



GUEST COLUMN

Rob Colbourn

Advanced driving instructor Rob Colbourn offers his thoughts on the will to learn and how it can make your driving complete

How would you rate your driving skill out of 10? Perhaps 9, or 8? Anyone gone any lower than a 6? Probably not, yet we all see sub-standard driving when we're out on the road – so where are all the below-average drivers? Statistically we can't honestly believe that none of them are driving 911s. Vehicle repair centres across the land would testify to that...

Now, this is looking dangerously like I'm about to alienate many a reader by insinuating you don't know what you're doing, so would it help if I tell you I'm probably only an 8? I also realise that last omission might not exactly convince you to give me a call and book an advanced driving course – I'm only an 8 out of 10 after all. So let me reassure you and point out that my 8 would be better than your 10 anyway, so I'm worth it! Arrogant? Of course, that's why I'm an 8. I'm only human and can make a mistake, which is why I'm not a 9. And you can't be a 10 without admitting that you have nothing left to learn, and once you tell yourself that, you've proven yourself to be an amateur that lacks imagination.

I have learnt my craft as an advanced driving instructor from a bewildering array of different people and scenarios in life, all of which have had some effect on my approach to driving and teaching but above all, learning. One particularly talented driver springs to mind when I think about reaching for the highest of standards in your own driving, and that is Jackie Stewart. He writes in one of his many books that it was entering the 1973 season when he felt he had finally reached a 'fundamental grasp of the basics,' his words not mine. This is truly fascinating when you appreciate that he actually held two World F1 Championship titles at the end of the 1972 season! So what made him think he didn't have that understanding after his first title win? I've never spoken to him but I'm fairly confident that he would say his experience and skill naturally developed over time and that the better he became, the more his humility grew.

In my opinion this has to be true. I'd go as far as to say that if he hadn't reached a level of humility that led to such a statement, he would never have reached the heights he did. You have to accept that you don't know it all in order to



keep pursuing more knowledge and experience. Without that desire you'll never improve, and that absolutely rings true with the art of driving.

Another inspiration for me is Bruce Lee. Yes, the famous martial artist; he is the most complete example of a student I have ever come across. Again, I have never met the man but reading some of his books has been the making of me as an instructor, because he gives such clarity on the topic of taking in new knowledge and assimilating it with the old. There are several great quotes from him that resonate with me as a driver, an instructor and a human being, one of which hails from his book *Striking Thoughts*, which perhaps resonated with me most: "Absorb what is useful, discard what is useless, add what is uniquely your own."

So the original question I asked you actually bears little to do with your own driving skills. Moreover, it's about rating your humility and desire to learn – it's about acknowledging that

there is always something to learn if you have the will to seek it out.

The point is, it's easy to chase the latest Porsche in order to be faster, or we may turn to modifying our 911s as an alternative: remove weight, boost power. Really though, the best and often most cost-effective way of ensuring you are both faster and safer in your Porsche is not by investing further in your car, but in yourself. It's here, in this department, where myself (or any other instructor, for that matter) can help you extract more from your own Porsche 911 driving experience than any new technological acronym-laden purchase.

As for my personal assessment of '8 out of 10,' a final quote from an interview with Bruce Lee about how good he thought he was: "If I tell you, you'll think I'm boasting, but if I say I'm not that good, well then you'll know I'm lying." **911**

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