

Reflections

You've had a good riding season. If you stop and think of the past year, it shouldn't take long to fill your head with memories of the year's riding adventures – some good and some bad, am I right? Let's build on the concept of mentoring and coaching where we use our experience to help others become better riders, and by better, let's think about taking better, smarter risks. Before going any further, take a moment and write down the three most important lessons or skills you took away from the past year of riding? You may have five or six, but focus on the most important three. Put it on paper. In ink. You never know if you'll want to share it with someone else, so make it legible.

The smarter risk is one with likelihood of a better outcome, like getting home at the end of the trip without adverse incidents. We're good at taking dumb risks, and many of us have the stories to prove it, though I'm not sure I want to brag about them myself. Kind of like cheating or stealing, you don't necessarily want to confess your sin to anyone. You'll make an exception for the right reverend friend who won't judge your confession since he's told you many the same story over a cold beverage or two.

What if you could share your wisdom with another rider? What would you tell a person within the first six months of his or her riding career? What would you tell the rider who's been on the road for 10 years? 20 years? Everything is fair game; from what to wear to where to ride. What about how to ride? And when it comes to taking smarter risks, which is more important? What you wear, where you ride, or how you ride?

If it was 4-6 months since the rider was on the road, what would that person need to know about "how to ride?" You might think of the simple stuff, like don't forget to put air in the tires and check the oil (for that matter, change the oil, and brake fluid too while you're at it); but those deal with maintenance, not how to ride.

Talking about "how to ride" deals with stuff like where the person looks while riding, the line used when entering a corner, braking in a corner, keeping a space cushion, looking for an escape path, negotiating with other traffic on a group ride, or covering the front brake at high speed in a corner. These are the subtleties coming into play on a given day of riding, each of which carrying more risk than wearing the wrong color clothing.

And along comes Black Friday and we think of the shopping opportunities for electronics, clothing, food and things to make our lives happier. What could possibly make your life happier than being a better motorcyclist by taking smarter risks? Consider giving yourself or a loved one the gift of a training activity to make better decisions while riding.

Back to the note, the one where you listed three tips from the past year of riding. If, upon reflection, would the tips lead to smarter risks?

Now think of the rider who chose to let winter pass and keep the bike in the garage. The rider may have read a few magazines or web articles over the winter about new roads, new equipment or, if we're lucky, training. There's a good chance the rider returns to the bike in spring with good ideas yet also with a few cobwebs since the mental challenge of getting back on the bike aren't fresh in the mind. If that rider came upon your note, would he or she easily understand your good intentions?



What if that rider was you? Holy cow, what a gift! You have a head start on the riding season and more time may pass before making the mistakes of last season.

Here's the take-away: with your note in one hand (you did write a note, didn't you?) and holding it securely, with the other hand reach for tape. The good tape, the stuff capable of holding your note over the course of a cold dark

winter in a garage. You don't need a big piece of tape, just enough to secure the note to your motorcycle. Speedometer usually makes a safe place since the adhesive won't harm glass. Properly mounted, the note is there to greet you when you return next spring with the silly grin on your face. What better way to pick up where you left off.