

# EXPERIENCE COUNTS

Pappy rides an amazing piece of road known as The Farm... Story by Pappy Photography by Pommie

JUST LIKE AN AVATAR, I feel like I have been transported into another world – 'The Farm'. I've warmed the tyres, hit the straight and nail it until I reach 245km/h at turn one (T1), where I button off, tip right and head for T2 – coming down gears and hard on the brakes for the right hander at T3. I turn it in hard, lick the grass on the apex and drive it hard again down hill to the hairpin at T4. This is one of the hardest braking areas and slowest corners that tightens up on itself and you feel like you've stopped. The grip is amazing – I'm hard on the gas and squirreling up hill for the run up to the left hander at T5.

Before I know it, I'm at T6, which is the scariest corner here – it reminds me of T8 at Eastern Creek – you have to commit and hope you don't get it wrong, as it will punish you. From there, I keep it smooth – driving hard to T7 and T8 and then slide across the seat, clamp on tight and roll off the throttle before T9, ready for some hard braking to back the bike into T10, which feels sensational. I stop giggling and gas it to T11, setting up for the three esses between T11-13 where I have to be super smooth with the throttle and throw the bike from side to side. I feel the bike is on rails like there's velcro and glue on the road as the grip is huge...

Up the gears now to T14 then braking hard and turn right – careful as it tightens up at the exit point and as soon as I'm out, I throw it over to the left for the drive down the valley to T15 and T16. I can see the straight at T16 and I line it up before T17, where it goes up hill, similar to T5 to T7 at Eastern Creek. This is nice and open and I can really run it up hard on the gas as the bike bucks, drifts and weaves onto the straight going up through the gears and there's a crest where the nose gets light as I top out at about 250km/h before I chicken out and brake hard for the left hander at T18...

From there, it's up a really steep hill to the blind T19. As soon as I've crested, I clip the left-hander at T20 and scribe a nice wide arc through T21 and onto the brakes at the second

hairpin at T22, which is a beautiful arc to drag the knee with plenty of space to gas it hard for the downhill run to T23. This has the hardest braking point and I can feel the rear tyre getting light as the front forks have been fully compressed. I immediately get off the picks and tip it to the right and flick to the left at T24 and start driving it gently to T25 and hard onto the long front straight...

The Farm is like a mini Nurburgring and one of the most fantastic experiences you will ever feel and see through your helmet. It is possibly half the reason all these guys are here today...

Last issue, I attended Top Rider's Advanced Rider Training course at Marulan, which was a big success for me. This time, I am lucky enough to experience this challenging road, which is 5km long with 25 corners and a super grippy surface. Jeff (the Editor) reckons it is one of the best places for testing bikes...

The Farm is located North of Sydney and was built over 10 years ago. It is a private property which happens to have a private road in the backyard. Owned by a very lucky chap who has a nice collection of exotic vehicles at his disposal and a great mate of Bernie's. You couldn't meet a nicer and more down-to-earth bloke and hopefully he will adopt Jeffro and myself one day!

The facilities are first class as it is a private home. The whole location is lush and picturesque. Bernie, as usual, made sure we were all well fed and hydrated after each session.

The group is kept very small and Bernie had the extra help of one of his old pupils Jamie Stauffer and his other instructor Max Enklaar. The training, like Marulan, was very specialised and focused, which is what all the punters were there for.

Our day started with a few laps on the road so we could familiarise ourselves while Bernie observed our riding. Most of the drills were as per the last course I covered [*Rapid Bikes* June 2010] with a few extras thrown in. As usual, the lessons were tightly controlled and

well supervised with a one-on-one approach. We did braking drills with Bernie and Jamie helping us. We then continued to ride around to find the esses and practice more dynamic braking. We did front and rear brakes separately, clutch in/out to see what distance we could brake without lock-up and how it felt.

Later, we focused on the esses so that Bernie could see how well we used our vision, head position, relaxation of arms, throttle control, driving into and out of a corners, peg weighting and how far our body was from the centre of bike. The esses were the perfect place as you could feel the grip come and go while learning to keep the throttle on to keep it gripping. Bernie, Jamie and Max pulled us up just past the esses and spoke to us about what they identified, whether it was good or bad so we could work on one thing at a time.

We then practiced braking with a marker on the road, which forced us to judge speed, line and our braking point. Once we got that right, we came down the gears to learn to load the lever, clear our feet, position bum and knee in tank, use of core muscles and trail braking. Jamie did some demonstrations and it was amazing to see how smooth and fast he was. It blew us away and gave us all something to strive for in the future.

The Farm is a special place that will blow you away riding it let alone doing a specialised course like the one Top Rider offers. I have been back there since for the *Rapid Bikes* comparo and still can't get the images out of my mind. But it is a private place, not commercial, and not open to the public. You need to be lucky enough to know someone who can get you invited. As the owner says "The only important time up here is how long the smile lasts", and I am still smiling.

Stay tuned as Bernie has something really interesting in store for me next time!

For more information call Top Rider on 1300 131 362 or visit [toprider.com.au](http://toprider.com.au)

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CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN PIC: Pappy hitting the esses; Bernie and Wayne Gardner at T23 during the *Rapid Bikes* comparo; All the riders ready to practice their braking drills; Pappy on the Top Rider rental CBR600; Riders being greeted by Bernie. OPPOSITE PAGE: Pappy at the end of the chute.

