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'07 OMA CHAMPION
ANDY LAGZDINS

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How to: Grass Track Sections

Our own '07 OMA ATV Champion, Andy Lagzdins gives his expertise on the how to conquer the grass track sections with ease and speed.

Most cross country courses include a grass track section or two, and they can offer opportunities to make passes and make time on the competition if you take the time to familiarize yourself with the basics of flat land racing techniques.

When setting up your quad for a race, take into account the amount of grass track and flat turn sections that there are on the course. Your quad is going to handle best on flat turns if it is low to the ground and as wide as possible. If the track is not known for rutting out real bad, and the ground is basically hard-packed, it is a good idea to drop the ride height of your machine by reducing the spring preload on your shocks. If the majority of the track is open with very little tight woods, I change the spacing on my rear axle to get a little bit of extra width for more stable cornering. Most racers don't have the luxury of having multiple choices of tires before a race, but the best tire for grass track is a small diameter, flat profile tire without a lot of deep tread on the outer edge. A short tire will lower the ride height a little, the flat tread surface will give the biggest contact patch for more traction, and the absence of big edge knobbies will help make the quad a more predictable slider.

The fastest way through a flat turn is to come into the turn on the outside, swing a smooth arc that puts you all the way inside at the midpoint, accelerate as soon as possible, and end up on the outside edge of the track. Making a wide radius will allow you to keep a higher speed through the turn, which lets you enter the turn without slowing down as much and gives you a higher speed on the following straightaway. This is how it should be done in every turn, but most of the time there are other factors involved such as other riders and obstacles located in the turn. If you get into a turn only to spot something in your path, such as a deep hole or a spun out rider, avoid chopping the throttle. Stay on the gas, and try to make the smallest change possible to your line. The goal is to keep your speed up through the turn. If you are trying to pass another rider, and he knows you are there, he will more than likely try to protect the inside line by entering the turn on the inside, which will put him on the outside when he exits the turn. If he goes to the inside, go wide and make your arc so that you will end up on the inside coming out of the turn and hopefully have an advantage into the next turn.

Knowing when to let off the throttle and still be able to make the turn is one of those things that you can only learn by riding your quad and knowing it well enough that you have confidence to brake later than the next guy. If you have been battling with another rider for several minutes, and feel that you are capable of more than just matching his braking points, get as close as you can to him on a straightaway, and when he goes for the brakes wait that extra nano-second and then grab your brakes. It's amazing how much distance you can gain by holding out just a split-second longer before hitting the binders.

If the grass track is wet from rain, or even condensation, be extra careful the first lap. The time it takes to recover from a spin out is way longer than being a bit careful. Some courses will have very few passing opportunities except for the grass track sections, so be ready to make a move on someone before you even get there. If you are behind a couple of lappers in a tight section, and you know the grass track is coming, plan your moves ahead of time. Know which line you are going to use whether he goes left or right, or even tries to race you. If you are battling a rider close to your speed, back off him a little leading up to the open area, and then go maximum speed right before the tree line. If you get the timing just right you will burst out of the woods with unexpected momentum and hopefully catch and pass the surprised rider.

The great thing about learning to ride grass track sections is that it is easy to find places to practice your technique, but I highly recommend not using golf courses, sod farms, or your parents' back yard! Take some time to learn the basics and you'll be looking forward to hitting the green stuff every lap.

