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## An Ounce of Prevention, Several Pounds of Cure or... How to Fall Off Your Bike and What to do Afterwards.

**THIS COLUMN IS A CLASSIC EXAMPLE** of education gained at the school of hard knocks. Recalling my recent story of an up-close and personal pavement inspection, I had the occasion to reflect on things that help avoid five ribs broken in nine places and/or a situation where your bike is off the side of a mountain, stuck in a stream. Or worse.

If riding motocross and enduros as a kid will teach you anything, it is how to fall off a motorcycle. For instance, it is rarely, if ever, a good choice to try to hang on to the bike when the situation goes beyond bad. Instead, a graceful exit is usually your best strategy in avoiding injury, as a tumbling motorcycle can inflict quite a bit of carnage.

A better course of action (especially with the heavier enduros) is to jump judiciously. Unfortunately, not every get-off provides you with sufficient warning, as things happen fast in our dynamic sport. Therefore learning to control several instinctive reactions that occur when crashing will help you pick up the bike and ride back home.

### Tuck and Roll... Save Your Upholstery

The first instinct to avoid is attempting to break your fall by placing your hands out in front of your now projectile body. This is a recipe for badly scraped and/or broken fingers, palms, wrists and arms. Instead, discipline yourself to keep your arms closer to your torso, forming a barrel-shape that allows you to roll to a stop. Yes, crashing multiple times helps quell this instinct, it's a hard habit to, um...break.

Next, keep your feet on the pegs as long as possible. Paddling through obstacles should be your last resort. If things go awry,

jump off the bike from the pegs, draw your knees inward and make them part of the barrel shape you're trying to form. Be the ball. Your gear has armor, right?

These techniques apply mostly to slower speed falls. Things are completely different when sliding along the pavement. Don't try to start rolling if you're already sliding and whether sliding or rolling, wait until you stop, count to three and then see if you're ready to stand up.

Which leads to the last remaining instinct to overcome, the desire to immediately pick the bike up. Yes, hit the kill switch, but unless the thing is spewing gas everywhere, save your back and let it sit there until your adrenaline subsides. Focus instead on whether your moving parts are still working. Remember, you still need to ride back



out from the middle of nowhere. There is much more to this than a simple article can cover, and there are some training schools that cover this subject matter quite well.

### Body Armor

While most good riding gear provides decent armor for arms, shoulders and knees, many products come up short when protecting your back, chest and hips. And while a Darien suit might be OK for a serious dual-sport event or hot-season ride, you're going to look like a dork and be hotter than the devil.

Enter Forcefield Body Armour, a product of the UK ([www.forcefieldbodyarmour.com](http://www.forcefieldbodyarmour.com)). Positioned as leaders in soft armor technology, Forcefield believes body armor doesn't have to be hard, rigid and uncomfortable to wear. It's a great choice when you want to wear a ventilated offroad jersey.





The Forcefield Action Shirt features CE-approved armor in strategic locations and is designed to be worn together with the Forcefield Pro L2K back protector. Both fit neatly under a typical enduro jersey.

Forcefield sells two products that work well together, and can also be used separately to supplement your existing jacket.

The Forcefield Action Shirt provides protection for forearms, shoulders and chest. BeCool™ fabric provides greater diffusive area than standard fiber, ensuring higher levels of airflow to and from your body. Pockets in the shirt hold low profile Nitrex® CE-approved armor which can be removed for machine washing the shirt. Designed to be used in conjunction with any Forcefield back protector, it is available for \$225 at most stores in sizes X-Small, Small, Medium, Large and X-Large.

Forcefield's Pro L2K Back Protector is a great complement to the Action Shirt. Thin and flexible, it's constructed using Kevlar® thread for increased

strength and durability. Combined with NitrexEvo®, a high-tech triangulated shock absorbing material, the Forcefield Pro L2K back protector is designed to be soft, flexible and comfortable while providing impact protection for your spine, ribs and tailbone. It meets and exceeds the CE test EN1621-2:2003 Level 2. The Pro L2K is constructed in multiple layers that are stitched and perforated in such a way as to allow partial movement of the inner layers. This movement has a dual purpose, to make the protector more comfortable by allowing it to mold to the body shape and to pump air through the multiple perforations to ventilate your back when in use. Fully adjustable shoulder straps and double waist adjustment ensure a correct fit for different body shapes and sizes.

Sizes Available: Mens: Small, Medium and Large and Ladies for \$155 in most stores.