

# CALIFORNIA GIRLS

Words: Paul | Pics: Phil Smith and Paul



With the California Superbike School running their first dates for 2013, BRM made the trip to Taupo with Tracey to see how the school works for female riders...

The California Superbike School has been teaching riders the "art of cornering" for over three decades, with Californian racer Keith Code breaking down the process of riding a motorcycle into a number of components which are then taught in levels. It's a unique way to teach riders how to improve their skills, with as much time spent in the classroom as out on the track. Yep, track. That's right, the schools are run at racetracks although that doesn't mean the skills you're taught only relate to racers or track day junkies. In fact, the opposite is true and it is surprising that Code hasn't changed the name of the programme to something

more generic to encourage road riders to come along. I'm guessing California Road Riding School just doesn't have the same ring to it...

#### ANY SKILL, ANY BIKE, ANYONE

We sent Tracey down to the school's first visit to the Ricoh Taupo Motorsport Park to get an idea of what the process was like for a female rider, and it was great to see she wasn't the only girl there. As she hadn't done the school before, she was placed into Level 1 along with two other females and around 15 male riders, who varied in skill from returning-to-riding types to full-on racers and everything in-between. The bikes



All-weather training



they were riding were varied as well, from a blacked-out Harley V-Rod to a smoky RG500 and a 125cc bucket racer, right through to the owner of a gorgeous 1199 Panigale enjoying the school environment.

With both days at Taupo sold out in advance, the paddock was full of life as we rolled in at 7am. That meant an early start from Paeroa and the Taupo chill was truly evident as we wheeled the Suzuki GSX650FU in to scrutineering. The whole day is expertly structured, and all the CSS crew were there checking the pupil's bikes out for tyre tread depth, pressure and general safety. After that, it was a trip upstairs to the smart conference rooms above the pit garages at Taupo where the pupils were introduced to the staff and sent to their various places.

Steve Brouggy is the head honcho at the school and takes all the classroom sessions. He's handy on a race bike, has plenty of Aussie charisma and really made the sessions back at school an enjoyable experience. The explanation of each point was simple enough for everyone to understand, with no motorcycling jargon thrown in to make him look good and everyone else feel stupid. He's a natural at teaching and making everyone relax and enjoy the experience, and the ladies were coming up with as many answers and suggestions as the men in the room.

With five sessions of 25 minutes on the racetrack planned throughout the day, it's no wonder there's an early start required to fit everything in, and it wasn't long before the Level 1s were out of the class and getting ready to fire their bikes up. When they were in the classroom, another group were in the garages working on other aspects while another group were out on track. Each time you go on track, there's a coach circulating who tags on and follows you to observe where you are at with the particular drill you are working on. Once he's had a chance to see if you're practising what you've been taught in the previous session in the classroom, he comes past and gets you to follow him while he demonstrates the correct application of the drill. After following again to ensure you are applying the drill correctly, he takes off and finds his next pupil. There's a maximum of one instructor for three pupils, so you get plenty of time with them on track and you also get debriefed after each session to check your understanding of the classroom tech.



Above: Tyre pressures are the first thing to be checked  
Below: Tracey liked the training  
Bottom: Watching/watching



**MANDY TEASLEY**

BIKE: KAWASAKI EX400

I rode years ago (and only had a bike). Then I had my kids and it would be maybe 20 years since I've had a bike. I've had a bike now about a year and a half and only road ride. I did my first track day at Hampton Downs about three weeks ago and that was nerve-wracking but it was also awesome. And here it's great; I'm just getting so much out of it.

I did Level 1 yesterday and am doing Level 2 today and everything now is so much smoother and my riding just feels so much better. I'm not doing it for the track or anything like that but for improvement on the road, because when I go riding either by myself or with other people, there're lots of corners where I get it wrong. So just being able to get that out of it, knowing when to turn and things like that is just amazing.

There's a lot of females out there who I think don't know that this exists and if I hadn't have met the people that I know, I wouldn't have known anything about this either. So it's almost like the Superbike School need to let the girls know it's not just a guy thing. I'm now planning to do level 3 & 4 in November - I love it!

With female riders often not quite as confident on track, the Superbike School is very particular with their on-track rules and aren't worried about sending riders home early who don't give their fellow pupils enough courtesy on the circuit. This includes a two metre rule when overtaking which is enforced rigidly by the flag marshals, and more than once a rider was pulled into the pits during a session to be given a bit more coaching on being courteous.

### IMPROVED SKILLS

Speaking to a number of the female riders on the course, there was one common theme that arose when I asked what they had come here to learn. "To go around corners better," was the answer from each one of them, and they were certainly in the right place to learn that. With bike geometry and the effect we have on it a major part of session one, it didn't take long before the entire group were nailing their corners like pros. Photographer Phil Smith who was snapping the students over the two days said his job becomes easier as the day wears on, as to begin with the riders are all over the track. "After a few sessions in the classroom, everyone is much tidier and come through the turns almost in the same place." So there's tangible proof that the schooling really works!

Each lesson concentrates on a different aspect that is involved in going through a corner, from braking to turn-in-point, when you open the throttle and where you should be looking. There's also simple and easy instruction on what is happening both to the bike itself, and your own body's interaction with the bike and its suspension when you're making the various inputs to



Above: It was fantastic to see cruiser riders there too!  
Below: De-brief after one session



"My cornering has improved big-time..." *Chrissie*



### CHRISSIE DOCHERTY

BIKE: TRIUMPH SPEED TRIPLE

I was one of the first Superbike School guinea pigs at Hampton Downs in 2009 and then each year I just went through and did the next two levels. I wanted to learn how to ride better and get more confidence on the road as I do a lot of road riding and basically be safer.

My cornering has improved big-time and I'm just more confident. I actually get compliments about my riding now, with people telling me that my riding has changed. When they ask what's changed, I tell them that I get rider training, and do you know where I go, the Superbike School! But I've still got a hell of a lot to learn and that's why I keep coming back.

I recommend to women all the time to come and give it a go, as I do a lot of ladies rides and I sometimes lead the rides for the guys now as well – I was the first lady rider to lead the recent Rat Raid – which can be intimidating. But now I just get compliments about my riding which reassures me I'm on the right track and it's all down to all this training that I do.

I don't do any straight-out track days although I do other training days and that's where I tell all the lady riders that they've just got to come and do it, as they're simply going to be safer on the road. Many think it's made for racers or just think it's there to teach you to go fast but I tell them, it's about the 'art of cornering...' and if you learn to corner correctly whether you're a racer or just a road rider, it's got to be good for you.

## SHERI BEAUMONT

BIKE: DUCATI MONSTER 696

I've had the Monster about 2 ½ years but I haven't ridden for about 25 years and have just taken it up again. I used to ride all the time when I was younger but have now met someone who loves bikes so I've got back into it. I'm probably a little bit more responsible now than I was back then though!

I ride just for the sheer fun of it but I came to the school because I wanted to get my skills improved. We heard about these guys and thought it was a must, so I came here with my partner. Our friends told us about it as they'd read the books and watched the DVDs of Keith Code's and they were saying how good it was. So we thought we had to do it. I just feel that now I'm a bit older I'm a little bit more tense and there's so much more traffic out there than when I used to ride that I think you've just got to be a better rider. I'm always aware of what's around me but it's the cornering where I lack the confidence and where I need the help.

I did Level 1 today and found it great although I'd love it if they could mark 'X' on the local roads I ride on so I knew where to turn in! I found it really good as its taught me how to take a corner and shown me things like how important the correct line is.

I'll definitely come back to do the other levels, and if I'm the slowest on the track I don't care, I just enjoy it. To me it's just about learning and I know the more I ride the better I'll get.



Above: Constant communication between coach and pupil  
Below: Coaches are on hand for classroom and track learning

the machine. For example, the back tyre is bigger than the front and theoretically therefore offers more grip. So where would you want a majority of the weight of the bike while cornering, the front or the rear? Think about it. Keith Code has and these schools pass on his thoughts in a simple, clear and easily practicable way.

If you can't see the benefit for yourself as a road rider, just think about where you position yourself in the approach to a corner, where you turn in and what you're looking at as you're heading through the turn. Be honest, none of us can afford not to keep up-skilling when it comes to riding motorcycles and even though the California Superbike School isn't the cheapest training school out there, it's certainly got to be at the top of the list when it comes to bang for buck. Not only do you get to ride on a racetrack in a controlled environment, you get more of an insight into what's going on beneath you when you ride as well as tuition that could possibly one day save your life. It's not just for guys, it's not only for racers; it's a great way for anyone riding a motorcycle to really make some serious improvement to their riding skills, in fact improvement is guaranteed with the California Superbike School program.

RTTT



FOR FURTHER INFO:  
[WWW.CALIFORNIASUPERBIKESCHOOL.CO.NZ](http://WWW.CALIFORNIASUPERBIKESCHOOL.CO.NZ)

