

ASK THE RIDING COACH

With Rapid Training Coach Ryan Decarteret

'I want to lean over more. What do I do?'

Q I'VE BEEN RIDING for three years and this summer, I set myself a mission to get the bike leant over more in corners. I was hoping I might even get my knee down. I did improve a bit but a lot of rides were stressful and I didn't really enjoy them. What am I doing wrong and can I get better at leaning the bike over?

Kyle Albright, email

A THE GOOD NEWS is that you can get better at leaning the bike over. The bad news is that you're going about it the wrong way. Lean angle is the product of good

cornering, not an ambition in itself and if you corner well, you'll lean the bike over without thinking. But if you go out with the ambition of leaning the bike over, you'll probably make matters worse. So, difficult though it is, you need to forget about increasing lean angle.

Because you seem to be a target-orientated person – nothing wrong with that – it's worth mentioning that the same applies to speed. If you go out with your focus on riding fast, you'll have a scrappy, and possibly dangerous, ride. If you go out to try and ride well, you're far more likely to be quicker. Speed and lean angle are by-products of riding well, so that's what you need to concentrate on.

You also mention trying to get your knee down. To be honest I'd forget that completely. It's a bit of a party stunt on the road – it isn't really necessary and can be counter-productive. I see it on courses from time to time when I'm following a rider who starts building up to a knee-down attempt by clambering over the saddle. The bike usually looks unsettled and he generally ends up going through the corner slower than he would have done had he not bothered and just concentrated on his vision, road position and so on.

So what should you do? The key is to concentrate on the principles of cornering and don't measure your performance in any way. As soon as you stop measuring, you'll relax – which in itself can improve your technique – and be able to focus on your ride. Plus you'll

probably start enjoying yourself again.

I haven't got space to cover all cornering techniques here, but pay particular attention to your vision: are you reading the road as far ahead as possible? Does your vision drop as you approach a corner? Are you actively looking for the corner exit or pootling round aimlessly? Just keeping your eyes up and looking in the right place can make a huge improvement to your riding, speed and safety.

Then start thinking about riding on a line that maximises that vision, before focussing on your steering technique and throttle control. There's a lot to it, so don't beat yourself up – build gradually and be pleased with small steps. Winter is actually a good time to practice all this because speeds are generally lower so you've got more time to calmly focus on different techniques.

You'll soon find that corners will seem a little easier and your confidence will build as you get it right time after time. Before you know it, your lean angles will have increased without it ever being a conscious priority. And finally – and I know I would say this – the quickest way to learn these techniques is to get some good-quality coaching. Think of it as a shortcut to quicker, safer riding. **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



▲ Decent lean is a product of good cornering, not a target



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