ROTAX MAX CHALLENGE
GRAND FINALS 2007
Saturday, November 24 2007

It's time once again for the Rotax Max Challenge Grand Finals. This year will be the 8th annual event and will be held at the Al Ain Sportplex at Ail Ain in the United Arab Emirates. At this event there will be 216 drivers from over 50 countries competing for the gold in three classifications: DD2, Senior Max and Junior Max. To realize the worldwide growth of the Rotax Max Challenge, it's worth noting that at the first Grand Finals in Puerto Rico, there were only 66 representing just 19 countries.

The Rotax Max Grand Finals has often been referred to as the "Olympics of Karting". This is an accurate description because it brings top-quality karting drivers from many nations all over the world to determine who is the best. It is also a good description because to get to the Grand Finals, a driver must first compete in his/her home country and qualify as one of the best. This fact signifies one of the most special aspects of the Grand Finals because a driver cannot simply buy their way in, they must earn it.

From being little more than just a track surface and a few huts just three months ago, the kart track at the Al Ain Sportplex has grown into a world-class facility. The effort required to handle such a task in such a short time has been enormous. As can be expected, even as the first drivers show up for registration, crews are busy at work putting the final touches on the facilities.

Gary Sheffield, General Manager of Al Ain Raceway, has spent almost the last year of his life dedicated to getting the facility up and running. He and his crew have put in many long days to make sure that every last detail is taken care of. The effort has paid off well and the comments from the drivers that were present on Saturday were very complimentary of the 15-turn circuit. Words like "Awesome" and "Brilliant" were used to describe the track layout. However, the most often heard comment was, "I can't wait to race on this track!"

The track that these drivers are so anxious to race on is a fine example of a modern facility. It is wide, smooth and looks particularly fast. However, it also has some tight corners that will provide enough technical ability that we should see plenty of passing action. The curbs have been particularly well done and really compliment the track surface.

This year, the karts chosen to compete are being issued by CRG and Intrepid. The DD2 class drivers will be using the CRG Dark Rider chassis. This is the first year that the DD2 class has not used the RM1 chassis and CRG has highlighted their contribution with a commemorative "Grand Finals Al Ain" graphics kit that features a very sharp gold on black color scheme. Intrepid returns to the Grand Finals as a chassis supplier for the second year. This year they are the official chassis for both the Senior Max and Junior Max classes. Intrepid has made serious gains within the karting market in the last few years and continues to build karts with the highest standards. Seeing all 200+ karts assembled and waiting on trolleys within the 3600 square meter paddock is quite an impressive sight.

On Saturday evening a press conference was held at the Intercontinental Hotel where many journalists from the area were briefed on the history of Rotax Max competition and the activities that would take place in the coming week. As can be expected, most of the media's questions regarded details about the UAE team and which other Arab countries would also be competing. Of particular interest was the mention that, after the Grand Finals, the track will be open to public access. With such a beautiful facility and the fact that after the race there will be many top-quality karts for sale, the growth of karting in this region should be tremendous.

As with the events of Saturday, Sunday will also be a day for driver registration at the track. With more drivers, tuners and support members showing up from all over the globe, the Rotax Max Grand Finals is getting set to be the highlight of the racing season.