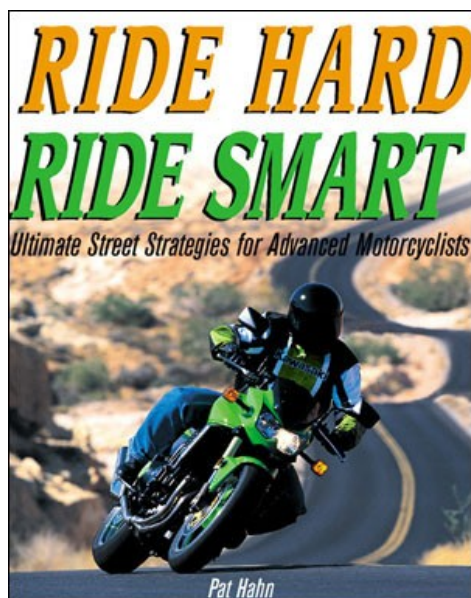


Book Review

Ride Hard Ride Smart – by Pat Hahn



What another advanced riding book I hear you protest and one from the USA too!

Well yes, but bear with me as I thought the same when I read the review on Amazon.

I didn't just stumble upon this book it was recommended to me by an independent advanced riding trainer during a discussion about advanced training effectiveness. (I'm working on another article which I'll post soon - honest). This trainers' personal review of the book was at odds with what I seen so I questioned him further and he pointed me to another review on another site. I have to say that it turned out the review was his, but after our chat he copied his review to Amazon to give balance.

The trainer was keen to make clear Pat's book is not a replacement for Motorcycle Roadcraft, other reviewers seemed to see it as a challenge to their 'bible' of advanced riding. This book doesn't set out to replace Motorcycle Roadcraft it is more about the thinking behind. In other words the bits it doesn't explicitly tell you, the why and the how. This struck a chord with me as I've always been of the view that to better understand something you need to view it from several perspectives, more of a 'broad church' view. (Sorry for the religious metaphors Jacquiey, but I seemed to recall you used several yourself when we first spoke about to you about joining IAM).

To allay any fears this book targets only the USA market the reverse carries recommended pricing for the UK, £13.99, as well as USA and Canada. Not that you'll expect to pay recommended prices these days. Looking inside the book I also spotted a picture of a helmet bearing a BSI sticker too.

Pat is clearly is an ideal author for this title, he is both an instructor for the US Motorcycle Safety Foundation and also an information officer for Minneapolis Department of Public Safety. Clearly safety is not just a hobby it's a job too. Or should that be a way of life to him?

Pats working title was to be 'Motorcycle Riding for the Risk Adverse Rider'; however the publisher (Motorbooks) suggested the title it now bears as they didn't think it would sell a single copy. By Pats admission the final book doesn't contain a great deal of hard riding, but there's a bag full of smart riding here. The book is divided into 13 chapters covering the basics of Pat's 'system' and how he derived it. In essence much of what he advises is risk driven, hence the original title.

The foundation for this risk assessment is the Hurt report of the late 1970's. The bonus here is Pat has been able to summary the 400+ page document and also update it to the then (2004) current situation through a number of updates, all be it for Minnesota. Remember Pats day job is public safety. This alone makes some interesting reading, but don't forget we are talking about a foreign land so we can't draw too many conclusions from this alone.

The first measure Pat discusses is what he calls the three degrees of separation: defensive riding strategy, training/skill and riding gear. Any one of these by themselves might reduce your risk, but combined they offer a much lowered risk. The aim is to objectively assess and reduce risk. This is something we all do all the time we're riding well, but it becomes so automatic we don't stop to think about what we are doing. So it's good to have it bought into focus so we can better understand what we do and more importantly re-evaluate what we should be doing.

Pat clearly does his research and has read several other riding strategies from around the world. Clearly he likes the Motorcycle Roadcraft approach to riding as he holds up the IPSPA strategy up as a fine example of simplicity.

Moving on through the use of statistics Pat is able to show the biggest risks we face; not just who poses the biggest risk, ourselves, but also how risks change with situation. Recognising these changes is the key. I note other publications refer to this super sense as 'situational awareness' but Pat stops short of this. From this basic understanding Pat lays out ways to lower the risks and adds in a few techniques. Although it's fair comment there aren't that many riding techniques you haven't heard before.

For me there were several statements that made me stop and think. This to me is the measure of greatness of any book. After all if you better remember these facts you are more likely to apply them in the future. The statements included considering not just your own attitude to riding but that of other road users; stereotyping other road users and their common mistakes. Strange how I'd almost forgotten how the majority of road users don't share my passion for improving their driving/riding skills. I also like the idea of taking responsibility for other road users, being a guardian for everyone else's safety. I guess this is covered in Motorcycle Roadcraft but it's never laid out in such detail. Another interesting concept is spreading the idea of motorcycling, making friends with non-riders and making them more aware of our needs. With the decline of new riders this is more relevant than we might think. Finally to round things off there are some interesting ideas about group riding, some we use and some we might consider.

On the downside a few Americanisms had me searching the web. Words like podunks, boondocks and even a P.O.S beater car. It's clear British riders have a different level of personal choice of riding gear, not just helmets; there are several pictures of riders in beachwear. Clearly Pat has a lot more education to pass on regarding protective equipment, but that doesn't overtake the rest of the book. I feel he could have gone on longer as the last chapter felt rushed by packing so much in. Maybe there will be more but his subsequent books look to be focused at a more basic level of skill.

So what's next? Well I think I'll follow the advice the Advanced Trainer who put me onto this book and look out a copy of Total Control by Lee Parks. Yes another American book! Then there's the SurvivalSkills CD-ROMs, just have to keep an eye open for upcoming offers though.

Safe riding and happy reading.

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References

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