BODY POSITION IN PRACTICE

Last issue we highlighted some of the indicators that show you're not properly balanced on the bike and outlined some tips on how to achieve better stability. Hopefully you had a chance to mull that over and have been monitoring your own technique in the last few weeks. Now we can talk more about various applications of the body position on the track.

The downhill body position is something you can use whenever you look down the track and think, "OK, now I have to concentrate" (that applies to beginners and downhillers alike). Remember, the two biggest aspects are **YOUR HEIGHT AND BEING CENTRED**.

Height-wise, when you are upright with straight arms, you have effectively **USED UP ALL OF THE SUSPENSION/ABSORPTION** in your arms, as you want your torso to stay still and for the bike to fall away from you as your arms extend.

Being centred means you will have your weight evenly spread between both wheels, hence, even grip on the ground.

One clear example of where this position helps is in ruts (narrow trench often at the entrance to a steep corner) where it is particularly hard to balance due to the wheel hitting the side of the rut. The lower your body position, the smaller the adjustments you will need to make with your handlebars to stay stable. Also note that the moment you leave a centred position in a rut, the bike will want to veer offline and it will take quite some wrestling to hold it stable.

Another application is for braking. You will all know the feeling of riding down a steep piece of trail and having trouble braking – the rear wheel skids and the front brake makes you want to tip over the bars? If your weight is low you will be better able to utilise your front brake **WHICH IS WHERE MOST OF YOUR BRAKING SHOULD COME FROM**.

In the case of riding over rocks/roots, slippery trails or gravelly corners, most people would agree it is a nice feeling when both wheels grip evenly, rather than one sliding unpredictably.

At the end of the day you are heavier than your bike, so your position on your steed is paramount to maintaining control. If your core is still and the bike rotates around you, your arms and the bike will absorb the bumps. If you do the rotating, the bike will be still and you will be bouncing around on top and arguing with it over where you want to go.

WHEN YOU GET IT RIGHT THE BIKE WILL FEEL ATTACHED AND GUIDED BY YOU.

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