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Never too young to learn

KARTING

KEN SEEBER

Matthew Galati is only nine years old but already he is a two-year sprint and bitumen karting veteran.

Galati races in the Midgets category, the first class available to budding racers who become eligible after their seventh birthday.

While it is a proper racing class, the real focus of the Midgets is, to quote the rule book, "to teach young people to drive karts of restricted performance at limited cost".

Perhaps Motorsport 101 might be a more appropriate title.

Unusual to most karting classes, the Midget section allows two engines, the Comer and the Yamaha KT100J.

The Comer has the convenience of

being a pull start but the Yamaha engine can be used in successive classes.

Because the Yamaha is bigger, it is detuned with a controlled restrictor-plate in the exhaust. On the dyno both engines are similar, with a power output of about 4kW.

On the track they are basically identical, with a top speed approaching 85kmh.

Weight is a key performance factor in karting, with a 20kg increase slowing down a kart by about 1sec. on a 52sec. track.

Therefore, for all other karting classes, there is a minimum combined kart and driver weight. This is measured on ground-level scales after each heat.

The minimum weight for the Midget class is 90kg.

With Galati's dripping-wet weight of 29kg, this means that he still has to attach lead weights to the kart to

meet the 90kg requirement. Keeping it in the family, his brother Daniel also races karts, contesting the Rookies category, the next class up from Midgets.

For their parents, Guy and Sandra Galati, karting represents a family affair with all of them attending race meetings and sharing the highs and lows of competition.

This is typical of karting, as is the fact that there is usually no previous family history of motor racing, being a sport many get their start in.

As one who has been involved with karting scene for quite some time, it is great to see Midgets come into the sport.

When they start out, they call me Mr Seeber whereas 10 years later they call me Ken.

So why does Matthew Galati do it? Because, as his mum says, "he just loves it".

There couldn't be a better reason.



Matthew Galati, 9, prepares for another race in the Midgets class.