



ROTAX MAX CHALLENGE GRAND FINALS 2007

Monday, November 26 2007

STORY

Thursday marked the first day of heat races here at the Kart Circuit in Al Ain for the 2007 ROTAX MAX Grand Finals. The day actually began with a bit of a chill in the air. But, as the sun came up, so did the temperature and the on-track action promised to be even hotter.

By now everyone knows how high the level of competition is at this event. And today's action did not disappoint. Looking particularly strong at this stage of the competition is Team Canada with three heat race wins, two of which belong to Pier-Luc Ouellette who seems to be the man to beat in DD2.

Also looking very strong is the team from the United Kingdom who also ended the day with three wins. Most impressive of all was a one-two-three finish in the third race by Mike Simpson, Benjy Russell and Ben Cooper.

Continuing on the form they've showed over the last two Grand Finals, the Netherlands is also making a statement that they are still a force to be reckoned with as they have wins in both the Junior and DD2 classes by Mats Van Der Brand and Pieter Scheefhals respectively.

However, these three teams did not take all the wins. Japan, South Africa, Estonia, Hungary and Australia all came away with heat race wins as well. Plus there were many other strong performances throughout the day, proving that this year's Grand Final is as competitive as ones in years past.

One question that still remains on many people's lips is "will we see any rain this year as we have in almost every other Grand Final?" While it seems as though the chance of rain is highly unlikely out here in the desert, one must remember that at this time last year it WAS raining. Add to that it was actually flooding not too far from here. Of course, these circumstances are rare. So far, the closest we've come to having it rain is when it has looked like it's raining in the distance. However, we've been told by locals that that's just the desert wind picking up sand and dirt.

It must be said that the wind isn't the only force kicking up dirt here. The occasional off-track excursions by some of the competitors has provided some exciting viewing for the spectators gathered on the observation deck on top of the main building. One such incident by American Junior driver Justin Coplen caught everyone's attention as he was completely sideways at full-throttle for over 100 meters as he drove alongside the track before being able to rejoin the track surface.

Tomorrow the tension will be even greater for the competitors as the last of the heat races will be run before the always exciting "last chance" race. This race will determine which drivers, who did not qualify for the finals through the regular heat races, will be granted a start in the most important races of the week. As it's name implies, it truly is the last opportunity for some drivers and, if history is any indicator, promises to provide a lot of action as some drivers will resort to desperation moves to claim a spot in the finals.