



Ride Like A Pro New Jersey instructor Sergeant Bill Hughes effortlessly demonstrates a slow-speed, 18' circle exercise on a heavy-weight cruiser. Using the course's techniques, the RLAP staff can teach anyone how to negotiate full-lock turns with precision.

JERRY "MOTORMAN" PALLADINO is a familiar sight at major Harley rallies, demonstrating his considerable skill at slow maneuvers by dragging the floorboards on his Electra Glide while cutting tight 18' circles and full-lock figure-8s. His instructional video, *Ride Like A Pro*, is already on its fifth edition, and he has now franchised the educational package to schools for experienced motorcyclists in Florida, Georgia, Texas, California, Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina and my home state of New Jersey. So this year, rather than take the MSF's Experienced RiderCourse (ERC) again, as is my annual norm to blow out the cobwebs, I signed up for Ride Like A Pro New Jersey (RLAPNJ).

RLAPNJ was founded by active motor officers Sergeant Bill Hughes and Lieutenant Allan Attanasio. Both Hughes and Attanasio have well over 25 years of riding experience, and are each certified by both the MSF and the State of New Jersey as motorcycle instructors and examiners. Their main motivator in starting RLAPNJ was to give Jersey riders a more challenging alternative to the MSF's ERC, using Palladino's proven methodology, and the result is, indeed, successful, educational and most worthwhile.

Much like ERC, students of RLAPNJ use their own registered and insured motorcycles, and are expected to arrive with a valid motorcycle license and wearing proper safety gear. Both riding courses also focus almost exclusively on slow-speed drills performed in a controlled parking lot setting, so comparison between the two is natural. The foundation of the Palladino method relies on three main skills: Mastery of the friction zone; keeping the head and eyes trained on where the rider wants to go; and adept use of the rear brake. This last technique is what truly separates RLAP from the ERC. The Palladino method has, in fact, been in use by police motor officers since the 1930s, and still serves as the bedrock for such training in many departments nationwide.

Our particular class had only six students, so there was plenty of individual attention and no waiting in long lines for others to finish exercises. True to the spirit of the course, most students arrived aboard larger machines, such as Gold Wings, Harley FLs and even one BMW GS Adventure, all eager to learn how to get their titanic beasts under control. Unlike the MSF's ERC, the entire RLAPNJ class takes place on the practice range.



RLAP founder Jerry "Motorman" Palladino teaches a student the proper line by having her chase him through a cone section.



Learning how to use the rear brake when making tight turns on heavyweight bikes is essential. Check out that lean angle!



Palladino addresses two students at RLAP in Florida. RLAP's courses are designed to be well-organized, and they use a proven methodology to teach better motorcycle control.

Instruction and demonstration is focused strictly on riding technique, followed by plentiful practice of these drills:

- The slow race
- 12' slow cone weave
- Off-set cone weave
- 24' circle
- 24' figure eight
- 24' U-turn exercise
- Iron cross intersection

Indeed, we logged upwards of 10 miles during the five hours of class time—quite a distance, considering that all the exercises are performed in the first-gear friction zone at very low speed. As expected, the drills build on each other cumulatively, starting

from a slow race in a straight line and culminating in the “Iron Cross Intersection,” a sort of final exam requiring the rider to use all of the various tight-turning techniques learned during the class.

The secret of the complete control our instructors had over their motorcycles was what they termed “creating a tug of war” between the motorcycle’s driveline and the rear brake. Bringing the engine speed to a constant rpm—typically at least twice idle speed—the students had to finesse forward movement with the clutch in its friction zone while simultaneously applying the rear brake gently to manage speed. In this way, the engine’s consistent higher rpm helps to create a stabilizing gyroscopic effect, while dragging the rear brake squats the chassis. The end result is a taut, controlled feeling motorcycle, even at nearly maximum lean angle at crawling speeds. This is the polar opposite of the usual helpless, lurching feeling some riders experience in slow maneuvers, aided only by the inertia of initial approach. At the end of class, the students unanimously agreed—and clearly demonstrated—that we had all improved our parking lot skills dramatically as a result of what we had learned.

Overall, there is no denying that the techniques taught by Ride Like A Pro are effective and, once perfected, can be utilized by anyone. Indeed, Palladino’s DVD shows petite, slender women demonstrating the same mastery in handling full-size touring rigs as his larger male instructors. Compared to the MSF’s ERC, the instructors were just as professional and well prepared, the coursework just as organized, and most importantly, the exercises were more challenging. As such, RLAP is surely a worthy addition to a proficient motorcyclist’s continuing education. ■

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How To Ride Like A Pro At Home

ALTHOUGH NOT REQUIRED for participation in the course, potential students should definitely consider buying the Ride Like A Pro V DVD (MSRP \$29.95), which comprehensively demonstrates all of the class techniques. The two-hour DVD is well shot and very detail-oriented, with multiple camera angles (including hand controls) and high-quality sound. True to form, Palladino shows students of all shapes and sizes handling Harley Elec-

tra Glides as though they were mopeds—including picking them up from a fallen position. Some of the most useful shots are actually of students making typical mistakes during each exercise, which helps the viewer understand what *not* to do in addition to where to focus. A useful, full-color foldout illustrating setup and tips for each exercise is included. Like any great rider, Palladino makes it look easy, but the skills demonstrated by him and his staff are clearly the result of intense effort over long periods of time. With this DVD, easily one of the best produced instructional videos out there, you too can learn the tools to master the maneuvers shown, but only with steady and focused practice!

Parking Lot Pals (MSRP \$30 per 40 pack) are plastic safety cones measuring about 2" high and 8" wide, stackable and easily collapsible due to the soft material they're constructed from. One can use the Pals to set up any of the exercises shown in the DVD or RLEP course to practice further in a safe and approved location. Because the Pals are relatively low and soft, they are safer than conventional

safety cones, and their bright colors are easy to see peripherally. Those on a budget might consider old tennis balls cut in half, which also work well.

