

Six points - #2-The Hips-“Being one with the bike”

Let's talk about unlocking the hips. Now, you may have heard me talk about unlocking your hips when you ride, either in an interview or from my website or perhaps from a video, and you may be asking “what on earth is this dude talking about?” Well, let me explain it. Here we go! I am going to start at the bike.

The bike is one but made from two separate parts. The front end and a rear end. Each is separate, but one, brought together in the front, allowing the bike to go side to side and turn right and left without affecting each other. If you welded the front end to the rear end so there would be no turning of the front end, I wouldn't be writing this and you for sure wouldn't be reading this because motocross would suck!

You have to have a pivot point to steer and not have either end affect the other side. So picturing this, now think about the body. The body is the same. You have an upper body and a lower body with a pivot and hinge, or linkage, in the middle of you. This “hinge” is your hips. They go up and down and left and right like the rear and front end of the bike do. If you are riding with your butt tucked, that makes the body lock up and now, well- it is welded together, so to speak.

SO, let's take a look at the three most dominant riders in this last era of the four stroke. Carmichael, Stewart and Villopoto. They all ride with their hips or butt out, allowing that separation and pivot point to work like I am speaking of. If you look at Villopoto, he is all legs and feet controlling the bike, with a very quiet upper body. As the bike moves over the track during riding, the bike stays below his upper body so he is unaffected at the highest point. He does not have to counterbalance or react to everything the bike does because his body absorbs the track.

Now “Bubba” Stewart is a different subject. He is the fastest rider we have seen on two wheels so far and it comes from his hips. It's a damn good thing because he has swapped out more than any rider out there, but he has also saved it more than any rider out there because of the separation in his mid-section allowing his upper body to do its thing and lower body to do its thing. That is why you can see number seven on the front and side plate at the same time when he rides the track and that back end is all over the place! And yet, he still saves it! Stewart is the fastest in the whoops because his style is key, with his hips unlocked and butt out. This allows the bike to go side to side and up and down, not affecting the upper body.

If there is no softness in the lower part of the body, just as a bike is, then you will be affected from whatever the bike does. It would be like taking the rear suspension off and trying to ride. I don't have to tell you what would happen! The energy or end of each movement would come out at the top of you, forcing you to have to stabilize whatever movement comes your way with your arms. The bike would kick up and it push the whole body forward. Now, if this were the case, what do you think you would have to use to stop that movement? Yep, you guessed it; your arms.

If the bike throws you side to side and your hips are locked up, then your upper body will have to follow the rear end of the bike, forcing you to try to stabilize the bike with your arms and that is for sure my friends, a ride to the hospital.

The lower half of the body is for the rear of the bike and the upper half of the body is for the front. Let's look at it what it is like when your back end swaps...scary sometimes! Now to get out of this, you want to keep the front wheel as straight as you can. Its not the bike that swaps out, its the rider. The body winds up, then releases suddenly, pulling the bike with it again and again and after three or four good swaps, you are on the ground saying, "Were am I and who the hell am I?" ("Batman" is NOT the answer!)

Is this starting to make sense to you? The reason Bubba swaps so much is, he rides flat footed. Like I have said, the first point of contact from bike to ground is the wheels. From the wheels, there is softness. The same needs to stand true at the first point of contact from the body to bike when sitting. If there is no softness, there then this is the point where you will be affected from.

The only way to ride as fast as Bubba does while riding flat footed is to have your hips unlocked or butt out. There is no other way, it is physically impossible to ride the bull if you don't keep the hips unlocked. I have personally tried to ride flat footed and felt the bike rode me, but when I really focused on that point imagining what Bubba looks like it, it actually felt way better. In my opinion, it's still not as good as being on the toes with hips out.

Now, if you look back, we all thought Carmichael had a crazy style with his straight back and butt out and no, it wasn't because he was heavier back in the day. To me, that is what helped him ride to a level no one had ever seen before and how he got away with some many "almost" crashes! I never noticed it back in the 2-stroke days, but now when I go back and look at pictures and videos, I see this same technique with Carmichael and Stewart. Their technique is why they were so far ahead of everyone; because it allowed that next level of speed.

As motocross has advanced, the bikes have changed and progressed dramatically over the last ten years. In order to keep up with these changes, rider's techniques must be improved to follow. The bikes are heavier and they have way more torque and horsepower than the two strokes. It is inevitable that these changes require a new way to ride the bike.

Now lets look at the body again. The human body has been around for millions of years and its primal movements are twisting, pulling, pushing, lunging and squatting. These movements ask for your hips to be "unlocked" or in other words, your butt needs to be out, to be strong and stabilized in anyone of these movements. How do you begin to sit in a chair or do a squat? Butt out! How do you twist when swinging a bat or golf club? Butt is out! As I am sure you have heard before, if you are pulling or pushing an object or weight, what is better? Is it wise to tuck your butt under or should you push it out, guiding with the legs rather than the back? Always lift with the legs and put the weight into your lower body! Never use your back, that just leads to an injury. Your back isn't meant to stabilize the body, leave that for the core, which I will talk about in point #3.

Now lets look at sports in general. What sport do you watch or do that asks the body to tuck the pelvis up and under? Football, baseball, golf or tennis? I am sure we could name an endless list of sports, but none will ask the body to be in a “tucked tail” position to be at its best! Being in a position with a tucked butt and rounded back is like being in the fetal position. The fetal position is a comfortable, safe position. So, I am guessing that about 90% of all the riders I see on a day-to-day basis are in a “scared of what might happen” position. They want to feel safe, comforted. As I always say, start out in a bad position, end up in a bad position; and that bad position just may end up with *you* lying in a world of hurt on a track somewhere. Your choice. Now think about how much everyday life and all other sports ask for this “hips out” stance or technique. Almost every sport requires good posture to excel and motocross is at the top of that list, especially due to the fact that in motocross you are riding a heavy, fast and dangerous machine.

So why in the hell do you do the hardest, most dangerous sport in the world in a stance or technique that will put the body into a terrible position for strength, power, stability, balance, flexibility and efficiency? Well, let me ask you this. Out of fear, what does a dog do when its in trouble? It tucks its tail. If you are tucking your tail, you are now just like a dog riding a motorcycle. When you are riding in that tucked up position, you are a bit backwards. The lower half of the body is now going forward and the upper half is going backwards. In that position, there is no weight on either end of the bike and you are now going away from the bike. If this is the case, how aggressive can you really be with the gas? I see this horrible technique so much now since the neck brace has come out. The riders knees are in front of the shoulders which causes them to tuck their butt, all while the brace is pushing their head down, forcing them to round their back and all this just so they can see up! Now that is extremely dangerous!

Do this for me. Have a friend sit on the bike and then you push him at the top of the chest, pushing him backwards just like what the bike would do if you were to slam on the gas on and the bike was pulling you back. Now, push your friend back with his arms off the bars with his butt tucked and see how hard it is to for him to keep from being pushed back. Now try it again and this time, with his hips unlocked or his butt “out”. There should be a massive difference in your friends’s ability to stabilize and keep himself in a forward position, going *with* the motorcycle.

When you are standing and riding, you want to almost look like a horse jockey with your legs being straight, your butt out, back straight and head over the bars. This will allow your rear end to do its “thing” by going up and down and side to side without the upper body being affected. This will help you stay in the direction you want to go, more like Villopoto in a squatted position with the legs and butt out on the back of the bike. In this position, is very important to have the hips unlocked because now you are on back of the bike and if the hips are locked up, you will be mimicking everything that back end of the bike does instead of flowing with the bike.

To me, Villopoto’s style is the next step and when I apply it to my riding, wow! What a difference it makes because you are now putting some weight to the rear end of the bike for traction while having the hips unlocked. This allows you to be one with the bike and not get thrown around. With this style, you are allowed to control the back of the bike, being that this is where about 90% of the control comes from while riding, so its very important. This technique

definitely takes practice, as well as a lot of strength. You'll want to be on your toes, in a squatted position with your butt out and holding on tightly with the legs.

So there you have it! I hope I have explained this deep enough to give you an idea of what to look for when trying this technique. Good luck and I hope you feel as much from this tip as I did the first time I tried it. Remember, you have to slow down to try a new technique. You have to first feel it before you can identify the “wow “ factor that will feel good and once you have identified that feeling, then you can recreate it all the time because its a learned experience and you will never forget an experience. When practicing, I often ride at 85% of my ability just to practice new ideas and work on my weak points, so that when it is time to go fast, my technique will be able to handle the speed in the window that I have now opened to allow more speed. My window isn't closed, shutting off fresh, new ideas! That is how you can be one with the bike!