

WEST AUSTRALIAN

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33

Starting up procedure on track for change

KART RACING

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To win a go-kart race means you must finish. To finish, you must start, so let's have a look at how we start a race.

The first thing to appreciate is that in Australia, until fairly recently, virtually all karts were direct drive. This means there is no clutch and only one single fixed-gear ratio.

To start the engine, the back wheels must be lifted clear of the ground, the kart pushed forward and dropped back on the ground and then pushed further until the engine starts and the kart takes off under its own power.

Simple mechanically, but a bit prehistoric, and this is slowly changing with a mandate by the Australian Karting Association that all karts must be clutched by 2010.

Now, karts must use the rolling start technique. This essentially means they start in a grid formation with a double row format, the front inside driver being classed as "on pole" and that driver sets the pace for the start.

Before the start/finish line the tracks are marked with a "no man's land" strip along the centre which the karters are forbidden to cross until the race has been officially started.

The starter monitors the formation of the grid and when satisfied, waves the Australian flag or turns on green signal lights to indicate the official start. Then the action begins.



A close field makes passing difficult so drivers look for a small opening at the right time. Picture: Derek Reynolds

Much can be gained at the start. A small opening at the right time might gain you many places and is far easier than trying to pass during a race.

However, with the karts being very close, the first corner usually results in some being "hung out to dry" as the

rest of the field sneaks underneath them. Worse, though, is being pushed off the track and stalling the engine. No engine, no pace, no race.

Meanwhile, the WA State Championships will be in Bunbury on October 6-8.

The basic format is time trials and first round of racing on Friday, intermediate rounds on Saturday and finals on Sunday morning and early afternoon. The track is on the North Boyanup Road, next to the speedway. ken@strikeproducts.com.au