



Southern Go Kart Club

about karting



What is Karting?

Since the sixties, kart racing has developed to the current high tech sport it is today. Karting has long been regarded as the entry level to motor racing, with a number of our own State members racing interstate and overseas in internationally recognised classes. Well known race car drivers such as Jamie Whincup, Mark Winterbottom made their debuts in sprint karts, both competing numerous times at Southern Go Kart Club. Current V8 Supercar Super Cheap Auto driver, Tim Slade is a former member and his team mate Russell Ingall cut his teeth here in his karting days also.

Sprint kart racing in Australia comes under the control of the Australian Karting Association (AKA) whose prime purpose is to promote and protect the sport of kart racing. The South Australian Branch oversees racing in "Southern's" home state, South Australia.

Sprint Kart racing uses purpose built chassis, engines and tyres for competition on bitumen surfaces, usually hotmix. Tracks vary from 500 metres to 1200 metres and races are usually between 8 and 15 laps long. Some higher profile meetings, such as the State Championships or the City of Adelaide Titles feature longer races, which are not more than 25 laps. Only international class karts racing in the CIK event usually do races of 35 to 39 laps with the exception of specially organised Marathon races.

Events are organised almost every weekend. The 2009 Calendar will give a better idea of how many organised race meetings there are, where and how often. Racing licence holders can enter race meetings promoted by the AKA.

Safety is a prime concern of the organisers of events. Strict rules govern the sport in regards to kart and circuit maintenance to ensure that any danger is avoided in the event of an accident. Like higher motorsport formulae, trained medical professionals are in attendance at all organised race meetings as a precaution.

Who Can Go Karting?

Karting is a sport the whole family can enjoy. Karting is for males and females from age seven up. Classes are separated by age until the driver reaches Senior level, which can be entered into at 16 years of age.

The four main age divisions are:
Midgets: Persons aged from their seventh (7) birthday until their eleventh (11) birthday.
Rookies: Persons aged from their tenth (10) birthday until their twelfth (12) birthday.
Juniors: Persons aged from their twelfth (12) birthday until their sixteenth (16) birthday.
Seniors: Persons aged sixteen (16) and over.

Midgets and Rookies are a single class using exhaust restrictors to control the speed of the kart, as well as smaller tyres on the rear of the kart. Within the Junior and Senior divisions there are various different weight and performance categories the driver can choose from.

Some examples of classes are:
Midgets: Low powered engine, Combined kart and driver weight 90kgs.
Rookies: Low powered engine, combined kart and driver weight 100kgs.
Junior National Light: Low powered engine, combined kart and driver weight 115kgs.
Junior National Heavy: Low powered engine, combined kart and driver weight 135kgs.
Senior National Heavy: Low powered engine, combined kart and driver weight 150kgs.
Senior Clubman Light: Higher powered engine, combined kart and driver weight 135kgs.

Where can Karters Drive?

Drivers licenced through the Australian Karting Association (AKA) can drive on AKA licenced tracks. The Southern Sprint Kart Club's facilities at Bolivar Raceway are licenced with the AKA(SA). There are ten AKA(SA) affiliated clubs in South Australia, including Broken Hill. There are six bitumen sprint circuits in the state. These are at Nuriootpa, Broken Hill, Mount Gambier, Monarto, Bolivar and Whyalla.

Southern Sprint Kart Club allows Recreational and Racing members to practice during days when racing is not organised at its facilities. However, only AKA licenced members should drive on an AKA licenced track, under the rules of the AKA with which the Southern Sprint Kart Club is affiliated.

The purpose built karts are designed for the flat, smooth surfaces of properly designed race tracks. They are not intended to also be used on public roads or on rough terrain.

Racing members may elect to drive at a sanctioned race meeting at Bolivar or any other circuit hosting the event. Drivers need to enter these events on official entry forms with the organising club and undertake scrutineering of their kart prior to competing in the event. The 2009 Calendar explains what events are scheduled when during the year and who the organising club is and what the venue is.

How much does karting cost?

Karting is the most affordable way to go motor racing. For the recreational driver, membership and licences are affordable and a suitable kart can be obtained for between \$1000 and \$3000. For the racer, classes feature controlled engines, tyres and petrol and strict rules about equipment modifications that keeps the sport fairer and cheaper.

The Kart itself is the most substantial financial outlay the karter will make. Karts range from \$2500 for a second hand basic kart to \$6000 for a reasonable new kart. The Trading Post, Ebay and your local kart dealer are great place to find second hand karts. Even a "Wanted" message on the Southern Go Kart Club, could land you a kart.

Protective apparel is also needed to drive a kart on an AKA licenced track. A helmet of single mould conforming to AS1698 or SNELL 1980, 1985, 1990 or 1995 or BS6658-85 is required. While kart-specific helmets are made, a motorcycle helmet with an Australian Standards sticker with 1698 printed on it can be purchased from \$200 to \$900. A full body racing suit with full length sleeves and trousers is needed to protect the torso. This could cost between \$200 and \$700 for a suitable garment. Overalls with 'pop' buttons are not acceptable. Protective gloves and boot also are required and this could cost from \$100 to \$300.

Memberships and AKA licences last for a period of 12 months. Exact fees for these items depend on the age of the driver and the type of licence/membership they require.

These are the major costs. At the bottom end this could be a \$2200 start up cost to a \$7300 cost to start-up racing. However, much of this cost is purchasing one-off things to get started and a second year in the sport would be substantially more affordable. Racing karters need

to also factor in entry fees to each race meeting which average about \$30 per meeting in South Australia. We recommend talking to someone involved in the sport or a kart shop to receive advice before making big decisions about getting into the sport. This way you can get the advice to get the best out of your equipment and the most out of karting for your dollar!

How Do I Get Started?

The first thing to do is to come along to a race meeting and see what goes on and talk to people who enjoy karting every weekend. There are several events at Bolivar you can attend to watch racing and chat to competitors and officials.

If you think karting might be for you but aren't sure, or want to know more about what a kart feels like to drive then participating in a Come and Try Day organised by the Australian Karting Association SA might help out. There are two held each year to give people the opportunity to get a feel of the sport before making the decision to be involved.

From here, the interested karter would probably purchase a kart to suit their needs as a karter. Karters can be recreational or racing licence holders, and these two groups in most cases have different needs.

Joining a club is essential to be able to have facilities to use and an endorsement to obtain an AKA recreational or racing licence. Southern Sprint Kart Club Membership gives the member many privileges and our membership officer will also assist you in obtaining your AKA licence. You may choose to join the club before purchasing a kart, and keeping an eye on club notice boards for second hand karts from other club members.

When applying for the AKA licence, you need to undertake an Observed Licence Test (OLT). On passing the OLT, you are given your provisional licence, under which Racing members need to display on their kart for four meetings for Midgets, Rookies and Juniors and three meetings for Seniors. After this period, subject to being approved by officials, you are now a fully licenced AKA C-Grade licence holder.

Racing on P-Plates

When you first start competing, you are issued with a provisional licence. Whilst racing with a provisional licence you have displayed on your kart a P-Plate on the front and rear. Usually this will be for the first four meetings for a Midget, Rookie or Junior and first three meetings for a Senior. The Senior's fourth meeting is spent as a flag marshal assisted by a trained flag marshal or another fully licenced driver.

Whilst you are racing on P-Plates, you will start every race at the rear of the field (behind all fully licenced AKA drivers).

At the beginning of the race meeting the stewards will take your provisional licence to hold onto during the day whilst you are under observation. They will look for consistency, respect for other karters and rules and that you have finished more races than you have not finished. If you have been observed by the stewards to have done this, you get a signature in your licence. Four signatures in your licence means you are a fully licenced C-Grade driver. The fourth signature for Seniors will be from an official of the meeting you flagged at.

Recreational or Racing?

The two main types of driver in the sport are Recreational drivers and Racing drivers. Recreational drivers are those who only want to drive their kart on a licenced track

recreationally rather than competitively. Racing karters can both use the facilities for practice and compete in sanctioned race meetings.

Recreational licences are more affordable than racing licences. Membership costs for Southern are the same for both Recreational and Racing memberships, as they have the same access to the facilities.

Some drivers prefer to become a recreational member initially and spend a year practicing to fine tune their driving before becoming a racing member and competing. This is a good way of introducing yourself to the sport, and also a way to save a little bit of cash.



2008 City of Adelaide Titles Clubman Super Heavy