

Speed Racers Show Their Karting Skills

by Chris J. Poglitsch

Ever wanted to be an F1 driver? Well my friends, there is an opportunity to live your fantasies out at Stephen Johansen's Karting track! On February 9, just days before Valentine's, the Indy Miata club, plus a couple of ringers, took to the road course in open wheeled chariots of fire. We proved, once and for all, that none of us are in the shape we need to be to go 200mph and push 4 G force points for 2 hours in order to stand on the podium next to Michael Schumacher.

Nevertheless, each and every one of us, save David Wamsley, came out mostly unbruised, exhausted, and smiling/laughing at all the fun we had! Johansen's was ideal from our perspective, as the karts are much faster than most if not all of the rest of the tracks in Indy, and the course is slick, which makes steering inputs a little easier in my own opinion. Our participants were:

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| 1. Chuck "The Prez" Wills | 6. David "What a Fine Helmet!" Wamsley |
| 2. Chris "Nomad" Poglitsch | 7. Rick "Flyin' Ponytail" Morris |
| 3. Melissa "Kiss My Socks" Forbes | 8. Eric "Flash" Drumwright |
| 4. Brian "Where's My Hat?" Lee | 9. Shane "Taxi, Oh Taxi!" Benson |
| 5. Rich "Speedy" Dinsmore | 10. Dr. Joe "I Drive a Porsche" Jakubowski |

The event started with a darkened course. I wondered if we were going to do a "24 Heures Du Mans" event, until the white effect smoke began to pour from the scoreboard, and an announcer rang out "Welcome Indy Miata Club". Unabashed, I let out a Rebel Howl at the moon, which is only customary in my beloved home, Atlanta. After everyone finished wondering "what the hell was that?" we got into our karts, and began a 5-10 minute warm up session. During the session it became clear who the more assertive drivers were going to be, and who the less assertive were. No matter, I'd spent hours agonizing over who to team up with whom, to make the event both enjoyable for all, and competitive.

After our ten minute warm up, we lined up in a random grid. When the green light shown, Dr. Spock unleashed hellfire as all karts lurched towards turn 1, two and three across. We settled into a smooth pace, with some bumping and bashing, finishing the first fifteen minute heat without much incident.

The track workers slowed us down, and brought us into the pits in reverse order from "feeling out the track" up front, to "hot shoes" in back. During the ten minute break, my partner, Rich Dinsmore, wondered if he was going to be able to contribute as much as necessary. Noting his kart's position on the grid for the second heat, I'd no doubts he was going to do just fine.

The second heat got much more dicey. Stacked up 3 wide into a turn, which could only take 2, turn one was a melee. Once through turn one, I had open track in front of me until just before an ess section. I came hammering around a corner to find Melissa's eyes bulging, and David Wamsley sideways on the course. As much as I tried to slow, I hit Melissa and went up over the side of David's kart. I felt really awful about this, as I watched David retire from the heat, limping back to the pits.

Passing is definitely doable here. That is to say, doable if you can hold your giggles as you saw the red of Melissa's "lipstick kisses" socks. In the second heat, I mixed it up with a couple of the more assertive variety of driver. I don't want to mention any names, but his initials are Shane Benson. Shane drove with considerable speed and skill, using a technique I hadn't seen since 1998, when I was flying in and out of Logan Airport often. Taxi cab drivers would get a headlight in between you and the car in front, thus marking their spot. I also got directed towards the "Sin Bin" because, in my opinion, Chuck and I have almost identical helmets, and he passed me on a yellow.

By the time the third heat came up, my left side rib cage was getting bruised. I could feel it coming on like you feel sunburn coming on a hot summer's day.



Eric and Chuck get settled into their karts and are ready to start their warm up laps.

Scoring was done using a 1-10 point scale, as you finished your heat, if you came in 1st, you got 1 point, if you came in 10th, you got 10 points. The team with the least amount of points after three heats wins prizes of immense value. In this case, the team of Shane Benson and Dr. Joe tied with Brian C. Lee and Eric Drumwright at 26 points. The deciding factor became the fastest lap time in heat three, which was Shane's, at 23.01. Brian and Eric came in 2nd, and Rich Dinsmore and I came in 3rd.

Afterwards, much bench racing and rehydration occurred at Union Jacks bar and grill. Many thanks to all the racers at the event, especially Dr. Joe, who at the last minute agreed to take #10 spot and to Sara McBride, the unofficial scorekeeper and photographer.

Winners: Brian Lee, Eric Drumwright, Joe Jakubowski, Shane Benson, and Chris Poglitsch (not pictured: Rich Dinsmore)

