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BOOTY POSITION AND THE HOKEY POKEY... OR COUNTERBALANCED TURNS MADE EASY WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

BY BILL DRAGOO

There's a lot of talk among the adventure riding community about weighting footpegs, keeping eyes forward and elbows up and more, but nobody talks about "booty" position. But in the end, that's really what it's all about. (And you thought it was the Hokey Pokey.)

One of the most difficult early riding skills to learn is how to properly use our body (or in large part, our booty) as a counterweight to accomplish tight, low-speed turns—especially in a low-traction environment. The yin and yang of the whole thing is that every action must have an equal and opposite reaction. If we lean a motorcycle without sufficient speed to invoke the gods of centrifugal force, something must give or we either dab or fall. Our greatest asset for accomplishing a counterbalance turn is—you guessed it—our booty. It's really our whole body but if we get the booty right, the rest will follow. When the bike leans in, our booty should lean out. Think of it as ballast, like the big counterweight hanging opposite the boom on a giant crane.

If it's that simple, why do some riders all but refuse to hoist their *derrieres* off center? In part, it is survival instinct. Early in life we learned to catch ourselves by moving our feet into a position that helps us regain balance. Sadly, this act of personal preservation when applied to riding a motorcycle pulls us to the inside of the turn, exacerbating the off-balance feeling by adding some of the bike's weight to the equation. When losing our balance, we naturally want to dab, or place a foot down to prevent a fall.

If properly positioned, however, we cannot easily reach the ground, ironically. We are committed to the turn. The good news is that when entering a turn properly balanced, and/or, counterbalanced, all forces generated by the motorcycle/rider combination are perpendicular to the ground. In contrast, increasing speed to keep the bike upright risks loss of traction and subsequent control. The street practice of leaning in pulls rider and bike off balance and, often, down.

Picture a motorcycle with the rider sitting inside a giant megaphone similar to the ones used by cheerleaders, wide part up. This enlarged version of that megaphone represents the cone of balance, within which we must remain in order to keep from toppling over. Whichever direction the bike leans, we should move our booty to the other side of the cone. Also, if accelerating or climbing a hill, the bike pitches up. We lean forward to the front part of the cone in order to equal and offset the angle and g-forces. If it pitches down, as if descending a steep pitch, or we are braking, our butt goes back, toward the rear of the cone.

Add to this monkey business turning our belly buttons to match the direction the headlight is pointing and keeping our chest parallel with the handlebars, and we're almost there. Just a slight, comfortable lift of the elbows and pressing the outside knee into the tank or seat and we're good to go. From there, we weight the footpegs according to the need to remain balanced and have a stable platform of bike and rider.

A picture is worth a thousand words, so it is helpful to have someone shoot video of us practicing turns. We should quickly be able to see where we are getting it right and where our booties stray from perfection.

Lean your motorcycle in, hang your booty out... that's what a counterbalanced turn is all about.

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