



## **FITNESS PROGRAMS AND THEIR BENEFITS TO THE SPORT OF ATVING**

**BY COACH MARC SPATARO**

Every form of ATV racing has seen a steady increase of participants in the last five years. Manufacturers are producing race ready quads that can be purchased, modified minimally, and taken to the race-track. This has allowed for greater competition and has opened the door for opportunities such as sponsorships and national and international recognition. These high stake offerings have allowed the ATV athlete to become more aware of the importance of staying in shape in order to be highly competitive.

ATV racing and riding is a physical sport and hobby requiring strength, balance, flexibility, and coordination. Like other sports, training can be an important tool to improve one's abilities out on the track or trail. With increased strength, endurance, and flexibility, maneuvering an ATV becomes more enjoyable and safer. Whether you are a professional racer, recreational racer, or weekend warrior, a proper physical fitness program can enhance your riding potential and provide countless hours of fun.

Exercise is a science with many philosophies and disciplines, so choosing the correct way to train for a specific sport can be difficult. My goal is to educate and help racers and riders through articles like this one, so that the right programs can be chosen and practiced with good direction from fitness professionals.

Traditional exercises over the last 25 years have focused on training specific body parts and typically perform exercises in a single plane of motion, which is an unnatural form of movement for the human body. Single plane exercises can lead to imbalances in the body reinforcing poor motor skills and injuries. Single plane exercises are good for increasing strength and causing muscular hypertrophy but do not enhance human movement or performance. An example of a single plane movement would be a standing bicep curl.

Functional training is a method of training where the workouts compliment the movements and tasks being performed while participating in the sport. Functional training provides improved muscular balance and joint stability, helping to improve performance and eliminate the number of injuries sustained while participating in that

sport. All functional movements involve acceleration, deceleration, and stabilization. This method of training allows the exercises being performed to utilize all three anatomical planes of motion: frontal, sagittal, and transverse. An example of a functional movement would be a lateral step press.

Atving is a full body activity requiring all aspects of human movement to be functioning at the same time. Training for a sport like this requires multiple movement exercises involving all of the bodies systems including: cardiovascular, respiratory, muscular, and nervous systems. Program design should include movements that simulate movements while riding an ATV. Examples of these would be wait shifting from side to side, pushing and pulling while moving up and down, and pushing and pulling while moving side to side. Effective programs will incorporate multiple exercises, performed in circuit style fashion, varying the speed and tempo, which in return will help to develop all of the bodies systems.

Programs should be integrated, having a variety of exercises challenging balance, reaction time, flexibility, strength, and power. Integration methods serve as a beneficial tool by keeping the workouts from becoming repetitive and boring, allowing the athlete new challenges each workout.

Progression is the next important component of a successful program. Progressive training ensures there is a steady increase in strength and energetic output from one workout to the next. This method will guarantee positive results as long as the athlete is consistent with his or her training.

Structured programs should be periodized. Periodization is a technique used to cycle workouts throughout the year based on the athlete's schedule. This method not only helps the athlete to peak for optimal results, but also factors in time for rest and recovery.

The final and most important part of any fitness program is that it has to be individualized. Each and every one of us is different, and participating in a sport and hobby such as atving can lead to injuries. This is why it is very important to work with a qualified, experienced, and well-educated fitness professional. The fitness professional should also have knowledge of the sport and hobby, hopefully participating in it as well. There are all levels of education in the physical fitness profession. There are certifications that only take a few weeks to obtain and there are college degrees and certifications that take several years to achieve. Your best bet is to choose a professional with the latter. Degrees in exercise and physiology, kinesiology, physical therapy, and certified strength and conditioning coaches are good examples of education to consider when choosing a fitness professional to work with. Continued education is also an important factor as well, exercise is a science that keeps evolving as more is learned about the human body. In my 24 years of working out I have witnessed the evolution of training and can tell you from first hand experience that what is excepted as current philosophies today could very well change tomorrow due to new findings.

The added benefits of a individualized, well structured, physical fitness program can be extremely rewarding no matter what level rider you may be. These benefits will not only play an important part of your chosen sport but will also improve other aspects of your life.

