

2011 Kaos Karting Young Guns Titles @ Lismore Kart Club

April 30-May 1, 2011

Report by Zak Caban

The beautiful city of Lismore, just south of the Queensland border welcomed some of the finest Junior Karting Talent that the East Coast has to offer as well as, a bit of unwanted weather and a tad of Motorsport Royalty for the 15th Running of the Young Guns Title.

Hi Everyone. Zak Caban with you, and welcome to this review of the 2011 Young Guns. Recent wet weather meant the pit premises was just mud and slush, an absolute quagmire however, at the business part of the weekend, the track was dry and, the Racing was fierce. How's that for irony!

Motorsport Royalty was present on the weekend but, as a Father and mechanic. 5-Time World Motorcycle Champion Mick Doohan introduced Lismore to his son, Jack Doohan, who competed in the Midget D Grade Class.

We'll speak more of Mick's appearance a little later on but, let's talk about the weekend as a whole and, this 720 metre, 11-turn, Clockwise Circuit is very tricky at the best of times and, is the most undulating circuit in the state.

Some outstanding numbers here with 23 Entries in Junior National Heavy, 23 in Midgets, 24 in Junior National Light and 22 in Rookies. A total of 115 Entries across the 8 classes. The JMAX Field was significantly smaller, mainly due to the 3rd Round of the Pro Tour being held in Port Macquarie across the same weekend which, no doubt, had a great affect on numbers here across all classes.

Lismore Mayor Jenny Dowell was on hand to welcome competitors and spectators to the Young Guns. Dowell was popular with Midgets who, gathered around to share their Karting stories and shed some light on Karting to the Mayor.

Let's move on to Racing and, Saturday was a mix of wet and dry weather which did have a major impact on Qualifying for the event.

The rain hit just prior to the start of the first Session for the Rookies, who were the last Class in the Race order. This meant that only a handful of Karts from the preceding seven classes ventured onto the circuit for Session 2 knowing, they wouldn't improve on their Q1 time.

By the time the 2nd Rookies Qualifying Session came around, the circuit was, once again, dry which meant a flurry of activity on the circuit.

Racing on Saturday was relatively uneventful. There was a red and white flag used in Heat 2 of Junior National Heavy after 5 karts stopped down at the turn 3 hairpin. It was immediately followed by a turn one crash in the Midget Race which was red-flagged. 4 Karts were involved, it wasn't a serious crash and, subsequently, no drivers were injured!

Saturday was also the day of the uncooperative wheel. On no less than 3 occasions, Karters were stranded on circuit as one of their 4 tyres started circulating the circuit on its own.

This was mainly caused by the constant changing of tyres (from dry to wet) that was happening across the day as, the Lismore weather couldn't make up its mind which, left us with a taste of 4 Seasons in 1 Day.

A Saturday Night Dinner with the Locals at the Workers set the tone, for what would be an awesome Sunday.

One of the highlights of the weekend came on Sunday Morning when, Drivers and their guardians were given the sermon by the minister, and reminded to read the bible in order to understand exactly what the Yellow Flag means!

Sunday was bone dry on-circuit but, gumboots were still required to make your way through the pit paddock.

Junior National Heavy was first out on Circuit for the Finals. Brock Plumb was the dominant force on Saturday, defeating the local, Joshua Crossingham in both heats after Crossingham secured Pole Position in Saturday Morning Qualifying. Crossingham won the Pre-Final after Plumb had a bizarre mechanical failure right at the start of the 12-lap race.

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The Final was always going to be interesting, with Plumb starting from the back of the field and, we were treated to one hell of a drive. Plumb had moved from 18th to 6th by Lap 6 and Crossingham, Ethan O'Farrell and Chris Williams were feeling the pressure.

Plumb eventually made it to the front and, pulled off the most unlikely of wins in an amazing rollercoaster ride. O'Farrell took 2nd, 3rd went to the Local, Joshua Crossingham, 4th went to Chris Williams and Jack Wood rounded out the podium.

Moving on to the Midget class now and, a huge field of talented youngsters took to the circuit to tackle the tricky, and at times, difficult conditions. Queenslander Declan Fraser clinched a clean sweep on Saturday. Put simply, given that it was a wet Saturday, it was very much consistency that got Declan the wins but, also his experiences on, as I understand it, slick circuits in the past.

In Sunday's Pre-Final, poor Fraser Ruane didn't even start and, post-race, Jay McGregor was disqualified. During the race, Harrison Hoey threw the first real challenge at Declan Fraser which, the youngster handled with consummate ease. It was another win for Fraser but, a front row start for Hoey come Final time.

The 12-Lap final was red-flagged part way through due to a nasty incident involving Ryan Suhle, Zak Hudson and, another Local, Matthew McElligott. Hudson was taken to the medical tent at the track, thankfully it was just a bump on the elbow and, he had a smile on his face later in the afternoon.

The race was to be restarted in Indian file for a duration of 9 laps. Retiree, Matthew McElligott joined me in the Commentary Box for the restart, and from that it was an outstanding battle between Fraser and Hoey and also Max Adams who, up until this point had been right up the pointy end without forcing the leader into a battle for position.

Hoey hit the lead in part two of the final and, lead for all of 2 laps but, once Declan Fraser re-hit the front, it was game over. Hoey tried as hard as possible but, good defence and consistent driving was enough to see Declan Fraser take the win from Hoey and Max Adams. Kaleb Veal ran a lonely race to finish a mighty fourth. Incidentally, he set the lap record at this circuit in the shakedown meeting. The two Nicks', Lane and James fought for the final podium position, and it was Lane, just over James to complete the minor podium placings.

Junior National Pro's turnout was very disappointing. A total of 4 entries which meant only one thing, VERY LITTLE ACTION. Whilst the commentator had nothing to talk about, one guy, Chris Burley wasn't complaining as he motored his way to a clean-sweep. Jake Jolley had a smooth run to take 2nd and rounding out the placings were Jake Downs and Alexander Ramsay.

The Midgets D Grade class was a similar affair in field size however, a tad more entertainment. The right front wheel on Jack Doohan's Kart went for an unexpected excursion on Saturday which, left Jack with a 2nd row start for the Pre-Final. Declan Matthews was always the fastest of the starters but, unfortunately, he slipped back to finish at the tail of the field across the rest of the weekend.

On Sunday, we were shown that the motor racing ability of Mick was passed down the gene pool. Jack Doohan won an enthralling Pre-Final after a great battle with Josh Radford who dominated Saturday proceedings.

More of the same was expected in the Final and, one had to feel sorry for Josh Radford who tried every possible move he could without luck. Jack Doohan took the right lines, made his kart as wide as he possibly could and, maintained consistency to hold out Radford who, tried numerous times to pass on the outside of the downhill, right-handed turn 10 without luck, as expected and, William Bruce secured third after a good battle with Bayley Hall who, did in fact, lead the early laps.

In years gone by, the sons of Moffat, Johnson and Richards have all entered the Motorsport fold with success but, also, with the pressure to perform to the standard of their famous Father's. If the early performances of Jack Doohan are any guide, he will one day be to 4-wheels what Mick was to 2. He will also have that same media hype surrounding him as the likes of Moffat, Johnson and Richards did.

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Moving on to JMAX and, whilst Brock Plumb didn't pull off a Final win from the rear of the field, he was still in the thick of the action.

Plumb unfortunately had an off-track excursion which, resulted in a retirement in Heat 1 before coming back to clinch wins in both Heat 2 and the Pre-Final in, as I said earlier, was a very small field, mainly due to the Pro Tour down the Road at Port Macquarie.

A shocker of a start in the final from both Plumb and Joshua Crossingham allowed Ashlon Gardner to capitalize and, take the lead. From there, he didn't look back. Gardner took the win. Brock Plumb tried all he could but, was unable to challenge Gardner for the lead so, Plumb had to settle for second. Stephen Appleton was 3rd, Crossingham 4th and 5th went to Jack Wood which, left the youngster with a pair of fifths for the event.

Let's head to the Rookie D Grade class and, this was a very small field and, it lacked the entertainment that the Midget D Grade class provided as well but, we saw these guys out on circuit, having a great time and, at the end of the day, that's all that counts.

Jack and Mia Smith brought a little bit of brotherly-sisterly competition to the show with, Jack getting the better on 3 occasions including, his Heat 1 win. Celebrations for that victory were short lived as, it was, a Flynn Adams domination for the rest of the weekend.

Adams was a clear winner of the Final from Jack Smith and Layton Butler. The winning margin was 4.129 seconds. Mia Smith took 4th and 5th went the way of Brodie Bramwell-Johnson. Sattlecker was 6th, her and Johnson finished a lap down.

Junior National Light would be the second last class of the meeting. This was the biggest field for the weekend with 24 entries.

When I flicked through the entry list, my money, if I were on a betting man, would've went straight on Lachlan McHugh. Reason being, his experience at state level which, has resulted in a championship win.

I'm glad I didn't gamble cause McHugh had no luck, two seconds on Saturday, a third in the Pre-Final and another 2nd in the Final.

Saturday Honours went to Brody Chardon however, on Sunday, Local and Junior National Pro winner, Chris Burley entered the fold.

Burley pipped Chardon in the Pre-Final with, McHugh in 3rd. It was Chardon's first defeat of the weekend but, the worst was yet to come for him.

In the Final, Burley lead early, McHugh was a small distance behind but, there was a forever increasing gap between he, and a flurry of karts including: Scott Hynes, Gus Flynn who, travelled all the way from Lithgow for the event, Jake Downs and also, Jamie Grohman. Chardon was in that pack as well, but a late race incident forced him down the field and, he would only finish 12th.

At the front, Burley had not one ounce of pressure on him, as he took his 2nd win of the day from McHugh who, played Bridesmaid all weekend. Scott Hynes held off a Hungry pack for third, Flynn was 4th and 5th went to Jake Downs.

The dominance of Queenslanders was evident in that Race. Only 3 New South Welshman finished inside the top 10 and, as I said on Commentary in Lismore, the State of Origin dominance has started to spill over into Karting but, the most important Race was won, by the local.

Rookies were to end our weekend of on-track entertainment and, they'd do it with the best last lap thriller of the weekend but, also in controversial circumstances.

Jordan McGregor started the weekend in grand style by taking Heat 1, Heat 2 went to Zane Goddard who, had a bout of illness on Saturday Night. Thankfully, it wasn't anything some Subway couldn't fix and, he was bright, ready and raring to go on Sunday Morning.

It was a Pre-Final that Harrison Oddie would win from Zane Goddard and Mitchell Maddren who, was firming as a contender for the win in the final, took 3rd.

So, 3 different winners in 3 races set the scene for a great Final and, when only 0.7 separated the top 4 at the end, you know why it was touted as a thriller.

All four contenders lead at one point or another and, moves galore were made on the Final lap which, did spark plenty of controversy post-race. Mitchell Maddren hit the front at exactly the right time, and

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that gave him the win. 4 different winners in as many races but, Maddren was going home with the big trophy. Cohen Ogilvie had a great run for 2nd, 3rd went to Goddard and 4th to Oddie. Tim Aebi was good enough to hold off Heat 1 winner Jordan McGregor, for 5th.

Post-Race, Cohen Ogilvie was disqualified for reasons we won't explain and, I have no doubt, we'll hear more on that in coming weeks. It meant that Jordan McGregor, after a consistent weekend, took home a worthy 5th spot. There was also a stewards hearing into a potential yellow-flag incident but, that was chucked out upon driver request which, was really great to see from a sportsmanship point.

So, that was racing and, it felt bizarre to be all done by One O'clock however, a great afternoon would still be had as we headed down to the Italo Australian Sports and Recreation Club for the Presentation Ceremony. Now, this was the first time I had attended a Race Presentation that wasn't held at the circuit. Funnily enough, it was the first time Lismore had done it this way as well.

It allowed competitors to kick-back, enjoy a cold beverage and also, watch the V8 Supercars, a category which, will no doubt, one day be home to some of the drivers who competed here this weekend.

Presentation was delayed due to the protest in the Rookie Class we detailed earlier.

Thousands of Dollars worth of prizes were given away to all drivers, most notably, place-getters however, a sportsman (or sportswoman in some cases) award was handed out to drivers who were, at times, unlucky across the weekend and, also to those who showed the values of sportsmanship across the weekend.

The Winners were:

Junior National Heavy: Christopher Williams	Midgets: Zac Stocks
Junior National Pro: Alexander Ramsay	Midgets D Grade: Bayley Hall
JMAX: Maxim Erickson	Rookies D Grade: Kayla Sattlecker
Junior National Light: Matthew Byrne	Rookies: Natasha Hern

Jack Doohan was awarded a Driver training day, with thanks to Matt Greenbury. On the note of Matt, a shout-out to his Brother Tyler who, had a nasty incident at the Pro Tour. Hope you're feeling better Tyler.

Ashlon Gardner, as best in class in JMAX, picked himself up a test day in a Formula Ford car courtesy of Anglo Australian Motorsports as voted by Tim Beale. It was a prize offered only to JMAX Competitors.

Whilst some drivers said farewell to the Young Guns Meeting ahead of their move to the Senior Ranks, it was evident that, a lot of eligible drivers would return next year. There is a lot of fine talent within the ranks we saw here this weekend, some of whom will still be attending the Young Guns for 5-7 Years and others who, will go on from that to have very successful Motor Racing Careers.

I want to say ever so briefly, and seriously before I wrap it up that, this meeting was overall, the best I've ever had the pleasure to attend.

Usually, as a commentator, you always incur problems at Kart Meetings. It may be with people who complain about speakers and speaker volume, or tell you how and where to hold the microphone to avoid it being inserted elsewhere by aggravated personnel at the meeting. It may also be with the club not being able to provide you with the utensils required (especially timing) for you to do your job however, here in Lismore not one problem at any point.

The club members were only ever too happy to help be it, with info on the circuit or, the supply of gumboots to get through the quagmire that was the pit paddock.

I think having the Mayor attend and open the event was a nice touch and, it shows how big the Young Guns Meeting is to the Community of Lismore as a whole and, that was also reflected with the presentation being held in town at the Italo Australian Sports Bar, who also sponsored the meeting.

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For me, this meeting was a challenge as, it was the first time I had attended Lismore but, also, it was the first time in which, more Queensland competitors were taking part than New South Wales competitors so, in that sense, it was good to get to know some of the Queensland Karters, and I look forward to meeting up with them again somewhere down the track.

As for the officials, Helen Voysey led a marvellous team that ran a brilliant Race Meeting in, at times, difficult circumstances. In fact, with the Red Flag on Sunday Morning, it meant the meeting finished 4 minutes later than anticipated. Fair to say, the boss wasn't impressed but, at the same time, wasn't overly worried.

Quickly, a personal thank you to the Ruane Family: Jane, Chris, Fraser and Austin who accommodated and transported me throughout the event. They are very lovely people who also, were only too happy to help me out across the weekend. Fraser didn't have the best of runs but, the spirit within that household wasn't dampened at any point.

Also, a shout out to Lismore Kart Club President, my mate Russell Standing, who organised for me to commentate this meeting. Russell isn't too well at present and, as a result, spent the weekend of the meeting in Hospital. I speak on behalf of everyone at the Lismore Club, the competitors of the Young Guns, and his Karting friends in wishing him a speedy and successful recovery.

With that, we say thanks for reading. Hope you've enjoyed the 15th Kaos Karting Young Guns from Lismore. Bye for now.