



MISTI HURST

MINI ROADRACING

THERE IS SOMETHING SO AMAZING ABOUT THE WAY THE WORLD WORKS. YOU WANDER DOWN A PATH, SOMETIMES BLINDLY, NOT KNOWING WHERE IT WILL TAKE YOU. SORT OF LIKE RIDING DOWN AN UNKNOWN ROAD JUST BECAUSE IT IS THERE, IT'S TWISTY, IT'S MYSTERIOUS, AND IT LOOKS FUN. YOU ENJOY THE JOURNEY BUT ARE NOT SURE WHERE THE FINAL DESTINATION REALLY IS, AND THEN SUDDENLY, YOU ARE THERE, RIGHT SMACK IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PLACE YOU WERE ALWAYS SUPPOSED TO END UP.

This recently happened to me and it was one of the coolest experiences of my life.

I love kids. I love kids so much that I spent four years of my life learning how to work with them, take care of them, counsel them, guide them, support them and teach them. In the year 2000, I graduated from the University of Victoria with a degree in Child and Youth Care and a fierce determination to make a difference in the lives of children but I didn't really know in what area, or in what capacity.

Shortly after that I became completely addicted to motorcycle riding and obsessed about racing and my life took an unexpected turn down a fast, twisty backroad in which only one thing mattered. Motorcycles! I fell in love with the sport and all other interests, including working with kids, faded into the background. I began riding every weekend, racing every other weekend and filling my time with anything and everything that had to do with bikes. Racing quickly led me to take some courses at the California Superbike School, which ended up in me getting a job there as a coach. Working as a coach has satisfied my passion for teaching as well as travel as I get to go all over North America and the world as part of the CSS team. Writing race reports on my website about my racing experiences got me involved with magazines and writing articles in the industry and all of this has led to quite the satisfying and exciting life within the motorcycle community.

Recently, however, I began to feel a little bit restless and somewhat empty, like something was missing. It took me a while to figure out what it was, and it finally came to me one day while I was riding a mini ATV with my niece and nephew. I missed working with kids. Here I was utilizing aspects of my schooling and all my experiences in the motorcycle industry to work with adults, which I love, but I started to ache for a chance to work with kids again. I thought about getting involved in a dirt bike school and teaching the little guys, or getting a part time job working with kids outside of the industry. What I really wanted was a way for all of it to fit together, a way for all of my passions, teaching, travel, writing, racing, kids and motorcycles to blend into one job, one way of life. Then an amazing thing happened.

I opened up my email one morning to find a note from Keith Code requesting my services as a coach for a private training day with an extremely successful motorcycle racer, nine year-old

Peter Lenz. Along with the request were a few photos of this kid, ripping around the track, in little leathers and an Arai helmet, knee down, at the apex, looking pretty darned fast, for a kid!

I could hardly believe it. Here was the missing piece to the puzzle, a way to work with kids in the motorcycle field, road racing of all things! Of course I would do it! I hadn't really seen kids riding small streetbikes, let alone racing them. I didn't really even know there was such a thing as road racing for kids.

I was thrilled to meet this kid and begin working with him. I drove down to a small go-cart track in Oregon, just south of Portland where I met with young Peter Lenz, his 2006 teammate Bennie Taylor (also 9 years old) and both of their families.

It was amazing watching these two kids fly around the track and exhibit some of the same riding techniques, skills and problems that I see every day with the adults that I work with. It was a similar observation that Keith Code had himself after working with the boys. He said to me, "I learned an enormous amount from coaching Peter and his teammate Bennie Taylor. Chief among them was the simple truth that good techniques that are flawlessly applied, build a solid foundation under any rider, young or old." Code also said, "What I was most surprised about was the single digit age bracket isn't immune to the identical problems that adults battle with. That was a big lesson. The rider is smaller, everything else is the same."

I spent the entire day working with both boys and found that the riding techniques, skills and concepts we teach adults are the very same, only the delivery had to be altered a little. What I found the most was that the kids were just as capable of understanding the riding concepts as the adults; only their attention span was just a bit shorter. I had to use methods such as drawing and demonstrating a little more and to make the information a little more fun to learn, with some games and play time, but other than that, I was able to help both Peter and Bennie change their riding for the better, and go faster around the track.

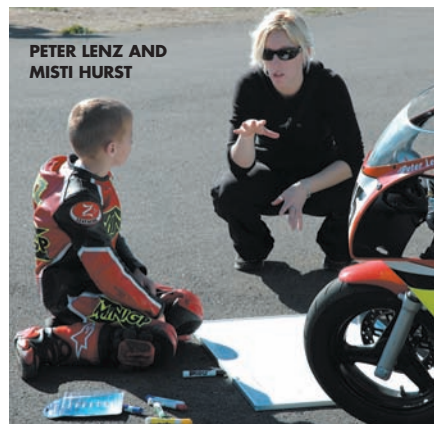


In fact, during the last race of 2006 Peter rode a new bike, a Pro-Circuit KTM 65SX Motard/Roadracer just one week after our private coaching session, and set a scorching time of 48.5 seconds, setting a new class record!

After the race Peter was interviewed for a press release and said, "Misti helped me go faster through the corners. I like working with her because she has a different style of teaching and she made understanding things easy. She was a great coach. I feel like I've known Misti a long time, she supports me when I have a race by calling me and going over our drills, and I usually win."

This was so cool for me and made me so proud of Peter. His statement got me thinking about continuing our coaching relationship, working with other kids, and pursuing the goal of coaching these up-and-coming riders through their racing careers.

Peter began riding at the age of five on a PW 50 and began racing shortly after, starting with pocketbikes and then moving to Mini GP and Mini Motard. In 2006, Peter won 40 races and 9 championship titles



PETER LENZ AND
MISTI HURST

across 4 countries and for 2007, Peter will ride for the Metrokit Canada Factory race team in the Canadian National Mini Roadracing Series aboard a Metrakit 50 and a Metrakit XL 80. I didn't even know that Canada had a National Mini Roadracing Series.

Again, it's funny how life works. Recently, and by recently, I mean two days ago, I was at Las Vegas Speedway with the California Superbike School for one of our two-day camps.

Sixteen year-old Charles Nalder (one of our students) and his non motorcycle-riding father, Scott Nalder, recognized me from this column in Motorcycle Mojo Magazine and said hello to me on the morning of the first day. They told me that they had been reading the articles in Mojo for the past year and a half and then mentioned that they also knew Peter Lenz from racing in Calgary. Small world.

Charles and Scott explained to me about the Western Canadian Mini Roadracing Series and the Alberta Mini Roadracing Association and they are both members.

The AMRA is a non-profit amateur roadracing organization that provides an introduction to the sport of motorcycle roadracing to riders of all ages, gender and abilities in a closed environment with a focus on safety, camaraderie and sportsmanship. The club has many classes to fit the needs and skills of all riders. Starting with 50 cc bikes for beginners and the youth class, that has recently been reduced to the starting age of 7, and

expanding up to 150 cc bikes.

Charles was at the California Superbike School to learn more skills and experience more formal training in the sport so he could ride and race even better. The school has an age requirement of 14 years and older for students and that particular school we had 16 year-old Charles and a 17 year-old rider named Coleman.

Charles told me that he lives in Okotoks, Alberta, and has been riding various motorcycles for the past 7 years. He started racing three years ago when he was 14 years old and currently competes in the Western Canadian Mini Roadracing series. He said with a huge grin on his face, "the series just recently got permission to allow children 7 years and over to enjoy the beginnings of a life changing experience, mini-roadracing. So, now we have even younger, smaller kids out there kicking our butts on the track."

Currently there are approximately 15 children between the ages of 7 and 10 years old that are active members of the Alberta Mini Roadracing Association (AMRA) and other 'mini' clubs in Western Canada.

Charles told me during a break at the track, "I absolutely love racing motorcycles because it allows me to relieve my 'need for speed' in a safe manner. With the exception of the California Superbike School, the only training I have received was a couple of test-and-tune track nights in Calgary where Clint McBain taught me, minimally, about threshold braking, and turn-in points. Everything else came from 3 years of trial



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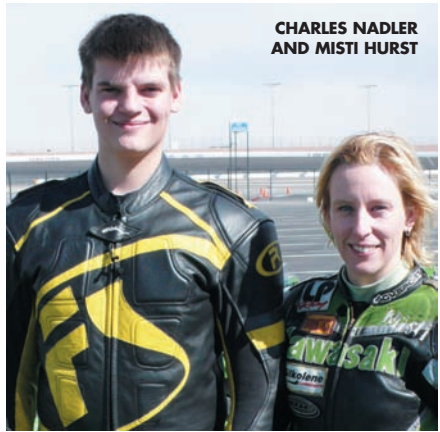
and error. The Superbike School helped to 'fine tune' those years of hard work. It has been extremely helpful to me because they gave me enough time to practice and perfect the skills they taught me." Although I wasn't working personally with Charles, it was a pleasure talking to him about the mini road racing series.

I think the idea of a mini road racing series for kids is an amazing concept and wish that I had been able to start this sport at a much younger age. I encourage all parents out there to investigate getting their kids involved in mini road racing, or dirtbike riding for their children. Working with Peter and Bennie, and meeting Charles and Coleman, I see a common drive, dedication and passion in them for the sport and think it helps to build confidence and self-assurance. For me it is the ultimate way to tie all my passions together and arrive decisively at the place where I truly think I belong.

I spoke to Scott Naldor for some time at the end of the school day. Some of the things he said about his experiences of being a part of the AMRA and having a son involved in road racing really made me smile.

"Once in a while we have stumbled on a moment of perfect wisdom for our family and it has turned into much more than we have any right to claim as our own." He said with a shy grin. "For Charles, we had one of those wise moments when we decided to let him try motorcycle road racing. It has given him a sense of satisfaction, pride and self-worth that no other activity has done.

**CHARLES NADLER
AND MISTI HURST**



The AMRA is a family oriented club that has welcomed us, showed us the way, and made it fun. I have no racing experience and no mechanical skill, but it is as much fun for me, the non-racing father, as it is for my racer son. I have no regrets." **MMM**
Cheers, Misti

Misti Hurst is a motorcycle racer, an instructor and a freelance writer. Visit her website at www.mistihurst.com
For more information on the Canadian Mini Road racing, visit the Alberta Mini Road racing Association at www.amra.ca. For information on Peter Lenz visit www.peterlenz.com.

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