



You go where you look: Lyle nails it during figure of eights



On the road for the first time (delivery van safely avoided)



Gheorghe and his pleasingly engaging style of instruction

[Skills]

Nothing like that first time...

Games console? Social media? Meh. Mike Armitage's son **Lyle** turns 16 and gets himself out riding instead

Words and photography Mike Armitage

Extracting teenagers from their beds is normally a tiresome, drawn-out event, usually involving daft threats and extended chuntering. Not today, mind. Despite it still being stupid o'clock - and despite the fact it's tipping it down - my youngest son Lyle is not only up on time but showered, dressed and fed... and pestering me to hurry up.

Such is the lure of two wheels. Lyle turned 16 a couple of weeks back and today he's booked in for his CBT - compulsory basic training. We've decided it'll be better if I don't misguide him by giving duff advice on a local car park beforehand; instead, he's heading to Phoenix Motorcycle Training as a pea-green newbie to learn from some grown-ups.

Except that, actually, Lyle is well prepped. It's almost 34 years since I did my (then newly

introduced) CBT and all I remember is razzing around a car park without a helmet on and not being able to answer Highway Code questions. Phoenix does things a tad better. They've worked with National Highways to develop an award-winning scheme called Ridefree. This has five online modules taken before CBT that cover hazard perception, clothing,

maintenance and much more - Lyle was sent a certificate on completion, meaning more time can be spent teaching on-road gubbins on the day. Excellent.

And so, after an initial chat and guidance, he's soon out on the expansive space at Phoenix's Milton Keynes centre. It's still tipping it down, but it doesn't seem to be quashing the enthusiasm of Lyle, the two folk who are doing their CBT alongside on 125s or instructor Gheorghe, who has a



Completing your CBT or Call of Duty? No contest...

pleasingly engaging and direct approach while still being, as my youngster puts it, 'surprisingly chilled'. After getting a nice gooey feeling at seeing his first few yards on a powered two-wheeler, it's fabulous watching him being guided properly through machine control, tight figure-of-eights, passing vehicles and more. Far better than having to endure me flailing my arms and yawping.

More classroom theory covering junctions and roundabouts is followed by more practical training, and with the rain finally abating it's on to the roads. Or it is for Lyle and one of the others. CBT might not be a 'test' as such, but you still need to be at a standard - and the third rider isn't. There's no 'that'll do' going on here, which as a parent is rather reassuring. Intercoms fitted, they're off with Lyle leading, so his 50cc Honda doesn't get left behind...

An hour or so later, and the sun breaking through the cloud isn't as bright as Lyle's beamer as he stands proud with his fresh CBT certificate. I don't think I've ever seen him so chuffed... and yes, there's that gooey feeling again. **MA**

From 16 to 60-year-olds

'Massive demand for bike training'

'It's mixed ages doing CBT,' says instructor Gheorghe Ganea-Misu. 'We can have 16-year-olds, or middle-aged people, or they can be in their 60s - they want to do a full licence, because they rode bikes years ago.'

'Some youngsters are doing it because they cannot drive a car and they want to commute to school, but lots are doing it because they want to be part of the biking world. They want an A2 licence and then a full A licence after that - there's an increase in young people who come to do CBT and have their mind set on a full licence. We're encouraging try-rides as well, where you come for an hour and see if it's for you - try before you buy - and then we can discuss CBT.'

'I'm training six days a week and we're booked months in advance. There's massive demand - and there was all through last winter as well. It's very reassuring. And I'm seeing a lot of female riders too - there's a real diversity of ages, sexes and cultures.'

» Phoenix is the largest bike training school in the UK, with 28 locations across the country covering everything from try-outs to advanced training. More info: phoenixmotorcycletraining.co.uk

