

Synopsis

Anyone who says that they 'can ride a bike perfectly well' is lying. The degree by which they can't ride a bike is difficult to be determined by the casual observer.

Enter **PARAGON** *Rider Training*, from stage left.

I have ridden bikes (though not always legally) in the past and had some ideas about what to expect from a training course. What surprised me were the solid understanding, sheer professionalism and depth of experience to be tapped throughout the duration of the course.

The system of riding taught by **PARAGON** is astounding, minimising the risks not only to yourself, but to other road users. The difference between 'dominant' rather than 'aggressive' riding is clearly demonstrated, and shown to work. The safety level of the course gives confidence to the student in tough traffic situations, that I'd even be nervous of attempting as a car driver.

Contained herein is a day-to-day diary describing what happened to me while undergoing **PARAGON** indoctrination!

Day 1: Compulsory Basic Training

A day mainly spent on a school playground. The weather was sunny but blowing a gale. The three of us who were students sat on a bench and had our eyes opened throughout the day to some of the basic behaviour of a motorbike. How the front brake will cause the front wheel to disappear when going round a corner and how a complex braking-system is required to perform the perfect emergency stop.

It was during the emergency stop exercise that the ultimate insult on the course found itself aired within the arena. My second attempt at squaring the back wheel (by rubbing the tread off while sliding at speed) was met with 'Oh, you're such a CAR driver.' I was shocked and stunned, but the solution was particularly colourful. Foot position on the back brake meant that only my big toe should engage it, and to help with control I was to imagine a small furry, fluffy and above all cute little animal resting on the brake pedal underneath my big toe, and the execution of the stop should enable the survival of the fluffy animal. After a few near misses the furry little cute thing is alive and well and permanently attached to my new bikes brake pedal.

At the end of the day a compulsory two-hour ride-out was performed which enabled the students to put into practice what they had learnt in the day.

Day 2: DAS Conversion Day

Having spent CBT day on a 125, the instructors asked me if I would like to move up to a 500 a day early. It was obvious to them that I'd ridden before and looked like I would be confident on the bigger bike. They asked that I not make an instant decision, but that I try basic manoeuvres first and then decide. After a set-off, stop and turn-in-the-road exercise it was decided, with my input, that I could go straight to 500s.

An absolutely great day out ensued. Learning road position, observation, safe driving techniques and control.

At the end of this day I had clocked up two 'car drivers', but I deserved them and with the help of the instructors understood just what I had done wrong, and even better how to combat the errors in future.

Day 3: DAS Training Day

Another great day out on a motorbike. While training with **PARAGON** you are normally paired up with another student. It was explained that because my opposite number was first-up for the test (and further along in training than me) that I would best spend my time observing the instructor to get the 'flow' of the road. Up until this point you are performing all techniques by rote with little understanding of the timing of their application. This observation period enabled me to hone my riding style so that observations occurred at the right point on the road approaching hazards, and that I was ready to overcome the hazard when I arrived at it without endangering myself or other road-users.

Day 4: DAS Training Day

My opposite numbers test day.

We started with a ride-out to give the instructors a general feeling for how we performed in traffic. Once satisfied, we were taken into the side streets to perform the dreaded emergency stop, the nerve wracking U turn and the painful if you get it wrong pull-out from behind a parked vehicle. These were performed until both of the students got it right. Over lunch the pillion questions were discussed together with their logical answers. Deep down both the instructors and I were convinced that the test student was ready.

And true to form he was – and he passed.

While he was out on his test the instructor gave me a talk about where I was in my training and how far I had yet to go. He was convinced that I was nearly there and just needed 'buffing'. He also outlined what the training regime would be for the next two days prior to my test.

Day 5: DAS Training Day

This turned out to be a one-to-one session with my instructor and I. The minimum of upset would be caused, by keeping the student riders in their current groups instead of shuffling us about.

Another great day out, it blew a gale and rained so hard that it bounced three feet up. I learned a lot about myself in the wet as well as how the bike handled.

The instructors were able to describe how the bike's performance would change in the wet and how I should change my style accordingly.

Day 6: DAS Training Day

Another great day out on a bike. I spent the morning doing everything we needed to do to prove that I was test ready, and by lunchtime both I, and the instructor thought I was ready. We agreed that a ride-out would be beneficial to work on the area that I needed most help – i.e. riding at speed. We ended up back near the **PARAGON** shop doing final U turns and emergency stops to make sure I was truly ready.

Day 7: Test Day

Not much sleep the night before!

An early start allowed a leisurely ride up to the test centre (Portsmouth), complete with emergency stop and U-turn practice.

We arrived at the test centre ten minutes before I was due to go on. This time was spent describing the test procedure in detail so that there would be no surprises. A final snippet of information about where to turn indicators on when leaving the test centre was given before I was off in a whirlwind.

The test lasts between 35 and 45 minutes, as a rider it lasts about 5, I was warned but I didn't understand. Now I do.

I passed!

Conclusion

Do your bike training with a proper instructor. You can't go wrong with **PARAGON**. One of the most amazing weeks, so far, of my motoring life. The road makes sense now, which after fourteen years of driving a car comes as a somewhat scary surprise.

Book your course now, it's a complete learning to drive experience in the company of people who really know what's going on and how to make you perform the same.

By John Weaver - a satisfied student