



ROTAX MAX CHALLENGE GRAND FINALS 2007 Monday, November 26 2007

STORY

After the events on Monday here in Al Ain, we're now one day away from seeing the official on-track action here at the 2007 ROTAX MAX Grand Finals. This day started promptly at 8:30 with a driver's briefing at the base of the main building. Drivers that have made it to the Grand Finals are already very accomplished in the rules of racing, As such, the meeting was kept as brief as possible so that the teams could set about the task of setting up their pit areas and attending the kart raffle.

At 9:15 the first raffle was set for the Junior MAX competitors to receive their karts. The raffle is a simple event. Basically each driver is called forward in order to draw a ping-pong ball out of a box that contains the number of the kart that will be his or hers for the week. In the preceding days, Intrepid and CRG mechanics had lined all the karts up on the main straightaway in a very impressive display. As each driver selects their kart, it is pulled from the lineup and they push it on its trolley back to their pit. Watching all the karts leave one-by-one was like watching some kind of slow-moving video game and over a period of 90 minutes, the once proud display of 220+ karts had dwindled to just a few spares that had not been picked.

After the raffles were complete, the paddock area was a blur of activity. The sounds of wrenches clinking, ratchets whizzing and mallets thumping filled the air, intermingled with the murmur of conversations between drivers and mechanics. While the team members were busying themselves with kart preparation, family members and supporters continued to look on, lending support wherever possible.

Once the competitors had their kart complete, it was time to take their kart and safety gear over to scrutineering for a complete safety check to make sure all safety measures had been adhered to. With 216 competitors, this can be a lengthy process, however, it all proceeded very smoothly with ROTAX officials operating two bays to accommodate the karts.

On Monday evening drivers and crews were invited to a welcoming party at the very posh Hotel Rotana Al Ain. The party was a great chance for all involved to relax and get to know their competitors while munching on finger food and ordering drinks from

the bar. Later on in the evening, Robert Gumpenberger of BRP-Rotax and Guy Sheffield of the Al Ain Kart Raceway addressed the crowd from the podium. Both men thanked all for coming and gave a bit of a background on both the circuit and the series and all the measures that had been taken to make this the best Grand Finals ever.

Although all attendees enjoyed the party, there's no doubt what everyone wants to get to is the on-track action. As such, most drivers and crews left the party early to get their rest so that can give their best when the track opens for non-qualifying practice tomorrow morning. Will this year see repeat champions? Or will new champions emerge? Can the South Africans regain the hold they once had on the top of the podium? Or will Holland, winners in the last two years, and other countries stake their claim as the best? Through all the questions to be answered, one thing is for sure; it will be very exciting to watch!