

THE EYES OF A RIDER

By John Lloyd #236695

It's been a while, but I can still remember as a child my Mum (yes, I'm British) telling me to watch where I was going. Though it may seem obvious, the same applies to motorcyclists, though even more so than one might imagine. The number one advice given to new riders is to "look where you want the bike to go." However, I don't believe the importance of this statement is stressed enough or understood fully by even moderately experienced motorcyclists.

Have you ever experienced your motorcycle not tracking perfectly? That is, though you may be generally following the left or right track in a given lane, you find that your bike continuously deviates a few inches either side of your desired path? If so, then you may not be looking far enough down the road, but instead are focusing too close to the front tire. I find that focusing about five seconds ahead on a straight road, or three seconds ahead when taking a curve, creates the smoothest path. Give it a try. You might be amazed at the improvement in your ride!

The flip side is focusing on roadway hazards. Tragically, this is often a rookie mistake that can result in disastrous consequences. For example, when a rider is faced with a situation that introduces anxiety, they identify and fixate on a potential hazard and by doing so the bike tracks perfectly, right toward said hazard.

Within the scope of my work in motorcycle accident reconstruction, I have investigated several severe collisions where a solo crash was the result of an inexperienced rider's fixation on a roadside hazard, such as a tree or traffic sign. All riders, including myself, have found themselves in similar situations. Training and experience allow riders to overcome their instinct to focus on the hazard, instead re-directing one's eyes away from the problem and toward the solution.

I remember one incidence in particular where I was following an unfamiliar two-lane road down from the Blue Ridge Parkway into a valley. The weather was beautiful, traffic was light, and I

was having a great ride. As the bike descended and sped up, I realized I was entering a curve with far too much speed. Initially, I panicked and looked to the tree-lined edge of the road. But instead of fixating, I remembered my training. Turning my head and eyes to look through the turn, the bike gracefully and obediently followed, though sparks were definitely flying! Fortunately, my misconception did not lead to disaster. I certainly learned from this near-miss as I do from all of my motorcycling experiences in my pursuit of continuous improvement.

The eyes of a rider are perhaps your most important motorcycling asset. Understanding the importance of head and eye movement and looking far enough ahead to produce a smooth and enjoyable ride while at the same time being observant but not fixating on potential hazards are all key to a safe and successful motorcycling journey.



John Lloyd is a PhD researcher, whose career focused on the biomechanics of traumatic brain injuries for veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Now retired, he

consults on helmet technology and motorcycle accident reconstruction. John is also an avid motorcyclist with 40 years of riding experience and a proud member of the BMW MOA. Please feel free to reach out with questions or comments at DrJohnLloyd@Tampabay.RR.com

BMW OWNERS NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE BMW MOTORCYCLE OWNERS OF AMERICA



NOVEMBER 2024
www.bmwmoa.org