

## Commentary on Snap-on Stars of Karting 2008 Technical Evolution

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Each year brings about change as motorsports is a fluid industry. We endeavor to make those changes reflect positively as we move forward. Reactions and projections as regards technical direction can help to develop stability in an industry where instability occasionally reigns supreme. I offer the following text as rationale used in going forward with the forward most sprint racing organization in North America.

I will hit the safety changes first since this has to always be our primary concern. You will note with review of our TechReg that we have made two significant strides in safety this year. One might say contradictory, but allow me to explain. Notably new for 2008 is the cessation of mandatory neck braces for seniors while conversely the new mandate for rear plastic protection for juniors. Our position on neck collars is that the current mandate is a stamp of fallacy as the only thing we can require is that they be unaltered. There are no standards. There is no consultation, no fitting, no restriction on personal choice as long as you don't saw the foam. If you don't believe me, look on the cover of your karting sites with long-necked guys wearing fabric and foam, floppy necklaces. It is over-governing and it's time to simply remove the rule.

I am told that we have no direct reason to require neck braces, chest protectors or flak jackets - except that we care about our racers. Because of that we continue to require neck braces for our soft-boned, younger constituents because we do believe that there is good to come of it. And not only will we require neck braces for Cadet and Junior, we will require a fitting verification. You will sit in your kart - full dress - at first scrutineering. We will evaluate your neck brace fitment and we will make comments on it. The driver's parents would be most welcome. We will make some evaluations at the first two events and try to have an expert at New Castle. If we find that your brace is completely unacceptable, we may require immediate solution. Otherwise, you may get an "advise" notice and be required to consider seriously a proper fitment by an expert going forward into the season. A return fitting may be required. Better to check for fit yourself. If you think it's kinda funky, it probably is.

We would welcome an adult neck brace specification but we are incapable of funding such an effort. It has to be meaningful and that is the point. We are possibly more complicit now, hanging an ill-suited brace on some guy's neck, not knowing if it will help or hurt, but at least someone thinks it's OK because it is unaltered.

With rear plastics on juniors, it would seem a no-brainer in safety. But there is more to it than that. Problem is an increase of aggressive bumping techniques with that big plastic bumper out there protecting the wheels. We have decided that the evolution of this move gives us an opportunity to establish a new paradigm of junior driving standards while increasing safety during incidental contact. The presence of rear plastics will cause the race directors to redefine the standards for junior classes everywhere. Soon every junior

kart will be plastic in back and we have the opportunity to redefine our youths' conduct on-track.

While on health issues, we have increased the weights for all three intercontinental classes. This is in response to the general size increase of North American *homo sapiens* in all three cases but with a few extra pounds tossed toward JICA to compensate for the rear plastics. We will evaluate the rear systems and consider going all-plastic at some time not so far down the road, so ICC and ICA can expect another five pounds on plastics day, whenever that turns out to be.

A subject dear is our homologated bumpers and bodywork. They dawn with an allowance to mix and match sets this year for the first time since introduction. So now you can use KG pods with Freeline nose if you like, as long as you use the bumpers matched to the plastic. Your sidepods have to be identical but all the rest can be from any homologated manufacturer. I applaud this move as a removal of an unnecessary extra layer of administration from the sport. Not to affect safety, make sure your elements were all crash-tested together, but customize your ride the way you like. Cool.

Our next hatching is the package aimed at Intercontinental A. The gearheads among us love this class. If 20,000 rpm doesn't turn your blood to oil, you can't quite get this class. The passion I saw in meeting with ICA faithful last summer was palpable. As we are now the only major sanctioning body worldwide supporting this class, we may well have some other faithfuls come from around the world, just to savor the engine once more before next generation rolls over us.

To enable this last tour, we have put together a wide-ranging plan to induce reliability. First, changing the spec fuel to VP Racing C12. This high octane favorite has seen the stresses of high revolution race engines for years. Come to think of it, a lot of problems came to the formulae A when less potent fuel was mandated. We feel that we can give this one last hurrah and we are excited to finish this generation in glory, not limping away.

Next, in terms of cooling, ICA is sensitive. To help combat the issues we encounter in North America, we now allow multiple radiators in ICA and specifically encourage bottom end ducting and air scoops. This would normally violate original outward appearance rules but, heck, if it helps us, who is to stop us? The rest of the world has already gone on to other problems.

We may not be quite done however. Based on practice day monitoring, if we have to control gear ratio to keep rpm in sane ranges, we reserve the right to do so. All efforts will be made in best faith to govern that program. Conferences with team managers will be help to determine the just methods of control. We are also investigating the promise of a better air filter that may eventually be class mandated, if tests show positive results.

I hearken to the faithful for one last intercontinental 100cc ride. Stars of Karting. North America.

Junior ICA may well be our most notable success introduction. The second coming of these engines was because of Stars and it has produced racing that is as exciting as it is equal. A wide range of tuners understand this engine and industry balance is great for engine builders. This fastest of junior classes is yet another passing lion but support is awesome for this stars-of-tomorrow class. Expect the best action as racers and tuners - and scrutineers - up their games for the finish.

In speaking of industry balance, I think it is noteworthy to recognize the balance amongst manufacturers in our series. It is a model for success in business. Comer in Cadet, Parilla in JICA, TM and Maxter in ICC, all four majors in ICA and Parilla, Vortex and ROTAX in our newest class - Stars TaG. Even TM getting onboard with the TaG ICC effort is very cool and another example of the market support we aim to steward. A nice spread and good for healthy function. All pure kart racing engines. Again, pretty cool.

The introduction of the Stars TaG class in place of Spec Racer is in an effort to bring the focus back to the driver and the sport and away from the contentious engine battles that are waged. We understand our responsibilities and step up to the plate when it is necessary. Multi-manufacturer platforms have been part of Stars since inception and there are places where this is the only proper method. Single-make classes are also part of our structure and we welcome this balance as well. One thing of note is that we are not a typical TaG structure. We have narrowed the engine choice down to just a select few and in this we are able to better focus on the task at hand; to provide quality competition with an efficient product keeping in mind the cost factor along with the ability to attract new users to the sport.

I will take this opportunity to present one official announcement - the Cadet class engine formula for 2009 will remain the Comer K80. After much consideration and debate, testing and analyzing market trends, technical and financial considerations combined with our recent re-invitation of 8- and 9-year-olds made the current formula the most attractive. None of the alternatives swayed the opinion of stability and popularity that the Comer offers. Close racing? Builder equity? Broad and open industry support? Rules stability? The Comer has it all in degrees that exceed the alternates.

But, we are going to move forward in careful steps. For now, we will commit to the Comer engine package for two years. We recognize development in this age group but decline to move away from stability at this time. It is considered to be of more weight in these difficult financial times. We will attempt to give one full year's notice prior to formula change.

Affecting every class is the doubleheader format of 2008 events, east, west and united, same format all year. This is the same format we ran at Race of Americas the last two years and last year's Final. Racing through the heats is difficult but failure in one heat is not insurmountable and the equally weighted finals mean that hard work through the heats and inspired finals results can reward the weekend's best driver with drastic point standings swings in one weekend. It will increase strength of the Final event because

with two equally weighted finals, anything can happen in points since the Final represents 25% of the season's total.

It will be interesting to see the various team managers and their efforts to excel at the new format. It will certainly change racecraft. For one thing, you will likely be required to race at least one extra session on a race engine each weekend before cutting the seal. If we don't cut seals in Final 1 post-tech, you will be asked to run *five competitive elements without maintenance*. If you run LCQ it could be six. With the prior divisional format, the most you could expect would be three sessions without under seal maintenance being allowed.

There is a procedure listed in 'scrutineering' that talks about engine maintenance if you have blown everything up. We did this because we expect there will be guys that will blow up all they have before the event is done. We have opened a window for that poor guy, but purposely made inconvenient so as to promote reliability in addition to horsepower. You may have to work for it, but we will keep you in the game if you want it bad enough.

Better thing is to tell your builder to not forget reliability when he is touching up your powerplant. It's going to be a lot easier weekend for all of us and help loads with costs, too. I think it is another good move because it makes more technical demands on the builder, advancing the sport and throwing yet another line of interest into the mix. "Yeah, he's fast but will he last?"

The last noteworthy item I will address is the switch to the next generation of Bridgestone slick tires in ICC and ICA and new rains for everyone. This year's homologation is YKB for medium slicks and YKP for rain tires, all classes. Other classes' slicks remain the venerable YHC USA. The earliest forecast introduction of the newly homologated slick compound of will occur at Race of the Americas. For at least the first divisional events, the compound for ICC and ICA will be YJB. A controlled release of the new slicks is planned and will be announced when appropriate. For rain tires, due to the existence of YJP rain tires on the market, we offer the first race, east and west, as optional to use the YJP along with the new YKP.