

New Speedwerx Kits Make The Thundercat Roar

Story by Gary Gustafson

Speedwerx was founded by championship snowmobile racer Steve Houle as "Hot Seat Performance" in 1993. As the company approaches its 15th anniversary in business, it continues to deliver a full range of Polaris and Arctic Cat performance upgrades ranging from exhaust pipes to full-scale engine modifications. Speedwerx is perhaps best known as the engine co-developer for the Arctic Cat snowmobile racing team, helping team pilot Tucker Hibbert to be nearly unbeatable in the winter of 2007-2008. In the past few years the Houle team has also branched out into making great performance parts for Arctic Cat Prowlers and ATVs, as well as Polaris quads.

The Speedwerx development headquarters is located on 80 acres just outside of Forest Lake, Minnesota. Employee counts range from 10-15 people depending on the season. The company's proving grounds include different types of terrain ranging from a rock and log-strewn trials course to a mud hole strictly used for testing snorkel-type air and CVT intakes. Jeremy and Larry Houle are the second-generation managers of Speedwerx, and they invited me to try out their latest creation - a clutch and pipe kit that adds even more growl to the formidable Thundercat.

The pipe kit is not a bolt-on but a *slip-on* exhaust. Simply push the mounting studs into the rubber-grommets on the Cat, attach the exhaust springs and presto, the Thundercat is suddenly eight pounds lighter and has seven more ponies pulling for it. It's hard to imagine an easier way to gain performance and lose weight. Speedwerx took advantage of its special relationship with Arctic Cat to develop the package and it shows in the performance, weight and sound. The pipe has a pleasing growl that is not "rattly" or tinny-sounding. It looks very clean, too.

Step two in stage tuning the Thundercat is adding the highly efficient Speedwerx clutch kit. Stiffer springs for the centrifugal clutch make the engagement RPM higher and guarantees a quicker launch out of the starting blocks. Speedwerx has its own fully-equipped machine shop and the beautifully crafted secondary clutch helix is 100 percent designed and made in-house.



The folks at Speedwerx pride themselves on delivering "straight-up" USA horsepower - no gimmicks and no hype - just performance products that really work.

The real test came when I put the upgraded Thundercat in motion. Our testing involved a before and after comparison between a stock Thunderkitty and the Speedwerx-tricked version. Superlatives can't be avoided when describing the experience. While the stock Cat has already gained a legendary status, the Speedwerx parts really make it scream. When launching from a dead start the inertia turns the wheels into rotary earth movers. As the modified clutches spool out power, the acceleration will stretch a rider's arms and the top end speed is pure adrenaline.

The Thundercat has an amazing powerplant in stock trim, and the Speedwerx modifications makes it even more of a handful for a sport-utility quad pilot. This package has so much speed that the rider needs to focus further out than usual on the trail, sort

of like driving on the Autobahn except the objects passing by in a blur are trees instead of Opels. The T-Cat gobbled up huge chunks of trail with the flick of the throttle, and could change directions harder than a roller coaster at Six Flags. While the trail performance is incomparable, the capability in rough terrain is just as impressive. Speedwerx has a trials course with logs at least 30-inches in diameter and rocks that would send a less manly ATV cowering back to the garage. The combination of the Cat's ground clearance and the excellent clutching and power delivery allows the biggest rocks and logs to be conquered, period. No wonder the Speedwerx Arctic Cat won the 2007 WPSA TerrainCross Championship.

It was refreshing to see just how in touch the Houles are with real-world riding. I did



New roller weights provide a steeper acceleration curve and the new helix (top) improves both upshift and backshift.

not get to test any of their snorkel kits, but Jeremy told me that with the exhaust and CVT vented higher, ATVs can be driven in water up to the rider's chest. It's too bad that everyone can't have the chance to enjoy



Riding both a stock Cat and the same Cat with a Speedwerx kit leaves no doubt that the performance gain is real. Acceleration is white-hot and immediate.

good clean, petrol-powered fun like extreme water crossing!

For ATV and snowmobile racers who live life at the redline, Speedwerx provides full modification services. Jeremy Houle said "Our clutch and pipe kits are just the beginning of what we can do. We have the capa-

bility to optimize everything on the engine from top to bottom for delivering maximum power". With decades of experience perfecting championship ATVs and snowmobiles, Speedwerx parts will bring the performance of any Cat or Polaris ATV to the next level.

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