



PRO RIDER

# BRAKING EFFECTIVELY

Words: **Paul Pavletich**

**Superman himself, Paul Pavletich, explains why braking correctly is so important and how we should all be doing it. Read this as it might just save your life...**

I'd like to talk to you about emergency braking. I am an instructor for Pro Rider, New Zealand's leading motorcycle training provider.

For the past 6 years every week, I take out students on the ACC Ride Forever courses. One of the topic's we discuss during the course, and practise is emergency braking. The different levels of braking skills I observe is huge. I vary the speed we practise the emergency braking, depending on what level course I am running, Bronze, Silver, Gold or trackday. I am personally delighted the government has introduced compulsory ABS for new motorcycles imported over 125cc from February 2020. The reason I am saying this is because while students are learning, particularly without ABS, I see countless riders do massive rear and front brake lock-ups, while they learn the finer art of using the most important bits of technology on their machines. Also returning riders are bringing a technique from days gone by were you needed to squeeze that lever as hard as you could to pull up on their single calliper, tiny brake rotor or worse drum braked heavy machines.

My background in Road Racing taught me what I consider to be a very good technique. The reason I had to learn to brake so hard over

my racing career is, if I was an All Black, I would be a forward not a half back like most top shelf road racers are. In the standard production racing classes. It was my opportunity to get back in front.

A great technique for an emergency stop is the following. To clarify I am not talking about setting up a corner from high speed, I am talking about; a car or other vehicle has pulled out in front of you and you need to stop fast to take some speed out of the situation and look for an escape route! I look ahead, keep my eyes up and apply my front brake in what many instructors call '2 stage' or 'progressive braking'. Stage one of the front brake application is taking up the slack in the lever and stage two is applying pressure. Immediately after I have applied the front brake which will be approximately 75% of my braking power, I then apply a little rear brake to assist the front. Its very easy to lock up the rear brake, so you need to be very careful with this application. Never panic and grab a hand full of front brake. I call this a "gun fighter grab!", particularly if you don't have ABS. This is super important on modern non-ABS bikes. A lot of them have incredibly powerful brakes running between 300/320mm disc rotors and twin/triple piston

callipers, that have the ability to lock a race tyre in the blink of an eye in dry conditions, let alone an adventure tyre or well worn hard old road tyre. I encourage riders to use two fingers particularly while they are learning to brake hard on the front. I have lost count how many times I have seen student turn the throttle on if they use all four fingers to pull the brake on. This issue can be magnified if the front brake lever is adjusted incorrectly or pointing too high. I'm not saying it's a bad technique using four fingers but its way harder to turn the throttle on if you only use two fingers on the lever. Don't stress and think "I may not have enough strength using only two fingers", you will be amazed at how much power and feel you have with just two. Bruce Lee could kill you with two fingers!

Now I want to talk about body position during hard braking. Look ahead, you may need to brake and escape, lock your knees into the petrol tank. This will lock you into the machine and stop you sliding to far up the seat. I lift my elbows up a bit to support my upper body. There is a lot of inertia on you particularly from high speed. Think about motocross riders. They ride with their elbows up, which gives them strength and importantly it gives them additional suspension to absorb the energy from

deceleration. Keep a bend in your elbows under hard braking. If you keep them locked straight the bike can start weaving as you slow down. Once you have managed your emergency stop, then you can sort your gear selection out. I suggest you come on one of these excellent courses and practise. If you can't make a Ride Forever course, find a carpark or a safe bit of road and practise. If you are struggling to put the front and rear brakes together, start with the front first and when you have this perfected, add the rear.

Often I am asked "why use your rear brake?", a lot of MotoGP guys don't because they have their leg dangling out. What they haven't learnt by asking this, is that a lot of them have fitted rear thumb brakes.

Give it a go, it may just save your life. ■■■



'There's two brakes?'



Practicing the technique



Two wheels up front adds confidence



Practice under Paul's expert guidance with Pro Rider's track-based training days