

# DOMOKOS TELLS ALL!

# WHEELIE GOOD TIPS!

## PART TWO

Practice tips and tricks

BY LEN WEED

*If you're serious about wheelieing, you're going to land on your butt a few times. If you aren't doing that, you really aren't going for it; you don't want to do it bad enough. It's all in your head—if you really want to ride a wheelie, you can. I'm living proof.*

—Doug Domokos

Welcome back, monowheelers. This month's concluding installment on the art of wheelieing offers

*Here you can see Doug's outside weighting as he turns. Note his left hand in from the grip.*



PHOTOS: LEN WEED



*Doug's one-handers are often turned into flag-wavers.*

tips and exercises as well as a look at common beginner mistakes. You'll also be able to check out how Doug Domokos—the Wheelie King himself—sets up his wheelie bike.

### COMMON BEGINNER MISTAKES

The toughest challenge is acquiring confidence—believing you can bring your bike back from beyond its balance point and then save it with the brake.

In practicing wheelie techniques, you often under- or over-correct, so analyze your mistakes. Here is a list of some of the more common ones:

- Not knowing your balance point.
- Too little throttle to lift the bike.
- Throttle off too soon.
- Too little pull-up on the handlebar.
- Leaving the throttle on too long.
- Lifting the front wheel too fast.
- Too much rear brake.
- Too little brake.
- Subconscious weight shift.
- Upper-body stiffness.
- Too much steering input.
- Failure to set a target.

### SLOW-SPEED CONTROL TIPS

- To brake, pull the clutch (to prevent stalling the engine) and tap the brake.
- To accelerate, pull up on the handlebar to bring the bike up into your chest. Then, use this leverage to snap the front end down. This sets up going to the gas to recover your balanced angle of attack.

### PRACTICE EXERCISES

- Pop/drop practice.
- Pop/carry/drop practice.
- Raise and lower your angle of attack.
- Hold a straight line, then lean the bike from side-to-side.
- Slow-speed wheelies.

### ADVANCED EXERCISES

Zero in on flat-ground wheelies and be able to shift through the gears while wheelieing before you try these advanced tricks:

- Standing.
- Fast/slow speed.
- Downhill/uphill.
- Hillside turns.
- Sloppy terrain.
- Trick riding.

### STANDING WHEELIES

To feel more secure, modify your stand-up stance: Put your left knee on the seat, your left foot on the rear frame loop and leave your right foot on its peg to control the rear brake.

To get comfortable with this stance, ask a buddy to hold your bike while you climb on and practice the switch to standing.

The following tips should help:

- Compensate by shifting body weight to the left as you lift your left leg. Otherwise, all your weight pressing down on the right peg will make the bike lean and turn.
- Transfer your left foot to its footrest as quickly as possible.
- Use arm pressure into the handlebar to help pull yourself up.
- Bring your right knee into the tank to help stabilize a straight-line ride.
- Center your left foot on its rest for straight-line riding. Move it to the outside (to allow a body pivot) while turning.

Possible problems:

- Leaning forward or pushing down into the handlebar as you try to stand.
- Failing to feed extra throttle to

*The key to downhill wheelieing is controlling speed. You have to gas the front end beyond the balance point to set up using the brake.*







Placing both feet on the rear footrest allows for more stylish standing turns. Doug uses the special left-hand brake lever to maintain his balance point.

counter expected down-pressure as you start to stand.

- Fluctuating throttle as you pull yourself up.

### WHEELIE TURNS

- Steer into a turn for an instant to start your bike leaning. Position yourself to the outside and push the front end over into the turn. Don't push down on the handlebar—push laterally. You have to force the spinning front wheel (especially if it's motor-driven) to lean inside.
- Then, countersteer to the outside of the turn to stabilize bike lean. The greater the lean, the more you'll need to countersteer to recover. (Be aware that a bike with a spinning front wheel—especially one that's motor-driven—will try to hinge to the inside since the wheel will resist moving.)
- Center over your line once you're in to the turn.
- Use bike lean to control your line in the turn. The more you lean, the tighter you can turn.
- Use throttle to correct excessive lean; bar pressure also helps.
- Steering: Countersteer relative to bike lean. Either steer outside more to counter the bike's lean, or reduce outside steering if lean is being reduced.

Doug leans his bike into the turn while remaining centered over his line. Steering inside makes the bike fall into the turn. Bike lean is then controlled by steering away from the turn.



- Body weighting: Center over your rear wheel's line, to the outside of the leaned-in bike.
- Speed: Decrease speed to turn tighter; increase speed to turn wider or to pick up a falling bike.
- Speed-lean relationship: More speed allows more bike lean, until traction goes. Less speed means you must decrease your bike's lean. If possible, use outside body weighting or peg pressure.
- Ending a turn: Reduce bike lean, lower the front end by braking to set up going to the gas; then, gas up to the balance point and snap your body up and outward.
- Circle turns: The hot tip is to lower your bike's angle of attack, which will make your bike fall straight down instead of wobbling from side to side. It's a more stable feel. Once the turn is begun, gas the front end up to its balance point. Full 360-degree turns are much easier with a front-wheel motor, but you can do them unassisted.
- Standing turns: You can use your body more effectively to allow more bike lean. For instance, it's easier to turn left since your right foot remains on its peg and weights the outside of the turn. You can also push down into the gyro force of the spinning front wheel more effectively. Both techniques permit more bike lean. For right turns, bow your leg out like a trials rider to get more weight to the outside of the bike.



Increasing speed allows more bike lean, especially with a motor-driven front wheel. Note how Doug weights to the outside of the turn and countersteers to create an up-force against bike lean.

### PICKING A WHEELIE BIKE

- A bike with a lower balance point (a higher center of gravity) is easier for beginners. Check the balance point by getting on the bike as a pal supports it.
- A mild, wide powerband is better for beginners.
- Shorter-wheelbase bikes are easier to lift (but generally harder to hold on the balance point).
- Finally, the bike must have a strong rear brake.

DR

Doug's famous fender-bender. Doug gasses his bike beyond its balance point until the rear fender scrapes the ground, then snaps the front forward with hard braking.



## DOMOKOS HIGHLIGHTS

✓ 1975—Age 20; performs wheelies as part of trio at Red Bud track between motos.

✓ 1976—Trio breaks up and Domokos continues solo, winning a wheelie contest in Santa Fe Springs, California.

✓ 1978—Kawasaki signs Domokos to perform at Nationals and stadium events. Stays with Kawasaki until '82.

✓ 1982—Switches to Honda, staying with them until late '84.

✓ 1983—Performs world's tallest wheelie, atop the Empire State Building.

✓ 1984—Wins \$10,000 bet with promoter Mike Goodwin by wheeling a complete lap of the Anaheim Stadium supercross track.

✓ 1984—Makes it into *Guinness Book of World Records* for a 145-mile wheelie at Talladega in Atlanta. Other records include: eight passengers on a three-wheeler, seven passengers on a four-wheeler.

✓ Appeared in the films *On Any Sunday II*, *Cannonball Run*, and *Megaforce*. Television appearances include wheeling up and down Lombard Street, San Francisco, on "That's Incredible!" and guest appearance on "The Powers of Matthew Star." Performed at Great American Motorcycle Shows.

✓ Wrote the book *Wheelin' With the King*.

✓ The sky's the limit for Domokos, whose dreams include wheeling across the United States to raise money for the Statue of Liberty fund, and wheeling a three-wheeler on a high-wire over the Los Angeles Coliseum peristyle.

Doug's book, *Wheelin' With the King*, 160 pages, 12 color pages, can be purchased for \$7.95, plus \$1.50 postage and handling, from Clean-sheet Enterprises, P.O. Box 241, Tarzana, CA 91356.