

# ASK THE RIDING COACH

With Rapid Training Coach Ryan Decarteret

## 'Can you help with my wet-weather riding anxiety?'

**Q** I'VE NEVER LIKED riding in the rain, but recently I've started to get really anxious about it and can't seem to sort myself out.

It's taken the edge off my motorcycling because I don't go out if it's raining and spend the whole time fretting if it starts. Short of going to the Sahara, is there anything I can do?

Please don't print my name, I'd rather my riding mates didn't know. Thanks.

**A** THE FIRST THING to say is there's no shame in feeling anxious - almost all experienced riders have felt like that about one aspect of their riding at some time.

For me, it was after a big crash when I was younger - a van pulled across in

front of me. I was nervous of certain junctions for months afterwards. No shame in that.

I'll give you some tips in a minute, but given how nervous you sound, my first piece of advice is to get some training with a good coach who's set up with intercoms.

With nervous riders, I find it can be incredibly useful for them to have a voice in their ear telling them when they're riding well. That can be very powerful because they've often lost all their confidence.

Obviously, I can point out errors, but nervousness is usually a mindset rather than a skill deficit, so the main job is to boost confidence - and one way of doing that is through positive reinforcement.

Clearly I don't know how you're riding, but I'm guessing you're doing a lot of things right and it might help to have someone experienced point that out to you.

The next thing is to contemplate the hard facts about riding in the wet. For most tarmac, rain reduces grip by about 30%. This sounds a lot, but because we're not using 100% in the first place we don't actually have to back off that much in the wet. Rainwater is not ice.

This means most of us can safely ride at almost the same speed in the wet as we do in the dry, provided our tyres are good. I've got the latest



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

Michelin Road 6s fitted on my BMW S1000XR and the wet grip they give is astonishing - unless there are massive puddles, I ride within 90% of my dry pace and have never had a moment. If you've got old or very sporty tyres (these don't work as well in the wet) I'd invest in some new sports-touring rubber.

Then, think about your kit. To ride smoothly, you need to plan as far ahead as possible - and you won't be doing that if you're peering through a misty, scratched visor.

Lots of people buy a new visor and Pinlock insert for summer, but that's the wrong way round - you need a new one for winter when visibility is often more difficult. And take a visor cleaning spray out with you on every ride.

Plus, do the obvious stuff: buy decent waterproof gear, ride on your own so you're not under pressure and don't try to ride fast - slow down and concentrate on smoothness instead. Plenty of experienced riders relish riding in the wet because their enjoyment comes from effortless, silky corner speed rather than thrashing.

Go easy on yourself, take small steps and it won't be long before you'll be enjoying wet riding. Good luck. **R**

Grip - and hence, safety - on decent tyres in the wet is surprisingly close to dry



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