

Basic RiderCourseSM Range Coaching

If some curious onlookers stop by a Basic RiderCourseSM (BRC) to watch what RiderCoachesSM do, what would they notice? Would they see the RiderCoach standing off to the side and observing passively or would they see the RiderCoach engaged with students and showing a lot of energy and involvement?



Experts believe it's better to think that learning occurs because of the experiences and timely tips provided to riders.

A primary responsibility an MSF-certified RiderCoach is to ensure a safe, effective and motivating learning environment. To be effective and motivating, a RiderCoach needs to understand the nature of learning and the nature of the learner. He/she needs to adjust instructional techniques to maximize rider development toward the achievement of overall RiderCourse and lesson objectives. Good RiderCoaches are active; they adjust their range positions to help each rider as much as possible with rider-specific coaching while maintaining a watchful eye on overall range operation.

The Teaching-Learning Process

An important question for a RiderCoach is "How can I effectively help each rider learn?" Although the teaching-learning process is complex, having a basic understanding of the principles of this process can help RiderCoaches become more effective. Learning is often defined as a change of behavior that is demonstrated by a change in knowledge, skill, attitude and habits. When applied to the MSF

RiderCourses, learning can be regarded as the development and improvement of safe and responsible riding behaviors that occur under the supervision and direct coaching of a RiderCoach.

Rider learning can occur because of something a RiderCoach does or says or as a result of what a rider reads in a handbook. But, motor skill learning experts believe it is better to think that learning occurs because of the experiences and timely tips provided to riders. So, a fundamental task of a RiderCoach, after setting up a lesson, is to facilitate experiences that foster rider development. Stated another way, a RiderCoach is responsible for establishing a safe and motivating learning environment that will maximize rider learning. A well-designed *RiderCourse* requires efficient and effective instruction and facilitation to bring it to life and make it meaningful to riders. The active step of providing rider-specific coaching will propel a fledgling motorcyclist into a fundamentally sound rider ready to continue developing skill and finesse on the street.

What does it mean to facilitate learning? Let's consider this question.

- First, think about a great learning experience you've had: one where your knowledge, skills, abilities and habits were improved greatly.
- Now consider, what were the qualities of the teacher or coach in this experience?
 - Was the teacher competent in the subject?
 - Was the teacher motivated to teach?
 - Did the teacher relate well to you?
 - Was the teacher non-offensive and sincerely interested in your experiences and your personal learning?
 - Did the teacher answer your "why" and "so what" questions?
 - Did the teacher make the material relevant to your real world?
 - Did the teacher pay attention to you and recognize your motivation and your specific needs?
 - Did the teacher keep you involved in the learning?
 - Did the teacher understand your learning process or did the teacher simply deliver information?

These are good questions for a RiderCoach to think about. An important aspect in developing better judgment and coaching skill is to reflect on the results of recent courses and think about what could have made it better.

Range Management and Coaching

Effective range management means to employ techniques that provide a safe riding area with controlled movement that maximizes rider learning. Range management goes hand-in-hand with opportunities to effectively coach riders.

Coaching is the heart and soul of *RiderCourses*, and it is the key to high quality training outcomes and maximum participant learning. Identifying opportunities to coach is a continuous process. A good RiderCoach will notice what is happening with each rider and look for opportunities to coach the development of that person so that he/she can be the best rider possible. More importantly, the RiderCoach needs to be aware of overall safety and to notice a rider who may not have the fundamental skills and capabilities to be in control of the motorcycle. On the range this means the RiderCoach must be in the best physical position to control overall range safety and group movement, communicate with individual riders, and provide non-verbal and verbal cues to ensure each rider develops the appropriate skill level and habits.

A RiderCoach must evaluate each rider's performance in order to prioritize the most critical areas to coach. Sometimes coaching is a simple correction such as a non-verbal indication to keep the head and eyes up. Sometimes effective coaching means letting a rider practice without any specific coaching. At other times, providing a positive and motivating "thumbs up" is critical. And, sometimes there is an opportunity to coach riders verbally



Good RiderCoaches adjust their positions to help each rider as much as possible.

(without yelling). Verbal coaching should occur when a rider is in a stopped position alongside a RiderCoach, when riders are being debriefed at the end of an exercise or during exercise transitions.



RiderCoaches must notice riders who have yet to attain smooth, coordinated movement.

Effective coaching should not equate to unlimited, continuous positive reinforcement. A RiderCoach should not be overzealous with praise when it is not warranted. Riders making errors should not be lead to believe that they are doing fine. Providing encouraging feedback is important, but praising riders into thinking they are performing well when they are not could lead to a false sense of accomplishment.

The coaching process can be thought of as a simple three-step process that we'll call "SEE," which stands for Search, Evaluate, and Execute. To Search is to observe and analyze total range safety (range management) and identify opportunities for coaching. To Evaluate is to determine the action steps necessary for overall range safety and rider-specific coaching. To Execute means to adjust position to be constantly in the best location to effectively manage the range, and to take action by providing non-verbal or verbal coaching (motivating feedback) as appropriate.

The chart on page seven depicts the fundamental elements of *RiderCourse* coaching. Coaching on the range can be viewed as two distinct but related parts: Range Management and Coaching Actions. It is difficult to separate the two, because only when range management is appropriately controlled and monitored for safety can effective, rider-specific coaching be maximized.

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Search

To “Search” with regard to range management involves four key areas to think about:

- 1) Overall range safety
- 2) Rider safety margins
- 3) Lesson sequential steps
- 4) Smooth and controlled skill by riders

Overall range safety means to notice any surface or area problems. Consider such questions as: Are there any obstacles near the range that could be moved? or Could local traffic or pedestrians interfere?

Maintaining rider safety margins means to ensure there is adequate time and space between riders during an exercise. Ask yourself: Are riders maintaining a space cushion that would prevent a momentary loss of control from affecting other riders? and Are stage positions appropriately spaced?

Lesson sequential steps means to mentally break the exercise into smaller pieces and consider transitions carefully. For example, consider: Where in the usual paths of travel could there be a conflict? Where might riders have a conflict when starting out and ending the exercise? Are there any transitional steps in the lesson that could produce a conflict for any rider?

Smooth and controlled skill by riders means to notice riders who haven’t mastered overall control and pay close attention to their positions and movements. A RiderCoach should be thinking: Which riders have yet to sufficiently master control? Which riders may take more chances than others?

A RiderCoach must assess each of these four key areas as important factors that could lead to conflicts and take measures to ensure overall safety.

Coaching opportunities in the “Search” step involve three interrelated aspects:

- 1) Major skills
- 2) Evaluations on the range cards
- 3) Rider actions

The major skills include clutch/throttle control, braking, straight-line riding, turning and shifting. RiderCoaches must

notice riders who have yet to attain smooth, coordinated movement of the major skills. A deficiency in any of the major skills that could produce an unsafe situation requires immediate coaching. The range cards contain the minimum outcomes that need to be observed. To determine what rider-specific coaching is necessary, a RiderCoach should notice rider actions related to the head and eyes, shoulders, hands, knees and feet. Here the RiderCoach has to do a quick gap analysis for each rider by asking: In what skill is the rider deficient and what can I do to help develop that skill in this rider to an appropriate level?



Range management sometimes involves coping with surprises, such as visits by livestock, like this moose on a BRC range in Alaska.

Evaluate

To “Evaluate” regarding range management involves determining the multitude of factors that could interact to form a conflict. What separates good coaching from exceptional coaching is, to a large extent, paying attention and thinking ahead. A RiderCoach must evaluate carefully the riding area and any fixed objects nearby to determine if there is sufficient time and space for riders to adjust their positions. A RiderCoach should be questioning continuously, asking: “Are riders leaving enough of a gap and keeping adequate safety margins for their skill level and their ability to control the motorcycle within this riding space?”

To “Evaluate” regarding coaching actions involves prioritizing a rider-specific error and determining its root cause. A RiderCoach must assess: Is the error due to a

lack of perception, poor decision-making, or a major or minor motor skill deficiency? Given that evaluation, how can I best communicate what is necessary to the rider?

Execute

To “Execute” regarding range management means to ensure safety margins by using non-verbal and verbal coaching. For instance, one of the more common action steps is to keep following distances appropriate by spacing out riders. Usually this can be accomplished non-verbally, but occasionally a verbal direction is required.

To “Execute” regarding coaching actions means to provide feedback that helps a rider improve. A rider may need RiderCoach feedback to develop an important skill or to reinforce good performance. Coaching is not the same as doing nothing, far from it. An exceptional RiderCoach energizes the learning environment with position changes and non-verbal signals that help riders, and engages in active communication with each rider to maximize their

development and ensure their safety.

Summary

Good coaching is not an easy task. Much like the onlookers who stopped to watch a *RiderCourse*, fans at a sporting event, say a basketball game, are often surprised at what they see when they look beyond the players actions and focus instead on the actions of the referees. They notice intense observation connected to a great deal of fluid movement necessary to control and manage the game.

In *RiderCourses*, if a rider can be helped, but isn’t, there is a deficiency in coaching. In the BRC, RiderCoaches typically are given about 10 hours of range time to develop the skills of riders and ensure they are safe to continue their development on the street. A RiderCoach is busy; busy managing the range and busy coaching riders. A RiderCoach must always be considering “What can I do to help that rider?” Times 12! **sc**

Remedial Coaching on the Range

re-me´di-al: tending or intended to rectify or improve.

Remedial training refers to adjusting regular instructional methods because a desired objective has not been accomplished. Normal *RiderCourse* range procedures should be followed, but if a rider or riders do not achieve exercise objectives, a RiderCoach has the responsibility to ensure every reasonable effort is made to assist riders. Coaching means to serve as a “help agent.” Not all riders learn in the same ways or at the same rate, and good coaching means to be constantly alert for opportunities to develop rider-specific skills and to ensure each rider is ready for subsequent lessons.

Remedial training usually means to repeat a lesson or to conduct a different lesson that will more easily address the root cause of poor performance. If a different exercise is used, it should not be more advanced but rather it should allow a rider to practice a skill in a more basic form. For example, if a rider is having problems in the offset weaves, the range dimensions could be set up with less width; if a rider is having problems in a u-turn, the exercise dimensions could be widened. Although the *RiderCourse* is designed to develop skills in a step-by-step building block process, sometimes riders need instruction

that would include remedial opportunities.

Remedial training can occur between lessons as riders are taking a scheduled break. Riders provided remedial practice should be given adequate break time too. If there is another riding area and an additional RiderCoach is available, a rider could be coached individually and rejoin the rest of the course participants once adequate skill requirements are developed.

If a rider continues to have difficulties developing basic skills and becomes too exhausted or frustrated to continue, it may be necessary for that rider to discontinue this particular *RiderCourse* (be dismissed) and re-enroll in another one at a later time. (Don’t forget the option for an Extended BRC if local programming accommodates this.) Because the lessons become more complex and require more skill as the course progresses, later exercises may be too difficult for some riders to safely practice. It is important that a rider does not become a safety hazard for self or others in the course. But each rider should be afforded a reasonable opportunity to continue and every reasonable effort should be made to help a rider develop. A primary RiderCoach goal is to maximize safety and learning and minimize risk and stress. **sc**

