



# Control Yourself

BY STEVE LITA

If you're reading this Riding Skills section of *RoadBike* each month (and I certainly hope you are), you may have similar answers to the ones Lee Parks heard when he opened up the first classroom session of a recent Total Control Class by asking the students, "Why are you here?" One student replied he wanted to get more comfortable on the street. There were three return riders, some with track day aspirations. One participant flat out admitted, "I have a problem turning." And some were just "looking to do longer rides," gain "more confidence," and "feel more in control." Yes, the class was comprised of a varied collection of riders (one student was a 30-year rider, another was a relative newbie from New York City who started in '05; also in attendance was a young rider who owns a sportbike), all possessing a desire to strengthen the street side of their riding.

Parks' Total Control Advanced Riding Clinic is taught at a variety of locations on both the East and West coasts. The particular class I sat in on was held at Cliff's Cycle Revolution dealership in Brookfield, Connecticut. But you can surely find one not far from where you live on Lee's web site, [www.TotalControlTraining.net](http://www.TotalControlTraining.net). Lee has franchised his classes to various rider training organizations around the country, and spends much of his time traveling and teaching classes in person. Although you can rest assured that all of his hired gun instructors are well versed in the ways of Total Control, including frequent

*RoadBike* contributor Tracy Martin.

### Six Ways To Corner

The clinic kicked off with a classroom session during which Lee talked about the main concentration points that are covered:

**Class 1 - Traction Control**

**Class 2 - Mental State**

**Class 3 - Throttle Control**

**Class 4 - Visual Activity**

**Class 5 - Line Selection**

**Class 6 - Body Position**

I'll only give a general overview of these primary topics in this two-page story, because I would never fully be able to go as in depth as Lee could in an actual class. Suffice it to



say that, to get the whole effect of what is taught at a Lee Parks Total Control Clinic, one needs to attend and participate.

### Traction Management

Starting with the most basic topic — what connects the rider to the road — Lee talks about traction. First thing on the range, the tire pressures on all student bikes are addressed. Taking pressure out of a tire = more traction. Putting more pressure in = more integrity.

A tire's age has a direct link to its available traction. Find the DOT number on the sidewall and you'll be able to read the age in a four-digit formula. The first two digits are the week and second two are the year the tire was produced. Generally speaking, a sportbike or sport-touring tire is good for two years, and a tourer or cruiser tire, four years. Tire temperature affects traction, too, so you should always give your tires a few minutes to get up to temp.

### Think About It

A motorcycle's throttle controls suspension. There is a sweet spot, and you should use the throttle to keep the suspension in that sweet spot. Be "on the gas" as early as possible when riding through a corner, and start being aware of where you get on the throttle through a corner.

Lee teaches trail braking techniques for use on the street. This minimizes the amount and speed of suspension movement. It also modifies the bike's attitude for faster and easier steering, and it reduces reaction time for the brakes and throttle. First, slowly roll off the throttle, transition to the



## STUDENT IMPRESSIONS

It was a rare opportunity for me to do some advanced rider training taught by an industry pro so close to my home, so I immediately signed up. Lee Parks' book *Total Control* had been my recent nighttime read, but I know there's nothing better than hands-on training to burn new techniques into your personal muscle memory.

Lee had a well-practiced and methodical combination of classroom discussion and visual imagery, followed by on-range exercises to keep us interested, alert, and in tune. There were seven of us in the class, covering the entire spectrum of riders: men and women; experience ranging from six months to 25 years; on both small, light bikes and heavy touring machines. The remarkable thing is that we all could see genuine improvement in each other at the end of the day, despite the range of riding abilities.

First, we practiced finesse with throttle control to warm up, and then Lee taught us the elusive art of trail-braking. Next, Lee individually went through his 10 steps to cornering with us on each of our own motorcycles, practicing over and over to get the feel of it with others balancing us. We had a discussion about line selection, and then we got to practice tight corners with his technique at speed.

Woven into Lee's one-day workshop were also discussions about fear, proper attitude, and concentration. We also learned about suspension, which is so important to handling a motorcycle. Lee made the mechanics of suspension easy to understand and took the time to have each of us feel what was too soft, too hard, and just right. We learned about spring force, damping force, and frictional force, and a couple lucky participants had their suspension custom-adjusted. (Thanks, Lee!)

I have to say I was super impressed with Lee's stamina and dedication to making sure we all came away with what we wanted to learn. Lee stayed with us well after class should have ended, answering questions and signing books. As we were leaving, when asked about the low-speed, U-turn chapter in his book, he grabbed his gear, went back down to the range, and demonstrated his technique. And that is why Lee Parks is in total control. —Alisa Clickenger



brakes, be on both the throttle and brakes, let the brakes off as you turn the bike in, then continue to let the brakes off as you apply the throttle. Students practiced this for awhile on the range with Lee. There I overheard one of the best motivational comments I've ever heard, when he told a student, "You're allowed to make as many mistakes as you can, but you're not allowed to get down on yourself."

### Going Mental

Back in the classroom, Lee led the class into discussion of the mental state of riding. There's so much great information here that I plan to cover it in depth in a future installment of *RoadBike Riding Skills*, but shown here are some pearls of wisdom presented during this important classroom session.

The paramount goal is overcoming fear. Everyone has had something happen that freaked him out, and it instills a fear of injury, wreck, or embarrassment. But one fear underlies all those other fears: the fundamental fear "I can't handle it." Lee teaches students to take fear out of the subconscious and put it into language. Admit and accept the risk, and then manage that risk by wearing gear and taking classes. We get scared when we think that what is happening should not be happening, so stay focused on what you're supposed to be doing. Plan your ride and ride your plan.

The power of faith is quite strong. Trust your abilities. No matter if you think you can or think you can't, you're right. But in times of trouble, go with what you know. So know this: what you resist, persists. This class is designed to teach riders to get comfortable getting leaned over really far.

### Body Positioning

The rider's head, shoulders, and hips give directional stability. Vision is the most fundamental skill on a motorcycle; you go



where you look, plain and simple. A predator's vision is straight ahead; however, riders should learn how to see like the prey. Everyone possesses spotlight vision and floodlight vision. Spotlight vision is basically target fixation, but prey uses floodlight vision. Look through a turn before you enter it and keep your head on a swivel.

Lee keeps the pace active and everyone stays involved. Even as an observer, I was actively involved. Lee's taught many of these classes, and he has his delivery down pat. After you've successfully completed the ARC, you can step up to a Total Control Level 2 class. And you could never go wrong reading Lee's book, *Total Control: High Performance Street Riding Techniques*. His sense of humor always shows through, whether you're in a classroom with him or reading his wonderful book. I say you could call Lee a control freak. But I mean that in a good way.

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## THE 10 STEPS TO PROPER CORNERING

AS PRESENTED BY LEE PARKS

- 1 REPOSITION THE INSIDE FOOT
- 2 REPOSITION THE BODY
- 3 PUSH ON THE OUTSIDE GRIP
- 4 LOCATE THE TURN POINT
- 5 LOCATE THE EXIT POINT THROUGH THE TURN AND CONNECT THE DOTS
- 6 RELAX THE OUTSIDE GRIP
- 7 PUSH ON THE INSIDE GRIP, FLOP INTO THE TURN ONCE, DO ALL THE STEERING WITH YOUR INSIDE ARM
- 8 ROLL ON THE THROTTLE GENTLY AND EARLY
- 9 PUSH ON THE OUTSIDE GRIP
- 10 MOVE BACK TO NEUTRAL