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LATEST ISSUE

By Bruce W. Smith  
8/8/2008

2009 XRT950 Brings Performance & Affordability To 4x4 Side-by-Sides

A thick, deep gumbo of field mud rose up to meet the floorboards as I rolled into the throttle and steered toward the deepest section of our little play area of muck. The consistency and depth of the mire wasn't all that different from what I've driven side-by-sides through in the past during spring turkey hunts and winter deer outings on some of the southern hunting clubs.

What was different is I'm in a Club Car. No, not the golf cart—the other Club Car: the XRT950 4x4, which is a true utility side-by-side ATV. With more than nine inches of ground clearance, locking rear differential, and four-wheel-independent suspension hung from a heavy duty tube-steel chassis, the XRT950 is a wonderful performer. The mud pit is no more a challenge than field-dressing game.

Add to that you can slide behind the wheel of the base 4x4 model for \$7,599 and it fits in the bed of a long-bed pickup, this "mid-size" UTV is sure to lift a few eyebrows around the hunt club when it hits dealers this fall.

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Actually a full day of driving the XRT950 over a variety of mountain Jeep trails and through the muddy bottom leave little doubt the newest Club Car is head and shoulders better than its nearest competitors—the Kawasaki Mule 610 4x4, Brister's 4x4, and the Kubota RTV 500. Club Car has good reason to be proud of their latest offering because it is a truly a well-built and well thought out four-wheel-drive utility vehicle. The 2009 XRT950 4x4 puts the name Club Car

right there with every other ATV/UTV manufacturer who offers an honest-to-goodness all-terrain utility vehicle.

## A NEW PLAYER

As mentioned earlier, the new Club Car XRT950 is considered a “mid-size” UTV; the 55-inch width, 105-inch overall length, and 1,200-pound weight allows it to be hauled in the bed of most full-size pickups. This means you don't necessarily need to invest in a trailer.

Speaking of investing, the price of the new four-wheel-drive side-by-side is going to bring in hunt club members for test drives, especially the XRT950 4x4 “EX” that comes complete with a Bestop fully-enclosed soft cab with fold-down windshield and hardtop, all for only \$8,899. And those prices include a full 2-year factory warranty.



Ride quality is by far the best in this segment of UTVs. In addition to the excellent suspension and ground clearance, the XRT950 has light steering and a fairly tight turning radius. The four-wheel-independent suspension absorbs a considerable amount of the harsh ride found on machines that still maintain the antiquated unit swing-axle design.

An added level of comfort comes from the well-designed bench seat that provides a substantial amount of padding for both bottom and back support.

Two minor comfort observations: Taller drivers might find legroom a little tight, but again, this is a mid-size UTV so passenger space is at a premium. The other item I wasn't that happy with (but learned to ignore) is the parking brake lever is to the driver's right and down in front of the bench seat, making it a little inconvenient to operate.

## INDUSTRIAL STRENGTH

Mounted mid-ship in the steel tube chassis is the 480cc, 14hp Vanguard V-Twin provided through Briggs & Stratton's Commercial Power division. (The engine is actually built by Daihatsu/Toyota with Toyota's eye on the quality control.) This engine is built for heavy duty commercial applications, so unlike the Briggs found in consumer's lawnmowers and tillers, this model has very tight tolerances and the really strong internal components needed to withstand a lot of user abuse.



The transmission is belt-driven CVT, which utilizes a “tight-belt” setup so the engagement is smooth, belt wear is greatly reduced, and there's a small amount of engine braking provided off-throttle. (The XRT950 also incorporates four-wheel hydraulic disc brakes, which are a big step in stopping power above drum brakes.)

The new Club Car's CVT gearing is 5.5:1, which translates into a nice range of ratios matched well to the Vanguard V-Twin's power curve so there's no need to have a two-speed mode. Top speed is limited by engine rpm to 25mph.

As a hunter one thing I hate is having to stop or slow down before engaging four-wheel drive. The XRT950 allows you to be running flat out and still pull the console-mounted lever into or out of 4x4 mode. The same holds true for locking the rear differential, which can be done in either two- or four-wheel-drive mode.

## UTILITY WITH VALUE

Lest we not forget, this is a UTV. That means it is designed to push, pull, carry and lift things in the process of getting work done. The XRT950 will carry a 400-pound load in the tilt-bed (47"Wx32.3"L) and tow a trailer up to 1,200 pounds. Both capacities are ideal for hunt club members who don't need to carry around much more than a few sacks of seed or haul out a couple nice bucks.

It can be fitted with a hydraulic system to handle a front mower, bucket, and pallet fork, the latter two with a 500-pound lifting capacity to a height of about four feet. There're 2-inch receiver hitch front and rear along with a wide array of cool accessories including a Warn winch, numerous cab and top styles, a heater, in-cab overhead stereo enclosure, and LED driving and work lights.



Club Car even offers camo bed covers and RealTree camo paint. So the XRT950 can be utilized for both work around the property as well as meeting club member's hunting needs.

The Bestop cab enclosures are very well done and of the best quality products. We even tested a couple different varieties of the

enclosed cabs in a man-made downpour equivalent to the best southern thunderstorm. Not a drop of water got inside, and when we pulled out into the clear, we dropped the front windshield to enjoy the fresh air.

Overall, my first driving impressions of the Club Car XRT950 4x4 and XRT950 EX are 1) this new model sets a high bar for the mid-size UTV class in overall ride quality, comfort and handling; 2) it delivers exceptional traction and smooth power delivery for a machine under 500cc; and 3) the value-for-the-dollar in a small side-by-side utility vehicles is one of the very best hunt club members are likely to find in 2009.—Bruce W. Smith