

Get Serious About Your Riding

ACCORDING TO A STATISTIC I RECENTLY SAW, 25 percent of those who die in motorcycle accidents do not have a motorcycle endorsement on their driver's license. This means that one out of every four riders

involved in a fatal crash is not properly licensed to ride on two wheels. My question is, why are these people riding motorcycles in the first place if they don't have licenses?

The other day, I was speaking with a motorcycle instructor who told me that in her home state of Florida, many riders do not have motorcycle licenses. I suspect this is true of other states. How come? It's hard to get away with driving a car without a license; why should motorcyclists get special treatment? If you're one of these people, it's time to get serious about your riding. Every person taking on the responsibility of riding a motorcycle should take the time to get properly licensed ... and properly trained.

It blows me away when people treat motorcycling like something as simple as bicycling — no formal training and no license needed. I'm sick of hearing people say that they rode ATVs and dirt bikes as kids, so they already know how to ride a motorcycle. Okay, that's fine ... maybe they don't have to sit through a weekend of learning where the controls are or how to properly brake. I'll buy that. However, knowing the basics and having several years of riding experience doesn't automatically qualify anyone as a great rider.

I recently heard someone say that even though he's been riding a motorcycle for 20 years, he realized he actually had only one year of experience that he's been repeating over and over for 19 years. That someone was Jerry Palladino, the guy behind those *Ride Like a Pro* motorcycle training DVDs (www.RideLikeAPro.com).

Jerry is a retired motorcycle police officer. He'd been riding a motorcycle recreationally for years, but it wasn't until he went through motorcycle officer's training that he realized he wasn't as proficient a rider as he thought.

Over time, Jerry has mastered the difficult maneuvers required of two-wheeled patrolmen, which he demonstrates in a fun and interesting DVD tutorial. Jerry shows the maneuvers in slow speed, so you can copy them and control your motorcycle when it is necessary to avoid obstacles on the road. He also explains how to find and use the friction zone, apply the "look where you want to go" technique, and control braking and countersteering.

Jerry recently released the fourth edition of his tutorial, which is essentially a combination of every-



thing contained in his first three editions. This latest offering, *Ride Like a Pro IV*, even eliminates the need for his special women's version of the video. That makes sense to me, because when it comes to riding a motorcycle, the requisite skills are the same whether you're a man or a woman. The maneuvers are executed the same regardless of gender. As someone who writes mostly about women's involvement in the sport of motorcycling, I don't like it when women are set apart in learning and training scenarios. Do people think they need to speak slower or something in order to teach us how to ride motorcycles? They don't, and I'm glad Jerry decided to produce one video suitable for both genders.

In the latest edition, Jerry enlisted several women riders, from beginner to expert, to execute the maneuvers. Maryanne, on her yellow Screamin' Eagle Electra Glide, flawlessly navigates figure eights and circles. Jerry explains that Maryanne has practiced these drills over and over. Practice is the name of the game. He points out when beginning riders successfully demonstrate the maneuvers, and also when they make mistakes. It's a great way for the viewer to learn what and what not to do. Jerry, along with a few other male riders, rounds out the "players" in the video, exhibiting the right, and sometimes wrong, way to perform the exercises.

Watching the DVD, I was reminded of the MSF Experienced Rider Course I took a few years ago. The curriculum is similar to what Jerry teaches on his DVD. After riding for 12 years, I thought it was high time I brushed up on my skills. Much like Jerry, who realized he had a lot to learn after 20 years of riding, I, too, recognized I was not a great rider after 12 years in the saddle. Just the basic "look where you want to go" technique was something I had yet to master.

The point of my column this month is to inspire you to take some advanced motorcycle training if you've not yet done so, or buy Jerry's latest DVD to teach yourself. Better yet, do both. Jerry has even included a section on what you need to know to pass the state motorcycle test, so you can make it a point to get licensed if you're not. If this is you, it's time to get serious about your riding. **AIM**

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