

Motorcycle pros offer good advice for bike safety

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FORT MCPHERSON, Ga. - Racing at speeds of more than 190 miles per hour while balancing on two wheels, inches from the ground, makes perfect sense if you are a professional motorcycle drag racer.

But it does not make a lot of sense if you are a Soldier speeding on a public road with a motorcycle.

These are the sentiments of Antron Brown, the Army-sponsored National Hot Rod Association Pro Stock Motorcycle Drag racer.

"I race a high-powered motorcycle in a controlled environment. I don't have to worry about a deer coming out in front of me. Safety is involved with everything we do," said Brown, who took the time to address this issue during the Summit Racing Equipment NHRA Southern Nationals in Atlanta May 4 through 7.

Motorcycle accidents claimed the lives of 11

Soldiers during the month of April alone, according to the Combat Readiness Center's Web site.

The rate at which Soldiers are dying in accidents has dramatically increased within the last couple of years. Eight months into this fiscal year, 24 Soldiers have died in motorcycle accidents. During that same time span in 2004, there were only eight fatalities. The number of total accidents during the same span is almost the same, but the fatality rate in 2006 is three times higher.

"The first thing for a Soldier to do who has recently purchased a high-performance motorcycle is to go to a 'test and tune' night at a local drag strip," said George Bryce, owner of Star Racing. Test and tune events are commonly held a couple times a week throughout the country at local drag strips. They provide a forum for people to both get their speed fix and to do trick riding in a safe and controlled environment.

Bryce is considered by many to be one of the

most respected sources on motorcycles, racing and speed. He has been racing and building bikes for more than 30 years and is a six-time NHRA Champion team owner. Bryce has trained 80 percent of the current NHRA pro stock motorcycle racers including both of the Army-sponsored racers.

His pupil, Brown, won the Southern National and racing a bike that can move out from 0 to 100 mph in just two seconds, weighs over 550 pounds, and can travel a quarter mile in just seven seconds.

Brown believes Soldiers should take the time to mentally and physically prepare themselves when they ride their bikes.

"If you want to stay alive, it's like a Soldier on a battlefield," said Brown. "You wouldn't go to war without your helmet or Kevlar; the same applies to the proper protective equipment you wear for your bike. You also need to aggressively watch what is going on around you on the road, so you can drive defensively."

This fiscal year, four fatalities have been directly related to excessive speed with many other cases citing speed a contributing factor to the accident, according to the Combat Readiness Center's Web site.

"I respect the guts that it takes to be a Soldier today," George Bryce said. "They go through life-threatening and dangerous experiences that I cannot relate to. They ride because it provides a way to channel or release some of those stresses and feelings."

The Army NHRA Pro Stock Motorcycle team has dominated the season so far by winning the first three events of the year. Brown is in first place in the standings overall just ahead Angelle Sampey, the other Army sponsored dragster.

"What makes us pros is not how well we can ride, but how well we can use our minds. You can't do anything without being safe and having respect for your motorcycle," Brown said.



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Antron Brown races during the first day at the Summit Racing Equipment NHRA Southern Nationals in Atlanta, May 4-7.

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