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Wally, the author of this article was up in Chicago visiting relatives and got a copy of Free Riders Press. He lives in Shelby, NC and sent me a few of his writings. Let me know what you think. Even though he lives down south (where he can ride year round, I'm jealous) this is the kind of material I am looking for. Again, thanks Wally and enjoy!

Over a year and a half ago, I contacted Robbie at Carolina Harley and asked him what I have to do to become a Rider's Edge-certified Rider Coach. He explained the process – first I had to become an MSF (Motorcycle Safety Foundation) instructor then I could possibly become a Rider's Edge-certified Rider Coach.

I then contacted Dave, the regional director of the North Carolina Motorcycle Safety Program and he told me that in order to become an MSF instructor, I first had to take an MSF class. I had never had any formal training in how to ride a motorcycle even though I had been riding for over a quarter century.

I got on the MSF website (<http://www.msf-usa.org/>) and located an Experienced Rider class from Spartanburg College at the Greer, SC campus. I attended it one Saturday and learned a lot in the 4 hrs on the range riding my BMW – most of the classroom info was just a rehash of what I already knew. It was mostly common sense.

Next I attended an MSF screening in December in Asheboro, NC. I had trouble finding the college but when I got there, I filled out the survey. There were some riding exercises but I don't remember too much, I had a very bad cold and was somewhat drugged up.

I must have done good because I was invited to the Rider Coach Prep class in late April lasting four consecutive full weekends at Caldwell Community College in Lenoir, NC. We were there Friday night 'til 9:00 or 10:00 then Saturday and Sunday from about 7:30 to 6:30. There were twelve of us from all over the state. It was a very grueling four weekends but we eventually completed it. We all graduated and received our MSF Instructor certificates.

The next step was to contact Robbie at Carolina H-D to get sponsored for the Rider's Edge Rider Coach Program – a week long course held in July at Carolina H-D and a local hotel. I was accepted along with five other men from North Carolina and Illinois. It was another intense learning experience but it was also fun. I got to ride all the different Harleys and realized that some of the big bikes are very easy to handle. We also learned how Harley-Davidson wanted us to coach – to provide the best H-D learning experience. We all graduated and became official Rider's Edge-certified Rider Coaches. Because Robbie schedules three months at a time, my first coaching class wouldn't be until October.

A couple weeks ago, I coached my first class. It had been awhile since my initial training in July so I was a little rusty. Luckily, I had Ron, a seasoned Rider Coach, as a partner. He helped me through the rough spots and we had a great time. The six participants in the class were all eager to learn and it was very gratifying to see the improvement from Saturday morning to Sunday afternoon. They made remarkable progress in such a short time. The New Rider Course is structured on the building block principle and it takes small steps until the participant gets comfortable with the bike. Then they are shown some safety skills that they should use once they have progressed to street riding. I took a lot of pictures and they can be seen on the Carolina H-D website (<http://www.carolinaharley.com/home.htm>) under "Photos" and "New Rider Course" – "October 26 to 29".



It was a long and seemingly endless journey to get this far but it was worth it when I saw the smiles on their faces when they learned a skill - also when I got their thanks at the end of the class. One of the lady participants even gave me a hug. I hope that I am just starting out on a long career of coaching many people in the skills of riding a motorcycle. I'll give it my best shot! Wally



MSF Experienced Rider Course



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