



Pictured is 13 year old Lismore Kart Club racer, Lachlan O'Reilly # 7 with his new livery from Brisbane based "Custom Decals" on his new Azzurro R8 Junior kart. Lachlan was competing at the Queensland State Titles and displaying his blue number panels with white number for the first time, signifying a reigning State Champion.

The other drivers in picture have the regular white panel with black number, signifying a Junior class driver. This was Lachlan's first race following his recent win at the NT State Championships and first opportunity to show off his "blue plate".

We had been warned that having the "blue plate" can become a bit of a target for other drivers out on the track, and within only two laps in the first unofficial practice session on Wednesday another driver had already driven over the back of Lachlan's kart, leaving tyre marks across the rear number panel, exhaust header pipe and engine.

The same driver in the next practice session bent the blue plate under and left smudges of sticker kit and old tyre rubber from his nose cone, with lots of pushing going on. Okay, that's racing, even though the actual meeting is still a day and a half away.

When for a third time in the official practice on Thursday, the same driver rammed the "blue plate" on the rear of Lachlan's kart, sending Lachlan shooting past the apex with full opposite lock on the steering wheel, it was time for a polite chat with the guardian of the driver.

More than 370 competitors across a dozen age and performance categories converged on Gympie over the weekend, with host Cooloola Kart Club providing an excellent track and facilities for the meeting.

Lachlan's Junior National Light class for 12 to 16 year olds was oversubscribed with 40 entries, meaning more competitors than grid positions on the track. A repo-charge race was held Friday morning after the timed qualifying sessions, with the lowest 9 qualifiers vying for the last 5 grid positions.

Lachlan qualified 14th and was working his way forward in the heats, with the 6th fastest time in the second heat and a 9th place finish. With a lap of the Cooloola track taking around 42 seconds, there was less than 1 second between the fastest times posted by the 36 drivers on the track.

Set for a top ten finish in the pre-final Saturday afternoon, to put him within reach of the lead pack and a possible podium finish in the final, early in the race he arrived at turn one at the end of the long straight to find the track blocked by a spun kart.

Braking hard and trying to avoid the crashed kart, Lachlan was smashed into from behind and was rammed into the stationary kart. The kart behind then rode over the top of Lachlan leaving black tyre marks across the top of his helmet.

Attempting to keep racing he found his kart near undriveable, with it pulling to the left with bent steering and chassis. Unable to turn right without manhandling the steering wheel he retired from the race.

Close inspection post race showed the karts frame to be bent beyond repair. Thankfully the pit crew had taken Lachlan's old kart along to sell, so working until they ran out of light, Lachlan's pit crew swapped axle, wheels, engine and electrics onto the old kart, in preparation for a rear of grid start in the final on Sunday.

With some great racing in the 16 lap final, Lachlan was able to work his way back to 20th. Whilst he made up 15 positions, he would have made more than 60 passes in the race, with the large midfield pack of drivers all attempting to fight their way toward the front and constantly jostling for position.

Lachlan would like to thank Dad for taking him and setting up his kart, Mum for finding the money for entry, tyres and accommodation, Tony Grant for helping Dad get the old R6B Azzurro kart ready for the final when my new one got bent, Graham Armstrong for putting his engine back together after the post race Technical Inspection at Darwin and Cameron Harch for the wicked new "Custom Decals" with the personalised blue number panels.