

SMART RIDE

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Nicky Hayden
AMA SUPERSTAR

PPE

Can Save Your Life

Ride Like a Girl

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SMART RIDE

A Special Supplement to Sea&Shore

Smart Ride is a special Issue magazine resulting from a close partnership with the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, a not-for-profit organization promoting motorcycle safety and awareness. This publication can never take the place of time, experience and practice on the roads. It is critically important that every rider take an approved motorcycle safety course and continue the training continuum throughout his or her riding life!

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Last year, the Naval Safety Center published its first-ever magazine dedicated to successful motorcycle riding. Although I'd never once driven a motorcycle, I volunteered to be the editor because riding was something I always wanted to do. In the process of trying to educate the Fleet about the triumphs and travails of the open road, I educated myself.

Last May I took the Motorcycle Safety Foundation's Basic RiderCourse and bought a small cruiser, a Suzuki Boulevard S-40. (I don't want to hear a peep out of you Harley guys – I love my bike and it's been perfect to learn on.)

The last year has held a lot of changes for Navy and Marine Corps motorcyclists. Unprecedented fatality numbers led to new training opportunities, including a course dedicated to sportbike riders, the Military Sportbike RiderCourse. We also started this magazine. *Smart Ride* is your forum. If you know of something we should cover in next year's edition, send me an email at april.phillips@navy.mil and let me know.

The new training seems to be paying off, but when the fatalities were at their peak, more than a few leadership voices were grumbling about banning motorcycles in the Navy and Marine Corps altogether. Imagine the irony: The men and women who protect this nation's freedom denied the freedom of two wheels on an open road.

The way to keep that nightmare from ever happening is to work within the system. Let your chain of command know if you ride or are thinking about riding so they can help you get initial or refresher training. Wear your PPE. All the gear, all the time. Take part in the motorcycle mentorship clubs on your base or installation. If there isn't one, take the initiative to start a group. You'll find some good information in this magazine on how to do that.

Keep the rubber side down. Take care of each other and ride smart.

April Phillips

Champion Racer Nicky Hayden Says **Take Calculated Risk**

By April Phillips

Nicky Hayden made history in 2002 when he became the youngest rider to ever win the AMA U.S. Superbike Championship at just 21. Now at 28, The Kentucky Kid's got a ton of victories and titles under his belt, but one of the things he's most proud of is his work with the U.S. military.

"Once I found out some of the numbers of accidents and fatalities to some of the military riders, I knew we needed to try to help," Hayden said. "I've had the chance to visit some bases around the world and have met a lot of troops at the races, so I have a bit of a connection. We're kind of the same in that we are out around the world representing our country, so I feel like we're in it together and on the same team."

Hayden began riding motorcycles when he was five and he turned pro at the age of 16, but he said he worries when some Sailors and Marines purchase bikes that are too big and powerful for their experience level.



"Well, these guys are brave or they wouldn't be able to do what they do in the military, but sometimes this can be a bad combination. I would say take the time to learn the basics and maybe a riding school would be a good idea. If you are a beginner, maybe hold off on getting a full-on superbike and start with something a

“Once I found out some of the numbers of accidents and fatalities to some of the military riders, I knew we needed to try to help.”

little smaller,” Hayden suggested.

He also said that new riders often don’t look far enough out in front of them, so he recommends scanning the road ahead and always being alert.

Hayden said that even though he’s been on two wheels since he was a young child, he still practices risk management.

“I accept that danger is part of my job, but I take calculated risks. I’ve got to know when to hang it all out and take chances, so I think a lot about how to be safe.”

He works with Alpinestars, a company that makes riding apparel, on his leathers, and also with Arai on his helmet. He’s working to make the gear as comfortable and effective as possible.

“I highly recommend wearing the right gear,” Hayden said. “They’ve come a long way in the last few years and in the long run, the gear is cheaper than the hospital bills!”

As a champion racer, Hayden said he understands why Sailors and Marines want to go fast on their motorcycles. However, he has some advice:

“Bikes are great, but you have to respect them. If you want to go fast, the streets are not the place. Believe me, if you like to bike on the streets, then that’s cool, but you’ve got to try to do some kind of track day. You’ll love it.”

Hayden loves the atmosphere at the track, and said he feels fortunate every day he goes to work.

“I love the people around bikes, working with the teams and competing. I’m very lucky and blessed to do what I do.”

He also feels blessed to have supportive fans, many of whom are in the military. Hayden said he never forgets their sacrifice.

“I travel the world 11 months out of the year and people always ask me what’s my favorite place. Well, that’s an easy one. Right home in America! People don’t realize how good we’ve got it here stateside, so I’ve got to thank the military for giving us the freedom and safety we have. Without the strong armed forces, it wouldn’t be like this, so ya’ll stay safe so you can continue protecting our great country and I’ll try to stay fast so I can make y’all proud!” ■



Where the Rubber Meets the Road



Don Borkoski

It's been a couple of days, weeks or months since you last rode. You have a little time. The weather is nice so you crank up the bike, roll on the throttle and WHAM! Turning out of the neighborhood, the bike slides out from under you for no apparent reason. Dang it! What happened?

There must have been gravel or something on the road! Well maybe, but probably not.

It seems that you were ready to ride and the engine may have been warmed up enough, but your tires probably weren't.

Tires have to be ready to ride? Never heard of that?

Heard of "yin and yang"? It is a concept of complementary opposites. Where there is white, there must be black. If there is hard, there must be soft. And for motorcycle tires, the more grip when warm, the more slippery when cold.

Tires are tires right? Well, no. Not really. You are the proud owner of a finely tuned machine that puts out more horsepower to weight than most cars. The more performance your bike puts out, the more power it provides to what? That's right, the tires.

Because of the performance of today's motorcycles, your tires are engineering marvels. Consider this: no matter how powerful the bike or how finely tuned the engine, all that power on your machine must be transferred to two small patches of rubber to make it go, turn and stop ... or not. The amount of rubber on the ground varies dramatically between bike types, but it is generally between 6 and 8 square inches or less. When you walk, you have more foot on the ground than your bike has rubber on the ground!

The advantage of such a small traction patch is less overall drag, more maneuverability and more speed. These are obvious advantages to any bike, especially sport bikes. The disadvantage is that you reach the traction limit quicker, especially in a curve, accelerating or stopping. Those forces use up a lot of traction, and you only have so much. Once your traction limit is exceeded, the bike will slide. If that happens too quickly for you to compensate, you're on the ground.

There are a lot of things that determine your traction: The weight of the bike with you on it, the amount of rubber on the road, the road condition, bike speed and speed changes, angle of the bike, the composition of the tire rub-

ber and more. To provide you the most traction possible, tires are engineered for each type of bike and riding environment. The tires you have and how you use them make all the difference.

On dirt, or wet surfaces, tires with lots of grooves provide the best traction. They provide a channel for water, loose dirt and sand to slip between. The "nobbies" can push through the loose stuff and improve the traction even more.

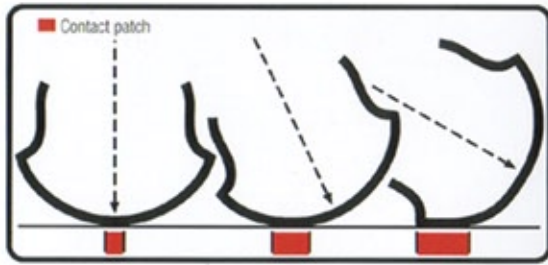
On a road surface, smooth tires give you the most traction because more rubber is on the road, and it isn't necessary to push through dirt and sand. Typical road tires have some tread to channel water away to improve your margin of safety if you get caught in the rain.

The tire shape is also important for traction. Cruisers and standard touring bikes have flatter tires. The bikes do not lean at extreme angles so most of the tire patch stays on the ground improving the bike's ability to accelerate and brake.

Performance bikes have a more rounded tire to provide maximum traction for a wide range of angles. Some performance tires are shaped more like a flat bottom V. This design allows the bike to lean faster and the sides of the V provide more rubber on the road improving the traction with the bike in a lean. The more torque and power your bike produces, the wider your back tire will be. Just remember, while wider equals more traction, it also means less maneuverability.

Lastly, the tire composition is very important to the tire's performance and its wear on the road. The harder the tire, the longer it will last. Harder tires are OK and normally built for heavier bikes with limited maneuverability. Softer tires will not last as long, but they provide something vital to performance machines – they grip the road surface much better. This is important when you are rolling on the throttle in a 45 degree turn.

But, there is another catch. Tires are made up of a combination of materials, but the softer tires are primarily rubber. Rubber has ideal properties for tires, but the gripping ability changes with the temperature of the tire. Tires can change as much as 25 degrees between the cold and "operating" temperatures. So faced with this dilemma, engineers decided to make the composition of the rubber tires most effective at operating temperature. Colder tires are much harder and provide less traction. So be cautious



Modern-day tires use a “multi-arc profile” (the tread profile varies across the tire) design in an attempt to get the quick steering of a narrower tire while upright and the higher traction of a wider tire at full lean. Notice how the contact patch grows as the bike leans over.



Cruiser Tires



V rear Tires



Sport Round Tires

when you first start your ride.

For all bikes, and especially performance bikes, you must get your tires ready to ride:

1. First and foremost, make sure your tires have the proper air pressure so the designed amount of tires is on the road. This will improve tire wear, improve stability and provide you with the designed amount of traction for your machine.

2. Inspect your tires for damage and wear. Your life depends on those small patches of rubber. A blowout could be catastrophic. The tread is important because you never know when that isolated rain shower finds you on the highway.

3. “Scrub in” or “scuff” your tires before you get too aggressive with your bike. Rubber is affected by the sun, environment and heat. The outside layer gets brittle and hard if your bike has been sitting for a day or two (or more). Weaving with an increased lean angle will wear away that thin hard layer exposing the very “grippy” rubber underneath. The longer the bike has sat, the more important this step is. If your tires are new, the same thing applies. New tires are extremely slippery because of the smooth oxidized layer on the outside.

4. Last but not least: warm up your tires before getting too aggressive with your bike. Your tires must be at operating temperature to be most effective. If you ride normally before you have them up to temperature, you may find yourself and your bike on the ground.

The best way to warm up your tires is to just ride for 15 minutes or so. Do it cautiously until your tires are ready, which means you should stay reasonably upright. On that sport bike, you must be very cautious about using the front brake in a lean until the tires are at operating temperature. It helps to accelerate and brake, to increase friction and heat, but this is only marginally effective. The colder the outside temperature is, the longer it takes to warm up the tires. Exposing your tires to the sun, or using specially designed tire blankets will help, but riding is still the most reliable way to get them up to temp.

One word of caution: Race tires specifically designed for the track are very exotic and require special care. Even with most of their tread intact, they may not be serviceable if they have exceeded their designed number of “heat cycles” (the duration and number of times they reached operating temperature) or their service life (as short as a year once used). These tires become very brittle and lose substantial amounts of traction once their service life is exceeded. These used tires can be purchased at substantial discounts from some tracks and dealers, but be wary. There is a reason these very expensive tires are not on the bike of the previous owner. If the pro is afraid to keep them, why would you even consider mounting them on your bike?

Like the commercial says, “There is a lot riding on your tires.” Don’t take them for granted. ■

Trained to Have Fun



Keith Code

These past four years working with Marines on their riding skills has taught me a lot. Sure, I've been riding for more than 50 years, but I'm still amazed at how much I can learn on a short ride between home and our office, riding pretty much the speed limit on the freeway.

Point is, there are technical skills to know and understand about riding motorcycles. I might be a little dim, because even though I was already racing as an AMA Superbike pro, it still took me 15 years to figure that out. The cool part is that once I started figuring out how to ride, I very rarely crashed. Before that, well, that's another story altogether. I went through a few sets of leathers.

The whole reason I started training riders in the '70s was I knew that understanding what you are doing; what the limits are; what the bike wants from you; what skills you need to become competent and what is in-control and what is out-of-control, is where the real thrill of riding

begins. It's amazing. Riders who don't understand this can't easily grasp how good it can get. They measure riding by what they feel, and they can't really get all of the feel available to them until they do understand. It's a Catch-22: you've got to know before you ride; you've got to ride before you know.

You think I'm blowing smoke in your ear? Talk to a few of the ten- or twenty-year veteran riders who have been through our Advanced Motorcycle Operators Schools (AMOS) at Marine Expeditionary Force bases, and see what they have to say.

I don't know if you like your job or not, but look at it this way, how much less would you like it if you hadn't been trained to do it? That's grim, man, very grim. You'd

“I’m still amazed at how much I can learn on a short ride between home and our office riding pretty much the speed limit on the freeway.”

making mistakes all the time and figuring out ways to cover them up so you wouldn’t get chewed out.

That’s what most riders do. They put together this little package of mistakes and call it riding. Yeah, they are still having “fun” riding but not be one of you out there can tell me that you don’t have *moments* while riding. You can’t tell me you don’t have doubts sometimes. You can’t tell me you don’t make mistakes. You can’t tell me you are as good a rider as you’d like to be when and if you grow up! (Motorcycle riders never actually do grow up.)

That’s my take on it--for what it’s worth. More training is coming your way. You can look at it other ways but to me the Marine Corps is doing its level best to get you to have fun riding. Don’t tell that to your commands; they think these things are safety programs. But you know what? A well trained rider is as safe as it gets and the hidden bonus is having more fun doing it. ■





Fulfilling Your Need for Speed

By April Phillips

Let's get real. If you own a sport bike, you want to go fast. Your leaders are constantly preaching to you to slow down, but that advice is going in one ear and out the other. You want to do the right thing. You practice risk management all day at work and it's not like you have a death wish. But still ... there's something inside you that keeps telling your throttle hand to roll on the power and your bike responds perfectly to your every command. It feels so good to go fast.

Believe it or not, naval leadership is starting to get it. Asking sport bike owners never to test the limits of their high performance machines is about as effective as giving a dog a bone and telling him not to gnaw at it.

So, if the bosses can't get you to slow down all the time, they've decided the next best thing is to provide a safe environment for you to test your high-speed skills, and even offer you top-of-the-line instruction from some of the motorcycle industry's best-known names. That's why the Marine Corps beta tested the Sport Bike Speed

and Direction Challenge Track Day at several areas across the fleet.

Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point hosted a track day March 2-6, which featured cornering instruction from Dylan Code, son of champion rider Keith Code and an instructor at Code's California Superbike School. The Marine Corps has looked to the Code family to provide high-level, advanced specialized training to Marines who ride sport bikes.

"We want a controlled environment to allow Marines

to better their skills with professional coaching, to go fast and learn something while having a good time,” said Stan Dutko, safety manager for Marine Corps Installations East.

A safe environment is key, said Dylan Code, who led the training at Cherry Point. The track was cleared of all debris before the riders began and also between each group of riders. Because it's a closed course, there's no four-wheeled traffic to contend with – and four-wheeled vehicles are often at fault in crashes with motorcyclists.

Code and his team provided light instruction on key aspects of track riding such as throttle control and correct entry speed into the turns. He said these skills are crucial on a track, but mastery of them also makes sport bike riders better overall motorcyclists on the street.

“If the best guys in the world are constantly poring over that information, don't you think it would be good to focus on throttle control and entry speed at your level?” he asked the Marines during his introductory brief.

After completing the instruction period, Code broke the

riders up into groups and let them do their thing.

“We're not setting speed limits,” he said. “The limits are on an individual basis. The mantra here is not ‘slow down.’ The mantra is ‘control your bike.’”

The Marines who participated in the track day said it was a great opportunity to test their existing skills and learn new ones.



SGT. KRISTIN RIOS WAS THE ONLY FEMALE rider who participated in this particular track day. Although her father and grandfather both rode motorcycles, they were upset when she bought a bike because her father spent seven months in the hospital after a serious injury. In her leather jacket and helmet adorned with chains and skulls, she's not easily intimidated; however, she's learned from others' mistakes and enjoys the safety of a closed track setting when she's out for speed.

“I keep my father's accident in the back of my mind, and when I'm over my limit, it slows me down,” Rios said.

Sgt. Bradley Wells was sent to Cherry Point on funded temporary duty orders from his command at the Marine Corps Security Force Regiment in Norfolk because his chain of command recognized the importance of this advanced training. However, just because the training is important, doesn't mean it can't be a lot of fun.

“I got it up to a little over a hundred on the straightaways,” Wells said. He also said it helped curb his need to go fast on the highway.

“Anything you can learn on a safe track is better than learning it on a freeway with cars, or worse yet, in a ditch on the side of the freeway.” ■



By April Phillips

There are very few motorcyclists who enter a tight curve at 80 miles per hour, over-correct with too much brake, slide across the highway after a front tire skid, and then get up to high-five their friends. However, even though you know the dangers, you've probably wondered just how far you can push it with your speed ... How fast you can take that curve ... How good you really are.

Wipe Out Without Being Wiped Out

Marines assigned to the Third Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW-3) at Miramar, California, are getting the chance to hone their riding skills, test the limits of what they know, and live to tell about it.

I hate to be the one to break it to you, but unless you're Ben Spies or another Superbike racing champ, you probably need to throttle back a little bit. However, you're human. You're naturally curious and love to push the limits. Wouldn't it be great if there were some way to find out what would happen if you did take a corner faster than you should?

Marines assigned to the Third Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW-3) at Miramar, California, are getting the chance to hone their riding skills, test the limits of what they know, and live to tell about it. The Department of Safety and Standardization recently made a major investment in the education of Marine motorcyclists by purchasing some high-tech motorcycle simulators with a price tag of about \$170,000 apiece. They have one cruiser-style simulator and one sport bike. The price is steep, but Col. Tom McKnight, who heads up MAW-3 DOSS, said it's worth the money.

"We're telling Marines that it's in our best interest to keep you alive and in one piece. Motorcycle fatalities and injuries impact our readiness. That's why this is so important," he said.

The high-fidelity E-F Bike simulator, made by Simulator Systems International, offers fully operational handlebar controls including clutch, front brake, gas, turn signals, lights, horn, and starter button. The foot controls operate the rear brake and the gear shifter, just like on a real motorcycle. Three 42-inch plasma screen monitors have realistic graphics and high resolution, 3-D visuals of scenarios such as city driving, country roads, interstates and other real-life riding situations. More importantly, riding the E-F Bike simulator feels like riding a motorcycle. The simulator automatically switches from direct steering,



where you steer the bike with the handlebars pretty much the same as you would on a bicycle, to counter-steering, where you have to push the handlebar more than turn it. This can be a tough concept for newbies to get, and learning it on the simulator is much more forgiving than learning it on the street.

MAW-3 requires all its new riders to attend simulator training before taking the Basic Rider Course, which is required of all military riders.

“You get a lot more out of the BRC by learning about the friction zone, the throttle controls and more before you ever go to the course,” said Steve Ray, an MSF rider coach and a contractor who teaches traffic safety. “If you already know how to control the bike you’re less nervous during the course and can pay attention to what the instructors are saying rather than worrying about the basics of throttle and clutch.”

The simulator has several modes, each designed to teach a new skill. After new riders learn the basics of motorcycle controls, they progress to maneuvering the bike at real highway speeds. More advanced programs take riders through complex intersections and traffic patterns, as they learn hazard perception, defensive driving, and how to divide and focus their attention as necessary. Road conditions even change as the weather changes. Simulated rain will reduce the tires’ traction, so riders can see how their own bike would handle differently in inclement weather.

Cpl. Christian Bramstedt, who works as a statistician in the MAW-3 safety office, was not a motorcyclist, so he was the perfect candidate to help test the simulator. He learned to ride by learning the mechanics and headwork of motorcycling on the E-F Bike.

“It gets you used to using a clutch, controlling the throttle, and learning how the motorcycle should lean and feel.”

Bramstedt said the simulator was very easy to use.

Anyone who’s ever used a computer or played a video game can operate it, he said. However, the stakes are much higher than those of your average video game.

“It lets new riders know what they’re getting into. A lot of riders think the bigger the better with motorcycles, but if they spend a couple of hours on this thing, they’ll have a much better idea of what they’re capable of.”



However, it’s not just new riders who can benefit from the simulator. MAW-3 requires its riders to train on the simulator again after a year, but this time they operate at a more advanced level. Those who have been riding for years and years get the opportunity to see just how fast they can travel through tight turns and through busy intersections. Most come away with a much more realistic impression of their riding abilities, which in turn keeps them safer on the streets. ■

Don't Ride Like an Idiot

By April Phillips

Imagine a dark night and an open road. A Sailor on a slick yellow sport bike pops a wheelie and flies on one tire through an intersection's red light. Soon, two more red lights as a police officer swerves onto the roadway, hits the siren, and floors it in hot pursuit.

It happens far too often ... a once-promising military career goes down the tubes in the time it takes for a sport bike rider to roll back on the throttle and shoot through an intersection like an F-18 catapulting off a flight deck. It's like playing Russian roulette when speed, traffic, road conditions and other factors combine to exponentially increase the likelihood of a gruesome crash.

But I'm not talking about the careers that end due to death or dismemberment on the highway. I'm talking about the ones that end because a Sailor or Marine is in jail, locked away on charges of felony police evasion, while his motorcycle is sitting idle in an impound lot.

"It's not unusual for sport bike riders to try to evade police," said Don Borkoski, the motorcycle safety manager at the Naval Safety Center (NSC). "He's got a performance machine that he knows will do more than just about anything else on the road. He thinks he can get away by out-maneuvering, but what many people don't know is that the police usually don't turn on their lights and go into active pursuit until they've already called for backup. You might be speeding away, but you're only going to get to the roadblock they've set up that much faster."

A recent incident involved a Sailor who was evading police after blowing through several lights. The pursuing officer ended up losing control of his vehicle and was trapped beneath a tractor trailer truck for nearly two hours. Someone was smiling on him, because he only suffered minor injuries.

The Sailor was arrested on felony charges and is facing major legal and career ramifications. While he might not realize it right now, this Sailor was actually very lucky.

"It could just as easily been him in the accident and not the cop, and he wouldn't have survived the crash like

the cop did," said Dan Dray, an NSC traffic safety specialist.

Felony charges of evasion can carry significant jail time, not to mention the original charges the rider was trying to flee from.

"If he goes to jail, he can take leave, but once that leave is used up, the Sailor or Marine is UA. When he gets out, chances are they'll process him out with an administrative or general discharge," Borkoski said.

Both he and Dray are former master chiefs, so they've seen their share of careers that got derailed because of bad judgment calls like running from the cops. Borkoski said that even if the service member is able to stay in the military, he or she may have to move into a less satisfying career field because security clearances are one of the first things to go with a felony conviction.

While it's typically the younger, sport bike riders who have the machines capable of evading police pursuit, Dray said it's up to all motorcycle riders to look out for each other.

"Motorcycle mentors and mentorship programs within the commands really need to promote responsible riding," he said.

This is important, because although the number of riders who run from the cops is very, very small, a few high-profile cases of felony evasion can give everyone a bad name.

"Before you run, think of the ramifications," Borkoski said. "If you do evade the police, when they finally catch you, they're going to throw every charge in the book at you. You're better off just taking the ticket." ■





DON BORKOSKI IS THE NAVY MOTORCYCLE MANAGER

Bike Buying Basics

Don Borkoski

Even if you know what bike you want, putting out the money is the easy part. Here are some things you should do before you even go to the dealership:

- Obtain motorcycle *permit* or *license*
- Take a training course (Motorcycle Safety Foundation Basic RiderCourse)
- Ask yourself, do you really want to ride?
- What is your experience level?
- What type of riding do you plan on doing? (Daily commuting, long rides, weekends only, etc.)
- Decide what type of bike you want
- Decide on a new or used bike
- Know what *options* are available for the type of bike you are interested in
- Call your insurance company and get quotes
- Call your bank and get quotes for a loan (if you are not paying cash)
- Decide if you want to purchase an *extended warranty*
- Decide if you want to purchase a *maintenance plan*
- Price Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) you need

When you can answer these questions you are ready to visit some dealerships:

- Is the bike the right size for you and your experience level?

- Do you know how *modifications* will affect the ride?
- Is the bike what you want or is it what the salesman thinks you want?
- *Can you afford it?* (Financially and risk-wise)
- If the bike is used, has it been inspected by a professional mechanic?
- Is this the best deal?
- Buy your bike!
- Plan on a way to *get the bike home*, especially if you're inexperienced.

Once you purchase your motorcycle, congratulations and welcome to the ride. You have joined an exclusive club that comprises about 10 percent of the licensed drivers in the military. But, you can never forget that the machine you purchased comes with significantly more risk than an automobile. While only 10 percent of the military population rides, motorcyclists account for more than 50 percent of the military's motor vehicle fatalities. The only safety features bikes provide are more efficient brakes, and on some models, ABS brakes. Your PPE is the only other protection you will have.

But wait! The single most important safety feature on

your machine is you! Seasoned riders have learned how to stay alive in spite of the increased risk. Things that are common to every seasoned rider include:

- They are trained for their *type of bike*
- They identify hazards (using ORM)
- They use Search, Evaluate, Execute (SEE)
- They always have a way out
- They ride defensively
- They keep their heads on a swivel
- They ride within their limits
- They don't speed or stunt on the highway. They take it to the track
- They don't ride drunk
- They avoid unnecessary risks
- They never assume the right of way

PERMIT or LICENSE: Most states offer 30-day permits to ride motorcycles. They can be obtained at your Department of Motor Vehicles if you have a valid driver's license and pass the written and the eye exams. After the 30 days you will be given a riding test and if you pass, you get a motorcycle endorsement on your license. Cost: \$25 to \$100 depending on your state. Contact your state DMV for details.

TRAINING: On a motorcycle, the one mistake you make could be the one that kills you. Training is provided free in the military, is mandatory before operating a motorcycle and will give you the skills and knowledge to stay alive. Many installations provide trainer motorcycles so you don't need your own bike, or a license. Take the BRC before you even buy a bike. After you take the training, decide if you really want to ride. Make the decision before you put down a lot of money. It might not be your thing.

If you end up buying a sport bike, remember you must take the Military Sportbike RiderCourse. It's mandatory and free. Sign up for these courses on: www.navymotorcyclerider.com

If you are not near a military base, most Community Colleges provide the training.

TYPE of BIKE: The military categorizes bikes into two family groups, Sport Bikes and Standard Bikes. Sport Bikes are performance machines born from the track. Some bikes in this family include supersport, sport touring, dual sport, and unclad or naked sport. Standard bikes are a huge family of bikes and include touring bikes, cruisers, custom bikes, dirt bikes, enduros, café and introductory bikes.

Note: Smaller cc, standard bikes are the safest motorcycles for beginners. In many cases you can sell them for what you bought them for. Consider one of these smaller machines before you move on to bigger or more performance machines.



NEW or USED: There is a saying that "there are two types of riders, ones who dropped their bike and ones who will." Whether you drop it in a crash (hopefully not) or drop it because you forgot to put the kickstand down (lose cool points), new riders tend to drop their bikes more. If you are a new rider, consider a used bike. If you do buy used, make sure the bike is inspected by a qualified mechanic. Getting a nasty front wheel shimmy on the way home is not fun and could prove hazardous to your health.

OPTIONS: Consider decorative options after you have owned your bike for awhile. Here are some important options to consider when you purchase the bike:

Windshield, saddle bags, engine guard (or roll bar), sissy bar (back rest), luggage rack, tank or tail bag, bike lock (chain, cable or disk brake lock) and helmet bungee.

INSURANCE: Some states do not require insurance. If you do not have a minimum of liability insurance you are taking a chance of losing everything you own and in some cases, your pay can be garnished in a liability suit. That could be worse than alimony! Comprehensive insurance will help cover the cost of repairs if you are involved in a crash. Keep your deductible high or you will be paying dearly for that coverage. Get a quote for your insurance before you buy your bike. Young, new riders may pay more for insurance than the bike payment!

Note: First, many insurance companies do not cover



your passenger. If you plan on riding with passengers, contact your insurance company to see if you are covered, or how you can get the coverage. Second, many insurance companies provide a discount if you have completed the BRC (usually 10%). Some may even offer an additional discount for more advanced training, which includes the MSRC. Get trained: it may save you money and your life.

LOAN: Your best interest rates are generally from credit unions, then banks. Some dealerships may have special deals where the interest is much lower. When you get a loan, consider the following questions: Fixed or variable rate loan? Could there be a future rate change for any reason? What is the late payment penalty? Is there a loan administrative fee? What are the loan term options? 12, 24, 36, 48, 56 months?

Note: The longer the loan is held, the lower the payments, but the more you will pay. Be cautious: with most motorcycle loans, if you exceed a 48-month loan, you may owe more for the motorcycle than it is worth.

EXTENDED WARRANTY: Most new bikes have sufficient coverage up to 36 months. Unless you have a very expensive bike, you may not need additional coverage. Also, consider if you will still have that same bike in 3 years.

MAINTENANCE PLAN: These plans can be very good and often pay for themselves, **if you use them and you don't move.** Most are not transferrable, and can only be used at a

particular dealership. These are not very cost effective for a military family who changes duty stations regularly.

PPE: Buy a good helmet; it could save your life. Full finger gloves, riding boots and a good jacket are important. You may want to consider riding pants or leathers. You have to decide how much risk you are willing to accept. Many riders wish they had better equipment after losing large sections of skin after a slide down the highway. Remember, the only protection you get on your bike is what you wear!

SIZE: You should be able to put both feet on the ground when you are sitting on your bike. Some bikes won't fit you. If the bike doesn't fit you, keep looking.

Engine size may be a measure of your ego, but it will also increase your insurance dramatically and if you are inexperienced, decrease your life span! You will also wear your tires down faster, especially if you "jack rabbit" from light to light. Consider a bigger size bike only if your experience level can handle it and/or if you normally ride with a passenger.

MODIFICATIONS: Here are some bike mods that could affect your safety.

1. Extended swing arms or front forks dramatically reduce the turning ability of the motorcycle. If the mod was an aftermarket change, consider the consequences.

2. Bike lowering mods reduce ground clearance and turning ability. In some cases when "hard parts" of the bike hit the ground, it could be dangerous.

3. If your tires aren't properly fitted, you can "rim out" in a turn and drop the bike.

4. If racing tires are on the bike, they may be brittle if they are used or old. You will have very minimal traction. Rim size changes can affect the suspension, traction and maneuverability of your bike.

5. Exhaust system changes can reduce the engine life if they have not been "mapped" to match the fuel injectors to the change in exhaust pressure.

6. Lastly, look for changes of the safety equipment on the bike such as lights and mirrors. Most states require an inspection prior to sale, but even if your bike passes inspection, consider the functionality of the installed modifications and how they will affect the bikes performance and your riding.

Whether this is your first bike or your fifth, whatever you buy will determine how you ride, how safe you will be, and how much skill you must have. Riding can be fun, thrilling and challenging, but it can also be a short-lived hobby if you don't know what you're doing. Get trained, buy smart, get experience, enjoy your ride and live to be a seasoned rider. See you on the road. ■

PPE CAN SAVE FACE

By AD3 Thaddeus R. Widen

Last Veterans Day it was a beautiful afternoon to go dirt bike riding, especially since it had been raining all week and I didn't get a chance to ride all weekend. My roommate and I both have dirt bikes and we usually ride trails, but on this day the trails were still too muddy to maintain control of our bikes. Instead of taking the chance of getting hurt on the trails we decided to practice our holeshots. In motorcycle racing, "holeshot" is the term for first person to enter the first corner.

My buddy, Aaron, and I lined up in a field that was approximately 300 yards long. We did three holeshots and were starting to get used to getting off the line quickly and safely. On the last holeshot we decided to race to the end of the field. I came off the line first and was quickly accelerating through the gears.

I was in fourth or fifth gear about 200 yards down the field when my front tire bounced up from a tractor tire rut. When my front tire came down, the handlebars bounced back and forth violently making it impossible for me to maintain control of the motorcycle. I was thrown off the right side of the bike and remember hitting the ground on my right shoulder and immediately starting to roll. On the second flip my head smashed face first into the soft dirt. This snapped the visor on my helmet into three pieces. I slowed to a stop about 40 feet from where I had initially landed.

Aaron had seen what had happened and stopped to assess the damage. As I stood up, he told me my nose was bleeding. At the time, my whole face hurt so I didn't even know the extent of my pain. We started both bikes back up and rode to the trucks. I cleaned my face and we packed up for the day to head home.

After driving home, I took a shower and made dinner. That evening, I noticed my neck was swollen. I have been in a few wrecks and know dirt bike riding can be dangerous. That's why I always ride with all of my personal protective equipment, including helmet, boots, gloves, long pants and eye protection. In the

past when I wrecked, I would just get up and shake it off and keep riding. This time, I was scared that something was wrong with my neck.

Aaron drove me to Portsmouth Naval Hospital and upon arrival I met with a nurse who put a neck brace on me and told me to be still. They did a CT scan to look for any broken bones and torn muscles. After finishing my scan, they did an X-Ray my spine just to make sure that nothing was misaligned. The results came back clear and I was free to leave, along with a prescription for some Motrin and Percocet.

I learned from this experience not go as fast as I ordinarily would when I don't know the condition of the field. Luckily, the field was soft enough to break my fall without breaking any of my bones. The doctor told me that if I had not been wearing my helmet I would most likely be in a coma, and if I had not been wearing my chest protector I could have easily broken my collar bone or shoulder blade. I have been riding since I was four years old and have wrecked many times without breaking any bones. This was also the first accident to send me to the hospital, but it can happen to anyone. ■

AD3 WIDEN IS A PLANE CAPTAIN IN VFA-37



Motorcycles Are For Girls

...they just don't know it yet.



By Jessica Prokup

I'm tired of hearing this story: "My husband bought me a motorcycle. *[Read: Gigantic hulking monster that freaks me out.]* I tried to ride it and dropped it. Now I'm too scared to get back on a bike." I teach people to ride in the Motorcycle Safety Foundation's Basic RiderCourse, and I've had women drop out halfway through because they went home after class, fired up the behemoth waiting in the garage, and promptly tipped over. And that's the last time they ever tried riding.

Too many women are discouraged from getting into motorcycling because they start on a bike that's way too big. Or they don't have a good support network. Or they lack enough confidence in themselves to even try riding. Those of us who've taken the leap know what they're missing out on: Motorcycling is one of the most fun and empowering things you can do, not to mention a great way to build friendships.

And you want to let a little thing like confidence get in the way? Get over it, girl!

Now more than ever, the motorcycle community has the means to support women riders. With more bikes, gear, schools, clubs and events than ever before, there are tons of opportunities and a lot of help for people of all backgrounds to get into motorcycling safely and smartly. If you're thinking about learning to ride, there's never been a better time.

Roadblocks

Freedom, camaraderie, adventure – motorcycling is where it's at. And you don't have to race or journey cross-country to enjoy it. So what keeps so many women from learning to ride? Let's look at the barriers standing in the way.

There are some reasons why women in particular have a hard time getting into motorcycling. For one, I've heard a lot of women say that they'd like to ride, but they just don't think they can do it. Does it look like something only guys can do? Chances are, the women who think they can't learn to ride don't know a lot of other women who do.

Some women simply have no one they trust to show

them the ropes. Imagine walking into a dealership full of strangers and asking for help, starting from square one. Would you be comfortable? Would you even know what to ask? Considering that most traditional ways of finding out about bikes (enthusiast magazines, bike rallies, dealerships) aren't always woman- or newbie-friendly, it's easy to see why a lot of women never even put a foot in the door.

What Can You Do?

If you're already a rider, you know the rewards of motorcycling and what makes the risk worth it. And you know exactly what it took to get you on a bike. Not everyone is meant to be a motorcyclist, but I'll bet there are a lot of women who'd like to learn – if they only felt comfortable enough to try.

The number one, and probably most rewarding, thing you can do is become a mentor. If you have a friend or co-worker who's interested in learning to ride, chances are she's got a ton of questions to ask, and maybe no one to turn to but you.

For starters, encourage your friend to take MSF's Basic RiderCourse. It's not only the best way to learn how to ride, it's also a safe way to see whether she'll actually enjoy being on a bike. As a coach, I've had people drop out simply because they didn't feel like motorcycling was for them. I think it's a smart decision, and it's one that people have to make for themselves.

Once your friend passes the class, it's time to think about motorcycles and gear. In the informal survey, I asked women what they need help with when it comes to buying a bike. Here are some of the questions they posed – questions they might not be confident asking a male staffer at a dealership:

Does the bike fit me?

Can I handle it?

Can I pick it up if it falls over?

What features does it have?

How will those features affect my riding?

Too often, new female riders are led to buy a larger, more powerful bike than they can handle because the salesperson assures them they'll quickly grow out of a "beginner bike." That's an irresponsible excuse for an upsell. Go shopping with your friend, help her find a bike that she's truly comfortable on, and be there when she asks all the questions she thinks are stupid. They're not. Same thing goes for gear. Help your friend buy comfortable, protective, properly fitting motorcycle apparel, and make sure she understands the importance of wearing it.

There are plenty of other ways you can share your experiences and offer support, particularly on the web. A number of women riders have already created websites (see sidebar) where you can post stories, join forum discussions, ask questions, and research or review bikes,

gear, accessories, and services from a woman's point of view. This is a great way for you to contribute to the female motorcycling community and expand your own network. These websites are also terrific resources for new riders, offering both inspiration and information. ■

Note: Jessica Prokup is Director of Emerging Market Communications for Discover Today's Motorcycling, the communications bureau of the not-for-profit Motorcycle Industry Council. Before joining DTM, Jessica was Editor of RoadBike, a national motorcycle enthusiast magazine. Jessica started riding in 2001 while living in New York City; since then, motorcycles have been her primary form of transportation and a defining part of her life. She still commutes on two wheels and changes her own oil.

Websites For Women Riders

- HelmetHairMagazine.com
- Her-Motorcycle.com
- LadyBiker.com
- Motoress.com
- RideMyOwn.com
- VTwinMama.com
- WomenMotorcyclist.com
- WomenRidersNow.com

Whether you're a potential rider, a new rider, or a longtime motorcyclist, we can all benefit from having a good network. Fellow women riders can be your best resource for information, camaraderie, support, or simply someone to ride with on a Sunday morning. You may meet other women riders on the road or at your local dealer, but you'll definitely find them through women motorcyclists clubs and at special events, like the National Women in Motorcycling Conference, which will take place August 19-22 in Colorado (for more information, go to www.womenandmotorcycling.com). For a great listing of women's clubs around the country, click on the "Women Motorcycle Clubs" link at www.womenridersnow.com.

Now get out there and ride – and take a friend with you.

Women On Wheels

“According to the 2008 Motorcycle Industry Council Owner’s Survey, 29% more women are riding today, compared with the last survey in 2003. We now make up almost 12% of all riders. Yet it’s still a surprise to people every time I roll up – even though women on bikes is nothing new,” said Jessica Prokup. “In the US, we’ve been riding for almost as long as motorcycles have been around! There are many great stories about bold, adventurous women who, through traveling, racing and reporting, paved (and keep paving) the way for the rest of us.” Here are a few of those stories:



In 1916, Adeline and Augusta Van Buren set out to prove to the military that women were fit to serve as motorcycle dispatch riders. They left Brooklyn on July 4, headed cross-country on Indian motorcycles. This was no easy trip – they faced mountains and deserts, fatigue, bad roads, and heavy rains – but they arrived in Los Angeles on September 8, proving that women were capable of far more than society allowed at the time. Along the way, they became the first women to ride motorized vehicles to Pikes Peak. Unfortunately, even after their feat, the Army rejected Adeline’s application as a dispatch rider.

of the time. During World War II, Bessie achieved the Van Buren sisters’ dream: she worked for the army as a civilian motorcycle dispatch rider. After the war, she settled in Florida, became a registered nurse, founded a motorcycle club, and started racing flat track – and winning.



Bessie B. Stringfield rode her first bike, a 1928 Indian Scout, at age 16. When she turned 19, Bessie started riding around the 48 states, competing in hill climbs and performing in stunt shows. Through the 1930s and ’40s, she did eight solo trips around the US. She even rode through the deep South, despite the racial prejudice

of the time. During World War II, Bessie achieved the Van Buren sisters’ dream: she worked for the army as a civilian motorcycle dispatch rider. After the war, she settled in Florida, became a registered nurse, founded a motorcycle club, and started racing flat track – and winning.

Dot Robinson was practically born on a motorcycle. In 1912, when Dot’s mother went into labor, her father put her in a sidecar and rushed them to the hospital. Dot met her husband, Earl, in high school; the pair opened and ran a Harley-Davidson dealership from 1935-1971. In the 1930s, they both participated in endurance runs and races, completing a record transcontinental run in 1935. In 1940, Dot won the Jack Pine sidecar class, becoming the first woman to win an AMA national competition. The following year, she became the first president of the Motor Maids, North America’s first national organization for women motorcyclists. Dot kept riding until 1998, when, at age 85, it became too hard to mount her sidecar rig. She passed away in 1999.



Linda “Jo” Giovannoni grew up in Chicago in the ’50s and ’60s, working in drag racing crews. She started racing cars as soon as she got her driver’s



motorcycle section of the *Daily Herald* in Illinois.

A 20-year veteran of television and print media, Genevieve Schmitt was a pioneer for female motojournalists. She was the first woman on television to report from the seat of a motorcycle. Genevieve was also a host on Speedvision’s “Bike Week” from 1997-2003. In 2000, Genevieve founded *Woman Rider*, the first all-brands national bike magazine for women. When the magazine stopped being published, Genevieve continued her work by launching *WomenRidersNow.com*, a website devoted to helping women share the experience of motorcycling. She still tours the country to speak at dealer events, ladies’ nights, and motorcycle rallies.



One of the fastest women in North America, Markbilt Racing rider Melissa Paris just set a new record at the 2009 Daytona 200: By placing 21st, Melissa became the top-finishing female in Daytona 200 history. She also raised awareness, as well as \$5,000 in donations, for the Dr. Susan Love Research Foundation, which works to eradicate breast cancer. Melissa grew up in Northern California and learned to ride when she was 21. A year later, she entered her first race at the Streets of Willow, and soon after that was tearing up tracks at club races all over the country. She won her first national championship in October 2008, during the CCS Race of Champions at Daytona. Now, just a few years after honing her skills at the club level, Melissa is an AMA professional motorcycle racer. For photos, videos, and more stories, go to www.melissaparis.com.

Live It, Learn It, Wear It!

LTJG Patrick Fisher

Like most inexperienced riders, I really wasn't very concerned about proper safety equipment, after all, it just didn't look cool. It was my pre-Navy years, so my focus on safety and wearing PPE had not yet been sparked. Additionally, my home state of Indiana did not have laws regarding personal protective equipment. I purchased my first bike, a "right out-of-the-box" 2004 Kawasaki Ninja 250R. Not a fast bike by any means, but it fit me—both in price and size. I took the courses at the DMV to get the learner's permit and my maiden voyage was a trek around my neighborhood. I wore an old helmet I borrowed from a friend and put on a jacket, jeans, tennis shoes and set off to see what this whole thing was all about. The streets were wet from the previous night's rain, but that didn't factor into my equation. "Experience is the best teacher" came to mind!

Fortunately, the ride went fine—although I did figure out the hard way that you can't go from 4th gear to 1st gear. I really grew to love the bike; nimble, comfortable and could stop on a dime.

Over time, I became more adventurous (some say stupid) and began to ride without a helmet. My reasoning was that I thought I had better visibility, not realizing that any crash was likely to result in massive head trauma. My track record with my car was flawless, I had never been in a car accident and I assumed that would translate into the same record with my new bike.

The summer came and my buddies and I would ride about town almost every day. Our typical riding gear included jeans (and sometimes cargo shorts!), a t-shirt and ball cap—backwards, of course. To keep the wind out of our eyes, we wore sunglasses! We were on top of the world, cruising over country roads, free and easy, without a care in the world.

Time passed without incident, although I did get a verbal warning for doing 33 in a 25 mph zone. I did have some close calls along the way. Once, I was approaching a busy intersection. The light turned yellow and I came to an abrupt stop. The car behind me did not notice how close he was and nearly rear-ended me. He, being unable to stop in the same distance that my bike could, swerved around me and went through the red light. I would've been severely injured or killed and I wasn't wearing any protective equipment at all. Being 21 at the time, I wasn't fazed by the event and kept on with my dangerous practices without wearing gear.

When I graduated from college and received my commission as a naval officer, I began to learn of the new regulations for active duty motorcycle riders. Initially, I

was overwhelmed with all the rules, classes and expenses that I'd have to deal with. I didn't understand it all because I wasn't educated at the time. I didn't know the statistics at the time, a real eye-opener!

I bit the bullet and purchased a mesh-riding jacket, full fingered gloves, a new helmet and found my old steel-toed boots. I felt like I was part of a bomb squad just walking out to my bike with all the gear on. I felt a bit constrained when I rode, and was a little uncomfortable with my narrowed field of view from my helmet. I had to remember that the Navy is nothing without its people, and life is short, especially for those not wearing PPE.

Pensacola in the fall is awesome. It cools off a bit and the daily thunderstorms had just about gone away. I lived in the north part of the city along with some fellow riders, and Scenic Highway was a favorite road to ride along the bay. One gorgeous Saturday, we decided to ride to the beach. For those of you who know Pensacola and Scenic Highway, it's a very windy road that can get quite narrow in some places. One of my buddies got a bit too ambitious in a turn and laid his bike down. He and the bike slid into a guardrail before coming to a dead stop in the middle of the road. Luckily, no cars were coming. After the rest of us stopped, we were able to quickly and easily get him and the bike out of the road with no problems. Fortunately, he was okay and not a single scratch on him. His gear was a bit torn, a seemingly small price to pay. It was right then and there that we realized just how important PPE is, and why the Navy has made it mandatory. He was shaken, but that was the extent of it. Without it, who knows what the outcome might have been.

I'm sure everyone has read stories and attended safety stand downs and heard the importance of PPE. But seeing it save a buddy, first hand, is something completely different, especially when the victim was able to stand up on his own and walk away. This stuff works, and while wearing all the gear can be uncomfortable, hot and expensive, the price of it definitely outweighs the consequences of serious injuries or death. Now, a little older and wiser, I don't even think twice about my gear, and not just because it's mandatory. Anything that can keep me safer is worth utilizing. I guess I had to see it firsthand, at the expense of my buddy and his bike, to get the message. You don't have to learn from your mistakes. It is okay to learn from the mistakes of others! ■

LTJG Fisher is a member of the "Knight Riders" of VP-46.



Personal Protective Equipment *Requirement*

The following is the *minimum* gear required every time you ride – whether on or off base, and regardless of state and local laws:

Helmet:

- Approved by DOT or the Snell Memorial Foundation
- Long Pants
- Long-Sleeved Shirt
- Full Fingerted Gloves
- Eye Protection (wrap-around style glasses or helmet face shield)
- Over-the-Ankle Footwear
- Reflective Vest (when riding after sundown)

These are just the minimum standards. Leather or textile riding jackets and pants provide much more protection than mere jeans and long-sleeved shirts. Full face helmets provide more protection than half helmets.

There have been numerous advances in riding gear to improve comfort, fit, and appearance. Check it out and make your own fashion statement. Remember, "All the gear, all the time."

Trail Braking:

On the track to win, on the street to survive

This is the most important riding-technique column you will ever read



By Nick Ienatsch

How can the fastest roadracers win races? Shouldn't they crash more frequently?

The Rossis and Mladins of our sport set track records, yet collect championships by finishing races. Lesser riders try to match the champion's pace, but crash trying. Amateur racers at the same track crash while pushing to get within six seconds of the champion's lap. How can this be?

There is one aspect of the champions' riding that will help every street and track rider in the world: The champions realize that every corner has a slow point.

It doesn't matter how long they dirttracked or who their daddy is, the fast guys know that each corner has a point where the bike must be going a certain speed to be able to match the turn's radius. Arrive at this particular point with too much speed and the racer runs wide or crashes, while the street rider might cross the center line and head-on a truck. The best riders have the ability to arrive at a corner's slowest point closer to the precise speed the chassis can handle, lap after lap, or corner after corner on the way to breakfast.

And this ability is called "trail braking." You need to learn it ... on the track to win, on the street to survive.

The term refers to the practice of trailing some front brake pressure into the corner, or you can think of trailing off the brakes as you apply lean angle. Understand that the majority of your braking should be done before you tip your bike into the corner and you want to give away brake pressure as you add lean angle because your front tire can only handle so much combined braking and lean angle. I explain it with a 100-point chart in my book *Sport Riding Techniques*, writing about a front tire that has 100 total

points of traction divisible between braking and cornering. As we add lean-angle points, we give away braking points.

We want to trail brake to control our speed closer to the slowest point of the corner. The closer we get to that point, the better we can judge whether we're going too fast or too slow. If your style is to let go of the brakes before turning into the corner, understand that you're giving up on your best speed control (the front brake) and hoping that your pre-turn-in braking was sufficient to get your speed correct at the slowest point in the corner. If you get in too slow, this is no big deal. The problem comes when the rider's upright braking doesn't shed the required speed and suddenly the rider is relying on additional lean angle to make it through the surprisingly tight turn or to get under the gravel patch.

I hope we all realize that lean angle is not infinite. When it runs out, you and the bike crash. If you're throwing your bike into a corner without the brakes on and the corner tightens unexpectedly (or there's gravel, a car in your lane, water across the road) all you have left is lean angle. It's gonna get tough.

You need to make a habit of turning into corners with just a little brake pressure because the unexpected is much easier to deal with if your brake pads are already squeezing your discs. You will be in control of your speed and as your speed drops, your bike will be able to carve a tighter radius at the same lean angle.

If you're sitting there thinking, "This guy doesn't know what he's talking about, my bike stands up when I stab



The champions realize that every corner has a slow point.

the brakes mid-corner,” I’d have to say you’re right. Abrupt braking midcorner will collapse the fork and make the bike stand up. Remember, trail braking is a light touch on the brakes, not a grab. Think of trail braking as fine-tuning your entrance speed. The big chunks of speed are knocked off while straight-line braking.

Makes sense, doesn’t it? If someone describes a riding technique that doesn’t make sense, ask questions. If it still doesn’t make sense, quit listening to them. In this case, I’m telling you it’s easier to judge your speed the closer you get to the slowest point in the corner. Your best speed-setting device is your front brake, so use it as you turn into the corner. All corners? No, don’t make this math. Corners differ and your techniques must differ to deal with them. But the majority of corners have their slowest point somewhere after the turn-in. Find that point and trail the brakes closer to it.

The second reason you need to trail brake is because you can actually improve your bike’s steering geometry, helping the bike to turn better. A slightly collapsed front fork tightens the bike’s rake and trail numbers and allows it to turn in less time and distance. Tighter steering geometry is one reason a sport bike turns better than a cruiser. Rather than let go of the front brake before the turn-in, keep a bit of pressure on and you’ll immediately feel the difference.

Let’s again study the rider who gets all his/her braking done before the turn-in. As the front brake is released, the fork springs rebound, putting the bike in the worst geometry to steer. As this rider works within this technique,

he/she will attempt to turn the bike quicker and quicker, trying to make up for the extended steering geometry with more and more aggressive steering inputs. The faster they ride, the wider the bike wants to run through the corners, so the harder they’ll try to steer. This rider will be forced to use more and more lean angle in an effort to “scrub off” speed with the front tire. Aggressive steering inputs and lots of lean angle...a recipe for disaster. Anyone who does this sport well realizes that aggression with the brakes, throttle and lean angle can get painful. Fast guys load the tires smoothly, whether accelerating, braking or turning. Forget the “flick.”

Here’s a real-world example. MotoGP (or World Superbike or 250GP or AMA Superbike, pick your favorite). All those guys trail brake and do you know why? Because it’s faster and safer. They’re champions because they carry as much speed as possible to the slowest point in the corner (and as much speed as possible from the slowest point, but that’s another subject). It’s not just about speed, it’s about finishing tire tests, practice, qualifying and the race. Crashing is disastrous for street riders and equally problematic for racers who want a contract next year. Trail braking is about safety on the street and consistency on the track. It makes sense. You need to do it. ■

Nick Ienatsch is the author of Sport Riding Techniques and led the Freddie Spencer High Performance Riding School from 1997 to 2008. He now leads the Yamaha school at Miller Motorsports Park and is proud of your efforts for our great country.

NEX Stocks Motorcycle Gear to Promote Safety

At the request of several Navy commands and to help support the Navy's initiative to reduce the number of motorcycle-related injuries and fatalities, 18 Navy Exchanges worldwide have begun selling motorcycle safety equipment in their stores.

"We are always looking to support the Navy's initiatives, especially when it comes to safety," said Channing Williams, Navy Exchange Service Command (NEXCOM) automotive buyer. "Placing motorcycle safety equipment in our NEXs was a natural fit. I hope Sailors and their families take advantage of the savings they'll find on this merchandise and purchase it from the NEX."

Customers can find basic motorcycle safety equipment that meets the Navy's on-base safety requirements, such as helmets, gloves, reflective vests and face shields. NEXs will soon also stock motorcycle jackets, locks and other accessories.

NEXs carrying the motorcycle safety equipment include Naval Station Norfolk, Naval Air Station Oceana and Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, Va.; Naval Air Station Pensacola and Aviation Plaza, Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Naval Station Mayport and Naval Air Station Key West, Fla.; Corpus Christi, Texas; Naval Station San Diego, Naval Air Station Imperial Beach, Naval Air Station North Island and Naval Construction Battalion Port Hueneme, Calif.; Naval Station Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; Naval Station Guam; U.S. Naval Support Activity Naples, Italy; U.S. Naval Air Station Sigonella, Italy and Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Japan.

According to the Naval Safety Center, 58 military members were killed on motorcycles in FY08, up 53 percent from the previous year. Of those 58 killed, 88 percent were killed while riding a sport bike.



Motorcycle Safety Foundation's Key Messages



- Get trained and licensed
- Wear protective gear – all the gear, all the time – including a helmet manufactured to the standards set by the DOT
- Ride unimpaired by alcohol and drugs
- Ride within your own skill limits
- Be a lifelong learner by taking refresher rider courses

When Disaster Strikes... The Right Equipment Can Save Your Life

By April Phillips

The sun was shining and the sky was the kind of crystal blue you only see out in Southern California. It was the kind of beautiful spring day that motorcycle riders live for. Some riders wake up on a day like that and push themselves beyond their skill levels in order to squeeze the most out of such a wonderful day, but STGSN Cody Cox wasn't a novice. He'd been riding motorcycles for six years and was confident in his skills, in his bike, and in his personal protective equipment. He got together with fellow riders to take advantage of the day and enjoy some canyon riding. By the end of the day, he learned the hard way that even the most conscientious riders can find themselves in trouble. The fact that he's still around to tell his story today is a testament to his gear.

"I'd like to think I have a pretty good understanding of motorcycles—the mechanics of them and how to ride responsibly," Cox said.

He was doing all the right things. He'd gone out riding with several buddies and they were obeying the speed limit. After several hours of riding, the day started to heat up and the group decided to turn back. That's when things started to go wrong.

"We were taking a new stretch of road that I'd never taken before," Cox said. "My buddy was in front of me, leading the way, and we came up to a pretty steep curve."

Since Cox had been riding for several years, he knew to take the "outside-inside-outside" track riders use to straighten out the path the bike travels, which diminishes the steepness of the curve. However, he didn't expect to find a large piece of debris in the middle of the curve. Rather than following his training for riding through curves, Cox focused on riding around the junk in the road.

"My buddy went on the left side to miss it so I went to the right side. It turns out the right side wasn't to my advantage," Cox said.

That's a huge understatement.

The right side was the closest to the road's shoulder and as often is the case, there was gravel and Cox found himself riding through it.

"I proceeded to lose control of my bike and I slid down an embankment about 30 feet and crashed into a guardrail," Cox remembered.

To make matters worse, the bike flipped up into the air and as Murphy's Law would have it, landed right on top



By the end of the day, Cox learned the hard way that even the most conscientious riders can find themselves in trouble.

of him. This only compounded the injuries that occurred when Cox slid down the embankment and jammed his leg into the guardrail, snapping the bones and tendons of his ankle like popsicle sticks.

"I blacked out," he said. "I was unconscious for a while. I was rushed by ambulance to the nearest civilian hospital which was about half an hour away."

When Cox woke up, he was in a hospital bed and they were cutting his boots off.

"It was pretty gruesome," he said. "My ankle was broken in about four different spots and all my toes were dislocated. I had a severe amount of road rash up my back, on my calves and on my knees. It's a very painful feeling when you know you have gravel embedded in your skin."

Although the boots he was wearing during the crash became garbage, Cox knows he owes them a debt of gratitude.

"I know that if I hadn't been wearing those boots, I wouldn't have a foot right now," he said.

Even with the boots, Cox's recovery has been long and painful. He had two surgeries to fix his left leg. He'll set off alarms at the airport for the rest of his life because he had a steel plate implanted. His ankle was put back together with five screws where the tendons and cartilage once were. He had five months of physical therapy and rehabilitation where he learned to walk again.

Although Cox is still an avid motorcycle rider, he's a lot more aware of the dangers that can spring up unexpectedly, even when you're obeying the speed limits and wearing the proper gear.

"This accident made me open my eyes and realize that no matter how long you've been riding, in a matter of minutes something small can catch you off guard." ■

STGSN CODY COX IS ASSIGNED TO PCU STOCKDALE.

T-CLOCS

T-CLOCS refers to Tires and Wheels, Controls, Lights and Elec

Even the most careful and conscientious rider can't ride safely if his or her machine is one bump away from falling apart. Care and maintenance of your motorcycle require frequent attention. Attending to every aspect of your motorcycle's well-being and making sure that all its components and systems are maintained in working order will go a long way toward allowing you to ride confidently. The reliability of modern-day machines has made getting stranded on the roadside an increasingly rare event, but any motorcycle can develop problems. Usually, you can discover a problem developing and have plenty of time to fix it before it leads to a crisis on the highway.

Lots of bikers come to love their motorcycles in a way that few four-wheeled drivers ever experience. They lavish them with care and attention. Even if your feelings about your bike don't run that deep, regular maintenance and preventive care are crucial. To help you through a quick and easy pre-ride inspection of critical components and systems, the Motorcycle Safety Foundation recommends using the acronym T-CLOCS, which refers to Tires and Wheels, Controls, Lights and Electrics, Oil and Other Fluids, Chassis and Chain, and Stands.

Tires and Wheels

T stands for tires and wheels, perhaps the most important components of a motorcycle with regard to safe riding. The small contact patches provided by the front and rear tires are the motorcycle's only source of traction. Even the slightest compromise of quality or condition of your tires can be enough to overwhelm this contact patch and bring a good ride to a bad end.

Check the air pressure in your tires regularly, and adjust it according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Maintaining proper air pressure is important for tire life and tire performance. Incorrect pressure can lead to uneven tire wear. Low pressure can cause excessive heat buildup or instability – especially at high speeds or when carrying heavy loads – and can affect available traction. If, under normal loads and operation, a tire needs air added every time you ride, you should assume there is a small puncture, slow leak, or other problem that can cause a failure. Take care of this ASAP.

Regularly inspect the tire tread depth to ensure that adequate tread remains. Most modern tires have small wear bars molded into the tread grooves. When these wear bars are exposed, the tread is worn out and the tire should be replaced. Although it may look like enough tread remains, it won't be enough to maintain traction in wet conditions, and worn tires are thinner and easier to puncture.

Flat tires happen to everyone. There's no sure way to predict when you might run over a nail, but you may be able to spot other signs of impending tire failure or blow-out. Before each ride, take a moment and glance over the tires' tread for any evidence of wear, cuts, embedded objects, bulges, or weathering.

While inspecting the tires, put the motorcycle on its center stand or otherwise raise the wheels securely using a shop stand or jack so that they can spin freely. Check the wheels as well. Most modern motorcycles are equipped with cast-spoke wheels. Make sure that these wheels are free of cracks or dents, especially at points where the spokes join the rim and along the bead (outer edge) portion of the rim. If your bike uses spoked wheels, periodically



trics, Oil and Other Fluids, Chassis and Chain, and Stands

check to make sure the spokes remain tight. Regardless of the type of wheel, make sure the rim is straight and round.

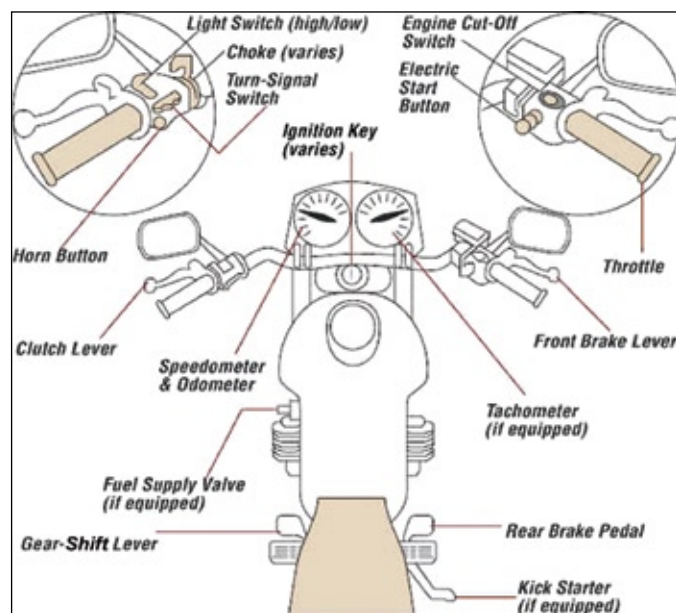
While the wheels are up and off the ground, check the wheel bearings for wear by grasping the tire at the top and bottom, then pushing and pulling on it. There should be no free play or audible noise from the hub or axle. Inspect the bearing seals for cracks or discoloration.

Inspect the brakes as well. Make sure that the calipers are mounted securely to the forks in the front and the swingarm in the rear. Spin the wheels to confirm that the rotors pass freely through the calipers without dragging, which might indicate a worn or stuck piston, a warped rotor, or other problems with the braking system. Check the brake pads or brake shoes for wear.

Controls

C stands for controls: the levers, the throttle, and all the cables and hoses associated with the motorcycle controls. You use these to communicate with your motorcycle, and it is important to maintain these systems in order to ensure that your bike responds quickly and correctly to your inputs.

Start your inspection with the levers. Make sure they are tight in the mounts but still pivot freely, and make sure the levers are not cracked or bent. A bent lever might restrict the available travel of that lever, possibly preventing complete engagement of the clutch or brakes. Also inspect the cable ends, looking for signs of fraying. Look carefully at cable routing and make sure there are no kinks. Control cables usually fray before breaking completely, and catching a frayed cable ahead of time can keep you from being stranded on the side of the road. A rough or gritty feel at the lever can be a warning sign that the cable it is attached to is beginning to fray. Also look at the cable ends, which



Controls includes all levers, cables, hoses and the throttle. It's important to maintain these systems to ensure your bike does what you want it to do.

occasionally come off unexpectedly. If you are touring long distances, it might be a good idea to carry spare cables in case one breaks. Spare cables are cheap compared to the expense of being stranded.

Pay special attention to the throttle cable routing, to make sure that it doesn't pull when the handlebars are turned. The throttle should rotate freely on the handlebars

and snap closed when it is released. Most modern motorcycles are equipped with two throttle cables – a second cable pulls the throttle closed, and both of these cables need to be working. If you notice the throttle sticking open, try to close it manually. If closing the throttle manually works, you will need to service that second cable so that the throttle automatically snaps closed when the grip is released. If the throttle should stick while you're riding, you'll have to use the clutch and brakes to control your speed as you safely maneuver out of traffic to where you can stop and shut down the engine using the engine cut-off switch.

Most disc brakes are hydraulically actuated and use hoses instead of cables. Make sure to inspect these regularly for cracks, cuts, leaks, bulges, chafing, or other deterioration. When you are checking out the brake levers and hoses, it's also a good time to check the function of the

brake light switches. Make sure the brake light illuminates when the front brake lever is squeezed in, or the rear brake pedal is pressed down.

Lights and Electrics

L is for lights and electrics. Electrical components are relatively sensitive to vibration and weather, which makes it important to inspect these systems regularly. Electrical failures can be particularly difficult to diagnose or deal with along the side of the road, so this maintenance is essential.

Your headlight should work properly and be aimed correctly on both-low and high-beam settings. The same applies to your brake and taillight. Make sure the brake light illuminates with both the front brake lever and rear brake pedal. Regularly check the function of your other electrical switch-



The oil in most street bikes lubricates the engine as well as the transmission, so it's doubly important to make sure the oil level is correct.



Your headlight should work properly and be aimed correctly on both-high and low-beam settings.



Controls should be smooth and cables should not be kinked or frayed.



Keep the chain at the proper tension and alignment (refer to your owner's manual) and lubricate it often. Photo courtesy of the Motorcycle Safety Foundation.

es, including turn signals, horn, and engine cut-off switch, to make sure that these are working the way they should. Inspect all electrical wiring for cracks, fraying, mounting, and chafing of the insulation. Look out for disconnected or broken wires and repair them when necessary.

Your bike will not run without electrical current, so keep the battery fully charged and serviced. If you don't ride very often, or if you store your motorcycle during a deployment, you may want to invest in a trickle charger to keep the battery in fully charged condition.

Many new motorcycles are equipped with sealed, maintenance-free batteries. If yours is not, and still uses a serviceable battery, make sure to check it frequently and keep the electrolyte level topped off. Regardless of the battery type, keep the terminals clean and tight and make sure the battery leads and grounds also remain clean and tight.

Oils and Other Fluids

O refers to oil and other fluids. Always keep the engine oil filled to the proper level and change it at regular intervals, according to the manufacturer's recommendations as detailed in your motorcycle owner's manual. Changing the engine oil is probably the most important service that you can perform on your motorcycle for engine longevity. After a few thousand miles of use, the molecules in motor oil break down and the oil loses its ability to properly lubricate the engine parts. This is important because in a motorcycle engine, the engine oil also lubricates the transmission and clutch. The added stress of lashing gears and the additional heat caused by the clutch puts additional strain on the oil molecules, making regular oil changes that much more critical.

Engine failure occurs in times of especially high stress – over-revving, overloading, or when vital lubricants run too low or are too old and worn out to do the job. Fortunately, engine failure almost never occurs unannounced. Usually, there are symptoms, such as poor starting, sluggish throttle response, and unusual noises. In addition to engine oil levels, also check all engine surfaces and gaskets to catch any oil leaks. Don't forget to check the levels of brake fluid and any other hydraulic fluids as well.

If your motorcycle is liquid cooled, inspect the coolant level at the reservoir or recovery tank. Be sure to check the radiator and hoses for cracks or other signs of leaks or potential failures. Don't neglect your fuel system. Replace your fuel filter regularly before it becomes clogged with dirt. If your bike has a fuel valve (petcock), it should turn from on to reserve to off/prime smoothly. A leaky petcock will allow fuel to flow into the carburetors and possibly overfill or flood them. If the O-rings inside the petcock are particularly degraded, some bikes may even leak if it is left in the off position.

Chassis and Chain

The second C in T-CLOCS refers to chassis and chain. Inspect the frame to look for cracks or other signs of trouble. Raise the front wheel off the ground and move the handlebar from side to side, checking to make sure that the forks move freely and easily, without any evidence of side play or any knocking noises. Raise the rear wheel and inspect for signs of play in the swingarm by pushing and pulling on the rear wheel. Once both ends are back on the ground, check the suspension for smooth movement. Pay special attention to fork and shock seals to make sure that no hydraulic fluid is leaking out.

The vast majority of motorcycles use chain drive, and motorcycle drive chains require frequent attention in order to provide long life and optimum service. Keep the chain at proper tension and alignment, and refer to your owner's manual for instructions on how to adjust this system and how often to perform the inspection. Depending on riding conditions, you may need to lubricate the drive chain often, as well. Lubricating the chain is best done at the end of a ride while the chain is still hot. The heat will help the lube penetrate the links better. When applying the lube, direct the stream between the plates and rollers, not down the center or against the sideplates.

A badly worn chain is much more likely to break or derail than one that is maintained, and a broken chain can do serious damage to the engine cases or swingarm, not to mention potentially locking the rear wheel and possibly causing a crash. Proper chain maintenance is vital. You'll want to inspect the sprockets for wear, as well. Look for hooked or broken teeth, and make sure that the rear sprocket remains securely attached to the rear hub.

Replace your chain when you can pull it away from the rear sprocket and expose more than half a tooth; if it is rusted, pitted or cracked; if it has numerous kinked "tight spots"; or if the rear axle adjusters have reached their farthest limits. If you are unsure of your chain's condition, see your dealer's service technicians for advice.

Motorcycles that use belt or shaft final drives are usually lower-maintenance than chain-drive units, but these are by no means maintenance-free. Just as you would with a chain, regularly inspect the belt to look for cracking, fraying, missing teeth, or other evidence of impending doom. On shaft-drive bikes, watch for leaks at all seals or contact points, and make sure the fluid levels remain at factory specifications.

Stands

S is for stands, including the side stand and the center stand. (Not all motorcycles are equipped with center stands.) Make sure the side and center stands both retract fully out of the way when riding. Hanging stands can easily catch the pavement when leaning into a corner and cause you to wipe out. To prevent this situation, many modern motorcycles are equipped with an engine cut-off that prevents the engine from running if the stand is down while the transmission is in gear. ■

Motorcycle Mentorship Clubs

Train to Ride Like You Train to Fight

By April Phillips

At the Marine Corps School of Infantry East, lives depend on good training. Here at Camp Geiger in North Carolina, the motto is “Every Marine is, first and foremost, a rifleman.” Four battalions fall under the School of Infantry East (SOI-East) and together they train and support Marines at entry and advanced levels as they hone their warrior skills.

The dedicated staff of professionals who train these Marines practice what they preach. When it comes to managing the risk of motorcycle riding, SOI-East Marines takes care of their own. The school has a robust motorcycle club, headed up by 1st Sgt. Jason Joiner.

“I know the value of riding together and the camaraderie it builds when you have a large enough group,” he said.

Joiner is the overall club president, but each of the school’s four battalions also has its own president. Everyone is plugged in to an intranet site, where important information such as updates on motorcycle policy and upcoming community rides is posted. Each of the battalion chapters of the club have their own meetings and schedule their own group rides, but they can also participate with the other chapters. They share safety presentations and other information to help riders manage risk.

Joiner has 20 years of riding experience and he believes in the power of positive mentorship.

“I’m a firm believer in this riding club and what it can do for the young Marines,” he said.

Joiner regularly schedules training rides and the whole



group – which includes new riders and experienced ones – perform inspections on their bikes and learn about proper personal protective equipment and other important topics for riders. Joiner said he’s seen some of the older cruiser riders change their mindsets about things like helmets, and this helps the junior folks.

“If the young Marines see the older riders changing, they’re more willing to be open-minded themselves as they learn,” he said.

One thing this club does for young riders is give them an opportunity to be leaders. Joiner has empowered his junior noncommissioned officers because he knows the focus



- Plan an organizational meeting with other interested people and hold the meeting in a convenient place.
- Prepare the agenda and create a survey or interest sheet to learn the needs of the unit you plan to serve. Include plans for training schedules and link up with other clubs for meeting and ride requirements.
- Promote your meeting by notifying commanders and potential riders via chains of command.
- Recruit volunteers for the organizational committee to make initial recommendations.
- Hold the organizational meeting. Include Tactical Safety Specialists and Motorcycle Safety Foundation coordinators for course information and schedules.
- Survey attendees for their interests and thoughts on the way ahead for the club.
- Chose interim leaders.
- Locate a regular group meeting place and determine a regular meeting time.
- Organizational committee should recommend name, purpose, structure, activities, and legal status of the group if functioning in the community.
- Draft club constitution and bylaws.
- Hold a meeting to approve organizational committee recommendations, approve constitution and bylaws, and elect officers
 - a. Review all applicable instructions and policies.
 - b. Determine budget (if available) or fund-raising efforts.
 - c. Develop rosters and training requirements.
- Draft policy notices and unit orders to accommodate directives for the motorcycle club. Include an appointment letter for the president and "by direction" authority for presidents to assign elected officers and to create ride and meeting plans.
- Plan programs for the first three to six months of meetings and activities.
- Advertise your meetings.
- Recruit members.
- Evaluate your progress and make any necessary changes.
- Have fun!

is on the 18-30-year-old riders, who are statistically most likely to be involved in crashes.

“This is their club and their voice,” he said. “We don’t allow rank structure within the club and we’re all on a first name basis. This helps the young guys develop professionalism because they have to be able to speak intelligently to a wide range of people based on their experience level.”

When the club goes on group rides, each group of six riders is led by the Marine with the most riding experience—not the most military rank.

Because this club is so well organized and has developed such a good system of disseminating information, SOI-East has been successful in getting its riders to the



appropriate training. Almost 100 percent of its sportbike riders have attended the Military Sportbike Rider Course and eleven SOI-East Marines attended a recent track day at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point. In the past, many Marines had complained that they were not given the opportunity to attend motorcycle training because of operational commitments, but the motorcycle club has a lot of visibility and support from leadership, which Joiner said has made a lot of difference.

“We got the school commander’s buy in and the leaders see this as something important,” he said.

The top brass at SOI-East give Joiner lots of credit for organizing the club, keeping it current, and keeping Marines interested in improving their skills.

“The CO has created an environment for 1st Sgt. Joiner to succeed, but if it wasn’t for the proactive role he’s taken, it wouldn’t be what it is. His dedication is what has made



this program so successful,” said Lt. Col. John Anderson, executive officer of SOI-East.

“The motorcycle club is important to this school because we have a lot of Marines returning from Iraq who are still pretty junior, but in this environment, where they’re instructing, they’re seen as senior,” he continued.

Many of SOI-East’s instructors are junior NCOs.

“They’re given a lot of responsibility for their rank and we’re teaching them to be leaders. This club is part of how we take care of Marines.”

Cpl. Nicholas Taylor, who just bought a GSXR-600 a few months back, is one of the club’s members. He said he loves the freedom that comes with riding a motorcycle, but he also appreciates the experience of others in the group ... especially the cruiser riders.

“The club builds camaraderie and more acceptance between the knee draggers and the Harley riders,” he said. “That knowledge base also keeps inexperienced riders more informed so they’ll think twice before making a decision that could be costly.”

Sgt. Christopher Torres, who has been riding his Yamaha R-6 since 2007, put it bluntly.

“You have some Marines who are hard-headed and some that are not. It’s good for the two of them to get together. Plus, you get out of work for a little while to go ride, so it’s all good fun.”

Joiner hopes SOI-East’s motorcycle club will be an inspiration to other Marine Corps commands, especially since a recent ALMAR directs Marines who ride to form and participate in mentorship clubs. More information about the club can be found at <http://www.lejeune.usmc.mil/soi/motorcycle/>. ■

Know Your Group Ride Hand Signals

Stop - arm extended straight down, palm facing back.



Slow Down - arm extended straight out, palm facing down.



Follow Me - arm extended straight up from shoulder, palm forward.



Speed Up - arm extended straight out, palm facing up.



You Lead/Come - arm extended upward 45 degrees, palm forward pointing with index finger, swing in arc from back to front.



Single File - arm and index finger extended straight up.



Double File - arm with index and middle fingers extended straight up.



Hazard in the Roadway - on the left, point with left hand; on the right, point with right foot.



Pull Off - arm positioned as for right turn, forearm swung toward shoulder.

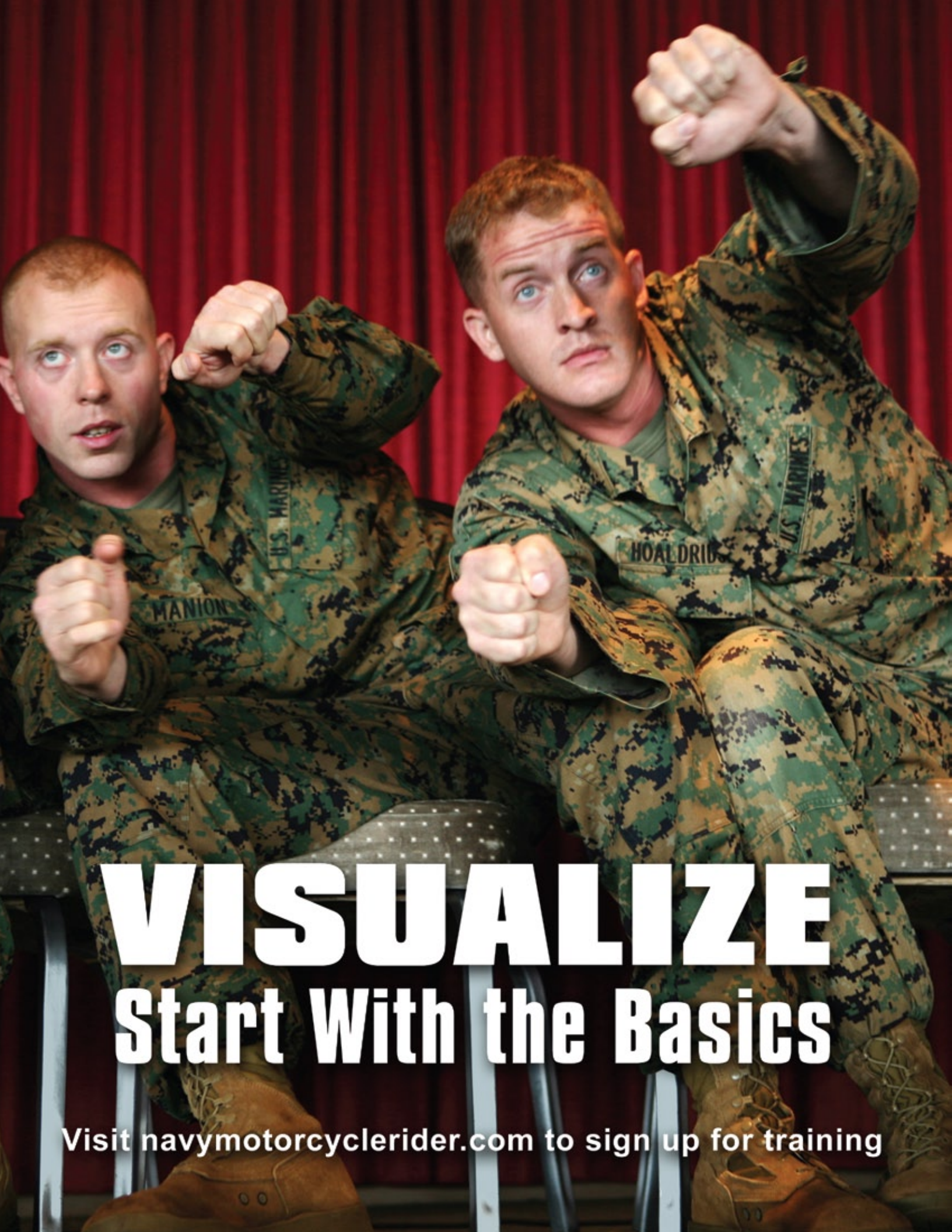


Highbeam - tap on top of helmet with open palm down.



Fuel - arm out to the side, finger pointing to tank.





VISUALIZE

Start With the Basics

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