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If he'd been wearing a helmet, gloves, and a jacket, he might have gotten up, dusted himself off, and spent the next ten minutes yelling at Sherry. Then he would've spent the rest of the afternoon mourning the loss of his beautiful bike.


Any one of the three degrees of separation probably would've changed the outcome dramatically in Vince's favor. Had Vince been using all of them simultaneously, this accident likely never would have happened.

If you already use the three degrees, great. If you don't, it's time to start: If you don't have a riding strategy, create one. If you have never taken a safety course, take one. And if you don't wear protective gear, get some—the best you can afford.

But once you've done all that, is there nothing left? Do you just "stop learning" once you have the three degrees mastered? Of course not. Is it okay to be a "pretty good" rider instead of an expert? No way. Is there more to riding than just the three degrees? You bet. There's a lot more.

The three degrees cannot protect you from everything—but they can protect you 99 percent of the time. For ideas on how to protect yourself from the one percenters, try Ride Hard, Ride Smart—Ultimate Street Strategies for Advanced Motorcyclists, reviewed elsewhere on this Web site. In RH, RS, I use the three degrees of separation as a starting point to explore more advanced riding strategies: dealing with other drivers, choosing the safest route, vision and visibility, when not to ride, intersections, risk and hazard hierarchy, speed differential, shadowing, the soft lane change, understanding traffic flow, and group riding, among other concepts. As a bonus, there is an in-depth look at the Hurt Study, and what it means today.

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