

One For The Ladies

IN THE PAST DECADE, THE NUMBER OF FEMALE motorcycle riders has increased to the point where some studies show they make up about 15 percent of the motorcycling population. I think that's a good thing. Growth in the sport can

easily relate to sales, political advantages, new innovations, etc; and bringing in riders of any fashion is a plus for us all. Manufacturers have taken notice of the increase in lady riders. Harley-Davidson, for one, has done a fantastic job of addressing their wants and needs over the years. From the lowering of seat heights, accessories for fitment, fashion designs that are functional and fit real women (not just the models in beauty or fashion ads), and more, companies have embraced this segment of new riders with open arms and the results can be seen not only on the roadways but at MSF/RidersEdge Courses throughout the country.

With the numbers of woman wanting to learn how to ride on the rise, I just wanted to pass on some information and/or opinions that I have seen over the past few years relating to the ladies' side of riding. For many women, the calling to move from the rear seat to grab ahold of the handlebars on their own comes quickly once they see the enjoyment of riding. For the most part, many of them do attend a RiderCourse to learn how to get those basic skills and obtain a license. I have stated in the past that sometimes the women that have moved forward to control their own rides become more skilled riders than the counterparts they sat behind because of the information and skills they gained from the course. I know for men that may be a hard pill to swallow, but to me, it seems a bit odd that we encourage our ladies to learn correctly by taking a course, yet we don't consider taking one ourselves.

Well, guys, here's a little saving grace (maybe): over the years I have discussed recognizing our skill levels, adjusting our egos, and presenting the fact that we all can benefit from taking a skills course, and though the major population of riders are men, the ladies also fall into the ego trap and need a little guidance. When it comes to riding, an understanding of the skills and the bikes we choose to ride

can have a serious effect on us. I know I have mentioned this, as well as Genevieve, but newer riders (which includes our target lady riders) should seriously consider riding a motorcycle that not only fits their size, but is easy and comfortable to ride. Don't let your other half decide what you're going to ride, he'll just pick a bike that he would ride when you're not on it or decide that riding isn't for you since the bigger bike didn't help your confidence or ability to become better in time. Granted, this is a general statement, but it probably happens more often than not.

The other thing I see with women riders lately is their move to a larger bike in a short period of time. Please keep in mind that even a Sportster is a large bike in regards to weight and handling, and moving up to Softails and Touring models is a jump in size. The one comment I normally hear is that the larger bikes are more comfortable and easier to handle while cruising around or on highways. This may be true, but this is where the ladies follow the men; they do not continue their riding education to learn how to ride the larger bikes correctly. I'm only guessing, but the number of women that attend skills courses beyond the Basic RiderCourse is a small percentage. When I ask women why, and after digging to get some honest answers, I have been told that they are afraid of dropping

the bike and possibly doing some damage to it while taking the class, or they don't ride at the level where they would use those skills — "I ride slower which is safer" — and I've even heard that they don't want to take such a class and be the only woman there.

So with that, ladies, you need to get your egos in check as well. I may get flack for just concentrating on the women, but when it comes to riding, the best way one can reduce the risks associated with the sport is to continue one's riding education and practice on a regular basis — no matter who you are. Granted, my past discussions on stepping up to work past how good we think we ride compared to how we really do may have been towards the male portion of riding, but ladies, you are increasing in numbers and need to hold up your end of the skills part of riding, too. We are all in this sport to enjoy ourselves and live the experiences that riding brings us, so why not make it better and hopefully safer to keep on enjoying it, or even lift that sensation we get from the open road to a new level? **AIM**



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