

# KartMania 2011

By Dave Bewley

**“Motorsport, like everything else, is feeling the effects of the economic problems we are going through at the moment, and karting is no different with everyone looking for the best deals and cutting their costs. So at the end of another busy season, where do you go for the bargains, information and a general debrief on the last season - KartMania!”**

**T**he words belonged to Martin Capenhurst who has been involved in karting for 18 years and is certainly one of its most enthusiastic exponents. Organising a show like this involves a huge financial commitment but Martin was upbeat about the show. “Five years on and this year we still pulled in over 2,600 visitors over the two days so we must be doing something right, although still down on last year which was expected by most of the exhibitors. A completely new layout received favourable comments from everyone - it was brighter and had a really good feel about it. The KartBoot was again

**European KF3 Champion George Russell on the Intrepid UK stand**



**New Dino Kart signing Jessica Hawkins**

a great attraction bringing a massive queue on Saturday morning. Although visitors were generally cautious throughout the weekend there were still many sales and deals taking place and some very brisk trading with most of the exhibitors already booking their place for KartMania 2012.”

As always, MSA registered Clubs and Associations had been offered free stands. Amongst those clubs taking advantage were Bayford Meadows, Buckmore, Cheshire, Clay Pigeon, Cumbria, Kimbolton, Little Rissington, Llandow and Lydd. Stalls were also occupied by various Associations including 210 Villiers, British Superkart,

Covkartsport, Formula 6, Historic Kart Club, Karting Legends, NKA and Northern Kart Federation. Super One and Formula Kart Stars occupied prominent places, as did Easykart, KGP and the TKM 4 Stroke Challenge. Sadly there was no input from either the MSA or ABKC.

Walking around a concrete floor for two whole days can be very hard on the feet. My first port of call, therefore, was to the Happy Feet stall manned by Chris Fitzpatrick. He offered me a “test drive” of their therapeutic massaging insoles. According to Chris, his product provided relief for hot or sore feet as well as easing

**As usual the KartBoot had something for everyone**





The new K4A

pains in the back and legs. As he pointed out, mechanics and spectators at kart meetings can do a lot of standing or walking on hard surfaces and their feet often suffer as a result. After more than 13 hours of hard testing, I was happy to stump up the £30 asking price and purchase a pair for myself.

Baz Scott informed me that Racing Drivers Inc was started in 2008, serving as a social club for competitors in all forms of motorsport. Members, of whom there are now more than 2800, pay an annual fee of £50. In return they receive help with PR and sponsorship. A free website is available and members can make use of discounts that have been negotiated with various companies. Baz has painstakingly built up good relationships with many motor racing teams and more experienced members

#### Kart shop and Gillard agent KartPartsUK



like Tom Ingram can offer sound advice to young karters.

Kevin Nuttall was attending KartMania for the fifth time exhibiting Iztech Seats which he named after his daughter Izzie. The seats come in soft, medium and rigid forms at a basic price of £55 + VAT. The Ultralite versions are more expensive and cost £220. Kevin believed that attending the show had been worthwhile and reported lots of interest in his kart scaling service. At a cost of £25 per hour the chassis is balanced using a portable flatbed. Iztech relies heavily on the export market for its seats which are all UK-sourced. It also supplies floor trays, chain guards and body protectors.

PKP Motorsport, run by Sean Girdler and Leon Cole, began importing Dino karts in April 2011. After serving an apprenticeship



The NKA Elite Karting League livery and racesuits

with Bournemouth Kart Centre (BKC), Sean became a freelance mechanic working for teams in Formula Ford and the BTCC. PKP is running the Dino works team in Europe with top drivers Jessica Hawkins and Jack Mitchell already signed up. Jessica was manning the stand along with Sean and expressed lots of confidence especially in the flagship chassis produced for them by CRG. The TKM model, jointly designed by PKP and Dino, is made in Denmark along with a Clubman kart that could prove popular with Rotax drivers. Dino karts have a long history stretching back to the early sixties and it was good to see them exhibited at KartMania.

Ian Rushforth explained to me that 182 different drivers had contested the Superkart series in 2011. A new class for 450cc 4 stroke engines had been incorporated in 2011 attracting half a dozen entries or more. Average entries for Division 1 Superkarts worked out at around 20 per round with the 250cc class always able to attract a full grid of 40. Competitors in the 125cc Open category can compete for as little as £5,000 per season while a full year in Division One Superkarts could work out at £30,000. Resplendent in full bodywork, Superkarts can usually attract lots of interest from the public and this show was clearly no exception. It was interesting to visit the Karting Legends stand where the modern version was compared against a 1970's Zip kart bearing the famous BP bodywork as raced by Martin Hines. To the unpractised eye there seemed little difference.

Dr Mark Green of Motor Racing Medics has occupied a stand at every KartMania show since its first appearance in 2007.



Alan Turney (right) with one of the Italkarts that launched Tal Ko's success



The J.A.G. Rotax stand manned by George Robinson

He also attends the Autosport and Race Retro shows. His assistant Jane Dungate explained that many drivers booked medical examinations in advance or some merely turned up on spec. The fee was £75 + VAT whereas many GPs charged as much as £200 for this service. Despite such a significant saving, Jane confessed that business had been slower than in previous years and this perhaps suggests further reductions in MSA licence holders for 2012.

Benjy Russell had replaced JKH as the UK distributor for Intrepid karts. Despite adopting a lower profile, Benjy reported that business had been brisk. John Hoyle, meanwhile, was free to concentrate all his attentions on the Super One stand where a steady stream of drivers could be seen signing up for 2012. As usual, Dartford Karting, Zip and Tal-Ko occupied prominent positions. Strawberry had booked a stall in the kart boot section but didn't appear in the main hall. However, the OTK range

was well displayed by KKC and their stand attracted lots of customers. There was great interest too in the Virgin F1 car exhibited by Andy Cox Racing as part of a very large Birel stand. Possibly as a direct result, Paul Deavin was kept busy fielding questions about the KGP class while Easykart also attracted lots of potential customers.

Paul did find time to visit the impressive British Historic Racing Club display where he could view two wonderfully restored versions of his Deavinson Sprint karts. As he himself admitted, they looked even better than the new models that had been turned out from his premises at Rye House 30 years beforehand. Alan Turney could also be seen admiring the immaculate 1962 Italkart with twin Komets K12C motors. Half a century earlier, Alan's father Bernie had begun importing these machines and thus the Tal-Ko name was conceived. This particular example had been painstakingly restored by Tony Brinkworth. It had cost

him around £1200 and 400 hours labour to achieve the final result. "The chassis wasn't too much of a problem, but it took an awful lot of time and money restoring both Komets engines," Tony claimed.

It was Tony's brother Peter who got him interested in restoring old karts and he was exhibiting his own Foxkart with twin McCullochs that's now become a regular at these shows. Peter is an enthusiastic member of the Club and reports that membership is growing at startling rates. "Although we had a fair amount of interest at last year's show, there were still long periods with no visitors at all. This time around there's hardly been a minute when we haven't had someone talking to us," he emphasised.

Historic karting offers relatively cheap racing and this probably explains why it's now so successful. There were clear signs that, while more expensive classes were obviously suffering, karting at the cheaper end was actually thriving. Gerard Cox reported that sales of his Project One Honda Cadet karts had broken all records in 2011. Ann-Marie Lepine confirmed that entries in the F6 Championships had averaged 65 at each round, an increase which she attributed to their presence at the 2010 show. "We're a family orientated concern and most of our competitors transport their karts on roof racks or in small trailers," she maintained.

This theme was repeated when I visited the Covkartsport stand. This non-profit making organisation has been running for 16 years and all the officials live in or around Coventry. They organise an Arrive & Drive championship series consisting of

**Martin Hines' and Chris Purdie's Superkarts, designed several decades apart**





**KGP Champion Michael Simpson in the Marussia Virgin F1 car on the KGP stand**

seven rounds. Each round costs £50 and the karts used are Honda-powered rental types. The club retains £5 from each entry, spending £4 on trophies and donating the remaining £1 to local charities. "2011 was our most successful season to date," said their chairman Nick Stanley. "We have 120 members and more than 90 drivers turned up at each round. We're not MSA-registered but run our meetings as close to MSA rules as possible. We see ourselves as a feeder club for MSA racing and actually aim to lose 30% of our members each year."

It's always nice to see international personalities attending the show and on this occasion we had two of them. Angelo Parrilla started to produce DAP engines in 1970, guiding such notable stars as Ayrton Senna, Terry Fullerton, Peter Koene, Vincenzo Sospiri, Stefano Modena, Harm Schuurman and Alessandro Piccini to an incredible string of victories at World and European Championship levels. My memories of Dutch star Harm Schuurman date back to 1972 when he took 2nd place in the Junior World Cup in Denmark, splitting Britain's Derek Bliss and Mark Hewetson. After that, he claimed many victories at international level but didn't quite manage to become World Champion.

Schuurman and Parrilla were on hand to promote the extremely well thought out Kartsport 4 All concept. Harm views the current karting scene as a pyramid divided into four sections. The peak consists of drivers competing at national and international championship level. Below is a larger section made up of club racing for Rotax and TKM classes. At the very base lies Arrive & Drive karting which enjoys a lot



**The Easykart stand in a rare quiet moment**



**KKC's well-stocked stand**

of support. In between is a gap that offers great potential but, as yet, has been largely unfilled.

Harm's solution marries a specially produced DAP chassis with a 150cc 4-stroke scooter engine. This kart is aimed

**Rotax Max engine prize draw winner  
Beverley Lawler**



at people who don't possess any great mechanical skills and can't afford the high costs associated with MSA type karting. It has many interesting features including three rear sprockets to use on a variety of circuits. The motor will run for over 500 hours and, for those with no mechanical competence, can be serviced at any normal motorcycle centre. The total package costs just under £3000 including VAT and can be used for leisure purposes as well as sprint or endurance racing.

Without doubt, the KartBoot section attracted more visitors than any other. It offered customers an opportunity to purchase used equipment at knock-down prices while vendors could convert their obsolete equipment for ready cash. Almost everyone appeared to leave feeling satisfied. Happiest of all, however, was the competition winner Mrs Beverley Lawler from Barnsley who left with a brand new Senior Rotax motor valued at £2,250 donated by JAG Engineering. It was a nice note on which to end yet another successful show. ●

All photos by Chris Walker