo next page)



It is important that you predetermine how you will load the quilt top, typically you will attach the bottom of the quilt top to the #2 leader, but on occasion if something is directional you may wish to reverse this. For the sake of the tutorial we will be attaching the **BOTTOM** of the quilt top to the zippered leader #2. Again, **WRONG** side of quilt top to **WRONG** side of zippered leader.

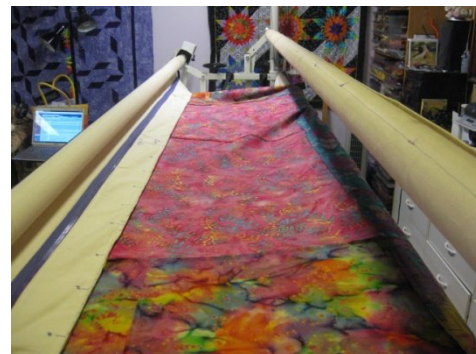
Ta Da, this part is done! Now let's go to the machine.



Okay, this may look a tad confusing, but let me explain. The top take up roller (#2) is being held up by the batting access lever. I've zipped on the #3 zippered leader which holds the Quilt Backing Bottom and have all the fabric draping on the floor. Then I roll it up by hand, *very roughly*. I know this doesn't look right, but trust me.



Next attach zipper leader #1 to the solo take up roller #1 at the back of the machine. It too is going to look rather unsettling – hold on, there's a reason for this.



Now it's time to play with the Tensionology™

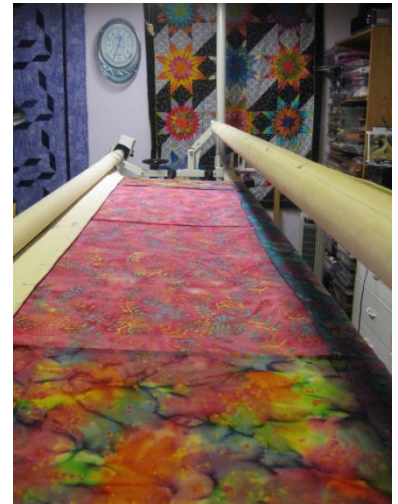


This is the pulley end of the bottom take up roller #3. (Again, take up roller #2 is raised by the batting access lever so it's not in the photo). Notice the arrow on the pulley near the connection to the bar. (If yours doesn't have an arrow you can add one with a sharpie). This pulley needs to have the wire wound around counter clockwise. I'm using the wire/weights on the left, which are the back side of the machine or panto side.

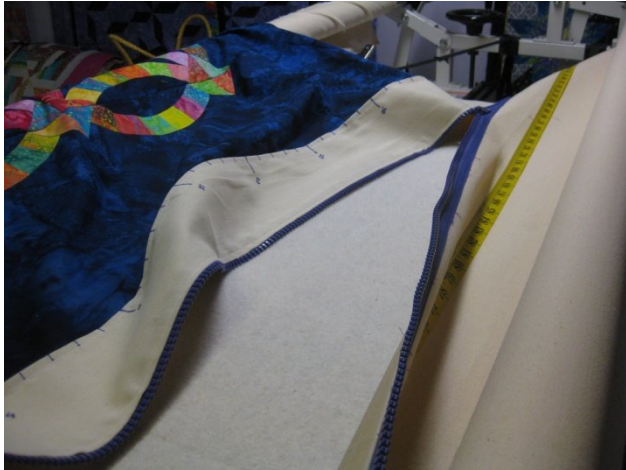


Next add weights. I generally find that two weights give me the tension that I desire. Play around and decide what you prefer, 1, 2 or 3 weights realizing it can vary from quilt to quilt. One word of caution – if it is too tight you may experience thread issues during the quilting process.

Now take the fob that came with your Tensionology™ and advance the fabric to the top take up roller #1 by pressing B on the fob – I remember it as “B for back” because I am generally working from the front of the machine - although that line of thinking doesn't work totally logically because you'd think “A for advance” and B actually advances ... SO just think B to go BACK on to take up roller #1. Whatever works for you (grin). Again, this is a rough roll, it looks strange but don't be overly concerned how the fabric is rolling. After all the backing is on take up roller #1 you will press A on the fob and now rewind to have all the fabric on take up roller #3 slowly, carefully, smoothing as you go until it's all neat and proper. This technique is especially helpful with pieced backings. During this process the weights will go up and down as the wire is being wound/unwound on the pulley.



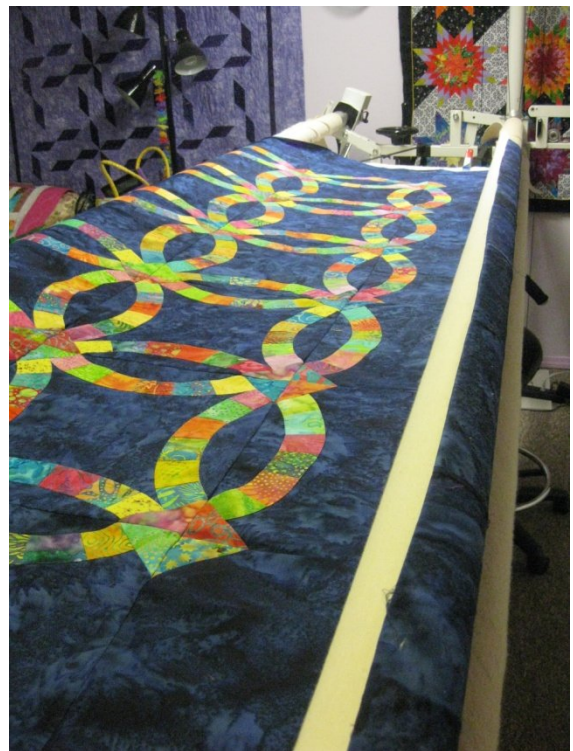
Now it's time to load the batting and baste it to the top. I've not given you photo documentation on this as it was covered during your set up/training. For reference here's a simplified explanation. With the batting access bar still holding take up roller #2 in the upward position, place the batting along the top edge of the quilt backing. Smooth out by hand; release the batting access lever to lower take up roller #2. Adjust the quilt by advancing or backing up the Tensionology™ to where the back of your backing and batting come to an area where you can push the machine to its further most point to create a channel lock and then stitch down the batting to the backing with a straight line – this will be your reference point to line up the top of the pieced quilt. (If this isn't clear, refer back to the Attaching Zippers blog/You Tube to demonstrate how to create a channel lock). Some prefer to stitch from the center out to each side; I generally go from left to right. Again, personal preference.

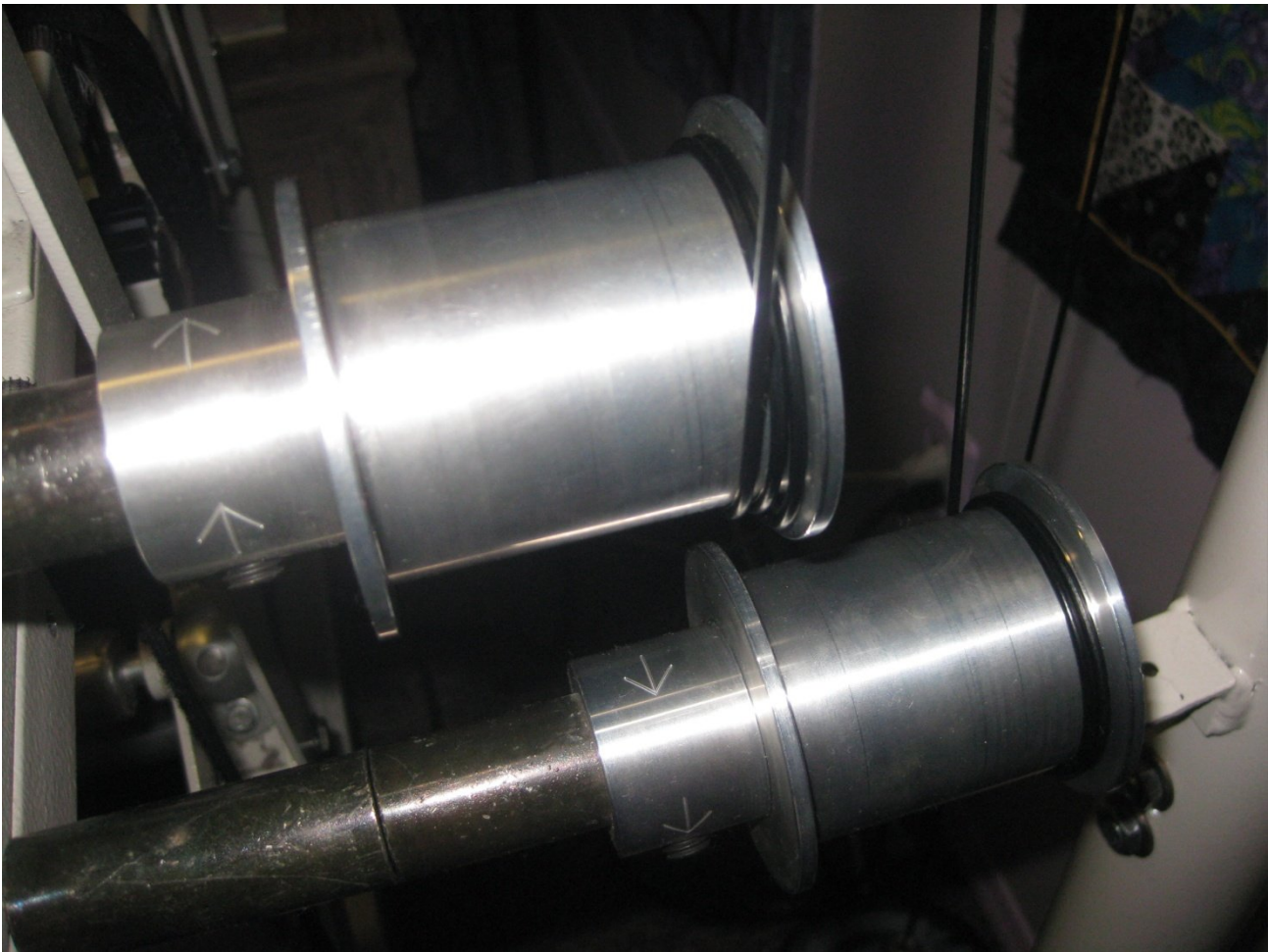


Once the batting is in place it's time to attach the quilt top. Zip the zipper leader #2 containing the bottom of the quilt top to the take up roller #2, taking care to spread the quilt top over take up roller #1.

If you notice in this photo I've begun to roll the quilt top onto take up roller #2. It is most critical that you take your time and roll smoothly. There's no 'back and forth' process as we did on the backing. This is

where you will want to make any slight adjustments due to fullness in the piecing, always maintaining a good horizontal placement of the quilt top, easing in fullness as needed. Once complete, baste the top of the quilt to the backing/batting. It is most important to do this step *before* adding Tensionology™ weights (ask me how I know!)





This is the most important photo out of the entire tutorial on loading a quilt with Tensionology™

The top pulley is connected to take up roller #2, the one that holds the quilt top; by the way, this photo shows the rollers in the “stacked” position, if you have the Horizon or don’t have your rollers stacked they will be slightly off-set, however, the placement of the pulleys and wires is the same. Take up roller #2 wraps clockwise using the wire on the front side of the machine and take up roller #3 wraps counterclockwise using the wire from the panto side of the machine.



Add weights and you are done!

Again, the photo is taken from the front of the machine with the Tensionology™ on the right hand side. Looking at the photo the weights on the left correspond to take up roller #3 (Quilt Backing Bottom) and the weights on the right attach to take up roller #2 (Quilt Top).

In closing a few more hints for your success with Tensionology™

If you have an extremely long quilt be sure to keep an eye out on the weights as they rise up the pole during advancing the quilt. If they get too close to the top and are in danger of hitting the top of the pole simply unwind a few links of the wire on your pulley to lower them a tad. This adjustment will have to be reversed if you advance back to the beginning. Not a big issue, just realize that really *really* big quilts can potentially outrun the length of the weight wires.

I also want to mention how you UNLOAD a quilt (grin). I neglected to photo document this, but will share some precautions and lessons learned along the way.

As you have quilted your way down the quilt top and now have the zippered leader #2 exposed you are going to want to release the quilt top bottom from that leader to be able to quilt to the edge of your quilt top - it is MOST IMPORTANT that you remove the weights before releasing the bottom of the quilt top from the leader – otherwise once you release the tension the weights are going to come crashing down! I realize this is simple science, but trust me, if you forget in your eagerness to continue quilting you will be startled by the loud crash!



This photo was taken after I stabilized the quilt by stitching all the continuous curves in the ring area of the double wedding ring. I wanted to do this first all the way down because I would be changing thread to do the background area. You can see that the take up leader #2 is no longer attached to the quilt. Now I can advance back and forth to my heart's content (grin) – the beauty of Tensionology™

Again, when the entire quilt is completed and you are ready to take it off the frame please make sure to release the tension by removing the weights from take up roller #1 before releasing the quilt from zipper leaders #1 and #3.

After a quilt or two all of the loading process will become second nature. I'm sure you will agree with me that you are soooo glad you added Tensionology™ to your A1 Quilting Machine!

Happy Quilting,

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