

ADVENTURE SKILLS

STANDING

With John Nick

Rally-Raid racers are the athletes of Adventure Riding. Where we might cruise a few hours on rough roads or tracks, Riders in the Paris to Dakar race might pull fourteen-hour stretches, off road, for days at a time. It may seem wrong if you come from a road riding background, but most of this riding is done standing on the foot pegs.

There are several good reasons for this. Properly done, standing is not tiring, just the opposite, it can be less so. However there are also several other vital advantages. You can see further ahead and react to ruts and holes sooner. You can move your body weight more quickly and over a greater range to control and help steer the bike. Your legs can absorb bumps much better than your spine. Because your body input goes mainly through the foot pegs, you can actually lower the bike's centre of gravity and thus improve stability. Racing or not, when riding your Adventure bike off road you will have far more control standing on the pegs. For riders bred on the road this is a whole new approach and might take some getting used to. It will also require that you re-set your controls to suit – but we will cover that in detail next issue. There are actually two standing positions, the standing attack position, used for the dynamic situations like bad potholes, ruts, downhills and climbs, and the standing trail, a more relaxed cruising mode for smooth terrain.

STANDING ATTACK

The standing attack position has us crouched forward from the waist, lowering the shoulders, knees slightly bent, butt thrust out. Elbows are somewhat bent and lifted up and out, forming a straight line between shoulder, elbow and wrist, when viewed from the side. Clutch and brake levers should be angled to extend this same line. Your arms are braced, your head is forward, body centered on the foot pegs. By gripping the frame and fuel tank with your boots and knees, you can relax your arms. Almost all of your weight will still be on your legs - don't worry, they are the biggest and strongest, muscle group in your body. Your knees being bent means your legs can act like giant extra suspension units, doubling your control over rough ground.

STANDING TRAIL

In the subtly different standing trail position, the rider straightens somewhat at the knees and the waist, standing tall and now leaning forward over the bars, your elbows are still bent and held up, while boots and knees still grip the frame and fuel tank. To be successful your head must be well forward, over the bars, or for tall riders even further. Keep your elbows up and experiment with the bend in your elbows to find your natural balance point, so as to keep your arms as relaxed as possible. As your speed increases you can actually relax your arms and balance against the wind pressure on your chest. In this position you will be relaxed, yet with the best view of the track ahead, able to instantly change your standing stance to the attack position for braking, corners, or when something nasty in the way of terrain turns inevitably turns up. Applied properly this position can be comfortably maintained for hours at the moderate pace we wish to maintain on long Adventure rides.