



Preventing Injuries while Racing and Riding Motorcycle and ATVs By Coach Marc Spataro

The other day I was asked by one of my racers if there was anything he could do in order to prevent injuries from occurring during racing. After some thought and a little research into some of my strength and conditioning journals I came up with the following information that I feel is essential to anyone who participates in atv racing or riding.

While it is not possible to prevent all injuries that occur during exercise and racing/riding, research has shown that injury can be reduced as much as 25% if precautions are taken. Proper conditioning for your sport is essential for injury prevention. Sport specific conditioning programs focus on strengthening the muscles and joints that perform complex and repetitive movements during that specific activity. As stated in my previous article it is important that the program be specific to the individual performing it. I recommend a personal physical assessment be performed by a fitness professional to reassure that the proper exercises chosen are strengthening the weakness found during the assessment. Once you know your current level of fitness, as well as your weaknesses, you can develop a more functional training routine.

Warm ups play a very important part of injury prevention. Warm muscles and joints are less susceptible to injuries. Warm ups should include movements that compliment the athletic activity to be performed. Active stretches as well as static stretches should also be included in the warm up. Incorporate light cardiovascular exercises to elevate body temperature and prepare the heart and lungs for the activities to be performed.

The athlete should avoid engaging in the sport when experiencing fatigue or pain. Performing under these conditions is a set up for a careless injury. Pain is an indicator that there is a problem. There are times when you have to recognize the signs that the body is sending and decide not to engage in the activity, which may enforce the injury further. **Joint pain, tenderness at a specific point, reduced range of motion, swelling, comparative weakness, and numbness and tingling** are all signs that should make the athlete aware that there is a problem. If experiencing any of these symptoms I recommend seeing a medical professional for further evaluation.

Fatigue can reduce reaction time, which could possibly create an error in performance resulting in a serious injury. Rest is one of the most important parts to any athletes program. Studies have shown that athletes with high consecutive days of training, experience more injuries. While many athletes think the more they train, the better they will perform, this is a misconception. Rest can make you stronger, prevent injuries, reduce fatigue, and decrease poor judgment. Again listen to your body, if you feel tired or weak take a day or two off and reduce activity and get some sleep.

Nutrition has a dramatic effect on the body and how it recovers from sports, training, and injuries. Supplying the body with nutrients and hydration helps the recovery rate from training and injury by assuring that the proper building blocks are there to help. A well-hydrated body also performs better reducing the chances of injury. Individualized nutrition programs are the foundation to any successful athletic program. Invest in one of these programs and you will see just how quickly your physique and performance change.

The last and absolute most important thing you can do to prevent injury is wear appropriate protective gear and equipment. Helmets, gloves, goggles, boots, pants, and jerseys are all common items worn by racers and riders. Every time I go to the races I am so surprised by the amount of riders who do not wear elbow and knee-pads, kidney belts, chest protectors, mouth guards, and the all new Leat-Brace (neck protector). I have heard numerous excuses as to why a racer has chosen not to wear such sound equipment and my response is a little discomfort is better than a crushed knee or elbow. Now that is really discomfoting! Do yourself a favor if you are one of those who does not use any of the listed items, purchase some and get use to wearing them, they absolutely will prevent injury!

Keeping yourself safe not only is good for you but good for our sport. The number of atv and motorcycle injuries increases each year because of the numerous people who do not take the proper precautions to protect themselves while riding. These injuries get recorded and have a direct impact on all of us, such as the limited amount of land to ride on, the high cost of medical and atv/motorcycle insurance, as well as the general publics opinions on the safety of our sport. Help to keep our sports future a bright one, practice the information provided and ride safe so that you can ride another day.

Coach Marc Spataro can help you improve your results on and off the track visit him at www.motoprotraining.com!

