

# **Superbike School**

## **Level Three**

The day started off much like the previous few school days – early wake up, bike on the trailer and a nice drive down to the Island. Once I arrive the Triumph comes off and goes over to the guys in the scrutineering garage, a bit of air here and there for the old tyres and I'm right to go into pit lane.

Being my third school day I have a fair idea of how much time you have to get changed and ready for the first lesson of the day, so I make a quick change into my leathers and still have time for a coffee.

Steve took charge of the classroom much the same as the previous classes I have had, which is a comfort in itself. Once again all of the staff members were introduced to all of the riders one by one, along with the roles they would play throughout the day.

The first lesson of the day was called 'Hook Turns'. This consisted of using the weight from the upper part of your body by moving forward while riding through a corner. The object of this lesson is to see how you can influence your bike's ability to tighten up or hold a tighter line while cornering.

The first couple of laps I found I was not comfortable leaning forward and I was afraid to move while I was in the corner. After the first few laps I started to relax and trust what the coach, Al, had said to do.

I started to experiment by breathing out just before the apex of the corner thus lowering my chest to the bike. The first couple of times I moved too much and found that the Trumpy really tightened up on the corner and put me where I did not want to be. I couldn't believe the difference just that little movement made. I practised this drill for the rest of the day and it seemed to feel right very quickly and did not take much getting used to.

The second drill for the day was called 'Power Steering'. I found this to be one of the harder drills to practise. The drill is to support your body diagonally, so if you are pushing with your right arm on the handlebars at the same time you should be pressing against the foot peg with your left leg, and vice versa. This helps to stabilise your body on the bike through the corner and be smooth with the handlebar controls.

Before I was shown the steps at the school to try the Power Steering drill I was not aware that I was doing the incorrect technique. I used to have trouble holding a tight and smooth line while going through a corner. I realised that I would push down on the same foot peg as the direction I was going, and this was pushing me off the bike and making me twist the upper part of my body. I struggled with this drill a lot – old habits die hard – but on the few

times I pulled it off successfully I found I could point the bike in the direction I wanted more easily. The Trumpy seemed to fall into the corners a fair bit quicker making my overall turn speed faster. I did not realise how much faster it made me until I was already in the next corner and had a realisation of how fast I was actually going. Just at that point I hit panic for a brief moment, but had a quick chat with myself and then got back on the job.

The third drill of the day was called 'Knee to Knee' and was very different for me as I ride with both knees on the tank and have never tried to hang off the bike before. I noticed another bad habit while I was learning the Knee to Knee drill - while I was trying it I became aware that I had been riding crossed up. I had to overcome this in order to be able to do the Knee to Knee drill. It made me aware that I needed to lean into the corner more than I had been. Taking off the inside knee and facing it in the direction I wanted to go made it easier for me to stop riding crossed up as it is almost impossible to ride crossed up while using the Knee to Knee technique. I found the Knee to Knee drill complemented the Wide View drill I learned in Level Two.

While using the Knee to Knee technique it allowed me to flow into the corner with more stability, making me feel more comfortable and allowing me to relax. I was able to take the corner closer and have the bike more upright thus allowing me to use more throttle and carry more corner speed with confidence.

The next drill was the 'Hip Flick'. I found the Hip Flick, if done correctly, great for going through back to back corners changing direction and getting the bike into the right position on the track allowing me to set up sooner for the following corner. The first few times I attempted to use the Hip Flick I found I was not using my knees, calf muscle and foot enough to lock myself into the bike, resulting in me using the handlebars to pull myself over the bike, making it wiggle and not feel as stable as it should.

Once I managed to put more pressure on my lock-on points that I had been shown by Steve and Al, I started to get the understanding of how and when I should move my knees on and off the tank.

After I had been around a couple of times I started to apply more pressure on the foot pegs, taking the pressure off my bum allowing me to move more easily across the seat, whilst using the Knee to Knee technique. Using the Hip Flick drill I could move my body across the seat easier and into different positions ready for the upcoming corners without using the handlebars and therefore making the Trumpy more stable than before. I found that if you have not done this technique before and are not bike fit, you will ache as much as I did.

The Hip Flick is a very good technique and I have used this on the road in conjunction with the Knee to Knee Drill. I have found I have a complete new level of trust in myself.

The 'Attack' drill was the last drill for the day. Turning the Trumpy into corners at later turn points on the track made me flick the bike into the corner faster, and using the previous four drills, made me realize how much you can straighten out a corner.

When I first heard of the California Superbike School my immediate thoughts were about learning how to corner at speed safely while having a fantastic time, finally being able to keep up with friends on rides through the hills, and riding with confidence. It's funny I have never met a fellow rider that has trouble riding fast in a straight line, only around corners. I never thought to make the corner as straight as possible - it's the pieces of information and the breakdown of movements and procedures that really make this learning experience one that will stick with me for the rest of my life.

I never gave it much thought on how your body works on the bike and what your body does to keep itself out of harm's way, more often than not actually making it more dangerous for you (and your passenger if you have one).

It's not very often you find anyone who wants to talk to you and give you the time of day explaining how things work and allowing questions to be asked and answers to be given.

Everyday Joe.