



ROTAX MAX CHALLENGE GRAND FINALS 2007 Monday, November 26 2007

STORY

Hello and welcome once again from the Kart Circuit in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates. The on-track action turned very serious here Wednesday afternoon as all three competition classes, DD2, MAX and Junior MAX, ran qualifying sessions to set the starting order for their heat races which will start tomorrow. As past entrants at the Grand Finals know, a good starting position is very important with such high competition. As such, the teams were very focused on achieving their highest level of performance.

The first group to qualify was the Junior MAX competitors. After both groups of Juniors had their chance at setting a fast time, it was Japan's Takamoto Katsuta at the top of the list with a lap of 59.336 seconds. Following Katsuta were Holland's Mats Van Den Brand (59.413), Estonian Kevin Korjus (59.434), William Bamber of New Zealand, (59.445) and rounding out the top five, Takamoto's teammate Mitsunori Takaboshi (59.537). As in all the classes, competition is very tight. As evidence of this, the top 27 Junior MAX drivers, nearly half the field, qualified within less than a half of a second of each other on this 1.4 Kilometer-long track.

After the Juniors had their runs, it was time for the MAX class (formerly known as Senior MAX) to have a go. When all the dust had settled, it was Australia's David Sera well ahead of the group with a fast lap of 57.986 seconds. Second through fifth were Benjy Russell (58.196) of the United Kingdom, Hungarian teammates Imre Birzdo (58.303) and Tamas Kiss Pal (58.358) and Belgian Michael Cool (58.367).

Last up to qualify were the DD2 entrants. With their extra power, two speed gearboxes and softer D2 tyres, the DD2s were expected to set the fastest times in Official Qualifying. To this extent, the DD2s did not disappoint and Canada's Pier-Luc Ouelette put in a real scorcher of a lap at the beginning of the session that withstood all other challengers. Pier-Luc's lap of 56.584 was nearly a quarter of a second faster than anyone else could muster. Behind Ouelette were South African Kyle Lawrence (56.832), Japan's Makoto Kubo (56.863), Australian Ben George (56.980) and Tom Williamson (57.008) also from Australia. Just like the other classes, the times in the DD2 class were very close.

After two days of running, every driver we've spoken to is still giving the track layout of the Al Ain Kart Raceway very high marks. It is interesting to note, however, that there is no clear favorite on which section of the track is the most fun. Some have said they really like the middle section for its sweeping medium-speed bends which all flow together. Others like the tighter technical section on the backside coming back to the pits. Meanwhile, others really love the long front straight that has a bit of a bump right where the DD2s are hitting around 120 KpH right before braking through a left-hand kink just before turn one.

Tomorrow's action begins promptly at 9:00 with 10-minute warm-up sessions for all groups followed by the first of the qualifying heats at 10:30. After qualifying, we know who's the fastest over a single lap. Starting tomorrow, we'll see who can perform the best in racing conditions over several laps.