Ten Lessons Learned From Motorcycle Racing (and How They Apply to Flight Testing)

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6 time National vintage champion (AHRMA)
3 Bonneville speed records
USA team member for UK/USA Match Races
Well over 400 races

Flight Tester
Technical Director USNTPS
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Member SFTE Tech Committee
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Motorcycle Racing

- National Racing Series
  - Roadracing (Daytona, Sears Point, Mid-Ohio)
  - Dirt Oval (Ashland, Oglethorpe, Sacramento)
- Vintage Motorcycles (1930’s to 1970’s)
- Former Professional Racers
  - BMW Legends
  - Sponsored Riders (Barber Motorsports)
- International Riders
- High Level of Competition
Lesson #10

Be Ready to Fall Down

- Leathers
- Helmet
- Gloves
- Boots
- Back Protector

Be Ready to Eject/Egress

- Anti-Exposure Gear
- Parachute
- Location

If you are not already wearing it, it is too late to put it on.
Lesson 9

Some may have better hands but.... None should be better prepared

Track notes
Gearing
Chair Fly
Starter

Test plan, Flight Test Practice, Crew Rest, Chair Fly
Lesson 8

- Sometimes 2nd is the Best You Can Finish
- Trying Harder isn’t often successful
- Reset your priorities and beat the guy in third

If You Cannot Hit The Hard Test Point – Go For The Easier One or Knock-It-Off
Lesson 7

Smooth IS Fast

Easy Progression from test point to test point
Save the stick raps for open loop tasks
Lesson 6

- Pre-Flight Is Vital
- Motorcycles Need Gas to Run……..
- Aircraft even more so……. not only fuel
  - CG, Configuration, Weapons & Tires (?)
Lesson 5

Details Matter

- Little Broken Parts = DNF (just like big ones)

*STP* Turbine Car at Indianapolis

Tire valve stem at Daytona

H-6 lock washer at Patuxent River
Lesson 4

- Maintain Situational Awareness
- *(your competition is not always in your field of view)*
- Where’s the airfield?
“You will win a lot of races by finishing ahead of the rider in second place” Jeff Smith – World Champion Moto-Cross

Hit the Test Point – That’s enough & That’s Professional
Lesson 2

Weather Will Get You if You Are Not Aware

Rain
Wind
Cold
Changes in flight
Crosswinds and Precip or Ice
LESSON #1

It Is NOT Always Good When Everyone is Looking AT YOU……

It Is WORSE When They’re Pointing
Motorcycle Racing AND Test Flying are potentially dangerous and always challenging activities.

BOTH offer chances to excel and chances to suffer embarrassment, loss, and defeat.

LEARN from others’ experience and share lessons across communities.

Be a professional, be productive, be ready.
BONUS LESSON

Winning beats losing any day!

Be a Winner

Join SETP/SFTE