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# Exploring Limits with Reg Pridmore at VIR

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*“Even more important, I developed an attitude of lifelong learning and improvement. Motorcycling, I realized, was something I could be better at but never completely master. No one ever can.”*

*— Reg Pridmore, three-time AMA Superbike Champion and AMA Hall of Fame*

**IN THE ETERNAL QUEST TO BECOME A** safe and skilled rider, there are few more effective methods to up your game than to seek out a variety of excellent coaches and schools. One such school is Reg Pridmore’s California Leading Advanced Safety School, better known as CLASS.

On September 20th and 21st, CLASS was held at the Virginia International Raceway (VIR). Since CLASS is conducted on racetracks, some participants arrive expecting a track day experience, while others may be frightened away or intimidated. Most street riders never think of spending a day on the track because they

don’t see the benefit. For the longest time, I was a member of that group, but to truly develop skill we need a safe and secure area to practice where we can eliminate or mitigate as many risk factors as possible. Only on a track can you practice the same corner hundreds of times while making incremental changes to see how to best exert precision and control over your motorcycle.

The advantage of the track is that it is a known quantity. It does not change or throw surprises at you. It can be memorized. At VIR, we learned instantly that turns 1-4 were left-right-right and then left

into a sort of straightaway. Even when you could not see around the corners, you knew what was next. There is more room for mistakes on exiting the corners on a track because there is no oncoming traffic. If something goes wrong on a racetrack, there is much more runoff and landings are softer, if needed. I decided to give CLASS a try.

Upon arrival, the first greeting is Tech inspection. For CLASS, the bike must have fresh tires, no leaks, good brakes (pads cannot be worn out), and the taillights, mirrors and speedometer must be taped over. The student needs a one- or



two-piece riding suit, a full-face DOT helmet that is less than five years old, gauntlet gloves, and over the ankle riding boots. That's it. Well, you also need an open mind.

There are always folks who feel they have nothing to learn, and this time was no exception. They did learn by the end, but had they started with an open mind; they would have gained so much more. The inspectors are helpful and accommodating.



Author left and above rides VIR. Photos by Bob Hartman, eTechPhoto.com

As the first impression of CLASS, the coaches do a great job of making everyone feel welcome right away. And everyone is welcome, including one of our newest MOA Members, Ron Pike (#226415), piloting a brand-new K 1600 B while wearing a two-piece textile riding suit as well as the guy riding a track-only HP4 Race in full custom Helimot Race Leather.

CLASS is not a track-day experience. There is no racing, but passing is allowed on the outside with lots of room. Don't think for a moment that the folks who came expecting a track day left disappointed. VIR provides all the opportunity for speed and track time they could hope

for. Add in the professional coaching and guidance provided by Reg and his team of coaches including his wife Gigi, and everyone experiences the perfect, safe, respectful and ego-free environment to hone all aspects of being a safe and skilled rider.

In alternating increments of 20 minutes each, the advanced riders, who have done a school at this venue before, take to the track while the first-timers discuss

concepts in the classroom or trackside. Regardless of which group you are in; you get hours of track time.

While in the classroom, each lesson has a theme or focus, but some themes are universal. Being smooth, maintaining constant focus and seeking precision are the universal themes. To be smooth, focused and precise, we all had to slow down. From my Army time, I learned that "slow is smooth and smooth is fast." Reg did not use those words, but he might as well have. As we all slowed down to achieve perfection, a funny thing happened. Our lap times began decreasing rapidly. Our speeds were coming up.

Instead of five laps per 20-minute session, we were doing eight laps or more. Each classroom session added another tool to the kitbag, including "Body Steering," higher RPM, brake/throttle ("rocking horse") technique, and different cornering lines. With each tool added, the ego-free message was the same from Reg and his fellow coaches.

"Here is something else you can try that I have found really works. I would like you to go out on the track and try it and see what you think."

Before you know it, you are back on the track, trying out the newest recommendation. The coaches are out there with you observing, demonstrating, advising and making themselves available to help. Reg reminds us to seek out one-on-one coaching at the end of each classroom session if we want it. We had perfect weather on Day 1 with clear skies and about 75 degrees. Day 2 brought cooler temperatures and rain.

Wait! What? Does CLASS continue in the rain? Isn't that unsafe? Like all the offered techniques, rain riding was just something else to try. The coaches asked us to give it a try if we felt comfortable. I have spent a lot of time street riding in foul weather and looked forward to searching for smoothness on a racetrack in the rain. I followed the aptly named coach, "Slippery," onto the track and mimicked his lines, power and grace

to the best of my ability. We did seek out the edge and felt the tires begin to slip, but with his help, I clocked my best lap time of the two days while riding in the rain. Most students saw triple-digit speeds, went faster, leaned farther, and braked harder than ever before. There were no injuries. After two full days of track riding in rain and shine, everyone who began on Day 1 was still riding at the end of Day 2. That is a safe riding school.

Ron Pike and I can't wait to return next year or attend another venue. I hope to see you all out there too. **ON**