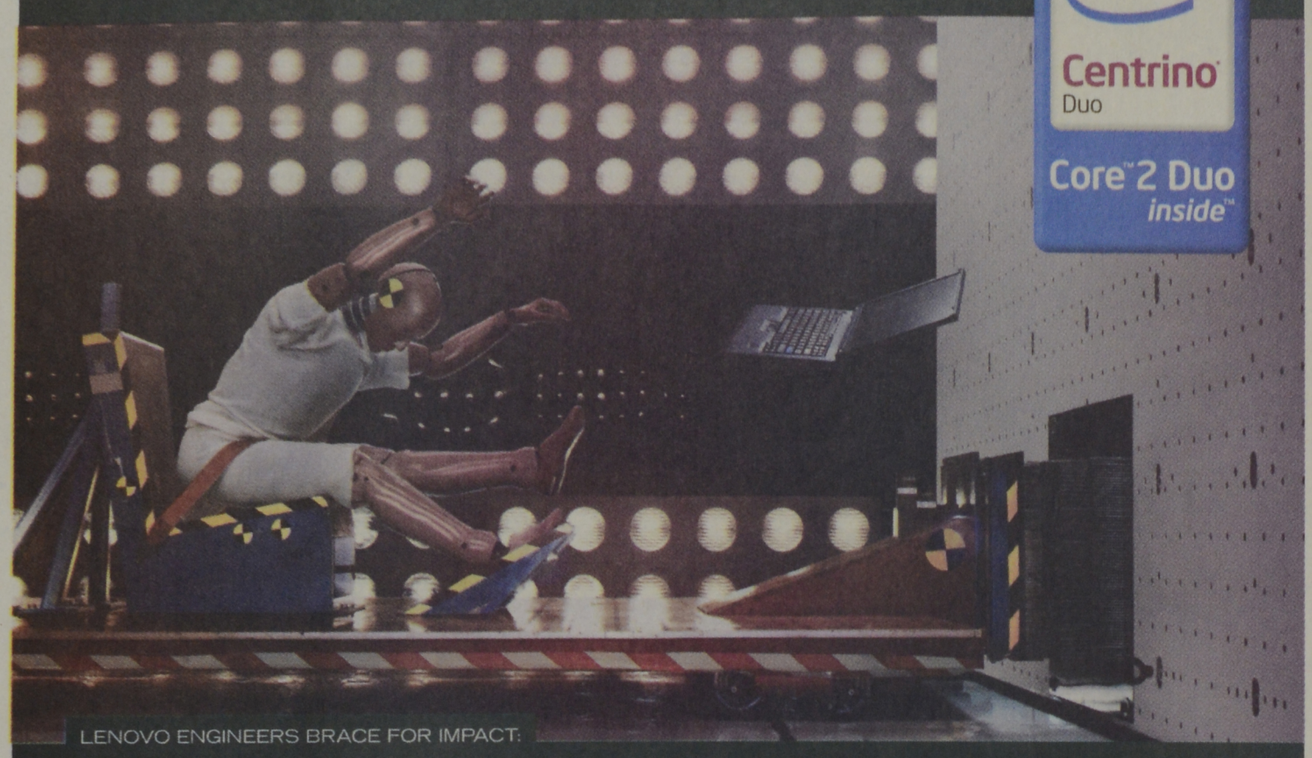
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Machine works more than your thumbs

University of Victoria engineering students try to get kids active

by David Karp
The Martlet
University of Victoria

VICTORIA (CUP) – Move over, Nintendo Wii – there's a brand new way to stay fit while playing video games.

A team of software engineering students from the University of Victoria has developed a stationary bicycle that hooks up to Microsoft's *Flight Simulator X*. The Future of Exercise won first prize on March 30 at an event showcasing fourth-year UVic engineering projects.

Instead of pushing a button to get the airplane going, users pedal the recumbent bike to start the plane and keep it in the air. A joystick is used to steer.

Ron Negrych, one of the three students in charge of the project, said their machine was designed to combat obesity.

"This is to get [kids] exercising while they're in front of the TV," he said.

"The faster you pedal, the faster the plane goes," said Greg Leah, another student who worked on the project. If the rider stops pedaling for too long, the plane loses altitude and crashes.

A sensor determines how fast the user is pedaling. That information is relayed to a computer. "The software tells the computer game, 'OK, he's pedaling at this number of [revolutions per minute], so therefore make the throttle at this level," Negrych explained.

Riders can adjust the resistance of the pedals, making it easier or more difficult to pedal. The resistance is caused by electromagnets, so there are no gears to shift or chains to get your jeans caught in.

"Somebody who is elderly but needs exercise, they can put it on the basic, simplest level," said Negrych. "You might have a pro athlete that gets to that stage where [they say], 'OK, I've got to get my heart rate at a certain rate – jack it up to the top level."

While it's fun, the technology won't be affordable for everyone. Negrych said the components cost roughly $2,500.

"Eventually, we'd like to adjust the response to what the airplane is trying to do," said Susan Perkins, the project's final member. She wants the resistance to change based on the conditions in the flight simulator, like wind for example. Perkins wants the experience to be like flying the Gossamer Albatross, a plane operated by pedaling.

The developers suggested that in the future, people might want to expand the technology to other types of video games. "That might be their goal – to make it into a first-person shooter game, or a road racing game or a BMX game," said Negrych.



Courtesy of Canadian University Press

This simulator, developed by software engineering students at the University of Victoria, translates the rate of the user's pedaling to determine the speed of planes flown within Microsoft's Flight Simulator X.

The life of Brian



BRIAN MUNN
Sports Editor

Call it a rip on Rick Reilly or the Monty Python movie if you will. I'll admit that no, I'm not as insightful as Reilly or as hilarious as Graham Chapman, but I don't think it would be fair to pass on the opportunity for such a sweet title for a bio.

My name is Brian Munn, and I'm the Brunswickan's Sports Editor for the 2007-08 year.

This is my first year at UNB, after spending the last four at STU completing a BA. In addition to the sports gig, I'll be doing a Master's in Political Science this year. You know, in my spare time.

I was born and raised in Pennfield, New Brunswick, and was cursed from birth with being a fan of the Toronto Maple Leafs and Boston Red Sox.

Sure, life got a little bit better in October 2004, but on the whole, my experience as a sports fan has been one of disappointment (I'm ignoring that I love the Patriots, just for dramatic effect.)

So covering the V-Reds presents somewhat of a challenge for me, in that some of the teams are pretty good. Men's hockey, for example. Defending national champs? The Leafs can't even make the playoffs! I'm not equipped to cheer for winning teams.

Sports are my Yoko Ono, in a less (debatably) career-ending way. I love sports like Gary Bettman loves to expand the NHL to terrible hockey markets (but really, who figures the Kansas City Scouts could flatline for a second time?)

Bombed the LSATs? Whatever, there's a soccer game against Mt. A. tonight. It's the most masculine type of therapy you can get.

Brian will spend most of his time this year on the ice, or at least wishing he was. His email is:
brunswickansports@gmail.com.
You can stop by the office to talk to him, write for him, or call professional soccer players wussies.

All thumbs? Good.

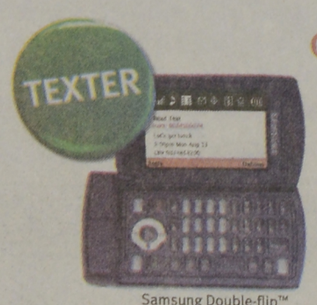


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