



Riding Dry

With some studies estimating that nearly 50 percent of all motorcycle accidents are related to alcohol, discussing the issue is still necessary.

AS MUCH AS ALL OF US LOVE TO RIDE IN DRY, BEAUTIFUL weather, we are actually going to discuss a different kind of dry riding: one without alcohol. With all the awareness these days on drinking and driving/riding, plus the fact

everyone knows for the most part the consequences of being caught operating a motor vehicle while under the influence, it seems odd that it is still a major problem in motorcycling today. With some studies estimating that nearly 50 percent of all motorcycle accidents are related to alcohol, discussing the issue is still necessary. Add to that the fact that, ratio-wise, more driving while intoxicated (DWI) arrests involve motorcycle riders than car drivers, and you have a scary situation.

Over the past few decades, there have been countless statistics compiled relating to the subject of operating a vehicle while impaired. We'll be using a few of them while covering this topic. One common thread with most of these studies: over the years, their information has been consistent.

We need to understand a couple of facts first. Alcohol is measured by blood alcohol count (BAC), which is the amount of booze in one's blood system. Another thing is whether it is an average 12-ounce beer (not the percentage type), 4-5 ounces of wine, or about 1 ounce of 80-proof alcohol. They all equal the same level in your blood system: 0.02 percent. In most states, the level of 0.05 is an offense that can lead to your arrest — that's just two and a half drinks in one hour, no matter what you're drinking. For those of you that say, "It's only beer," think again. Nearly 80 percent of all DWI arrests are of drivers that have

only been drinking beer.

There is only one thing that can remove alcohol from your body: time. It takes an average of one hour for your body to process a drink (0.02 percent), — that's if you're in good physical condition. Ailments, medications, and age will increase that time, plus, it's a fact that it takes a little longer for a woman's body to process the same amount. Food will just make you full and drunk, coffee will make you drunk and awake, and cold showers will just make you wet. The only way to remove booze from your body is time, and at an average of one drink per hour.

To think or say that you can handle or hold your booze can be a big mistake. Alcohol directly affects your mental judgment and vision. You need to remember that the booze goes into your blood system, which travels to your brain; hence, the effects are the same whether you think you can handle your drinking or not. Researchers have tested professional riders after one to two drinks within an hour. While they were more than capable of completing the single task of riding a motorcycle, as soon as an emergency evasive maneuver, such as a quick stop, swerve, or decreasing radius turn was required, their skills failed them due to the effects of the drinks consumed. If professional riders have problems adjusting to more than one task, how do you think the average rider would do under the same conditions?

Besides all the studies and research

associated with alcohol and vehicles, there's the legal aspect to consider if you are arrested for the offense. These days, the costs of lawyers, court fees, fines, restricted licenses, insurance increases, and other expenses — even for first time offenders — can be an extreme burden to deal with. Forget about the mental part of dealing with a relationship and being the guilty one.

So we know that booze and riding are a bad mix, but what will you do if the time comes and you're on your bike and there is an opportunity to drink? Or if you've had a couple drinks and you're on your bike, what would you do? Will you be smart enough to control your ego and know that you shouldn't take the risk to ride? Will you listen to the judgment of others if they tell you not to ride? Remember that alcohol affects our judgment, so if folks say don't ride, listen to them.

What if you're with someone who has been drinking and plans to ride? Do whatever you can to keep him off his bike: stop his drinking, let time pass, and enlist the aid of friends. You may be saving his life or someone else's. Sure, his ego and lack of judgment will have him thinking differently and possibly make him difficult to deal with, but do what you can. Here's a simple tip: take bar napkins and stuff them into the spark plug caps. No damage to the bike, no spark, no start, no ride home. And if he has been drinking, the chances of him figuring out the problem may be slim.

Our safety is our responsibility, being responsible includes knowing not to drink and ride. Remember to separate the two, and when it comes to others, tell them to do the same. We all love the freedom of riding, but riding while under the influence can quickly take away that freedom or worse. Ride often, ride safe, ride straight. **AIM**