

## NOT REAL ATHLETES?

**I**'m going to vent about something I hear a lot: "Motorsport athletes are not real athletes."

My name is Greg Hammond, and I work in the Motor/Action Sports Training department at Concept2. We manufacture indoor rowers, and our machines have been a staple of elite athletes' workout programs for almost 30 years. As someone who works with both professional and Olympic athletes on a regular basis I can say, without a doubt, that motorsports athletes are, in fact, real athletes.

Recently, many riders in motorsports have been training with rowing machines. In my 15 years at Concept2, I've had the chance to work with Olympic gold medalists, professionals from numerous disciplines of traditional sports, mixed martial arts fighters and IndyCar drivers. In my experience those who participate in motocross, supercross, GNCC, WORCS or desert racing can and often do test among the best in our human performance lab (think a dyno for humans). Not only does their performance in the gym equal that of other athletes, but the conditions in which they compete are often more stressful, more dangerous and overall more demanding. Take the 2008 Daytona Supercross mudfest, for instance. What racers went out and competed in on that day is the equivalent of loading an Olympic rower's boat with rocks the day of the race and telling him or her to have fun and race smooth!

There are racers out there coming off as punks, trouble-makers or even stuck-up rock stars, but one thing's for sure despite their attitude: If they're racing at this level, they have the dedication and drive to succeed in anything. I've seen this firsthand from both sides of the sport.

PHOTO: GREG HAMMOND



Anyone who wants to see what it takes to succeed in our sport needs only to visit the Millsaps Training Facility in Georgia. Those kids ride hard and train even harder. I also get calls on a regular basis from privateers using our rowers telling me how much they ride and train. Trust me, they rival any NCAA athlete.

So the next time someone looks down their nose at you when you're tired, sore and exhausted from your latest ride, ask him or her this:

"How do you think you'd feel after pegging your heart rate at 180 while flying through the air? Do you think your brain could comprehend where to land and what line to take off the next jump? And do you think, even in the first few minutes of competition, that you could handle a couple dozen other guys in your face doing the exact same thing?"

They may not get the point, but it's worth a shot. If they still don't believe you, have them call me.

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