

20 January 2012

### **Race Report: Combined RMC, DAMC and SWS races at the Kartdrome**

It was back to basics at the Dubai Kartdrome, in the wake of the Dunlop 24 Hours at Dubai Autodrome, when the combined Rotax Max Challenge and DAMC Karting Championship took place at Dubai's premier karting venue. Also on the bill were SWS Sprint races for both Master Cup and Star Cup series – a total of 13 action packed races on the day.

In the Max Seniors Class it was Omani teenager Sanad Al Rawahi who scored a trio of wins – in the Heat race, Pre-final and Final. He was in top form all day and did his title chances the world of good as the season resumes for the new year.

Al Rawahi said after his win, "It was a good day for us. We travel far to get here and it is always good to win and especially taking maximum points from all the races is very good."

Biggest story of the day was the performance of Dubai schoolboy Piers Pakenham-Walsh who received a special dispensation to compete in the seniors class, although technically he is still a junior driver. He finished second in the final, crossing the line a mere 0.275 seconds behind Al Rawahi. The youngster is set to become a force in this class as his confidence and experience grows.

Third in the final was Raffaele do Lorenzi, followed by Alexandre Silanine in fourth.

Raed Hassan, who is better known for his track exploits in the UAE GT Championship, won his first final in the Max Masters class. He beat Andrew Fuller who finished second and third placed Per Spruit.

Hassan reflected afterwards, "Really it feels great to win. I use this as training, but the racing and competition is tough. This is the first time I have had a kart that is 100% and it showed in the result."

It was a familiar face at on the top step of the DD2 podium with Maurits Knopjes claiming a clean sweep of wins. The flying Dutchman, who ranks in the top ten in the world in this class, was unbeatable but was pushed hard by Arnaud Bouf in the Heat race and the Pre-final, with Oliver George running him close in the Final.

"It was a good day, but really no chance to relax. Each time there are new guys rising up to challenge me. This weekend it was Oliver and Arnaud. It was close but winning all three is a good feeling," said Knopjes.

The Junior Max class is proving to be a hotbed of very close action with at least half a dozen drivers capable of victory. As a result there were three different winners during the course of the day. Pasqual Pook took victory in the Heat race, Abdulla Al Rawahi claiming the win in the Pre-final and Cyrus Engineer taking top honours in the Final, followed across the line by Pasqual Pook in second and Amir Hassan in third.

Throughout the day the trio were battling it out at the front of the field along with Ameer Hassan, Tom Bale and Patrick Hannah also in the mix. At any one time less than a second separated the pace setting youngsters.

Engineer said of his win, "It was close all day. There was very little between us with many able to win. But in the end I stuck to my game plan and took the lucky breaks. I am very happy to win the final."

Taymour Kermanshahchi has emerged as the dominant driver in the Cadets Class, since the move up to the Max Juniors Class by reigning champion Tom Bale. Kermanshahchi has taken a leaf out of young Bale's book by dominating proceedings, winning all three races comfortably. Zachary Robertson was next best chasing hard in all three races, while Tehmur Chohan claimed third in the trio of Cadet races.

Also on the bill were two sprint races for each: SWS Master Cup and SWS Star Cup.

In the SWS Master Cup, Rami Azzam won the first race after edging away from his rivals battling for second place which included the likes of reigning champion Rami Joudi, perpetual front runner Sam Zian, Paul Chatenay and Khalid Al Mutawaa, who was making a welcome return to racing after over two years out of action. Behind Azzam, Zian managed second place from Rami Joudi in third.

Race two witnessed a five way battle to the finish line with Chatenay snatching the lead on the final lap from Zian who ended second again and Hussai Umid Ali claiming third and Azzam fourth.

In the Star Cup Philippe Valenza gave an impressive performance to win both races by a fair margin with Atef Barwani taking second place in both races.

Round four of the DAMC Karting Championship takes place at the Kartdrome on 24 February.