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# Newsletter

**KnK/NL0206**

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## KnK Racing

### England

Winter has been about kart shows and testing for the 2006 season.



After the Birmingham Kart Show in December 2005, KnK Karts were on display at the London NEC kart show in January this year.

KnK Karts to participate in most kart classes in England in 2006;

Honda Cadet  
World Formula  
Pro kart  
Rotax Mini Max  
Rotax Junior Max  
Rotax Senior Max  
Biland Intermediate  
Biland Senior

**Foreign tie-ups** – Karts ‘n’ Kitcars manufacturers of KnK Karts have tied up with manufacturers of high quality kart components in Europe and these parts will soon become standard fittings on KnK Karts in 2006.

High quality imported KnK Karts racing suits and gloves will also be available in India this year.

### India

Team KnK drivers attended 2 schools of three days each at Go A Kart Racing circuit in Goa in December 2005 and late January 2006. Drivers did part of the Kartsmart - KART and Kartsmart - FIRST courses. The KART course teaches about understanding and providing the pit crew with accurate feedback on the behavior of the chassis as well as the engine. Students are taught in a practical way about kart dynamics and set-ups and their effects on the



handling of the kart. FIRST is a course that trains drivers towards

being consistent on track as well as mastery of the skills for passing in safety. Other aspects of KART and FIRST teach about nursing an ailing kart to finish a race amongst other useful information to racers.



Team KnK drivers will attend the complete Kartsmart - FIRST and Kartsmart - KART courses before the racing season

begins this year.

# From Pit Lane

## INDIAN MOTOR RACING – We all know the problems, let's find some solutions!

A few years ago, we watched Michael Schumacher and company on our TV sets and forecast – “one day we will have an Indian in F1”. Last year we did, we also had a driver in Formula Nippon, Formula A1 and two in the Rotax Max Grand Finals. We had drivers across the board in the most important motor racing classifications in the world. Karting at the bottom - Formula 1 at the top.

Overall though, our performance was dismal. The only performing driver was Akhil Khushlani a privateer; he finished an impressive 5<sup>th</sup> amongst the best Rotax Junior drivers in the world.



Akhil with friend, guide, mentor, tuner, coach and dad – Dinesh.

When karting came to India, we saw it as being what the country needed, a low cost introduction for those seeking a future in the sport.

Five years down, we see a sport of immense potential withering.



Akhil impresses at Rotax Junior in World Finals. Landkawi 2005.

2005 was a year when kart racing was almost non-existent in spite of the huge interest in motor sport from having an Indian in F1. Many feel the efforts of the motor sport bodies and sponsors have been in great part focused in the wrong direction. Their efforts have been directed to fix what is broken instead of building something new. What is more, they appear to have forgotten that kart racing is an amateur sport and that it is about grass roots racing.

In 2005, the lack of lower kart classes and the Rotax class being the only class racing did not help matters, too expensive and competitive for the beginner, it discouraged many more from kart racing than the handful it attracted. The so-called “upswing” to kart racing that it was expected to bring never materialized, we saw very few new faces and retained too few of the existing ones. Hundreds of drivers disappeared last year.

The MAI plans to only recognize the World Formula and Rotax classes for national championships in 2006. What we need is a low budget class.

Conditions for kart racing in India are different and a fresh and purposeful approach is required towards it. Just like everything else in life, anything without a purpose withers and dies.

Other than Rotax, all other kart racing in India thus far has been what is widely termed overseas as Arrive & Drive racing. At A&R (Arrive & Race) events, drivers turn up, sign on, qualify and race. They pay a small charge. Drivers learn very little from A&R racing outside of perhaps realizing whether they have it or they don't. In A&R races, drivers are not permitted set ups, repairs or tune-ups, they are expected to drive what they get! Each participant is permitted 10 laps to familiarize with the kart before racing. These events in countries like England for example are most often run as club events and no ASN permits or licenses are required for them.

The format is more suited to a club or a corporate race event rather than a national championship.

What we need is a low cost format where drivers can own their own karts and race them in several events in the year, not just the one or two. They need to pick up the experience and the feel of a racing kart.

A significant problem also seen is that of new participants. In the past, karting has been able to somewhat replenish the ranks in other forms of motor sport; last year there was no influx of karters. The lack of “sports marketing” on the part of the concerned bodies is obvious here.

One often hears about the "Ladder System" in karting and motor sport. No ladder exists in our system at the moment, only a quick elevator to the terrace - if you can afford the ride or if you know the lift attendant!

The ladder system is perceived as a large pool of participants, progressing through realization of a career and proper instructions. Add to this, progressively more challenging competition, it also needs a wider range of classes and a practical licensing system.

In comparison, the “ladder” in other sports selects players from a huge pool at an early age and nurtures their talent. They are trained and encouraged to practice and play against players of equal or greater ability so they progress, based on their work and talent. It takes several years to move forward and upward on the “ladder” before they are exposed to the big league.

Let us look at some of the truths about racing a kart:

- It is an amateur form of motor racing and the most popular.
- It is an affordable entry-level of motor sport.
- It is the first step to open wheel racing.
- It needs a user-friendly, affordable fun form of race kart to attract, retain and train new-drivers.
- It does not need to be marketed as a professional sport but as one where the road to being a pro starts.
- It needs more kart drivers moving forward into faster kart classes while new ones replace them at the beginner levels.
- New kart racers need to be brought into the sport by encouragement to a platform that ensures fairness through having different clearly demarcated skill levels.
- The Federation and Associations for motor sport need to get proactive to sell kart racing.
- Kart Racing has created most if not all the professional open wheel drivers, but those drivers started at lower divisions of the sport first.

A SOLUTION? - Before solutions to the problems with our kart racing can be addressed, it must be understood that everyone, from the national, regional and local associations, kart manufacturers, importers, local kart clubs and tracks have a stake in the growth of the sport through increasing it's size and number of participants.

If the climb to the top is structured through the crowded bottom, we first need to create that crowded bottom, before we have a meaningful top. For kart racing to grow in India it needs to be marketed creatively at a level that is affordable, user friendly and most of all, fun. It must be marketed to the masses including rural areas and not limited only to those who can afford the high cost classes.

If it is not affordable, it will not be user-friendly or fun and it is not going to attract the masses of people we need to create that crowded bottom of the ladder. A well-organized program could easily attract a few thousand new kart drivers each year and retain them for several years instead of the one-year formula that is currently in vogue.

A driver's progress must be structured to provide an environment that becomes progressively more challenging as he/she moves along based upon race results. Alongside, progressive instruction in racing has to be available. The package needs to be specific, sealed engines and inexpensive race karts. Once the driver has a few years of kart racing under his belt he can move on to race in the big classes with drivers who have come out of a similar pool.

A plan of this type is very easily possible and only needs commitment and a pledge to correct the problems or at the very least, a willingness to search for solutions and set aside politics and personal agendas for a common good. We need to shelve the N.I.H (*Not Invented Here*) syndrome. The “if it’s not my idea it will not work” concept needs to be done away with.

The first steps need to be taken today, not tomorrow!!!

There are people working on such a program and if anyone is interested please e-mail me at [racing@knkkarts.com](mailto:racing@knkkarts.com) with any ideas and suggestions you might want to share.

Thank you for reading with me, next month we’ll talk some more!

Cheers!

Micki