

NEW COLUMN!

# ASK THE RIDING COACH

With Rapid Training Coach Ryan Decarteret

## ‘Should I really be trail braking on the road?’

**Q** SOME FRIENDS HAVE told me that trail braking is essential for quick road riding. I tried it but really didn't enjoy it – I was petrified of losing the front. Should I persevere?  
**Paul Simpson, Clitheroe**

**A** TRAIL BRAKING, WHERE you drag the brakes as you lean into a corner, is definitely not essential for quick road riding. You can ride very rapidly without ever trail braking. I totally accept that, done perfectly, it's the fastest way to get into a corner, which is why all good racers are experts at it. However, as road riders, a decent safety margin (and a fast exit) is more valuable to us than gaining 0.1sec on the way in.  
The key problem with trail braking on the road is that by combining braking

and cornering forces, your front tyre traction can easily be maxed-out when you might need some in reserve if something unpredictable happens or you cock up.

If you're braking into the apex and suddenly realise the corner keeps tightening, or there's a junction with a car in it, or a patch of gravel on the line, you can't do much about it. So trail braking should not be your main plan for getting round a corner. If your mates have to brake going into every bend to get round them, then I'd argue they're on the edge of either getting it badly wrong or, at best, looking extremely scruffy.

Another way of thinking about it is that it's much easier to deploy 200bhp (or whatever power you've got) going out of



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

a corner than it is to use a pair of massive Brembos on the way in. So if you want to ride faster, it's easier to concentrate on that. Slow in, fast out is bloody effective on the road and is generally a faster and safer way to ride, especially in the wet.

But that's not to say you shouldn't learn how to trail brake: what a skill to have in your toolbox! However, it is dangerous in the hands of a novice and part of the problem is that if you don't trail brake, you won't be any good at it and will never learn how and when it can be used safely.

That means you need to practise, which is why I encourage riders to go on as many trackdays as possible – you'll sharpen up your braking, remind yourself of what they're capable of and you can practice trail braking without spannering yourself if it goes wrong.

It's also worth remembering that if you go into a corner in the right gear on a closed throttle, you are getting a similar, but lower risk, effect to trail braking anyway because of engine braking. That's the sweetspot, where you're shifting weight forward and loading the front tyre on the way in to give that confidence-inspiring feel, but with plenty of front grip in hand if things turn awkward and you need to brake. **R**

▼ Trail-braking into a corner can be useful but can also mean no margin for error or for the unexpected



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 [www.rapidtraining.co.uk](http://www.rapidtraining.co.uk)**