

OMM BULLETIN MAR. 08

Year 9, Issue 81, New Series 4

1. A moment of reflection on the spheres of biking

By Paolo Volpara OMM 2008

Quite surprising the quality and quantity of the letters I received as a reaction to the last bulletin: the esoteric teaching of biking generated more comments and questions than any other subject covered in the Bulletin in the last nine years. Which is great. But not so good.

I was planning to move in this issue to the third sphere of biking: the response-ability, instead I am obliged to take a pause to explain the sphere concept and the interaction of the first two discussed in January and February issues (Abandonment and Presence).

I use the concept of sphere in the etymological sense: *from Latin sphaera, from Greek sphaira, literally, ball. (1): the apparent surface of the heavens of which half forms the dome of the visible sky.. (5) Natural, normal, or proper place. (6) An area or range over or within which someone or something acts, exists, or has influence or significance.*

Contemplating the constant modification and death of the reality that surround us, being able to abandon all possession including life creates a sphere, *an area within which one acts, exists, has influence and significance.*

This is the first sphere of the biker, the space where all he does assumes a new meaning. Am I preaching "risk taking"? Do I praise a "wish for death"?

This was not my intention: being ready to abandon does not mean wanting to abandon. Risk taking comes from another source, not from this sphere of biking. Risk taking, for the sake of risk taking, is the sport of those bikers (especially new born bikers) that search for a brief-two-hours-long remedy to the frustrations that they submit themselves to during the week. *"I ride to feel free, to get rid of stress"*: this is the vain risk-taking reserved to people who have little sympathy for biking.

Mark Barnes, in an article published by Motorcycle Consumer News (the most intelligent publication for bikers in the entire galaxy www.mcnews.com), compares risk taking in financial investment with risks taking while biking - *"Many of us want to beat the odds, which are unbeatable over time. The experience of "getting away with something" adds a sense of invincibility to the simpler joy of mastering the immediate situation. The higher the stakes, the greater the rush, the more satisfying the climactic release of tension, and the more indestructible the self-image. This last part is key. To whatever extent we have felt defeated, inadequate and powerless in our lives, we will be compelled to reverse those feelings with heroic accomplishments. Such compensatory achievements may exist only in fantasy, they may result from genuinely admirable endeavors, or they may take the form of tempting fate and proving our strength by surviving the ordeal. A sense of inner deadness can be momentarily replaced by a rush of vitality, provoked by danger. So, when I embark on a motorcycling adventure (or a day trade), it's important for me to wonder about my motives. Am I trying to offset some negative feeling with a burst of*

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excitement? What is it likely to cost me? Is it worth the risk? Or might I need to manage my emotional equilibrium some other way? And what about those times when I get in over my head and things turn against me? The chances of a happy ending have all but vanished, the dark clouds of loss, regret and self-reproach are gathering, and I'm about to end up with confirmations of my limitations and foolishness instead of that sense of invulnerability. Can I remember in that moment how I'm driven to make rash decisions in (unrealistic) hopes of rescuing my self-esteem, with the most likely outcome being even greater shame or worse? If I persist in a failing trade to prove I'm right and Wall Street is wrong, I will probably lose money. If I press on through severe weather during a ride in the mountains, or act on angry impulses in traffic, I could lose my life. If I make decisions while high on stress hormones that can make me overconfident, or at least hyper focused on some detail (the downside of that heightened alertness), my probability of losing increases dramatically. In order to change the outcome, we must first notice the process. Then it's up to us to deliberately back out of the thrill cycle and return to life as a mere mortal. Doing so can have a beneficial effect on our life-expectancy"

In order to change the outcome, we must first notice the process... how right. I am free and in this sphere of abandonment, among other think, I bike.

2. OMM suggestions for Riders visiting Turkey

It is time for ride planning with the spring already in full blossom and temperatures up along the Mediterranean coasts:

OMM has always ready to help riders in making the most out of the time spent on Turkish roads and, to answer to many request from would-be-visitors. We have updated our "list of suggestions" available on request. OMM offers suggestions for complete tour of Turkey in the web site. Check in the section [Ride with OMM](#) for more details. We are always happy to help you in designing your own tour. for futher information please mail to volpara@homemail.com

3. Position is everything: OMM diary

The calendar reads January but outside, in the rural environment of Trakya, the thermometer reads +13 and the air is balmy and crystal clear.

It is not a good winter companion but today is Ducati day and the glorious 916 meets the road off season: Italian twin's day on the Trakya (Thrace) roads between the Black and the Marmara Sea, drifting toward the Bulgarian border.

The roads, on this European portion of Turkey, are notoriously bad: with few exceptions (110 to Tekirdag and Ipsala border, 100 to Edirne via Corlu and motorway 03 to Edirne) one faces small and badly paved surfaces with

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long straights followed by crazy set of corners, erratic traffic, mud and debris moved in by tractors: the entire scenario is dotted by ugly villages, industrial constructions, unfinished residential projects and the spilling of urban refusal that Istanbul, the BIG BEAST, vomits on the surrounding areas. Not a pretty picture but with this weather, even Trakya can be beautiful.

The Italian twins do not care: road is and road must be faced. A briskly pace, picking not only cornering lines but, as important, surface lines... take that corner in style while double swerving around opening holes, worth of speleological exploration, and menacing cracks at the apex.

The intensity of the ride keeps brain (or what is left of it) working fast and then the real estate motto comes to life: "position... position... and position". Bikes are funnier and faster than houses, but position is equally important.

And I do not talk here about "position of the bike on the road": important but not what comes to mind when body is shaken and, at the same time, stirred. I am talking (and thinking) about position of the poor body itself.

In many years of riding and sharing riding experiences we discovered that nothing change style, technique and results as a correct and relaxed body position on the saddle.

Get it wrong (so easy) and the ride becomes risky and difficult, get it right and you can relax enjoying a better progression and sharper lines.

Ducati's are not as famous for comfort and spaciousness: the bike is small, suspensions hard and the position is "sporting", to say the best. In few words, an ideal situation for start thinking about body position.

The bikes talks: take a corner with stiff posture, rigid locked arms, flat feet on pegs... touch a small bump (if you can find a small one)... the front feel vague, the bike's head start shaking, the back tire wobbles and the entire process turn scaring.

Here you do not have too many choices but to listen: Tofas drivers take possession of the road, they cut big portions of your lane with nonchalance, happy fathers brake in front of you for no reason other than showing to kids "that red shining bike", joyous bus drivers slalom between potholes moving, without warning, between English and European lane discipline. You have to stay on your toes.

Positioning the balls of feet on the pegs is the key to keep mobility on the bike: this position of feet gives first of all great sensitivity on what the bike is doing. Furthermore it allows moving the entire body around rapidly and effortlessly. Big hole coming... impossible to avoid it... just press on feet/legs and raise your bum from the saddle leaving the bike free moving under you and absorbing most of the impact. The position is further improved by turning the feet toward the chassis: more leaning angle and better hold of the legs against the bike. The inconvenience of having to move the feet to reach gear and brake levers is amply overrun by

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the mobility and control advantages.

Balls of feet on pegs also mean better position of the knees locked against the tank. Legs hold the bike releasing pressure from arms. Knee pressure on the opposite side of the corner helps the control of leaning and steering contributing to a constant and clean line throughout the bend.

Old, but good, bikers used to say that if at the end of a ride your arms are more tired than your legs you still have a lot to learn. True, the entire mission is to keep the upper body, shoulders, arms and hands free of weight and tension, to attend the delicate work of steering, braking and throttle control.

Sitting on the saddle like one would sit on the favorite armchair is not as good as it sounds and this is true for all types of bikes, tourers, choppers, cruisers, sports, trellies.

Besides making your lower back sore after few kilometers, a flat or back hips position may damage the spine allowing all forces from the road to hit without buffer. Moving the hips forward toward the tank and arching the back to the handlebar call all middle muscles (back and abs) to work keeping the entire body stable on the center while braking or accelerating.

A lot of my friends, victims of Rossi-mania, spend time moving around the bike in the elegant attempt to lean and lean and lean till the knee kisses the ground. It is good on circuit but quite useless on road riding: focusing on shifting weight on the saddle takes the finesse out of riding and adds unnecessary work during the crucial moment of cornering. A disciplined and, at the same time, relaxed middle-body position (hips forward and spine arched) combined with a good knees-grip on the tanks is more than sufficient and efficient in keeping bike control throughout difficult surfaces and tight lines. Additionally you can move your head and shoulder toward the mirror on the inside-side of your corner.

Shoulder's position is the base for relaxed arms and good vision ahead. Tense, up-raised shoulders are always, when riding, a symptom of mental tension and physical discomfort. Shoulders should lean slightly forward continuing the arch of the spine and the tension must be taken out completely. Shoulders must drop down in a relaxed way taking tension from arms and allowing the head to rotate freely in order to scan the horizon.

With spine arched and shoulder dropped forward the head position must be raised to reach the extreme limit of the horizon. Not only look well ahead but, more specifically, look at the "absolute limit of view", the road's vanishing point.

A tightly comfortable helmet and the correct collar of the jacket must permit free movement of the head without any restriction of movements. The head is up, as the last portion of a bow, collecting information with deep and scanning vision.

The correct position of the head and shoulders is determined in major part

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by the position of the arms; this is the point to check and re-align with frequency during the ride.

The objective for the correct position of the arms is to reduce at the maximum the tension on the bars: to this goal arms should be relaxed, with elbows bent and inside. In this way arms operate as an additional pair of shock absorbers buffering the hits coming from the road (see potholes). Conversely tense and locked arms amplify any small movement coming from the road-tires-chassis making the ride erratic and jolting. Tense arms means as well tense grip on the controls: tight gripping hands loose the feeling and the smoothes of throttle control goes with the wind.

Bent elbows allow the lower part of the arm to be in line with the hands and levers facilitating the pushing (steering) of the bar.

A good setting of the levers (to be in straight line with lower arm and hand) not only provides better (easier) steering but also reduces fatigue and the risk of carpal syndrome. This is an easy job that can be performed in all bikes: exceptions are "show-off" handle-bars occasionally mounted on cruisers and choppers... no cure for them

Biking is a sporting activity and, as such, requires a good level of fitness: being able to assume and maintain a correct position is the important indicator of the level of fitness. It keeps biking as a joy without pain, permits concentration and vision determining factors of safe biking.

The next time the road hits you and shakes body and bike check your position: better, make an habit to check and relax position frequently during the ride: California Superbike School's instructor ask the riders to wave elbows, as dancing chickens, in the middle of the corners in order to visually show total relaxation on the saddle.

Play chicken often and all rides will turn safer and more pleasant.

Now, where was I? That's right ... Position...position...position and keep looking around. There's always something you've missed.

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5. OMM Events Ahead

05-Apr-2008	Ara-Control	Istanbul
25-26-27-28.04.2008	Istanbul-Fethiye-Istanbul Touring	Tour
19-20.Apr-2008	Ara Road National Ride	Ankara
26-Apr-2008	Roadcraft Ride	Istanbul
27-Apr-2008	Ara-Control	Bursa
03-May-2008	Ara-Control	Istanbul
17-18 May-2008	Ara-Road International Ride	Istanbul
20-May-2008	IAM	Istanbul
21-May-2008	IAM	Istanbul
22-May-2008	IAM	Istanbul
24-25 May 2008	Ara-Road International Ride	Izmir
31-May-2008	Roadcraft	Istanbul
14-15 Jun-2008	Ara-Road National Ride	Bursa
21-Jun-2008	Roadcraft Ride	Istanbul
03-06 Jul-2008	Emok-Festival	Bilecik
12-13 Jul-2008	Ara-Road (TT,TT)	Istanbul
09-Aug-2008	Ara-Control	Istanbul
16-23 Aug-2008	Black Sea - Touring	Tour
30-Aug-2008	Roadcraft Ride	Istanbul
13-14 Sep-2008	4 Corners of Marmara Touring	Tour
20-21 Sep-2008	Ara Road International Ride	Istanbul
23-Sep-2008	IAM	Istanbul
24-Sep-2008	IAM	Istanbul
25-Sep-2008	IAM	Istanbul
27-28 Sep-2008	Ara Road International Ride	Izmir
4-Oct-2008	Ara-Control	Istanbul
11-Oct-2008	Roadcraft Ride	Istanbul
18-19-20 Oct-2008	Ara-Road National Ride	Istanbul
15-Nov-2008	Roadcraft Ride	Istanbul

The OMM Calendar and list of activities is presented in www.ommriders.com and invitations are sent to the ARA Yahoo Group open to everybody who wants to sign up at **ARA Yahoo Groups**

OMM communities are riding in
Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Bursa and Trabzon.