2026

Texas Motorcycle Safety Forum

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SAN MARCOS, TEXAS

Texas A&M Transportation Institute

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Save a Life™ Texas Department of Transportation

Texas Motorcycle Safety Coalition



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

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

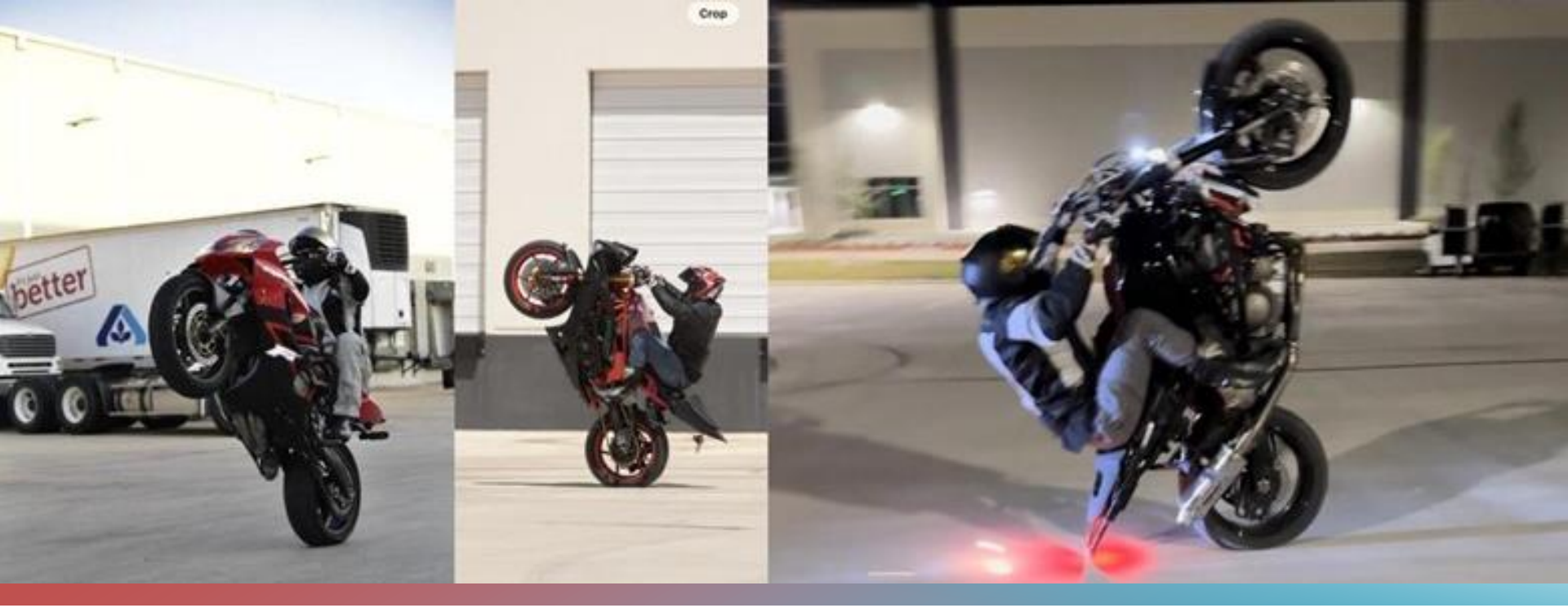
INTRODUCTION

About the Speaker

Daniel Hernandez

- Grew up riding and repairing motorcycles at 12yrs old.
- Experience across cruisers, sport bikes, track, and stunt riding.
- Now responsible for servicing motorcycles and mounting tires professionally.

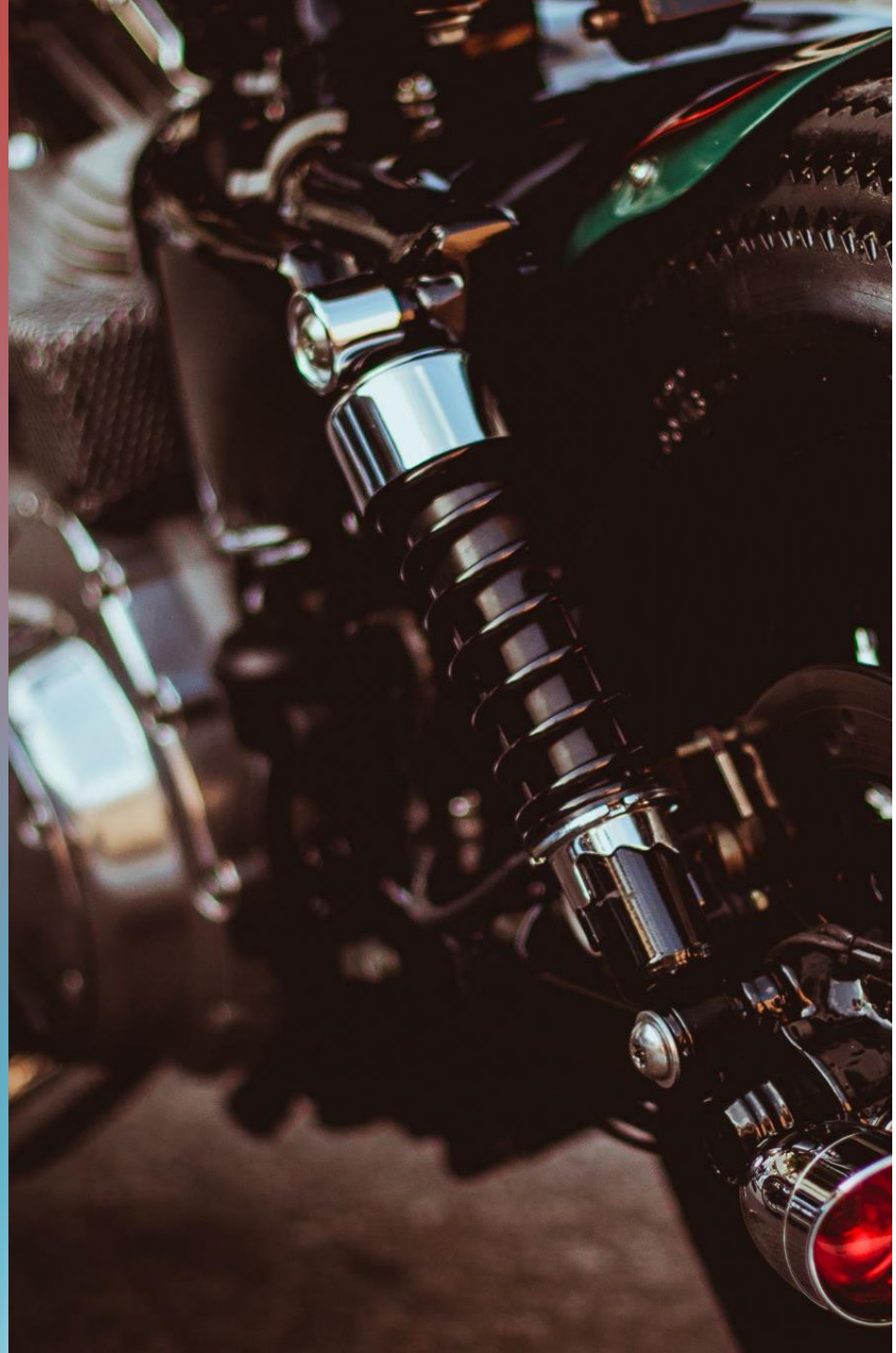
I’ve been the broke rider, the inexperienced rider, and now the professional, responsible for the safety of others.



About DBB Powersports Team

Tucker Klein

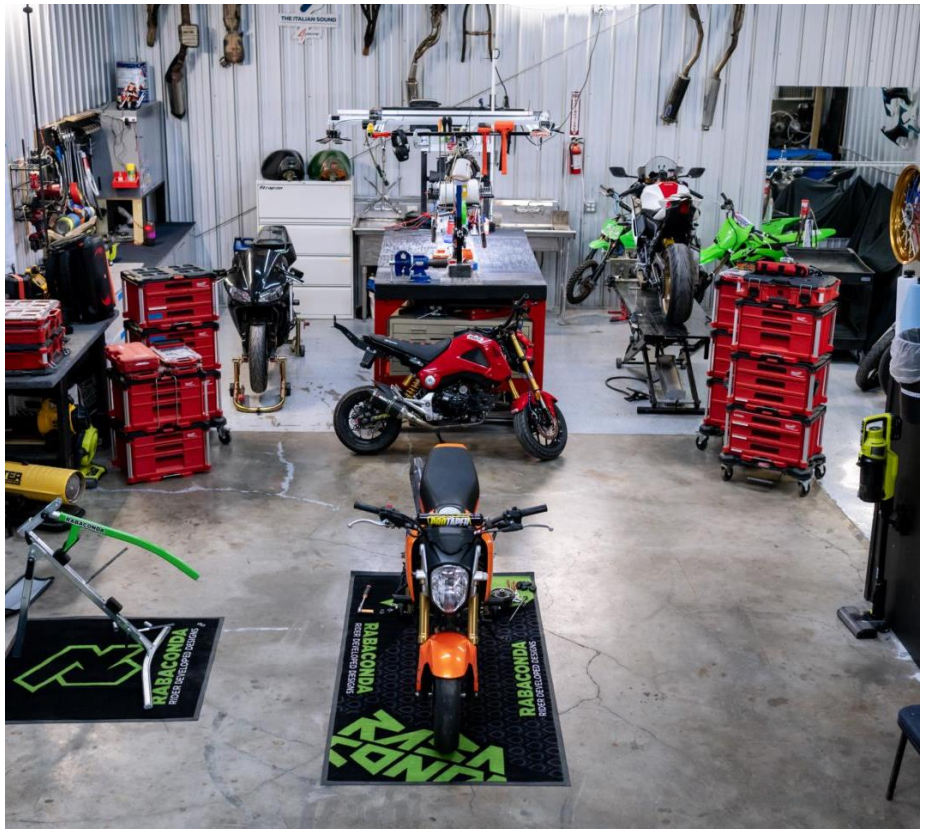
Tucker has had a big impact on filling the gaps in my knowledge and is our main tester of the tires and handles most of the tire changes in the shop.



Key Ideas

- Most riders understand the basics: the motorcycle, protective gear, and some level of formal training
- This session focuses on something often overlooked: **cost per mile of fuel vs cost per mile of tires**
- Tires are the only part of the motorcycle in contact with the road
- Regardless of bike type, gear, or upgrades, all performance depends on the tire
- Many riders delay replacing tires to “save money”

Riders often see tires as a **large, unexpected bill** instead of a **normal operating expense** because of the time delay in between sets.



WHAT PROFESSIONALS SEE...

What we see in the shop as Professionals

When buying bikes for our dealership, the biggest $ suck was if we had to put new tires on a bike.

Tires running well past their safe age, even while they look "brand new".

Maintenance is delayed until it becomes urgent/an emergency (cords showing, flats, crash due to tire issues)

Riders are surprised by the tire replacement cost.

- **Why this happens**
  - Most riders do not mentally budget for tires. We think and research the upgrades like exhaust, fairings, LED Lights, and flashy bits.
- **The Core Concept**
  - Every ride consumes two things:
  - Rubber/Tires: (If you aren't using all of your tire, you aren't using the fuel to its full potential.)
  - Gasoline (If you aren't at full throttle, you aren't using the fuel to its full potential.)
  - Honorable mentions: Chain and sprockets, brake pads, oil and filters, grips, etc.

Marcus's Tires Example

Most people wish they could use this much of their tire

Only one 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.

CALCULATING COST PER MILE

300cc–500cc Bike	600cc–1000cc Sport Bike
TIRES	**TIRES**
• Tire Cost: $250–$500 (~$400 avg)	• Tire Cost: $300–$650 (~$500 avg)
• Tire Life: 5,000–10,000 miles (~7,500 miles avg)	• Tire Life: 2,500–7,500 miles (~5,000 miles avg)
FUEL	**FUEL**
• Fuel Capacity: 3.5 gal avg @ $3.50 = $12.00	• Fuel Capacity: 4.5 gal avg @ $3.50 = $15.75
• Mileage: ~50 MPG (175 miles)	• Mileage: ~35 MPG (157.5 miles)
Cost Per Mile Comparison	
• Tires: $0.053 per mile *(5 cents/mile)*	• Tires: $0.10 per mile *(10 cents/mile)*
• Fuel: $0.069 per mile *(7 cents/mile)*	• Fuel: $0.10 per mile *(10 cents/mile)*

Calculation: $/Mile

Example: 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**

Calculation: $/Mile

Example: 600cc–1000cc Sport Bikes

- **TIRES:**
  - Typical tire set: $300–$650 = **~$500**
  - Typical tire life: 2500-7500 miles = **~5000 miles**
- **FUEL:**
  - Typical Fuel Capacity/Tank: 4-5.3gal =~4.5gal @$3.50/gal = **$15.75**
  - 30-45mpg =~35mpg

  Therefore Mileage = **~157.50 miles**

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

Calculation: $/Mile

- 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 burns:
  - Gas
  - Rubber
  - Brake pads
  - Chain life
- Tires are not a surprise expense. They are part of the cost of riding.

Story Time
Save $40... Spend $1500+

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 Woth it?

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 is 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

- 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.