

Scaling up RSI

Nathan Davis discovers a terrifying new concept: exercise.

Gaming whilst exercising is presently laughable, but one man has set out to change all that -- inventor of the *FPS GameRunner*, Charles Van Noland.

The GameRunner is a treadmill integrated with game controls that can be plugged into either console or PC and is fitted out for some body-building fragging. The treadmill controls the walking pace, whilst everything else is controlled via a bike-like handle. Sounds bizarre for first person shooters, but it's promised to be quite intuitive. From what we understand, the controller of your choice can still be equipped for us keyboard/mouse die-hards.

So far, the reaction from the gaming community has been positive. '...the word "sick" is now used by youth, much the way "bad" was a common word for describing something desirable, not too long ago. Mostly the smiles and interest told us what we wanted to know.' says Van Noland. Apparently when in use, you're drawn into the game so much you hardly notice you're using your legs.

For those looking to drop off the kilos, the current model is listed as supporting up to just under 115KGs. Future models will support weights in excess of 180KGs.

The original idea was conjured up all thanks to a pair of hyperactive legs. Every time

Charles saw his son playing games, his legs would be all over the joint (his son's legs, that is), trying to achieve the tasks within the game as if his actual legs were the sole reason for getting to the target. Having gone through several ex-sturdy chairs in which his son's legs could destroy/run on, only one thing could be done. '... I needed to somehow integrate a treadmill into a game controller. . .' he recalls.

'The first "prototype" was nothing more than a conveyer/rack/belt. At the time, I thought bi-directional was the way to go. At first, I simply put a mouse directly on it. Through this it was instantly clear that the action needed to be reversed. It was just a curiosity at the time.'

No one else had secured a relevant patent, so the creative juices gushed open and he started thinking more seriously about developing a system.

'The very first complete prototype, (which now sits in our "GameRunner-Smithsonian"),



... strength, speed and endurance that saves the world from the Aliens!



is quite simple, and very functional. It is comprised of a bi-directional treadmill (of my own design, built from scratch) the movement of which is tracked with a wheel and a speedometer cable used to transfer that action to another small belt for a mouse reader, which reverses the action and is held in place by an arm which is also the steering bar with handles above. As archaic as it seems, in some ways, the action is actually quite nice as it translates



to the game movements.'

This was a great start, however it wasn't the perfect platform, involving traction issues.

'We needed more control possibilities, since the few signals we could take from the mouse just weren't enough for most of the complex games available today. We also came to realize that the bi-directional treadmill was neither required, nor safe enough. Without holding on pretty tight it would tend to be slippery.' he mentions.

Soon the final model will be hitting our shores and when it does you can be sure we'll be on it like flies. We reckon it'll be about 30 seconds before we start panting and have to put down the Krispy Kreme doughnuts.

'The new Cyber-Athlete will be a true Champion. After all, it is his strength, speed and endurance that saves the world from the Aliens!'

We like Van Noland's thinking.