



ROTAX MAX CHALLENGE GRAND FINALS 2007 Monday, November 26 2007

STORY

After three days of anticipation, serious on-track action began today as all three classes of ROTAX karts ran their first two practice sessions each at the Al Ain Kart Circuit. Although the sessions were officially untimed, there were a lot of mechanics standing along the pit wall holding stopwatches as they tracked their driver's movements out on course. After practice, throughout the pits there were many discussions about tyre pressures, front-end settings, gear selection and more. Everyone realizes how vital tomorrow's qualifying sessions will be and want to maximize his or her performance before then.

As can be expected, some people were happy with their initial setups while others were left scratching their heads in search of finding the proper balance for their kart's handling. Others, however, were still just happy to be part of the ROTAX Grand Finals and took a more relaxed approach. One such team was the first-year squad from Jordan. As event rookies, the team has set goals geared more towards learning for next year then worrying about outright speed. This is not to say they have just shown up in a cavalier manner. The three-driver strong team has put in a lot of effort to be as professional as possible and has even attracted a corporate sponsor, Arab Wings, to support them.

In attendance, but not racing, are three former ROTAX MAX Grand Finals champions, all from South Africa. 2001 Champion, Claudio Piazza-Musso owns a kart shop in Cape Town and is on hand to support his drivers and provide advice to the team. Working a similar role for the Mexican team is 2004 and 2005 DD2 champion Wesleigh Orr. Also attending, but just in general support of his friends is 2003 Champion Cristiano Morgado, who won his title in Egypt after a very spirited drive against Holland's Ricardo van der Ende.

As expected, the track is getting rave reviews from all the drivers. The DD2 drivers especially like the long straights that let the two-speed karts really stretch their legs. It was interesting to hear that some of the drivers felt they were getting moved around a little bit by the wind which has been blowing very strong out of the West. The curbs have also been a popular topic of discussion. The placement and design of the red

and white borders has created an extra element to the driving tactics at the Al Ain Kart Raceway.

There weren't many off-track excursions in today's practice session. Yet, when someone did decide to do a little "agricultural racing", the cloud of dirt left behind could be seen from clear on the other side of the track. Those with the best vantage point of the action are watching from high above on the terrace of the scoring and timing building. As one can imagine, the terrace is fast becoming a very popular place.

On-track action heats up bright and early tomorrow morning when all three classifications have two timed practice sessions each before official qualifying begins. Once qualifying is under way, we'll have a clearer picture of who the favorites are to battle for the Championship.