

Tuesday Toolbox: Tara Dunaway

by: [Jennifer Kenyon](#)

Tuesday June 7th, 2011



*Every once in a while, amidst the craziness of life and racing, we stumble across an individual that causes us to stop and think about what it means to truly live life to the fullest. As a championship contender in the Girls (8-15) Youth ATV class, Tara Dunaway of Leitchfield, KY is one of those individuals. Tara is unique from her other competitors in that she races her ATV with the absence of half of her left arm. Now many people, when faced with a challenge like Tara, would just say "oh well, I guess racing is out of the question" but this 14 year old stepped up to the occasion and proved that she can do anything she sets her mind to, and that's a quality anyone can appreciate. Not only is Tara a fierce competitor on the course, but she's one of the most well-spoken, thankful and kind hearted kids on the circuit. We caught up with Tara as she begins her final summer before moving into the **big** ranks of High School.*



Photo By: Amy McConnell: X-Country Photos
This girl has a true passion for racing

Hey Tara! What are you up to?

Well, we just got done with school Thursday; so today I've been babysitting a 2 and 3 year old. It was a lot fun but very exhausting though!

I bet! What grade in school are you?

I'm going to be a freshman this year.

Do you play any sports at school or are you strictly a racer girl?

In Middle School I played basketball and in High School I play softball and soccer. I was usually a power forward in basketball and I don't really know yet for soccer this year, wherever really.

How and when did you get into ATV racing? What was the factor leading you to GNCC?

I've played softball since I was really young and my dad raced 4 wheelers in the GNCC Series since before my sister and I were born. He got back into it about 2007-2008 and I really wanted to race, but he was like "no I don't really think that'd be the best idea," and he finally let me race

when I was about 11. After I did it once, I just loved it. I've actually never raced another series besides GNCC (*laughs*).

So you're obviously unique from the rest of the racers out there. Many of our GNCC readers may not know your story. Can you tell us a little bit about your arm?

Well I was really born without half of my left arm. When I was kid, my parents and everyone else, nobody really treated me differently and so when I was young I didn't really see a difference in myself from any of the other kids. I always thought I could do everything they did. And I just keep doing that and I still think that. There's really nothing that I can't do if I try. I'm not at a disability.



Photo By: Amy McConnell: X-Country Photos
Tara has a great attitude as you can see

So when you ride, is your ATV set up in a special way?

On the left side of the handlebars there's like an extension part and I'll have where it's regular and then about 1-2 inches down there's like another part so it's kind of like a square box with an emptiness in the middle of it so that it'll be just a little bit close to me so I don't have to reach as far.

How do you stay on the bars?

I don't really know. I just try to hang on. It doesn't really affect anything; it's just like normal.

Do you do any type of training during the week? You must have crazy good upper body strength to do that...

I really don't. I exercise but with sports it's like all of my time so I get as much exercise out of that as I can and I don't really have time to do anything extra. I usually don't ride during the week for the same reason. At the GNCC races is really the only time I really get to ride. I try to but I don't have a lot of spare time to make it happen.

What do you think is the hardest part about riding without half of your arm?

I think the hardest part is near the end of the race because I just get so tired and it's really hard to hold on. When it's really muddy my gloves and handlebars get really wet, it makes it really hard to hang on when it's so slick. I feel like I'm just going to fall off because I don't have that extra support to hang on.

Has there ever been talk of a prosthetic arm to help with riding?

My dad really wants me to and he first mentioned it about a year ago. I was just kind of like "no I don't need one, I don't want one". But he keeps talking about it and some of the other families have talked about it and how they think it would be better. Probably, if I stick with it and move up into the different age groups, I'll probably try it because it'll be easier on me and I could like throw the bike around a lot easier. But I don't know, I don't really like the idea of it but I guess I'm willing to try it for riding.



Photo By: Amy McConnell: X-Country Photos

Tara's ATV is decked out in bright colors to match her fun personality

So does that mean you have plans to continue racing and move into the higher ranks in GNCC?

Yeah I do. It's just going to be hard setting up a bike that doesn't have a clutch on it though; I just have to change gears with my foot. But we've met some really nice people so far that have been talking to me about it a little bit.

It doesn't seem to phase you too much as you're sitting in 2nd place in points right now. Tell us a little bit about your season so far.

Well I've broken down twice this year. I usually finish third or fourth, somewhere around there and the girls that are faster than me - they've just had some bad runs and broke down a few times. This past weekend my belt broke on the third lap and at first I was like "yeah a little break!" but then I was disappointed (*laughs*).

What's your favorite type of GNCC course?

I like it when it's really muddy but usually dad doesn't like that because my bike doesn't like the mud (*laughs*). I don't like rocky stuff but I really like a bunch of field sections.

Do you plan on following the whole GNCC series this year?

Yeah, usually we try to make it to all of them but there's usually 1-2 we don't make it to. My dad always comes to the races and my mom and sisters usually try to come too but we have other

groups of families that live in the same town as us that always go to the GNCC too and they help out a lot with the bike and stuff.

So I hear you've got a couple favorite Pro riders, who are they?

My favorite is Donnie Ockerman (*laughs*). About a year or two ago, my dad bought a 4 wheeler from him and he took me up there actually to his house to go get it and ever since then, I love him! He's so down to earth and doesn't care who talks to him and he's not going to act like he's better than anyone because he's a pro.

Well Tara, thanks again for talking with us. Have a good summer break from school and we'll see you at Snowshoe!

Thanks! I just want to thank my mom and my dad for everything they do for me. Also G-Force, Apex, KS Automotive, England's Custom T's, Xtreme Fabrication, Scott Day, Mr. Broc Booth, X Country Photos, GNCC and all the families that help and encourage me.



Photo By: Amy McConnell: X-Country Photos
Tara gave Adam a birthday cupcake this year