

ASK THE RIDING COACH

With Rapid Training Coach Ryan Decarteret

'I got knocked off. How do I build confidence to return to riding?'

Q I WAS INVOLVED in a crash that wasn't my fault and I'd like some advice on how I can make a confident return to biking. The situation was that, as I drew alongside a car I was overtaking, it suddenly pulled out to overtake the car in front and knocked me off. The driver didn't stop and left the scene (the police caught him later and are prosecuting). I'm wondering if I should step down in size and power from my BMW R1250GS Adventure?

Andy Colgan

A From your full description [the above is edited for brevity - Ed] it sounds like you ticked all the boxes in terms of reading the road and planning, and that the driver just didn't look. The fact that he fled the scene just

adds to the distress - here's hoping the police throw the book at him.

In terms of making a confident return, you've already taken a great step by acknowledging that the accident will have an impact on your riding, especially in a similar scenario. I had a head-on collision with a van 15 years ago when it dived across a dual carriageway from a central turning bay; and when I ride into a similar road layout even now, I have to dig deep to keep a steady throttle even though I can see for miles in every direction.

So, the first thing to do is accept that you may be overly cautious when overtaking. There's no shame in that. Just make sure you leave plenty of clearance between you and the car - move right to the other side if it's safe - and pause for a final check before hitting the afterburners. That pause is crucial to double-check all is well.

The next thing is to ride alone. For the first few weeks, it's important you ride at your own pace and don't have anyone else to think about. That way, if you don't feel like overtaking, there's no pressure and you can hang back until you feel ready. Even the most-patient riding mates probably wouldn't put up with that for long.

Think about your kit too. Most people find they're more confident if they're wearing top-quality gear. If that resonates with you, is there anything

you could upgrade?

Maybe an airbag jacket or new helmet? Again, there's no shame in doing this - top racers do exactly the same thing.

As for swapping your BMW, it doesn't sound like bike weight or power influenced your crash, so it's not something I'd recommend. If you feel confident on the bike and you enjoy riding it, keep it. Above 5mph, most crashes are down to the actions of the rider, not the bike they're on.

Which brings me to... training. Any tuition will probably help but, from your description of the incident, I think it will be a mental game for you rather than a case of dramatically improving your skills. That means you need an experienced, well-trained coach who will work with you to achieve your goals, listen carefully to your concerns and not just rattle through a syllabus.

I suspect that talking through how you feel at each stage of overtaking manoeuvres will be considerably more helpful to you than receiving a lecture about your positioning. Open and honest conversations between rider and coach are always important but, in your particular case, I think they will be crucial. Good luck, and please do contact Rapid if you want to be put in touch with an excellent coach. **R**



Having spent seven years as a surveillance rider with the National Crime Agency, Ryan Decarteret is one of Britain's most skilled, safest and most qualified road riders



Build confidence gradually - and alone - after an accident


RAPID
PRO COACH TEAM

The Rapid team includes TT racers, a BSB squad, and police and surveillance riders. They are the most highly qualified professionals in the business and their unique, no-nonsense courses are designed to help riders be the best they can be. **More info at rapidtraining.co.uk**