

Spring Training

If baseball players go to spring training to get into shape for the coming season, what does that mean to us as athletes that ride motorcycles? Think about it, you are an athlete each and every time you ride! Celebrate that you're using muscle and mental skills similar to those who compete while riding. When we accept that we too are athletes, you might appreciate we too need a form of 'spring training.' Thinking you can step into the batter's box on day one of the baseball season and hit a 95 mph fastball is really no different than thinking you can put a leg over the bike and ride with the same skills you used last season when mentally and physically your 'head was in the game.'

If you Google 'prepare yourself for motorcycle riding season' or use similar wording in an attempt to get ready to ride, the majority of the results speak to getting the bike ready with such tips as checking tire pressure, chain lube, oil level, fresh fuel and condition of the battery. Before thinking about the bike and its needs, think about your needs. Is there benefit in preparing yourself as you get ready to mentally and physically do something you may not have done in weeks or months? You can imagine the experts will tell you any amount of stretching, conditioning, and exercise are vital to a long and productive riding season (of course, the more the better).

So what would you do to prepare for a 1,000 mile bike ride? Would it be different than if you were only going 20 miles? Does it change your thinking to realize 69% of all motorcycle accidents occur during the first 12 minutes of a trip, or that 57% happen during a trip of less-than five miles? Realize too that 70% of the fatalities in Washington last year were the result of something the rider did (and it did not involve another vehicle). These stats speak to conditioning, mental processing, and preparedness, as many riders likely riding beyond their physical and mental abilities as they head out. Is it reasonable to think that regardless of distance, destination, road, or the bike you ride, being in shape makes you a better rider?

Think about a stretching or exercise program engages the muscles you use while riding. Put emphasis on the shoulders, arms, legs, and core as holding up a bike is a lot different than driving the car or watching TV. Think about how you get your head into shape before the ride, going through the differences between riding and driving, things to watch for while riding, and what do if an emergency occurs while riding.

Start slow and build speed as you regain confidence and skill in knowing how to respond if the 'Oh oops!' moment appears. Think especially about whether you're ready to drag a floorboard in the corner or if you should reflect on the basics of 'slow, look, press, and roll.' How much should I slow? Where should I look? Am I pressing

the handlebar, or apply sufficient handgrip pressure, to lean the bike when cornering?
Am I rolling on the throttle too fast which results in applying brakes while still in the corner?

Think of a routine or habit that helps you remember the basics each and every time you leave the driveway. Think to remind yourself the goal is to get home to the ones you love. You know, the ones that think you're an amazing (athletic) rider!