



Although the sensation might be second nature to many riders who began their riding in the dirt, tires slipping at both ends can feel pretty weird to a street rider, especially aboard a 500-lb. machine.

same stuff every good street rider knows, but the feel of it on the dirt, even at a walking pace, is a fresh challenge. Jim has a series of steep-sided, 4-foot-high dirt mounds that riders must negotiate—both riding straight through them and also riding and then stopping at the crest of each one. The riders who had no trouble, kept their eye-line high and forward, their weight center-balanced on the pegs, and their hands soft on the grips. There were a couple of riders who had trouble translating Jim's clear instructions into action, with the result you'd expect. I found that with tire pressure dropped to around 20 psi, the fat-tired Buell is quite easy to balance at the verge of a stall, and the light clutch action means you can easily modulate power to the rear wheel and ride the thing like a giant trials bike.

The next challenge we faced, Jim feels, is the one most important to master before heading off-campus: Off-camber turns up and down a slope. As Jim says, nature's trails are made by animals or erosion, not highway engineers, so you have to be able to turn the bike even when it's tough to do so. He has a steep hill leading up through a grove of large trees, and he's designed a path of about eight switch-backs using those trees as giant pylons. There are a few yards of upward traversing, then a decreasing radius turn, half of which is uphill, the other half downhill. At first, it feels like you're trying to perform a circus act, and it points out clearly where your weaknesses are. Some are better at lefts, others at rights—one rider dropped his Buell in the same exact spot at least 5 times, while others found the same section easy. We spent well over an hour there, and by the time we were done, Jim had pretty much everyone making it through without removing feet from pegs.

Day two had us starting on a long street ride to reach a series of graded dirt roads and the opportunity to test our skills on some trails as well. The Buell's long travel suspension soaked up the bumps, the narrow and torquey V-twin seemed especially well-suited to this sort of thing, and its specialized Dunlop tires offered reasonable grip and good feel. We did notice a very clear difference in feel between bikes that had different levels of tire wear. With fresh tires, there was good grip and front end tracking, thanks to sharp-edged tread blocks and deep sipes to channel sand. However, on a model with about 50% worn tread, we kept breaking the rear end loose, even with moderate throttle inputs. The flip side of this is that once you get used to letting that back tire slide a bit, it's tremendously fun to pretend you're Chris Carr on wide, flat sandy dirt roads like these and hang that back end out with a twist of your wrist.

I joined a smaller group of more confident riders for a short ride



At the end of the school, we all came away impressed by the Ulysses' ability as a dual-purpose bike. The smooth throttle behavior, easily modulated clutch, sensitive brakes and plush suspension all aided control.

on some rutted, narrow trails. While it was exciting and challenging, it never felt dangerous, and in fact, I tried some slopes and angles I never thought I could negotiate on a dirt bike, let alone a Buell. The capability of the Ulysses truly allowed me to extend my off-road envelope as a rider, and that's a good thing.

Most of us felt the same way about the Ulysses: Surprised. Dedicated Beemerphile Jim Hyde was at first concerned that the 17" front tire and steep steering head angle would conspire to render the bike incapable of carrying him through areas where his sturdy GS shines. At the lunch stop, we watched Jim take off and rail through some very steep single track, with all the rain-runoff ruts, whoops, and off-camber challenges Mother Nature could throw at him. He came back, pulled in with a big smile on his face and said, "Wow, I'm impressed." In fact, so are we. If you want to improve your off-road riding skills, on about any sort of dual-sport, Jim's Rawhyde Adventures training would be a great place to start.

—Steve Natt



Rawhyde Adventures also organizes "safaris" so you can ride the wide-open spaces with friends, enjoying full support and fine accommodations.

CONTACT

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