

Learning to stay on the asphalt

By **MARKO PRIMORAC**
Assistant News Editor



Marko enjoys the finer things in life

The need for speed is all consuming for me. To me, there is nothing like flying down the highway in my car, weaving through traffic, taunting the grim reaper. Believe me, my driving record shows this. Until my recent ticket, I have never obeyed the "speed limit," no matter what state or country I was driving in.

I now have to be obedient, like the rest of the sheep on the road, but there is hope even in such a bleak situation.

What hope is that, you might ask? Motorcycles. Yes, motorcycles.

I used to ride sporadically while visiting family in Europe, but it's been over 11 years since I actually shifted gears on a bike. I will never forget the rush of feeling the power of a bike, and the wind trying to pull you off and smear you on the pavement.

Well, o.k. my cousin rode the Cagiva Mito and I held onto his back, or I rode the Vespa moped. The Mito was an expensive bike, and I was a novice, so I don't blame the bastard. Besides, those streets in Europe are pretty narrow, even minimum speed is dangerous...

Since my memory is all but destroyed, I needed a refresher course. I called an old drinking friend of mine, and after a week of poor communication and phone tag, he made it to campus.

He rode in on a yellow, white, and black 1999 Suzuki GSXR 600.

He gave me a quick rundown on the parts and their place on the bike.

On the left side of the bike, is the clutch and

gearshift. The clutch is attached to the handlebar, and the gearshift is under the foot peg.

On the right side of the bike are the brakes and accelerator. The front brake is attached to the handlebar, and the rear brake is under the right foot peg. The accelerator is on the handlebar itself.

The turn signals are attached to the left handlebar, the key ignition is in the center, and the starter is on the bottom of the right handlebar.

I put on a helmet, hopped on the back, and took a little spin around the parking lot. After that, I was up to bat.

To start, put the key in the ignition, turn it, and then press the starter while giving it a little gas, holding the clutch in - the bike should be in neutral, which is halfway up. Put the bike in first-gear with the peg all the way down and slowly let go of the

brain was too distracted by the adrenaline and I mistook the clutch for the break. I was told to break at 80 percent front and 20 percent back, that's the average.

After saving face by getting back on the road and "gunning it" - not really, but it seemed like it to me, I took a few victory laps around the parking lot. The power of the machine and the freedom I felt driving around in circles was pretty wild. I didn't even have to speed to get my kicks.

I am definitely going to take the free motorcycle safety course that is offered at HACC the first chance I get, and save my pennies for a bike. Just one more reason to quit smoking and use that money for something useful.



Photos by Brett Miller

Marko masters shifting and avoiding grass. Showing is the side without the scratches and dents. He is driving a yellow and black 1999 Suzuki GSXR 600.

clutch while lightly giving it gas.

After stalling three times, I finally got rolling. To shift up, put your toes under the gearshift, press the clutch with your left hand, pull up with your toes, and ease off of the clutch while gently giving it gas. To shift down, do the opposite.

After shaming myself while turning around, my

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