

WA MOTORSPORT DON'T MISS THE START OF OUR NEW KARTING COVERAGE

Karting a breeding ground for stars

KEN SEEBER

You are 30mm from the ground, the engine is screaming at 15,000 revs and the steering is incredibly direct.

You speed around the 1000m track in about 50sec., going into the 15 corners at an almost suicidal speed which generates a 1.5 g-force.

This is great — no, it's incredible. And the other thing is that you are not alone; there are others around you doing exactly the same thing.

This is "full on" racing.

Welcome to the first of our fortnightly columns covering karting in WA. There are more than 10,000 licenced karters in Australia, with more than 1000 in WA. Of these, about 700 are sprint karters, meaning

they race on purpose-built bitumen tracks. The remainder race on dirt tracks, again specially made for kart racing.

Karting as a sport provides close and intense racing in relative safety, and is the most affordable of all motorsports.

It also is the training ground for virtually every professional racing driver, from V8 Supercar racers to Formula 1 competitors.

A good example of this rise to success is Garth Tander, who started his motorsport career racing karts in Perth before progressing to Formula Ford where he became the Australian champion.

This led him to a test drive in a Gary Rogers Commodore and from

there he joined the V8 Supercar circus. Another karter following the same path is Daniel Elliot who, after a successful career in karting, is now dominating Formula Ford in his first season.

Obviously not all karters aspire to these levels so that leaves the 900-odd who can start karting at the age of seven and continue racing well into their 60s.

These drivers passionately enjoy their karting at their chosen level of competitiveness.

While karting is about motorsport, the fun factor and a friendly social environment is the goal of clubs and members. This is reflected in the big number of family members, friends and helpers for each driver.



Justin Schneider leads the field in a typical, close-fought kart race.

Next time, I will take a quick look at the bitumen circuits around WA, from Port Hedland in the north down to Esperance on the south coast. After that, I will explain all the

classes, interspersed with a range of karting topics — such as club operation, the overall structure of karting and track safety.

strikep@bigpond.net.au

"WEST AUSTRALIAN"

JUNE 8, 2005