

A KID In a CANDY STORE

*Motorcycle Enthusiast Terry Pendleton
Enjoys Off Day By Touring Harley-Davidson Factory*



THE BRAVES' off day in Washington on April 28 (created by the game originally scheduled for that day being moved to Mar. 30 for the opening of Nationals Park) was the kind of off day that baseball players loathe. The rain came in gusts, didn't let up, and foiled many players' golfing plans.

Hitting coach Terry Pendleton had plans of a different sort - to join a local rider for a motorcycle excursion out of D.C. and toward the Chesapeake Bay. He'd packed his helmet, gloves and black Harley-Davidson boots for the Braves' road trip that began April 25 in New York, but to his dismay, his plans were called off, as well.

"I would have ridden in this," said Pendleton, looking out a car window at the dreary weather.

Instead, he took another kind of trip - one that he's wanted to do for years. He took the 90-mile journey from Washington to the Harley-Davidson Vaughn L. Beals Tour Center in York, Penn. Wearing his riding boots, Harley shirt and jeans, the former

The road test actually occurs on a test bay in the factory. A rider places the bike on steel rollers and rides for two minutes, reaching 90 mph. He checks the engine, transmission and electrical system, and typically rides 40 to 50 new bikes a day.

"Now that's a good job," said Pendleton, who is in his seventh season as the Braves' hitting coach. "I would do that all winter for free."

The motorcycle bug was planted in Pendleton, 47, when he was growing up in Southern California. His grandfather, who rode a Honda and was part of a local motorcycle club, used to put Pendleton on the back of his bike and take off for short rides.

"That got my juices flowing," Pendleton said. "Then I got into football and basketball, and I never really thought about riding a motorcycle again."

In the winter of 1986, when he was playing for the St. Louis Cardinals, Pendleton went home to California and rode his god brother's bike, and that's when he realized one day he'd have a motorcycle of his own.



MELANIE D. G. KAPLAN

Braves third baseman (1991-94, '96) and 1991 National League MVP and batting champ escaped the downpours in the Harley-Davidson factory showroom, where he sat on (and looked longingly at) several 2008 models. Then Pendleton toured the manufacturing facility.

Don, the guide, took a small group around the factory floor, past robot-operated stations that press out fenders and polish footboards. Pendleton saw where all Harley "jiffy stands," or kickstands, are made, how the fuel tanks are trimmed and welded, and where the chrome parts are produced.

"Bikes are sent all over the world from this factory," Don said, walking the group past the 48-station assembly line, where shiny new bikes hung from J-hooks. The line moves at a rate of six feet every minute, and at the end, each bike is road tested - the final inspection before it's sent to a dealer.

Pendleton tries on some new Harleys for size during an off day visit to the company's factory and tour center in York, Pa. He says his custom Bourget Fat Daddy Beach Cruiser (L) "shows a little more rebel in me."

Yet he also knew that one day would be years away - because active Major League Baseball players are prohibited from riding motorcycles, per their contracts.

However, after Pendleton retired following the 1998 season, he was free to ride, even after he signed on as a Braves coach in 2002. He and his wife Catherine (who had ridden mopeds as a teenager) took a riding class during the winter of 2000. Pendleton had just bought a black Harley-Davidson Road King Classic 1600 the week before from a dealer in Marietta, Ga. Catherine was three months pregnant with their third child.

"Since then, it's been like an addiction," Pendleton said. "I have an itch, and I have to get out (riding)."

ALUSON SHREFFS

The couple rides together (on his bike, although Catherine has her own) every once in a blue moon, but for Pendleton, the motorcycle is mostly a means of transportation and a way to escape.

He rides 70 miles round-trip from his home in Snellville, east of Atlanta, to Turner Field and back, and also rides into the Georgia mountains with friends when he has time (Florida Marlins manager Fredi Gonzalez, the Braves former third base coach, is a regular riding buddy). The day after Thanksgiving and New Year's Day are traditional riding days for the crew.

"We don't do it for the adrenaline rush like some guys," he said. "We do it for relaxation."

Pendleton rides his Harley and a Bourget's Fat Daddy Beach Cruiser, which he said is a totally different ride.

"The Road King is like sitting in a lounge chair," he said. "The Bourget's custom shows a little more rebel in me, and people stop to look at it. It's a whole different flair."

The custom, which was built in six months at Bourget's Bike Works in Phoenix (and was back at the factory for maintenance when this story was reported), is a deep candy apple red and has a picture of Catherine and their three children (Stephanie, Terry and Trinity) painted on the rear fender. Pendleton said it's the most expensive toy he's ever bought.

Although riding doesn't get in the way of Pendleton's coaching, former Braves president Stan Kasten, now president of the Washington Nationals, used to let Pendleton know how he felt

about motorcycles.

"He got on me about riding all the time," Pendleton said. "He'd say, 'You're going to get hurt on that thing.' And I'd say, 'Stan, let's be positive.'"

Players and coaches are expected to wear a collared shirt when they go to Turner Field, so Pendleton wears a heavyweight Harley-Davidson collared shirt when he rides to the ballpark. He parks his bike in the tunnel behind the right-field bleachers, where the grounds crew keeps its equipment.

During spring training, players tend to envy Pendleton's freedom to ride. He takes his bikes to Florida in a trailer and said he's out the door on his way to the ballpark at Disney's Wide World of Sports, helmet strapped, at 4:45 a.m. Conveniently, Daytona Beach Bike Week coincides with spring training, so Pendleton turns down offers to tee up in his spare time and heads to the bike show.

"They just can't get me to play golf," he said. "No, thanks. On the bike, I can just disappear."

But there's one ride Pendleton hopes to take that puts him smack in the center of the limelight, instead of outside it. Bobby Cox told Pendleton during the 2004 season that when the team goes to the World Series the next time, he can ride one of the motorcycles in the police escort, from Turner Field to the airport.

"That would be my dream," Pendleton said. "Not just to ride the bike, but because we're in the Series."



Pendleton, the 1991 National League MVP and batting champ, demos his bike for the ChopTalk camera outside his Snellville home.