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**Return Of The Santa Rosa Mile: We Talk To The Team Behind The Upcoming Three-Day Flat Track-aganza**

**Ballad Of The Bikester • Sisters Centennial Ride**  
**R Nine T Custom Build by BMW Motorcycles of San Francisco**  
**Higher Learning: Total Control Advanced Rider Clinic**



Photo: Bonnie Kellogg

# Higher Learning

## The Total Control Advanced Rider Clinic At 2 Wheel Safety Training

By Sam Devine  
Photos by Bonnie Kellogg  
and Max Klein

A relatively new rider told me he wanted the most protective boots ever so that he could put a foot down in the twisties on Mount Tam. It was hard to explain to him that things didn't necessarily work that way. But he persisted: "What about really tight turns?"

This is exactly the type of overconfidence that's worrisome. He's stoked, ready to take on anything, and bragging that his old boots have 15,000 miles on them. He reminds me of myself after I rode to and from Chicago. I was sure I had solved the mystery of motorcycling. It was time to hang up the proverbial spurs, smoke a pipe by the fire, and recount my glory days to the whippersnappers.

Little did I know that I was still a greenhorn. Still am. In fact, as the years go by, all I'm learning is how much more there is to know. I'm realizing, somewhat painfully at times, that there are certain things I'll never understand—not for a lack of trying or a

lack of desire—but because there just won't be time.

So my candle has been burning at both ends for some time now, and I show up to the level one Total Control Advanced Rider Clinic overworked and severely under-rested. But I'm ready to give every last ounce of effort my buzzing neon bulb of a brain can muster.

A half-helmeted, chaps-wearing Harley rider named Mike gives an enthusiastic welcome. It turns out that he's taking the advanced

an F700. There are two American cruisers, two Honda sport bikes, a Triumph Street Triple, a Ducati Monster and my oily Suzuki dual sport.

"Is that the Dr. Ninja of *CityBike* fame?" asks Kerri Dougherty, whose neighbor has been passing our paper her way—now that's a good neighbor in our opinion! This remark leaves your reporter slightly—but hopefully imperceptibly—verklempt.

Dougherty recently sold off most of her possessions and rode out of Maryland to her new home in Oakland. She's here today on her new F650GS. She's every bit the badass, tattooed moto babe, but is humble enough to be seeking more riding knowledge. She wanted to take an advanced cornering class before leaving the East Coast but ran out of time, signing up for this clinic as soon as she could.

The rest of the class had heard about the clinic from various channels. Santa Cruz resident, GS rider, and *CityBike* subscriber, Greg Rowley had heard about the class from the flier inserted in the book. "I bought Lee Parks' book and started reading it before I knew they were doing the courses."

Ninja 300 rider Jamie Kruse heard about the course through her friend David Marchaland. He's riding a CB500F today and—though he's been riding less than a year—has stayed on top of his motorcycle education and is riding really well. After completing the basic rider course, he took an intermediate course, which then recommended this advanced class. I wish I had sought out instruction as eagerly and immediately as he has. Instead, I'll be spending the rest of my life ironing out my bad habits.

After introductions, our instructors Colleen Sepulveda and William Sommers promise us that we'll improve our riding skills, understand riding better and increase problem recognition on the road. In return, they ask that we keep an open mind and accept coaching. This is the second time a program has made this request of me and it has made so much sense both times. Hear me out, then decide what you think for yourself. It's just polite.

We first talk about traction management. We learn how to read tire codes and cover some basic theory: lower tire pressure and softer rubber compounds offer better traction; higher pressures and harder

compounds give more longevity to the tire; acceleration and deceleration; changes in lean angle; center of gravity; road conditions. These all affect traction.

Then there's a trail braking discussion: importance of smooth throttle control and braking. We head out to the range to work on some very basic but necessary tasks. We accelerate and decelerate slowly, trying not to compress the suspension. We do it in a straight line, first with only the throttle and then with the brakes as well. Trail braking is generally thought to be for cornering but it can (and should) absolutely be practiced in a straight line.



Photo: Max Klein

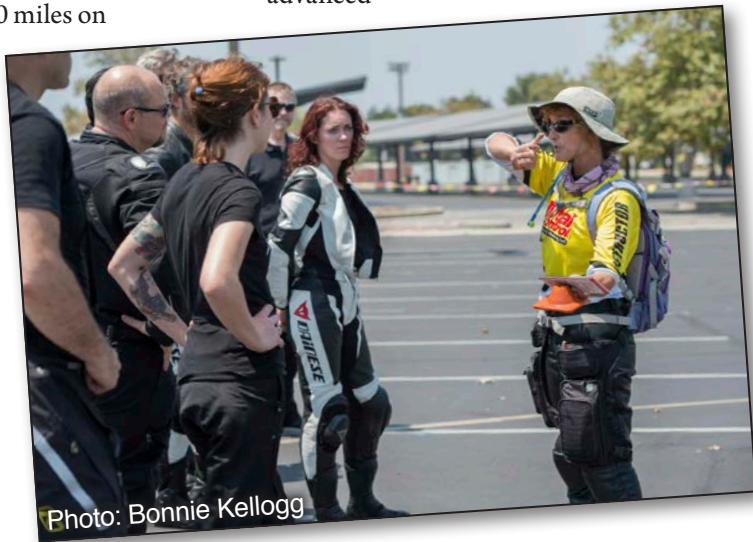


Photo: Bonnie Kellogg

level two course for the second time. "I've taken both classes twice," he explains. "Not because I don't get it, but because I don't get it!" With that he belts out a good guffaw.

The level two instructor asks what tire pressure I'm running and hands me an air pressure gauge. Last time I checked, Dr. Ninja's tire pressures had been running in the high teens, but I'm ashamed to find that it's a minor miracle that I've made it to Santa Clara—each tire is holding about 10 psi. So that's why I was getting front end wash... ahhh... learning already.

We walk past flowers and concrete columns and across the green lawns of the Mission College of Santa Clara. The classroom contains eleven other would-be students of corner-ology, hoping to glean insights and abilities from the course designed by Lee Parks, based on his book *Total Control*. We go through introductions: name, bike, experience and expectations. Bike-wise, the room is weighted heavily with BMW riders: there are three R1200 GS riders, an F650GS and

The exercises are fundamentally simple, but are the type of challenge that separates "could" from "did." We all say, "I could do that." But not all of us can say, "I have done that." It reminds me of classical music exercises where we were trained to warm up with "long tones," drawing the bow across the string extremely slowly, taking twenty or even thirty seconds to play a single note. It's like Tai Chi, doing something simple—as slowly and as focused as possible. Sure, we all want to do rolling burnouts, but we've got to start with basic throttle control.

Ducati rider and SF resident Scot Brenton confirms this association, saying, "I'm a musician and you practice things slow because if you can't do it slow, you damn sure can't play it fast."

Kurt Petersdorff comes up to me and I recognize him as the cool guy with the Speed Triple that I gave a brush-up lesson to while working for Monkey Moto School a little over a year ago. "You've been riding pretty much forever," Kurt asks me. "Right?"

"Well," I say, again taken a little off-guard. "I've been riding a little over ten years. There's always more to learn and there's also seeing how they present the information." At first I'm worried about performing well in front of a former student. But by the end of the day I'm just happy to see him doing well—really well,

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Photo: Bonnie Kellogg

riding outside of our tense, survival-oriented lizard brains.

We practice an interesting trust fall that simulates a motorcycle lean. And to practice being physical aware of our turn-in points, we walk out and pick up objects with our eyes closed. We discuss meditation, inner quiet, and the importance of a positive attitude. "Whether

you think you can or whether you think you can't, you're right," says Sepulveda, riffing on a quote attributed to Henry Ford.

We return to the range and take turns supporting each other on our own bikes as we practice body position in a lean. "I was overwhelmed and in disbelief that it would work," says Dougherty. We work on widening and relaxing our focus, trying to take in a cone pattern like a swirling constellation. We practice flopping into turns.

After breaking for lunch, we return to the classroom to get the ten points of turning according to Lee Parks, then back out to the range again to run drills that incorporate everything we've learned for the day. I look across the parking lot to see Mike killing it on his Harley in the Level 2

obstacles course. We wrap things up with a brief but effective lesson on suspension adjustment.

As I ride home, I think about how we've all been given advice on cornering: body position, traction, shifting, trail-braking, mental thought process, staying loose, staying focused, looking through the turn. But this course put it all in sequence, particularly the step-by-step breakdown of cornering. It was like hearing a good version of a familiar story—like the myth of Hercules or Batman's origin—and all the way through for a change. And we didn't just hear the tale: we played it out,



Photo: Bonnie Kellogg

interacted with it, became the story of total control.

I'm happy to say that the promises of improved skills, recognition and understanding seem to have held true. As I ride my commute now, my bike slips around corners much smoother than before and my body moves around with a

in fact. Darth Vader's voice rings in my head, "Sho, the shtudent hash become the mashtah." Or is that Sean Connery saying it?

We return to the classroom and focus on mentality: how we get scared, why we get scared. "Being honest with each other about all being a bit uneasy was helpful," says Dougherty. It is good insight, but we're spending a lot of time in the classroom—and only about 30% drilling. "It would be nice to have a longer stretch to try the trail braking and exercises like that," says Kruse after the course.

Thinking now about the lessons we received on how the brain works, though, it seems that spending focused time imagining riding could actually be more beneficial than a lot of hard riding exercises. We're told that survival and fear reside in our lizard brain while creativity and planning come from our frontal lobes. All the discussion and concentration on the ideas of riding are getting our frontal lobes warmed up so we can practice

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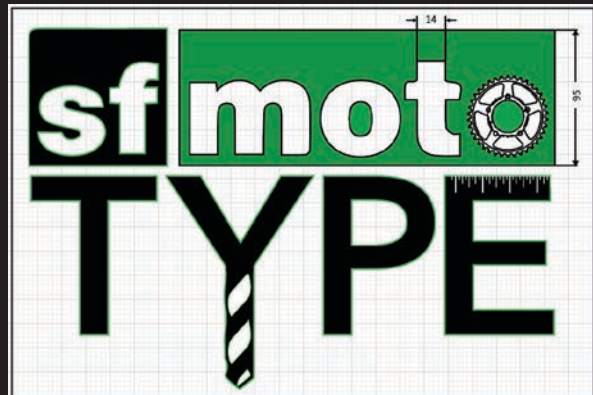


more focused intent. Dougherty confirms, "At the end of the day I was feeling 100% different, excited and more confident."

Hopefully I can stay humble and continue practicing and seeking more information.

Total Control's next riding clinic is Saturday, September 14. The cost is \$325, which, if you can afford it, is a small price to pay to unlock a lifetime of riding skills. For more information, go to [2WheelSafety.com](http://2WheelSafety.com) or [TotalControlTraining.net](http://TotalControlTraining.net).

Sam is our SF-based columnist. Between writing roughly half this here mag and chasing the dragon of improved riding skills, he's working on an article about not sleeping and "seeing what happens." @



# Motorcycle Prototype 3D Design Challenge

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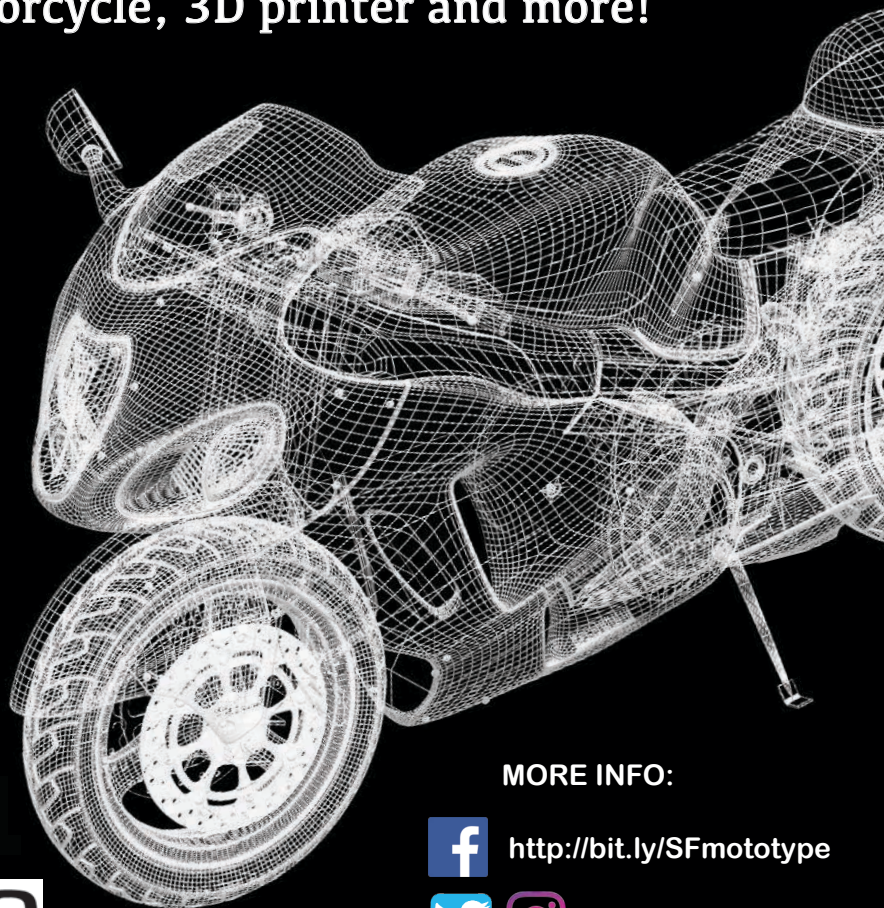
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