




# RIDING WITH THE BIG DOGS

*by Don Gomo*

*Photos by Carlos Varon*



I have always been amazed of the skills that police motorcyclists possess; the training they go through is certainly some of the best there is. Besides the training,

their daily requirements within service throughout the community are probably even more challenging than their actual training. I have seen several Police Motorcycle Competi-

tions and have always thought that it would be a great experience to actually compete in one, but they have always been for active or retired officers only - until recently.

I was happy to find out from another RiderCoach I work with that there was actually a competition in Brooklyn, NY (which is a short drive from my home) that was open

to both motor officers (retired and active) and to civilians. The NYC Metro Motor Skills competition and safety seminar was promoted as a “first of its kind” in the U.S. that offers levels of entries to all, and they were having their second annual event at the Floyd Bennett Field, a former military airfield which is now a

national park. Their website explains the ideas for the events, which were thought of and worked through by one of its sponsors, the Midwest Police Motorcycle Training facility in Troy, Michigan in April, 2008. The idea for an integrated motorcycle competition was discussed during the Ad-



vanced Training program for civilians (one of the courses they offer), and after dealing with several obstacles (no pun intended), they were able to host the first police and civilian competition ever in the United States in 2009.

Their first event drew in 48 competitors and hundreds of spectators

who were able not only watch some great riding motor officers, but civilians; some whom were friends. Needless to say, it didn't take long in the skills community for word to spread about this event. So, 2010 brought in officers from the entire east coast, and many more civilian



### **The author, daring to pit himself against the best in the East.**

riders that wanted to try out their skills with the “big boys” – and that included me. To be able to enter an event with motor officers really had an excitement

level that was high on the cool factor, especially when you consider that motor officers rank in the top 1% of the best riders in the country.

I have always practiced to make my slow speed skills better, which included taking some advanced classes to help. I hope to be able to soon adjust my schedule to take a course offered by the Midwest Police Motorcycle Training school. One thing that was certainly evident at the competition was the past students of the training school, as they all rode with the same style taught and they rode very well. To see past attendees of the class riding throughout the course in all levels (novice to advanced and expert) and not knocking down cones

is certainly a testament to their teachings.

The event itself started on a Thursday with the competition scheduled for Saturday. They conducted safety seminars, riding demonstrations, skill practice tips and slotted plenty of extra time for one to practice their skills avoiding the cones. You had an opportunity to get tips and information from some of the best riders around and then try it out yourself, which is something you very rarely get to do at most seminars.

Saturday rolled in with plenty of motorcycles that sported red

and blue lights and several privately own ones, too. The weather was a perfect late summer day in NYC and if you were brought in blindfolded, you would never believe you were less than five miles from midtown Manhattan, the long open former runways, trees and the only sounds around were the infamous rumble of Harleys. Since I had never done a competition before, I opted to entry at the novice level. After several rounds of practice, I was getting things smoother with each pass. When the time came to go over the in-



formation for the competition scoring, I fell into a mental trap I always ask my students try to not do – worry about it. Being almost last in line certainly didn't help the mental process and when it came for me to do my run I did the number one no-no and looked down, which made my pass less than perfect. As much as I mentally

kicked myself for doing such a simple mistake, I gained a better understanding of how my students feel when the evaluation part of the Basic Rider Course comes to play.

Though I didn't do as well as I wanted, I learned a few things, met some great people, and watched some amazingly skilled riders. Without a doubt a

good day. Now that I had my opportunity to try riding in a competition and got those beginner jitters out of the way, I will be back for next year's event – and yes, there will be more practice before then.

For more information - <http://www.nycmetro-motorskills.com>

*Gomo*