



S·M·A·R·T Training = Smart Riding

By April Phillips

There's a mantra in the Navy and Marine Corps that says "Train like you fight." It means a general quarters drill will seem as close as possible to an actual shipboard emergency. It means that aircraft launch from a flight deck the same way in training as they do when they're loaded with live ammunition. This philosophy applies to off-duty activities as well. The Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) recently visited ships in Norfolk, Va., with the Safe Motorcyclist Awareness and Recognition Trainer (SMART), a new tool to help motorcycle riders react to a number of dangerous scenarios they will encounter when they're out in traffic.

The machine is basically a high-tech video game, with

handlebars and controls just like those on a real motorcycle. "Riders" look at a screen depicting likely roadway scenarios, and their actions at the controls affect what occurs on screen.

The SMART, manufactured by Honda, is not a simulator, explained Al Hydeman of MSF.

"It doesn't lean like a motorcycle does. We can't teach riders how to counter-steer or operate their bikes. That's what the *RiderCourses* are for, and they do a great job of teaching people how to ride safely in a parking lot or other controlled environment. This takes them into traffic."

Electronics Technician Third Class Kevin Jordan has been in the Navy just over two years. He's stationed

onboard USS *George Washington* and recently had the chance to try out the SMART when Hydeman and the Naval Safety Center took the trainer onboard the carrier.

"It makes you think and puts you through scenarios such as pedestrian crossings and vehicles that don't see you coming," he said.

Jordan has been riding his Kawasaki ZZR 600 for about a year and a half. He's one of many military riders who bought their bikes without any prior training.

"When I bought my bike, it was the first time I'd ever even been on a motorcycle or a dirt bike, or anything like that," he said.

He believes the SMART would be beneficial to Sailors and Marines before they purchase a bike.

"It helps you with your thought process and muscle memory and getting used to the feel of the controls. At first, it can be overwhelming, even without the traffic."

Hydeman understands this, and said it's better to be overwhelmed at the controls of a video monitor than on real roads, at real speeds.

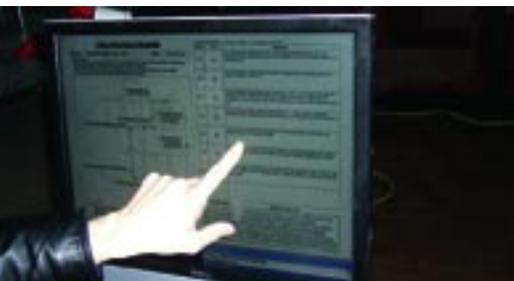
"A lot of people say, 'I hope I don't crash' when they use SMART. I say, 'I hope you do crash' because that's how you learn and here the only thing that really crashes is the ego," Hydeman said.

He went through a test ride with Aviation Ordnanceman Airman Mark Gentle, another *George Washington* Sailor. After Gentle completed his first ride on the SMART, Hydeman was able to go back through it with him, replaying all the dangerous scenarios that

occurred. One benefit is that SMART allows you to change perspectives when it's switched into coaching mode. In one scenario where a car pulled out directly in front of the motorcycle, Gentle was able to realize that the motorist couldn't see him. This is important, because part of the danger of motorcycles is that they're far less visible than cars and defensive



Al Hydeman of the Motorcycle Safety Foundation coaches ET3 Kevin Jordan, stationed onboard USS *George Washington*, after he completed a SMART ride.



SMART's video monitor breaks down all the training opportunities that occur during the ride and grades the trainee. Hydeman is able to explain how the scenario might have been managed more safely. He can also show riders where their strengths lie.



Photo by Dan Steber.

driving is that much more important for two-wheeled riders.

The coach gets a printout of the ride, so he or she can tell how fast the motorcyclist was going, whether their stops were smooth or abrupt, whether the turn signal was used, and many other important aspects of safe riding.

"Using the coach controls, we can show him how to maneuver more safely and then put him into a second, more challenging ride, based on his needs."

Gentle scored an overall 'A' on his ride, performing very well. He's been riding for four years, but said he still learned something important from using SMART.

"You can't assume anything out there on the road. This is good for raising awareness."

Each Honda SMART costs about \$5,000, and the Naval Safety Center is considering purchasing several to use during safety fairs and stand downs throughout the fleet. ■