



You always pass failure on the way to success.  
Mickey Rooney

Success and failure are the same thing measured differently.  
Dave Michaud

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It's an odd sensation to ride on top of a motorcycle that is laying on its side. I remember thinking, 'Why did that idiot knock me down and that it didn't seem so bad', at the same time. Later, I realized that the oddest thing was that I didn't hear anything at all while I was sliding along the pavement and into the grass. Maybe it was my ear plugs and helmet that silenced the whole event or maybe the slow motion effect of an accident is also a silent movie.

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It is now Monday as I write this and over the long weekend I completed the Penguin Beginners Road Racing School, ran the Rookie Race, and my first Novice Race.

The Penguin Race School started with a 2 hour classroom session which was well done and to the point. Steve was a great instructor, keeping it lively and covering all the tactical things you need to know before you grid up for a race. And if you have never done this, there's more to it than just the 'flags'! The on track lessons were great too. We had 2 or 3 'follow the leader' sessions and then they turned us loose to experience what it is like being passed anytime, anywhere....or, passing others anytime, anywhere! I spent the rest of the on track sessions working with an instructor improving my line and stepping up my lap times.

The Penguin Road Racing Beginners Class is a RACING school and its purpose is to prepare a person for riding on a race track with other riders where the goal, at least for some, is TO WIN. This is very different from a typical track day where the goal is to provide riders with a safe environment to explore the limits of their motorcycle and their abilities. The other thing that Penguin does is help a rider simplify all the very confusing, and complicated, administrative stuff you need to do to race. Steve helped me pick a class and a novice race, understand the registration and tech process, how to secure a license and racer number, and most importantly when and where to grid and how the start works. You can't just 'intuit' this stuff, believe me!

So, how did I do? I passed the quiz from the classroom session. Again, thanks to Steve for all his help! I took good advantage of the practice sessions chasing Mike Dube around. He spent time following me too and took the time between practice to give me some really helpful pointers. Thanks Mike!



I managed to pre-register for my Novice race Friday night and secured my CCS Racing number and plates Saturday morning. I got through tech and rode the two practice sessions Saturday morning.

At 11:45 on Saturday morning I lined up on the false grid for my Rookie Race and double checked my position by referring to the reminder taped on my gas tank. (Another great tip from Steve). And then, right after the National Anthem, they sent us out for our 'sighting lap'. I gridded properly at Start/Finish and got a good launch when the #1 board came down and the green flag gave the third wave the start. I ran the 3 laps, passed a couple of other riders, and was flying high having completed my first race safely and respectably!

I had registered on Friday night for Race 9, Light Weight Sportsman, as my first Novice Race.

I lined up on time at the right place, ran my sighting lap and gridded properly. The green flag came out and after a small wheelie I got a good launch! I rode smoothly and consistently, focusing on my line and getting solid drive out of the corners. I was feeling really good and having a great time chasing my friend Tom Patch. I think it was on lap six when, as I heeled over to hit the apex at 1A, a rider nailed me on the right side taking us both down. He was apparently trying to pass me on the inside and couldn't hold his line. Damn! Anyway, I slid right off the track jumped up, gave the guy a dirty look, and sorted myself out! At the direction of the corner workers we rolled our bikes back to the tire wall and I cooled down while we waited for the cool down lap!

I have a slightly bruised middle finger on my right hand...and not from flipping it at the guy either! The BatBike had a broken brake lever, a small crack in the upper right fairing and a few scratches. (I've done more damage dropping my ST2 off the sidestand in the garage!) I have already replaced the brake lever, duct-taped the crack and emptied the dirt, grass and gravel from the belly pan. I'm ready to go again anytime!



I had a lot of fun at the class and the Rookie race. Crashing out on my first Novice race is disappointing but, as they say, that's racing! (Also, it's a good reason to get out of novice as quickly as possible!)



I have 5 more track days scheduled this season so I won't be back racing until next year. But I will be back!

Success? Failure? It's all in how you want to count the chips. The way I see it I accomplished several goals. I passed the Race School, ran a bunch of laps at speed, learned more about the race lines at NHIS, completed the required rookie race, ran most of my first novice race, learned that a crash that is caused by someone else is still a crash and is listed as DNF in the records, scuffed up my leathers a little which is good, and took some of the gleam off the Batbike...which is good too! On top of those specific accomplishments, I had an absolute blast and met a bunch of really great people.

Feels like success to me. And I'm the one doing the counting!

Dave

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Dave Michaud  
CCS #951  
NESBA "I" #51  
Track/Race Bike - Ducati 750SS  
Street Bike - Ducati ST2  
603.424.6514 Cell  
[www.batmanmoto.com](http://www.batmanmoto.com)