



'It's similar to pilot training'

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A lofty goal, yes, but upon entering the former premises of Action Motorcycle School, the surroundings are striking: a showroom featuring the latest Kawasaki machines under lights, hardwood floors and -- I had to laugh -- a bathroom that was a far cry from the typical "Joe's Garage" standard.

A big effort has been made to make these surroundings appealing to everyone. But co-owners Dat Louie and Mark Kruger will be the first to tell you it's not just about looks.

"After 13 years of running a motorcycle school [as Action], I wanted to expand to a different level of training," said Louie. "I was approached by Mark Kruger, a six-time Supersport road-racing champion, and realized, 'Who better than Mark to join forces [with]?'"

"We combine Mark's expertise with my years of experience as a professional educator to bring training to the next level," said Louie, who holds an education degree from McGill University, has taught high school and has seen thousands of motorcycle students pass through his doors.

Pacific is striving to do something no one else is doing -- it is one of the first riding schools to offer an interpreter for the hearing-impaired.

"Everyone is the same here -- male, female, hearing-impaired. All are welcome," said Louie, who has learned to sign in the last year.

And that's just one way in which Pacific is setting itself apart.

"I find a lot of courses will teach you defensively, but what they don't teach you is how to bring a vehicle that's out of control back into control," said Louie.

"It's similar to pilot training. All pilot training is about is what to do when things go wrong -- engine failures, ice on the wings -- and that stuff has to be taught by professional pilots.

"We take the same approach with motorcycle training. To be the best you have to train with the best, and you have to mix it up. You've got to do some dirt training even if you ride a cruiser. The two are not mutually exclusive any more."

Pacific Riding School alumni have the opportunity to train at CLASS motorcycle schools with Hall of Famer and three-time AMA World Champion road racer Reg Pridmore (www.classrides.com), and with

Rich Oliver (seven-time U.S. champ) at the Mystery Dirt Track School near Fresno, Calif. (www.richoliver.net). Louie himself has studied under Pridmore for 12 years, and he, Kruger and other staff continue to train with both Pridmore and Oliver.

"Rich Oliver's school trains you on 100-c.c. bikes in the dirt. Pacific sponsors riders to go down there for one-on-one training with a seven-time U.S. champion. We help pay their way; it's something we can give back to our former students."

And it's working for them. After Louie teamed up with Kruger, the manufacturers began to realize the significance of what the two were trying to accomplish.

Kawasaki threw their support behind them as a major sponsor, supplying \$80,000 worth of bikes. Joe Rocket and Shoei helmets soon followed suit.

Pacific now supplies all the gear students need, including Joe Rocket jackets with spine protection.

"The product we use on the racetrack is the product we should be endorsing with our students," said Kruger.

If you are just getting into riding, Kruger and Louie advise you to take it very seriously.

"Street riding can be a much deadlier game than road racing. You're playing with your life out there, so you want the best training possible," said Louie.

And these guys at Pacific have trained with some of the best in the world.

For more information on Pacific Riding School go to the website www.pacificridingschool.com.

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