



# AHRMA Fast & Safe Roadracing School

**A**t most rounds of the CPL Systems National Historic Cup Roadrace Series, AHRMA offers its Fast & Safe Roadracing School on the Friday before race weekend. The school teaches aspiring roadracers the ins and outs of competing on the pavement – including riding gear selection, preparation, riding technique and track etiquette – all with an emphasis on safety. Participants get ample track time, and even participate alongside instructors and other students in a mock race to gain experience. Anyone who passes the school is granted a license and can compete the very next day. The school is widely recognized across the country, and meets the requirements to gain a license with many other racing organizations. The first two race weekends of 2014 attracted 29 new students to the school. Below, Robert Steele and Hanni Berger share their experiences.

## School is in session



### Joining the ranks of the pavement scratchers

**H**ello, my name is Robert Steele. I have been to the Barber Vintage Festival the last three years, and during my time as a spectator, I noticed that the AHRMA group looked first class and was something I was definitely interested in becoming a part of – especially after I got to ride in the parade lap there!



When I found out about the new Next Gen Superbike class, that was right up my alley; I grew up watching Scott Russell, Miguel Duhamel, Jamie James, David Sadowski and all the other greats.

I went home, bought a 1989 Suzuki GSX-R750, and headed to the Jennings GP track in Florida for novice school. I attended several track days there before

starting my AHRMA racing career at the Roebbling Road race school.

First, I would like to say Andrew Cowell, Murrae Haynes and Chris Carr were great instructors. The rest of the gang was awesome as well – Cindy Cowell (who I drove crazy with a zillion questions before Roebbling), Pam, Mary, Tony P., Cal Lewis, Carl Anderson and all the others at tech. It was cool meeting Ed Bargy, his name is one I have heard a lot over the last few years. Ok...race school day! It started early on Friday morning; I was very happy when I walked in and saw Andrew was the head instructor (I had read a lot about him

on the track to pit lane entrance procedures. Andrew and Murrae supplied an enormous amount of information and techniques that I began applying immediately; it greatly improved my riding ability and my viewpoint of race craft.

At the end of the day, it was time for the most important part of the class – the one-on-one verbal exam! You pass, you race. If you fail, you're done. I was worried about that part the most (I'm a huge worrywart).

My test was with Andrew – he was very direct and to the point, and the questions had to be answered precisely (and well they should be, because getting on a racetrack with others is a privilege that should not ever be taken lightly).

Race day on Saturday was awesome, there were plenty of practice rounds, and I had a huge battle with Rich Bergin on a ZX7, which was a blast!

### “The stressed importance of safety was awesome”



prior to race school, so I knew he was The Dude). I could tell this was going to be a good school because right off, Andrew stated it would be a very serious day; all about safety and getting us to race pace, and that there would be people in the class that day who would pass, and some who would fail. I was also very impressed with the amount of time spent on-track instruction, and I can't say enough about the classroom instruction! It was all invaluable. The stressed importance of safety was awesome, because at other tracks, I've seen many racers make some very unsafe maneuvers, from passing

Sunday's race day was even better! I talked to Andrew and Murrae on how to make a clean, safe pass on a fellow racer. I followed their instructions and...I did it! As a new racer, I tend to hesitate when I see an opening because I don't want to make an unsafe maneuver on someone (they say that confidence will come with time). The seasoned racers just blaze through that hole in a millisecond, which is something I will be able to do soon!

All-in-all, Roebbling was an amazing experience. I can't wait to meet even more of the AHRMA family and get to know more great people along the way.

So, until the next time I get to slide my helmet on and say those famous Andrew Cowell words, "It's Showtime!" (No wait – he said those words resulted in too many hospital visits). I got it Andrew, no worries mate, "Relax to the Max" is the motto of the best school instructor!

Thanks,  
Robert Steele

**H**ello AHRMA family! I'm a newbie to racing and AHRMA, and have already witnessed why the word "family" is so



*Hanni Berger chats with instructor Chris Carr while Robert Steele and his GSX-R (4s) wait for more track time.*

## “There is so much camaraderie and support”

appropriate when talking about the people associated with this organization. There is so much camaraderie and support. But before you can officially don that bright orange vest symbolizing that you are about to enter your first-ever AHRMA race, you need to complete the crucial step of passing racing school.

AHRMA's Fast & Safe Roadracing School was very eye-opening and educational for me, and I definitely learned a lot. Andrew Cowell, the instructor and unmistakably a very experienced racer, led a full classroom of 16 students. The diversity of riders and bikes was fantastic – people of all ages, bikes from the 1970s upwards, and two other women in the room...yes!

The school includes on- and off-track training, but before any one of us would actually be allowed to go out, Andrew reviewed with us the different flags used on the track. He stressed the importance of understanding the flags, and his fun and energetic personality for the moment turned serious, a wake-up call to ensure we all paid attention. That was very understandable, considering it's the only way to communicate out there, and misunderstandings can become a problem very quickly.

As we were about to go on the track, Andrew introduced us to two instructors who would support our on-track performance. Chris Carr and Murrae first led us through

a few warm-up rounds to get to know the two-mile track before demonstrating the best racing lines. I had the chance to follow Chris, who clearly knew the fastest way around the eight turns of Roebing Road. It's no wonder, considering he has an AHRMA Vintage Superbike Middleweight national championship (among a few other racing titles) under his belt. Just trying to keep up with his already-reduced pace, I found it fascinating how comfortable and relaxed he looks on his bike.

Back in the classroom, we cover topics such as racing lines, braking, shifting, passing and (completely new to me) the procedures of a race start. There was a lot to cover, so staying focused was important, but before we knew it, the day had flown by and it was time for the mock race. The mock race was an important part of passing school, and just lining up on the grid made my adrenaline spike. It was so much fun, and after four laps I went across the finish line with a big smile on my face.

We all still had to pass the one-on-one verbal test. One after the other, we joined Andrew in the classroom to correctly answer the use for all the different flags, and a number of other questions on topics covered earlier in the day. I was relieved to pass, and with an amazing sunset showing, I took a deep breath and felt on top of the world, realizing just how much I had learned that day.

As I get ready for my second weekend of racing, I'm excited to see the familiar faces of our instructors again!

Thank you, Fast & Safe Roadracing School.  
Hanni Berger ▲



*Instructor Andrew Cowell at work with students of the Fast & Safe Roadracing School at NOLA Motor-sports Park. Rain was just one of the challenges facing the new riders.*