

When is a motorcycle the most stable?

According to Wayne from *Stay Upright*, one rider reckoned the answer was 'on its side'! Obviously that rider was in dire need of some techniques to assist in keeping the bike upright.

So you're a good rider?

Having had a motorcycle license for 25 years or so (with the obligatory family break in the middle), I thought it was time I upgraded my skills a little. Of course I am a 'good rider' (aren't we all?) but with a few near misses and one major accident under my belt, perhaps it was time to admit that being a 'good rider' is not enough.

Maybe if I had mastered some of the techniques Wayne and his team teach on the Advanced Skills Course I wouldn't have ended up with my bike crushed under the diff of a truck and me on the road about 20 metres away! Sure it wasn't my fault – the truck pulled out in front of me – or was it? If I had been better at emergency braking, or had made decisions that split second earlier maybe I could have avoided the pain.

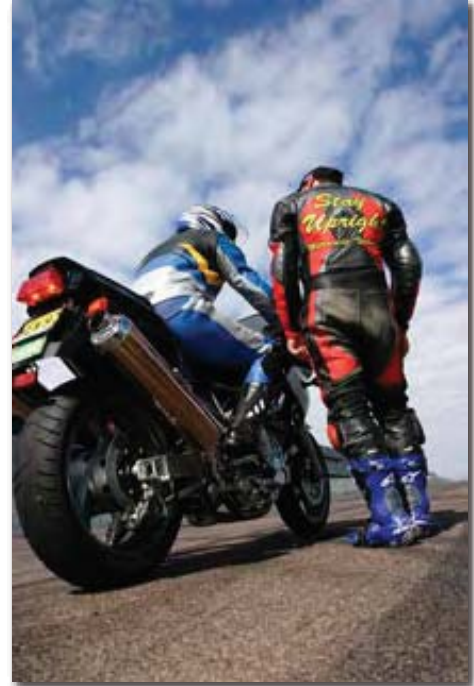
So I talked to Stew, a mate of mine, who is also a 'good rider' and we thought we'd give it a go – besides even if the course was a drag we would have had a chance to fang it on Oran Park!

Old dog – love the new tricks!

The \$340 course fee included an optional three hour theory session on the Friday before the day at the track. Even though we both thought we were up with the theory and that sitting in a room for three hours would be only slightly more interesting than sitting in rush hour traffic, we made the effort to turn up (as did about half of the other participants). Even if you learn



Right, you lot, follow me!



Yep, that lever you've got your hand on is the front brake!

only one thing, I would urge you to go to the session. For me the value was a discussion on the finer points of counter steering. I had always been taught to push down and forward on the opposite bar to get the bike to turn into the corner; however Wayne said applying forward pressure only was the best way. Trying that on the way home on my rather heavy 1200cc sports-tourer was a real revelation – much smoother and no muscle required.

Different strokes (well four-strokes) for different folks

The day itself dawned bright and sunny but bloody cold! However the excitement soon warmed us up – checking out the other bikes and the track itself. There were about 20 participants and four instructors. Interestingly, no two bikes were the same – there were two Ducati sport machines, a few touring Beemers, a couple of cruisers, naked bikes (including a very nice Triumph Speed Triple), as well as the usual suspects (Yamaha, Suzuki, and Kawasaki).

The riders were also varied and included an L plater, a couple of P platers and a few female riders. So





Slow speed manoeuvring – see it's easy!

don't think the course is for 'boy racers' or guys who want to go to ride days. It's for anyone who wants to get more out of themselves and their bikes.

Stop it now!

The morning started with a brief demonstration on bike setup and had some good tips on manhandling the bike. This was followed by the first track session on braking correctly and manoeuvring around obstacles.

Demonstrations by the instructors on what not to do when it comes to braking were very powerful – particularly what happens if you try to stop using the rear brake only (I think that bike has skidded down to Phillip Island by now). Then it was our chance to try it for ourselves. You really don't want to find out how long it takes your bike to safely stop at 100kmh when you are rapidly approaching the back end of a car that has just rammed on the anchors and stopped in front of you unexpectedly. Being able to practice in a controlled environment using a proven braking system could save your life!

Seeing around corners

The afternoon session covered cornering with plenty of track time for practice and personal feedback from the instructors. A common fault with most of the riders (including me) was keeping the upper body too stiff, or using the body as a lever. For road riding there should be no need to "get your knee down" – Wayne's advice to me was to "hold on to the bike with your knees, drop your shoulder and move your upper body over so that your head lines up, say, with the mirror rather than the centre line of the bike." It felt a little strange at first but once I got the hang of it, the difference was remarkable – more control of the bike, much tighter lines and room to increase the lean angle if necessary.

Lastly, there was an opportunity to "put it all together" with some free track time to practice all my new found skills and confidence. By 4:30pm everyone was tired, but you couldn't wipe the grins off their faces!

Well done!

My thanks to all the instructors (Wayne C, Wayne B, Terry, and Elaine) who made the day such an enjoyable experience, and to Stay Upright for their very professional approach. If you want more enjoyment from your bike, some potentially life-saving new skills, and about 160km on a race track – book for the next Advanced Skills Course – it's a blast!

For dates and venues, visit www.stayupright.com.au.

ANTICIPATION!

The road is calling.
Corners await.

But don't let the anticipation end when you wind on the throttle.

At a Stay Upright Course we'll teach you to anticipate the unexpected and help you build a systematic and safer approach to your riding.

Call 1300 366 640 or visit www.stayupright.com.au.

