

# GETTING STARTED

## ROAD RACING

**T**here are many people who think they ride pretty well (translate fast) on the street. They've beveled their footpegs and worn the tits off their tires. They pass other bikes easily and haven't been passed themselves in several months. At this point it's time to quit playing with the canyon racers and join the big leagues. On a race track it's safer and it's legal. You'll quickly learn that there's fast, and then there's fast. What you were doing on the street wasn't the latter, so imagine how incredible it will be to go racing for real.

The logical point to start is in some Production class that will enable you to run your present bike. That way you can give it a taste without a lot of financial flimflam and if you don't like it, pull out free. Most organizations have Box Stock Production classes, not to be confused with the highly-modified and heavily-bank-rolled Superbike Production machines which race at the AMA Nationals. Most Box Stock classes allow a change in tires, shocks, bars and pegs, but that's all. Some people out for nothing but fun even run with their rear-view mirrors. Production classes cover just about every size and type of bike, though breakdowns

may vary depending on the sponsoring organization. Bracket racing where people are grouped by lap times regardless of equipment is emerging as a popular way to ensure everyone has a class. In general, if you have a motorcycle, you can race.

There are some rules, however, such as safety-wiring your oil sump plug to eliminate spills that could cause mass crashes. And you'll have to remove your centerstand, the most frequent item to drag in sharp corners.

Here is a list of the major road racing associations:

AMA (American Motorcyclist Assn.)  
Box 141  
Westerville, OH 43081

AAMRR (Assoc. of American Motorcycle Road Racers)  
268 East St.  
Hebron, CT 06284

AFM (American Federation of Motorcyclists)  
4996 Argyle Dr.  
Buena Park, CA 90620

MCRA (Midwest Cafe Racing Assn.)  
Box 16591  
Clayton, MO 63105

MRA (Midland Racing Assn.)  
Box 213  
Wheatridge, CT 80033

WERA (Western/Eastern Road Racers Assn.)  
1742 Addison St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19146

NML (National Motorcycle League)  
179 SW First Way  
Deerfield Beach, FL 33441

Fla.GPRA (Florida GP Riders Assn.)  
1611 N. Florida Ave  
Lakeland, FL 33801

ECRRA (East Coast Racing Assn.)  
1742 Addison St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19146

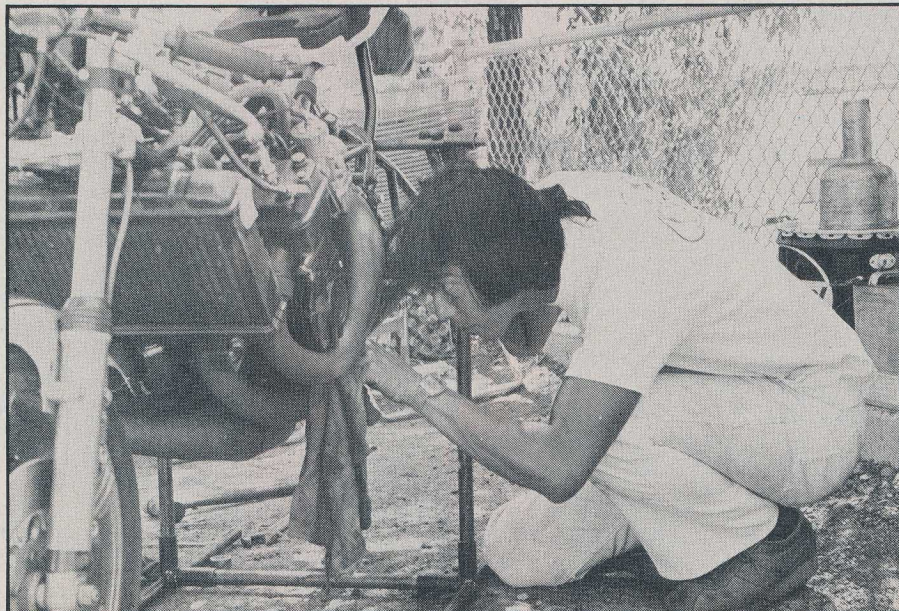
CRA (Central Roadracing Assn.)  
10117 Nicollet Ave. South  
Bloomington, Minn. 55420

CMC (Continental Motosport Club)  
3407 West Olive Ave.  
Burbank, CA 91505

These organizations sponsor and promote races on various levels from professional to sportsman. All Novices will begin in the sportsman ranks, which means they go for trophies and points toward advancement to Junior and Expert, not money purses. Some sportsman events offer contingency prizes such as tires, oil, gloves, etc., if you sign an advertising release and display the proper sticker on your bike. Any race that isn't an AMA National is usually referred to as a "club race," or an "alphabet race," because of the numerous letters in the sponsor's title—AAMRR, WERA, etc. To enter a club race you must join the organization, which costs about \$15-\$30 and sometimes requires a physical exam. You will then be awarded a license to race.

Most clubs have an orientation session for new members which consists of a short lecture on theory, proper lines, drafting techniques, regulations, safety and the unwritten rules of racing which cover the delicate art of bunting, elbowing, etc. Then an experienced racer will lead you around the track at slowly increasing speeds so you can watch his technique and learn braking points, lean angles and lines. Many self-described hot-shot street racers have their bubbles burst by this

*An incredibly expensive, complicated and fast road racing machine is the Yamaha TZ750. Master tuner/builder Erv Kanemoto fettles Gary Nixon's bike before the Sears Point national. A leaking O-ring put him out.*



JODY NICHOLAS



teacher when it suddenly becomes apparent he could blow them off in their own favorite canyons. West Coast hopefuls might want to enroll in the Keith Code School of Road Racing (*Motorcyclist*, August 1977) for a complete mental and physical prepping.

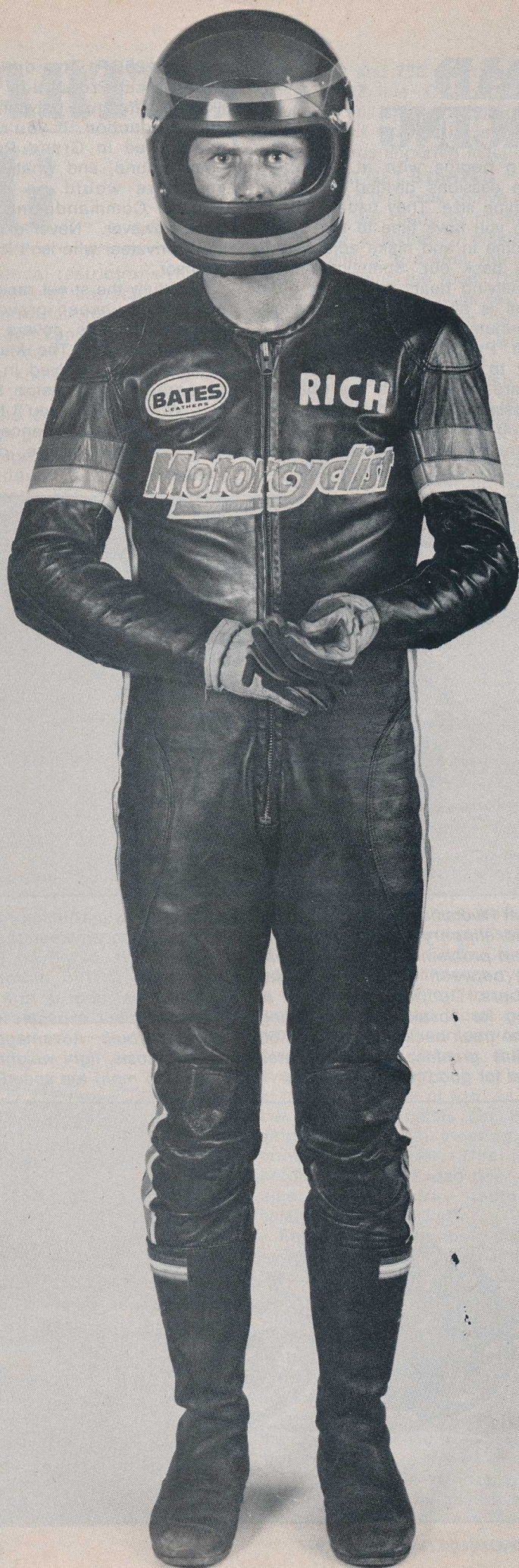
Each club has a rulebook and newsletter which touts upcoming events and recounts previous races lap-by-lap. Further coverage is usually provided by the regional weekly motorcycle newspapers. Most clubs supply insurance and all enforce strict rules about protective clothing. Full leathers, gloves, boots, eye protection and a Snell-approved helmet are mandatory. Naturally you will require a complete set of tools and spares to work on your bike, unless you're one of the few who enjoys the luxury of a "tuner." For longer races a good pit crew will be part of your strategy, and even in short ones it's great to be greeted by someone with the prop stand and Gatorade ready.

For your own safety make sure someone in the pits knows who you are, where you live and who to call in case you unload. "Never race alone" is one of the Commandments.

Assuming you've progressed nicely in Box Stock production, you might want to move up to Superbike Production. On a local level this doesn't require quite the money and technical know-how evidenced on the nation's top Production bikes. The rules are often loosely interpreted and no one squeals on the other guy for fear of being protested himself. Here's where you start rolling out the check-book however, because suddenly you'll graduate to the reality of \$80 tires, \$300 worth of cylinder-head porting, special pistons, Magnaflux bills and to justify it all you'll have to travel farther to more races. Mileage, gas, lodging, food, spares, repairs. Cubic money.

But how much will it cost to race locally on a budget? Assuming you already have a motorcycle, club membership and license won't be more than \$50. Race entries are about \$15 each. You already have a helmet. Leathers are steep (\$100-200) and lightweight boots cost \$30-50. Another Commandment is "Don't go racing on bad tires," so figure on \$100 twice each season. If you tuck away \$1000 and don't crash badly, there will probably be enough left over to celebrate your advancement to Expert with French Champagne.

What's it like at a typical event? At most club events there will be about 100 entries. Classes are often run simultaneously—for instance 250 Experts and 500 Experts will race together but be scored separately. The





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morning begins with at least two practice sessions divided according to machine size. They usually last ½ hour so you have time to turn a few laps, come in and make adjustments and go back out. Sometimes there are qualifying heats, but most often the final is all there is. It's usually 15-20 minutes long.

From Production classes it's straight to the front line—GP bikes. These are the big guys, the real racers. Classes are straightforward: 125, 250, 500 and Open. Most of the bikes are Yamahas, although the little MT125R from Honda is competi-

tive in 125GP. The difference between local Production and GP is like the difference between the street and Production. If you're ready to get started in Grand Prix, you've been around, and whatever we told you here would be redundant. Another Commandment is apropos here, however. "Never expect to find a GP privateer who isn't looking for a sponsor."

Hopefully the street racer will move away from unseen gravel patches, slippery manhole covers, oncoming Oldsmobiles and The Man's full attention. Once involved in racing, be prepared for a passion to possess you. When it does you'll be enjoying transcendental experiences only you, and the other racers, can understand. **M**

**O**f all four of these categories, touring is the most open, diversified, and easiest to get involved in. There's no rigorous training required, you don't have to ride an extremely trick mount, and your physical size (in regards to either how tall or wide you are) does not limit the amount of fun possible to the street riding enthusiast.

In touring you'll never have to worry about having land taken away from you. Until the day that we're all zipping around with jet packs on our backs, touring's future is bright, ever-expanding, with no real limitations. You can go around the block, or take an extensive trip around the world, clicking off miles aboard your two-wheeler. The only limitations are those that you yourself set.

## THE THREE TOURING GROUPS

Touring seems to naturally break down into three distinct groups, with no exact definition, based on the general mood and character of riders.

The first group is the lone, or at the most, two-rider tour. You either go by yourself or take a buddy along. From what we've seen going the other way on the highway, and those we've passed, touring riders generally travel in groups of two. This group occasionally has been known to embark with a head-count of six wheels, six riders, and plenty of luggage.

The second group is the "neighborhood" or "guys from the office" gathering. Ranging in numbers from eight to sixteen, it's usually a very informal tour; a nice way to pass the weekend with others interested in the same beauty, and a social meeting between those of a common cause.

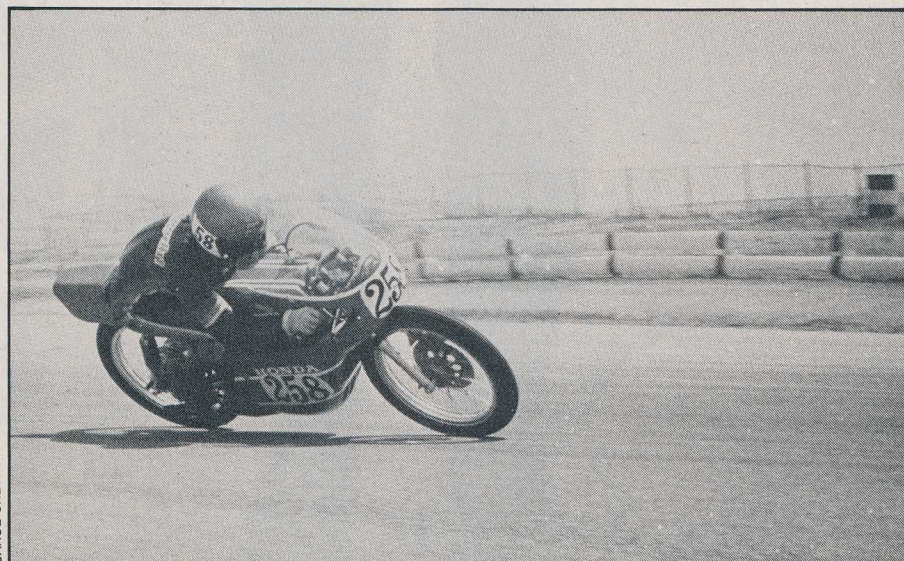
Our final group is the biggie—the large touring groups, usually numbering well above twenty, and up to as many as three to four hundred motorcycles. Unfortunately, to the general public, this large gathering



DON GILES

Turn 7 at Riverside Raceway normally isn't too slippery but occasionally there is a problem with a loose connection between the seat and the handlebars. Our intrepid tester is checking for obstacles while sliding down the track backwards at over 50 mph. This graphically demonstrates the need for good rider protection.

A more reasonable motorcycle for the beginning amateur racer is Honda's MT125R, based on their highly successful CR125 motocross machine. Initial cost is rather high at this writing but expected to drop as more are built. Advantages are low running costs, light weight and moderate (115 mph) top speed.



CAROL CHEVALIER

