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Women riders

Women's Riding School - Performance Level, Las Vegas Motor Speedway

By Judy Mirro & Kim Brittenham

The day began with a VIP breakfast under the Ducati hospitality tent. The women, many racers meeting for the first time, talked excitedly about the day ahead. Women are few and far between in motorcycle racing, so this event which gathered over 30 attendees, was special for all involved.

School was called into session at the Freddie Spencer High Performance Riding School's trackside classroom. The preliminary introductions were impressive Nick Ienatsch (accomplished racer and journalist) and Vicky Jackson Bell (2000 125 Grand Prix Champion). Three-time World Grand Prix Champion, Freddie Spencer, himself showed the women the track line. Ienatsch gave a formal lecture on the track layout, trail braking, and technical tips so riders could make the most of their rotating 20-minute track sessions. The women were quick to ask questions and drill Nick and Freddie for as much information as possible.



As the race leather-clad women moved from the classroom to the HMC race trailer with its sea of red Ducati 996SPS hyper tuned race bikes, it became evident the women weren't the only ones excited. The crowd of spectators built steadily. Photographers snapped pics left and right, Speedvision filmed, and Sports Illustrated Women interviewed and photographed individuals for its upcoming December feature.

The group broke into two groups and each group went out with its World Superbike "marshal" -- either current series racer Ruben Xaus or veteran rider Doug Polen. The pros were quick to give on-track instruction and personal hot laps with the students. They were having as much fun as the women were, and it showed. Xaus could not stop smiling about the company he was keeping. Doug, while quieter about his assignment, always managed to be first in line to get back out on the track with the women.



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Amongst the class participants were many stunning riders and motorcycle industry professionals. Stuntrider Debbie Evans has spent years jumping bikes for Hollywood and holds several world trials competition titles, but this was her first time on a racetrack. Evans positively glowed after her second track session. She proudly remarked on dragging her knees through corners after following Xaus. Also new to the track, German architecture student, Rabea Remke astounded racers, instructors, and other students with her fluid lines. Many whispered, "a born natural" and made a note to watch her racing future. Keith Code instructor, Nancy Montgomery, mixed it up with racers like Melissa Shimmin, former owner of MOTA, motorbike gear for women and a Formula racer from California.



After the extended track sessions and a generous lunch break the women gathered again for a maintenance course with Mark Sutton, HMC's top technician. A suspension class with Nick and co-instructor Jeff Haney followed. The day wound down, but the spirits did not. Women made commitments to keep in touch, many returning to their home tracks to continue honing their racing skills.

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