TMSF 2026 | Gas, Rubber, and Risk: Understanding the Real Cost of Motorcycle Tires

Speaker:
Daniel Hernandez
DBB Powersports – Motorcycle Tire Specialist, Round Rock, TX

Daniel Hernandez is the owner of DBB Powersports, a motorcycle service shop in Central Texas. Through his work, he serves riders as a consultant first, helping them make informed decisions about maintenance, upgrades, and how to spend their money effectively to keep their motorcycles safe and in good working order.

Having started riding at a young age, he developed a strong interest in maintaining and repairing motorcycles and has spent years working hands-on with riders across a wide range of experience levels. While his work covers many aspects of motorcycle ownership, this session focuses specifically on tire safety and helping riders better understand tire wear, replacement timing, and the real operating costs of riding.

Session Overview

- Most riders understand the basics: the motorcycle, protective gear, and some level of training
- This session focuses on what's often overlooked:
  Cost per mile of fuel vs. cost per mile of tires
- Tires are the **only point of contact** between the motorcycle and the road
- All performance—acceleration, braking, cornering—depends on tires
- Many riders delay replacing tires to "save money"

Key Idea

Tires are often seen as a large, unexpected expense instead of a **normal operating cost**, simply because of the time between replacements.

Introduction

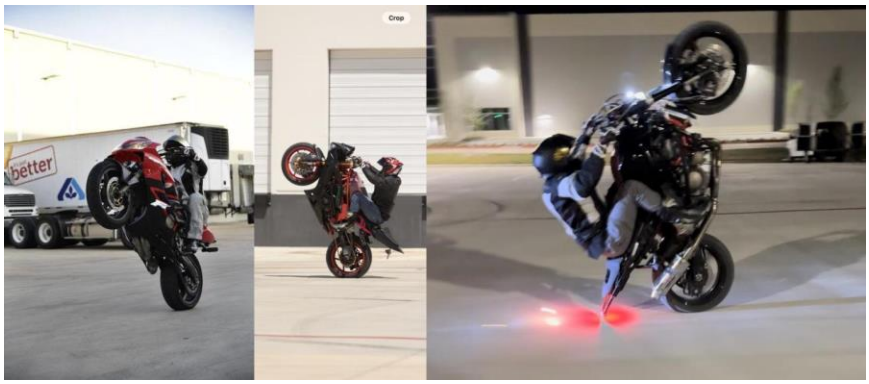
- Started riding and repairing motorcycles at age 12
- Experience across cruisers, sport bikes, track riding, and stunt riding
- Now services motorcycles and mounts tires professionally

Perspective:
"I've been the broke rider, the inexperienced rider, and now the professional responsible for the safety of others."

DBB Powersports Team

Tucker Klein

- Plays a key role in testing tires
- Handles most tire changes in the shop
- Helps fill knowledge gaps through hands-on experience

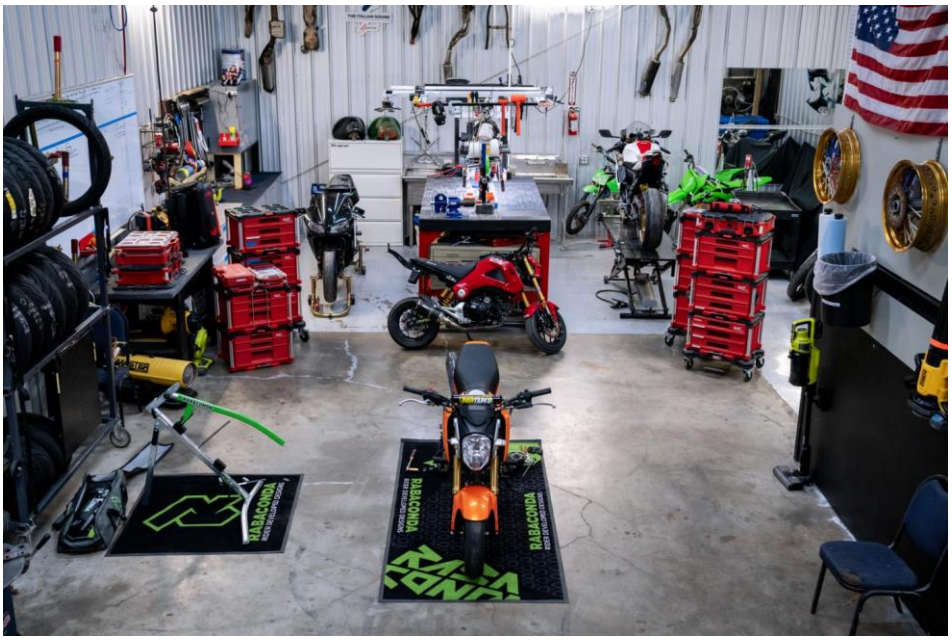


What Professionals See

In the Shop:

- New tires are often the biggest unexpected cost when acquiring bikes
- Tires used **well past safe age**, even when they appear “new”
- Maintenance delayed until urgent or catastrophic:
    - Cords showing
    - Flats
    - Tire-related crashes

- Riders are often surprised by replacement costs and forced into rushed decisions



Why This Happens:

- Riders don’t mentally budget for tires
- Focus tends to be on upgrades:
    - Exhaust
    - Fairings
    - LED lighting
    - Cosmetic additions

The Core Concept

Every ride consumes:

- **Fuel (gasoline)**
- **Tires (rubber)**

If you’re not using your tire effectively, you’re not fully using your fuel—and vice versa.

Also consuming:

- Chain and sprockets
- Brake pads
- Oil and filters
- Grips

Marcus's Tires

Most people wish they could use this much of their tire.

Only 1 2in spot of this tire has been worn, likely due to locking up in one spot. You wouldn't see this compromised situation if you weren't frequently inspecting your bike.

"New" 80% Sides but 0% on the middle.

Cost Per Mile Breakdown

300cc-500cc Sport Bikes (Ninja 400, R3, CBR300R, RC390, RS457)

TIRES:

- Typical Tire Set Cost: $250–$500 avg =~$400
- Typical Tire Life: 5,000-10,000 miles (about 2500 more than a "big bike" on avg)

FUEL:

- Typical Fuel Capacity/Tank: 2.5-4gal =~ 3.5gal avg @$3.50 =~**$12**

- Typical MPG: 40-70mpg Therefore = Mileage: 3.5gal @ ~50mpg = **175 miles**

Cost per mile

- **Tires:** $400/7500mile = $0.053 per mile or **~5cents/miles**
  Fuel: $12/175 = $0.069 per mile **~7cents/mile**

600cc–1000cc Sport Bikes

TIRES:

- Typical tire set: $300–$650 = ~**$500**
- Typical tire life: 2500-7500 miles = ~**5000 miles**

FUEL:

- Typical Fuel Capacity 4-5.3gal =~4.5gal @$3.50/gal = **$15.75**
- Typical MPG: 30-45mpg =~35mpg Therefore Mileage =~**157.50 miles**

Cost per mile

- **Tires:** $500/5000miles = $0.10 per mile or **10cents/mile**
- **Fuel:** $15.75/157.50 = $0.10 per mile or **10cents/mile**

Simple Takeaway for Riders

- For many sport bikes, tire cost can approach fuel cost per mile.
- Sometimes customers get upset that they "still have tread" but down the middle it's very close to being at 0%.

Simple explanation instructors/riders can use...

Every ride consumes:

- Gas
- Tires
- Brake pads
- Chain life

Tires are not a surprise expense.
They are part of the cost of riding—and a matter of personal responsibility.

Real Story: Save $40... Spend $1,500+

One time, I tried to stretch my tire life a little longer by slapping on an old take-off from when I swapped to some fresh Pirelli Supercorsas. I had burned through those in six months or less, so I figured I'd run my old tire for a few more weeks until I could afford a new one (~$225 at the time). Less than a month later, I crashed in the dumbest way possible (User error) and had to replace my gas tank, front fairings, headlight assembly, and rear cowl—over $1500 in parts alone. And that's not even counting labor (though I did all the work myself).

After the dust settled, I did the math. I was trying to save about **$20** by delaying my new tire purchase for the tire change.

Let's break it down:

- The average tire lasts **3,000–10,000 miles** for most riders.
- Even a common/moderately expensive tire (~$400) costs **4 cents per mile** at 10,000miles or **13 cents per mile** at 3,000miles.
- I rode maybe **300-400 miles ($39-$52 worth of tire life)** before crashing. If I had stretched it to **500-1,000 miles**. (Subtract the labor cost of doing the tire change, $30 wheel off bike), I would've "saved" $**130** at most in best case scenario.

Was it worth it??? H*ll No!

I knew the tire was old. I knew it was colder outside. I even noticed the pressure was slightly low before I left (Sluggish turning), but I was in a rush and didn't feel like running

back inside for the air pump. "I'll take it easy. We're just going into town to _____." I thought I was being careful. I crashed going **~15 mph in town.**

Could I have gone even slower? Sure. Now I know **just how much slower** you need to be on old tires. Lesson learned, and hopefully, you don't have to pay the price I did.

What's the REAL Cost?

My wife and I started riding together when we were younger, and we spent a lot of time riding two-up. That experience taught me early on that every decision on the bike affects more than just the rider.

This is my family. Now replace them with yours. Your loved ones and dependents expect you to think ahead and make responsible decisions.

No cost associated with riding, maintenance, or repairs will ever compare to the cost of having to tell someone that something went wrong. I've been fortunate to avoid serious

accidents, but the responsibility that comes with riding, especially with someone else on the bike, is always there.

Conclusion/Questions

- Sportbikes vs Cruisers
- Ways to stay safe and SAVE $
    - Keep a tire gauge on the bike (Push Test) QT has free air most of the time.
    - Plan ahead and get the correct tire for your needs (Harder center and softer sides)
    - Fork setting/suspension setup/leaking forks or brakes.
- We can talk about patching/repairing tires. See "Why we can't patch your tires as professionals." Talk about DIY Plugs as well.
- Types of customers we see vs the riders that you may know.
- How can we help new riders think of budgeting and relating things to gas/gas tanks? (Chain maintenance every other gas tank)
- Relates to saving lives and how going beyond the basics is the first start.
- Come and use the durometer against the tires we have on display.


Dunlop TT93 GP →
Kenda KD2 →
Kenda Kozmik →
Kenda Small Block →
Kenda BIG Block →