



MOTORSPORT WALES

Karting – From Nursery to Retirement Home

If you look at the career path of any of today's leading racing drivers their early career will almost inevitably include kart racing. So what is it about karting that makes it such a good proving ground and what about those of us who can barely remember our youth, can we still go karting for fun?



At Motorsport Wales we have been to talk to Nigel Hughes. Nigel, a former Welsh

Karting champion, now runs the kart shop at Llandow race circuit and is also much in demand as a team manager.

We first asked Nigel why karting is such a popular learning ground for young racers. "You learn discipline, and the flag system", he explained, "and the way motorsport operates." So at what age can you begin karting? "You can now start at six years old with bambinos". Nigel went on to explain that bambinos does not involve racing but is actually a time trial with each young driver trying to improve on his or her previous lap time. "There are moves to bring in racing this year but to be honest I think the fathers will push the children too much."

At 8, competitors move into racing proper in the Cadet series. The most popular series uses Honda GX16 four stroke engines similar to those fitted to cement mixers and road whackers although they are tuned versions. The karts produce a nominal 5 1/2 hp. There is an alternative two stroke series.

At around at the age of 12 drivers move into the junior category. "Years ago, I'm talking about the 70s and 80s when some of us started racing, you couldn't start until you're 13", recalls Nigel, "there have been one or two world champions who have started racing at 13 so it isn't too late to start but there are some 13 year olds around now who have five years of racing experience."

Nigel adds, however, that experience is a valuable commodity. "If we look at Super One, of the 50 entries the top 30 entries will be separated by just 2/10 of a second so it is very tight.

"It breeds consistency so you have to get to the level you can drive the same lap every time. If you ask any Formula One team or touring car team what they want it is a driver who can drive the same lap time every lap regardless. This is where youngsters are now coming through who are able to do this so that technical feedback is very very good from an early age."

At this stage the costs are starting to rise, as Nigel explains, "to do a top season of Super One there are budgets banded around of £60-£80,000 a year. That's

Welcome, once again, to "Motorsport Wales". In this edition, we take a look at the nursery ground of motorsport, karting. We find out how to get started in the sport and we meet up with one remarkable young driver.

In addition to all the latest news on the Association championships we also have the results of our "MotorMind" competition and find out about a special evening for fans of road rallying.

In this issue:

We explore karting, a low cost motorsport we can all try.

We meet Caleb McDuff, a very special youngster with a unique ambition.

We find out the lucky winner of our MotorMind competition along with all the answers.

We learn about a fun evening coming up in Llanelli.

Upcoming Events:

Severn Valley Stages May 31st

*Eagle Rally May 31st
/June 1st*

*Pembrey Sprint May 31st
/June 1st*

Mini Epynt Rally June 1st

*BTRDA Rallycross June 7th/8th
Pembrey*

Coracle Stages June 15th

Pirelli MSA Welsh Forest Rally Championship

The first three rounds of the championship have produced three different maximum points scorers with Luke Francis taking top honours on the Wydean, followed by Matthew Robinson on the Mid Wales Stages and Euan Thorburn on the Plains Rally.

Leading the series overall, however, is Paul Davy with Roger Allen heading the co-driver standings.

The Worcester pair also head the Group N table with Roland Llewellyn and Jamie Edwards in second place both overall and in Group N.

The Plains Rally saw Rory Jones take the lead from James Hamer in the under 25 drivers while Will Rogers leads the co-drivers.

Yorkshire duo Matthew Robinson and Sam Collis head the two wheel drive category.

Following the unfortunate cancellation of Rally North Wales the reserve event, the Neath Valley Stages on August 9th now becomes a round of the championship.

For 2014, the championship will enjoy TV coverage on the new Motors TV programme Special Stage Extra. Initial transmission of each programme is scheduled for the first Wednesday of each month at 7.30pm.

over six rounds so it's quite a lot of budget, but those six rounds include testing. Teams go off and test at the venues extensively. It is possible to do the same championship quite a lot cheaper and just as competitively but teams being teams they're there to be busy and they'll cram their awnings with quite a lot of competitors all paying £2000 or £3000 per meet and so it's quite a lucrative business for some of the big teams."

Nigel says, however, that you don't have to spend this sort of money. "Dad and lad teams still exist. It isn't like the 60s or 70s when you would see someone turn up in their Austin Maxi with a roof rack with a kart on top. That doesn't tend to happen now; there are a lot more vans or box trailers and awnings. The paddock has got a lot more professional now, indeed to the point where we have large lorries and race trailers with huge awnings at the major championships but it isn't essential to be in a team to win. You need a good mechanic. You need good equipment, but the edge the teams gain is five or six drivers all running in the same class. Yes, they compete against each other but there is information shared. You can get on the pace a lot better. Having said that last year with Joshua (Joshua Collings from Swansea) we ran as an independent driver and mechanic and finished in the top 10 of the national championship standings, on the podium and winning races. We even ran on the pace of the top 10 in the European Championships."

Nigel argues that it is the driver that is the key factor in any kart race team. "All the top chassis manufacturers produce a product that is capable of winning races in the right hands. All the engines are so similar they're capable of winning in the right hands. The biggest variable is the squidgy bit in the middle, the seat gasket. A good pilot will basically pilot a five bar gate with wheels on and still be competitive. Unfortunately, fashion rules and it's seen that that you have to have the latest kit and spend the money to be competitive but that isn't necessarily the case. You can still get someone with an old chassis that still does well. A case in point last year, a local driver, Daryl Henderson who has run in the national championships as a works driver for Gillard. He came down and we were looking through my stock and we had an old Mike Wilson chassis that was about 10 years old it was exactly the same as the one he had raced as a junior. He saw that and he said 'I'd love to restore it as a replica of my first race kart'. Daryl took it away and that weekend there was a club race here. He turned up with that chassis, got an engine and tyres on it and he and Joshua were three quarters of a second quicker than anyone else, Joshua was on his current race kart and Daryl was on a 10 year old chassis that 99% of the grid wouldn't even have looked at."

So just what does it cost to go karting? "You can go racing with a good bambino for just over £1000." Nigel says, "You can get a good second-hand bambino for that. Beyond that, brand new you're looking at about £1500. Under 15 years of age you have to have a CMR or children's motor racing specification helmet that can be bought from £80. Overalls, they range from £70-£80 upwards. Shoes must cover the ankles and gloves are mandatory. To go in at the junior level you can get a race kart from £800-£1000. To buy new you'll spend considerably more. You can spend £4000 or £5000."

You can add to that as well if you want, "data logging will cost another thousand pounds", explains Nigel, "it's not entirely necessary. If you have data logging it means another person on the team to interpret the data. The mechanic will be too busy to look at the mass of data that he will get."

*In Car Services Welsh
Clubman's 2WD Forest Rally
Championship*

Three rounds of the In Car Services & Evans Motorsport Tyres Ltd Welsh Clubman's Championship have taken place to date.

Following the Plains Rally, Simon Pickering and Colin Jenkins have taken the lead in their Ford Escort Mark 1 from early front-runners David Jones and Glyn Price in their BMW.

Geraint Davies and Chris Williams scored maximum championship points on their first appearance in the championship on the second round so they may be the crew to keep a watch on as the season progresses.

The next round of the championship is the Coracle Stages on June 15th.

*Brian Dennis
Motorsport Welsh Historic
Rally Championship*

Following the Mid Wales Historic Stages second round of the championship we now have 36 registered contenders of which 10 are new first time to the championship. Leading crew is Peter Jones and Graham Joseph in a Triumph TR8 while second is one of the first time crews of Simon Pickering and Colin Jenkins in Escort MK1 RS2000 and third is yet another new crew to the championship Steve Ward and Mike Crawford in their ex works Escort twin cam.

That still doesn't bring us, however, to the sort of budgets that Nigel was talking about for Super One. "In Super One the equipment is identical." Nigel explains, "The problem you've got is that it's a three day event. You have to be there on Friday to stand any chance of being competitive. You have to start with a new set of slicks and wets for each event which will cost you another £280 and the fuel is control fuel and that's about £4.75 a litre. On a race weekend you need at least 20l. One of the biggest costs we have is accommodation."

So what about those of us of a certain age who might just want to enjoy ourselves? "An adult who wants to race just for fun can come and pick up a kart that has electric start and that will give you more bang for your buck than £100,000 worth of supercar." Nigel explains, "A Ferrari 360 will give you 1G of cornering load whereas a typical Rotax kart that can be bought for about £1000 will give you 2 1/2 G in the corners and performance to match. It's not about top speed. It's all about cornering, acceleration and stopping. That's where it is all concentrated and it is very physical. You know, he had me quite interested until the physical bit!

Meet a 6 Year Old Superstar

They say you're starting to get old when police officers begin to look too young to be on the job. For me the process began when racing drivers started to look like they were too young to have a driving license. In fairness that was often true.

Imagine how I felt, however, when I recently met a young man who has begun his racing career at the tender age of six.



But that's not all that is remarkable about Caleb Macduff. Like many youngsters his ambition is to be a Grand Prix driver but unlike those others his ambition is to be the first profoundly deaf Grand Prix driver.

Caleb could hear when he was born but illness meant that he gradually lost his hearing with tests eventually confirming his profound deafness.

Meanwhile, he had developed a fascination with cars, "he had his first ride on an electric car when he was 18 months old", says his father Ian, " he would sit in it and we would press the accelerator for him and he would steer it wherever he wanted to go." Ian enjoyed karting himself and Caleb would sometimes go along with him "as soon as he could reach the pedals he wanted have a go", explains Ian.

Indeed, ask Caleb his favourite racing driver's and his first answer is "daddy", although that is quickly followed by "Jenson Button", while his favourite team is Ferrari.

It soon became obvious that Caleb could drive the kart quickly and precisely. Ian does believe that Caleb's deafness makes a difference when he's driving, "I can only imagine how it feels for him the only way I can describe it is if you're walking down the street and someone comes from behind you when you don't know they're there. It startles you. So I can only imagine for him being on the track, if a quicker kart comes past from nowhere, it can be a bit of a

Due to the cancellation of Rally North Wales the reserve event the Red Dragon Rally, on September 21st, will now be round 8 of the championship.

*Steve Harkness Competition
Tyres Welsh Tarmacadam
Rally Championship*

To date we have 39 Drivers & 31 Navigators registered for the championship. Following the fifth round, The Toyota Harlech Stages the drivers' championship is headed by Rob Tout with last year's champion, Kath Curzon leading the co-drivers.

Richard Merriman & Richard Suter lie second with Carl O'Grady and Emma Todd in third position.

Aaron Jones leads the Under 25 category from Keegan Rees and Lloyd Bettinson while Kath Curzon heads the lady co-drivers' standings from Emma Todd and Sherryn Roberts

King of Epynt

We are proud to announce that The King of Epynt has a new sponsor, Quantum Tuning, and thanks to Dan Holley. The championship to date has 26 Drivers and 18 Navigators registered. The first round was The Tour of Epynt and the first 3 Drivers are Bob Fowden, Rob Tout, and Darren Underwood. In the navigators we have in first place Sue Underwood, second Alan Jones and third Ceri Simpson. The next round will be the Mini Epynt on the June 1st.

surprise."

Caleb has not allowed his deafness to hold him back, however, developing different techniques to deal with his lack of hearing. "A lot of your perception of speed in the car comes from noise input, tyre noise and your engine", explains Ian, "whereas Caleb doesn't get that so he really has to look at the scenery coming towards him and has to pick points where he knows he has to start slowing down which I think racing drivers do anyway but it's coming naturally to him. He has no choice but to do it."

Caleb attends Nant Celyn School in Cwmbran, a mainstream school with support for children who are deaf or hard of hearing but when he's not in school there's a good chance you'll find him at the local G-Force kart track near Pontypool.

Ian is full of praise for the circuit management who he says have been hugely supportive of Caleb, often opening the track just for him to practice. Caleb is usually to be found driving each Saturday and Sunday and through the summer months he'll be on track at least three evenings a week as well.

On his sixth birthday the MSA issued Caleb with his first competition license. "I was concerned because of the deafness that they were going to at least ask a lot of questions." says Ian, "but it's all gone straight through without an issue."



Caleb is now competing in the national championship for 6 to 8 year olds, the seven round Bambino tour. The competition doesn't see the drivers racing directly against

each other. Instead, Ian likens it to the qualifying procedure used in Formula One, "they get 10 minute slots to go out on track and they have to set the fastest lap."

With many of the drivers in the series in their second year of competitive racing, Ian views 2014 as a learning year for Caleb. "There are a lot of new tracks for him," he says, "also, he wasn't used to a lot of people around, so this year is all about development."

Even at this level motorsport can be expensive and Ian says he could not afford to run Caleb competitively at this level by himself. The result has been many hours spent writing letters and e-mails and making phone calls but those efforts have started to pay dividends with sponsorship deals from the go compare.com Price comparison website and from Abergavenny based Motorcare motor factors. But the "lad and dad" team is still looking for more support with a range of sponsorship packages in return either for cash or products and services available.

The plan is for Caleb to compete in the championship for two years and beyond that, well Formula One is still a long way off but, as Ian puts it, "he says now that he loves Formula One and he wants to be a racing driver and if that's what he wants to do I will do everything that I can do to support him. I spend hours every day just replying to e-mails and chasing things up, doing what I can to help them. If that's where he wants to go I'd love to see him reach the top. Why not?"

However, Ian's overall aspirations for his son are summed up quite simply, "my hope is that he does whatever he wants to do." Meeting Caleb, the impression you get, even at this young age, is that he may well have the drive and determination to achieve whatever he wants to as well.

You can follow Caleb's racing exploits on his Facebook page, 'Silence Racing'. If you're interested in supporting his racing you can contact Ian by e-mail at Ian.Macduff@Frenchautosolutions.net.

*Road Rally Championship
supported by the Basic Roamer
Company*

The 2014 WAMC Road Rally Championship supported by the Basic Roamer Company is up and running, with 5 rounds having been completed, the most recent being the Night Owl.

Registrations are at the highest level for a number of years and currently stand at 51 Drivers and 51 Navigators.

The first 4 rounds saw 4 different drivers score maximum points so it looks like being an interesting year. The next round is the Eagle Rally organised by Newtown and District AC.

There has been a change to the published calendar with Knighton MC's Pacemaker rally taking the place of the Bro Teifi which is not running this year. The Pacemaker is on 12/13th July

As ever, we want your motorsport news to include in future editions. Just e-mail it to peter@peterhughesmedia.com.

Don't forget you can see the latest Championship standings and lots more at www.wamc.org.uk



MotorMind Results

Congratulations to Tim Hobbs of Telford on winning our MotorMind competition. He will shortly receive a copy of "Pirelli backstage 1964 – 2005" courtesy of Jimmy and Heather Jones. For those of you who are wondering, here are the correct answers:

1. The Welsh Forest Rally Championship was first contested in 1975. Who was the winning driver? **Colin Mack**
2. Moving right up to date, who took the 2013 Trident Engineering Welsh Sprint and Hill Climb title? **Roger Turner**
3. What is the name of the Welsh Road Rally Championship round run by Aberystwyth and District Motor Club? **Night Owl**
4. Moving further afield, in what make and model car did Bjorn Waldegard win the 1970 Monte Carlo Rally? **Porsche 911S**
5. Which rally driver's nickname means "on the roof" in English? **Erik Carlsson**
6. In what year was James Hunt Formula One World Champion? **1976**
7. Who was the last Welsh competitor to win the British Rally Championship and in what year? **Phil Pugh**
8. Who is the current British Touring Car Champion? **Andrew Jordan**
9. Whose autobiography is entitled "Only Here for the Beer"? **Gerry Marshall**
10. The Wydean Stages first ran in 1975. Who was the winning driver that year? **Graham Elsmore**
11. How many Grands Prix did Sebastian Vettel win in 2013? **13**
12. Who took the overall driver's title in the 2013 British Historic Rally Championship? **Richard Hill**
13. Who co-drove Tom Pryce on the 1976 Tour of Epynt? **Dave Richards**
14. Name the three courses in the 2013 British Hillclimb Championship that were not in mainland Britain. **Bouley Bay, Val des Terres, Craigantlet**
15. What make and model of car won the 2013 Steve Harkness Competition Tyres Welsh Tarmac Rally Championship? **Subaru Impreza.**

A special mention, too, for Stuart Cardell who pointed out that it was actually 1975 that Tom Pryce did the Tour of Epynt. In our defence, it was on December 28th so it was nearly 1976! We hope you enjoyed the competition, let us know if you would like more in future editions.

A Date For Your Diary

Three times "Motoring News" Road Rally Champion Mick Briant is organising a Road Rally Forum at Parc y Scarlets in Llanelli on Saturday June 7th. A number of the stars of the era are due to be present at the event which starts at 5 PM and runs until midnight. It will be chaired in their usual irreverent style by Peter Griffiths and Howard Davies.

Mick's second book on the Motoring News championship is also currently available. Called "If the Lanes Could Talk", it features the personal stories of 14 drivers and navigators who contested the championship. Priced at £55 the book is available from www.mickbriant.com as are tickets for the forum.