

Bright future for Rotax – The MAX Column

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The economic downturn, World recession, financial crisis or whatever we choose to call it was big news in 2008. That is almost eight years ago, at the time Karting and the dominant Rotax classes seemed to be unaffected. A slow process of having to work longer hours for the same return and a general lethargy in the retail sector still did not really have an effect on our sport.

So many people in Karting are business people in their own right, or hold a position in their chosen field of some authority or responsibility, it was clear that these people were in the sport for a reason and did not find themselves as seriously affected as the media would have us believe.

If recession really did hit our sport then I think it was in about 2010. The entries all over the country were down, MSA licence holders were at an all-time low and yet we still tried to place the blame and not face up to the reality of recession having finally bitten.

Meanwhile the Rotax Classes help sway as the choice for all age groups from 11 year olds to those well past it! The Rotax product has had the longest ever run of popularity in terms of a single brand and a type of power unit that had never existed before the launch of the MAX in 1997.

The concept of the Rotax MAX with its self-contained water cooling system, clutch and self-starter was a revolution in the sport. The concept also ticked the box for the new generation of Karting enthusiast who for the first time came from the leisure industry via Indoor Karting which after all only came into being in the mid 1980's.

In the past year there has been a gradual regrowth in the sport which has seen the Rotax Classes become the bedrock of Club level racing while still holding a high proportion of racing at National and International level. A recent survey just before Christmas showed that The Max Classes in the UK hold just under 40% of the market share. Since the New Year, with the introduction of the EVO engine unit sales for engines have been stronger than in the

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previous two years. New units sold before the end of April carry a full 12 month warranty, a unique feature of a unique product with unrivalled reliability.

It may well be that the New OK engines will attract a small percentage of the top drivers as Formula A and the short life of the KF series did before. However this should only strengthen the position of the Rotax classes as the place to learn, to race competitively and all at a reasonable price. The effect of the top drivers and teams on the Rotax has been to artificially inflate prices and thereby restrict the growth of the sport as a whole. The future is bright for Rotax at Club, National and International level all of which is attainable as a privateer with the right advise and a well structured budget.

Written by George Robinson

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