

Coach's viewpoint

Column by Can Akkaya, ex-professional racer, author of the book Racers-Story, and founder of the Superbike-Coach Corp. (www.superbike-coach.com)

Honestly, I was shocked when I first came to America to make my dream come true. You ask why? Well, the first time I commuted from the East Bay to San Francisco on a motorcycle, I was



confronted with California's laws and rules of the road. Furthermore, I had new experiences to process with lane splitting, city chaos and the Oakland Bay Bridge. The DMV circle test and the written exam were not difficult, but they did not prepare me for riding on California roads. I adjusted quickly. But as I considered ways to ride safely in California, as a European Championship professional and racer coach I had the training and skills to adapt quickly, but here is my point...what's going to happen with a rookie who's just started riding on the street, even though he learned to ride at the MSF course instead of going through the DMV circle test? He might not have enough time to give his butt a quick goodbye kiss.

Then, I couldn't wait to hit the road in California's canyons. Ready to let the R1 horses rip on my first Sunday ride. To my surprise, all the cars were gentle and attentive, which is a marked difference to Germany's drivers, believe me. But here I was confronted with fallen trees, deer, gravel, bumps and holes in the pavement as big as you can park a Chinese Car in there. Don't get me wrong on that, cuz' I love this country and its differences. But after I almost lost the front wheel on debris a couple of times, I began to consider. So that was me, a guy who bent a couple of rims by going through gravel traps on my way to a lap record on the Zolder Circuit in Belgium. I am used to that, but here is my point... what's gonna happen with a new rider, who doesn't yet have these skills?! He might crash on a lonely road and slide down the road where he may lie with a broken leg. He might get harassed by a bear because his cell phone has no reception in the canyon.

Later, as my circle of riding friends has become larger, we have had some great rides on Highway 1, Skaggs Springs Road, Redwood Road and Lake Berryessa. I love the atmosphere, enthusiasm, and the mentality in America, but here I was confronted with group riding where risk is buried. Riders wear jeans instead of full leathers, cell phones and music during riding, wheelie try-outs, and ego embossed races. Well, that day I figured that this is a global problem, and let's get this straight... I am ego driven too. And after a couple of law-bending actions, seeing the guys trying to keep up, and some exclaim "Uh, that was close!", I began to consider. So that was me, a racer who feels at home riding in a pack but experienced enough to know when it is enough. So I'm hanging in there, but here is my point... what's with the riders who don't know their personal and technical limits? They might crash, and the other riders are getting busy to pick up their friend's junk. I don't want their day to end up with mutual recriminations and broken friendships.

But that's the reality. Summarized, it comes down to lacking experience - knowledge, judgment and skills. Two of these attributes can be taught, but experience and judgment come with time. So make sure you don't exceed your own personal experience and skills and judgment, and waste time in a hospital instead of enjoying the summer.

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After 11 years of professional racing in the German IDM, Dutch and Spanish Open, European Championship, and a MotoGP Wild Card, he retired with a victory. 8 years later he published his 'Racers-Story', which is since 5 years still on Amazon.de bestseller list. With his book, Can have come back on track as a test editor, Ducati Racing test rider, and Chief instructor for Europe's top-notch Racing School. A dream has come true as he get a US-Green Card in 2008. Can Akkaya found the Superbike-Coach Corp in 2009. Coach Can teaches all rider levels and ages with a wide band of experience, on the street and track. Websites: www.superbike-coach.com www.racers-story.com