

ABkC News February 2001

Annual General Meeting

The ABkC's AGM was held at Trentham Garden's International Kart Show for the first time, and although overall attendance was slightly down, a record number of clubs sent representatives. Steve Chapman and Graham Smith were again returned unopposed as Chairman and Secretary but there were seven nominations for the three 100cc positions, Steve Clayton, Roy Trethewey and newcomer Stuart Ziemelis (representing Kimbolton) being successful. The remaining elected members are Paul Klaassen, Neil Hann, Mike Coombs, Russell Anderson, Derek Price, Trevor Cryer and Alan Bryant with Ian Rennison being co-opted on as Treasurer at a short steering group meeting. Chairman Steve Chapman told the delegates that there were many initiatives either completed or in the pipeline. With the future of 100cc 2-strokes at a cross-roads, Formula Libre has been introduced and 100C re-vamped as 100 National with stickier tyres and a larger carburettor. Transponders have been introduced at over half of our member clubs, and although some clubs have applied for waivers to delay introduction, the implementation is proving popular. A new Judicial 'points' system has been tested in the Super 4, and will be used in Super 1 during 2001 with full club implementation for 2002 likely. 'KartSport', the future of progressive competition licencing, is coming along too. He added that noise is still a problem in our sport, and not enough drivers are taking the correct actions to limit their engines noise output before racing. The treasurer announced that fees would remain unchanged for 2001 and he thanked the clubs that have contributed to funds through running O Plates. Paul Gladstone for the MSA revealed that there had been much less judicial inquiries of driver conduct this year, and this was very welcome. He also said that the CIK would be looking into new safety areas such as neck collars and plastic rear bodywork. Eight or nine manufacturers have already registered an intent to tender for the new Cadet engine. Answering a question from the floor, he said that tinted visors are permitted in 2001 so long as they do not change the colour of the safety flags. In discussion about official's responsibilities in regard to a pending court case, he reminded delegates of the MSA Club Manual which is now available on the MSA's website. Officials may be better protected if the club is a limited liability company. An agenda item for discussion was about protecting the future of 2-stroke karting in the face of the CIK decision to move towards 4-stroke. Many delegates were unhappy at the possible costs of racing 4-stroke engines as well as the noise output. It was pointed out that in motocross, it is the 4-strokes that are noisier than the 2-strokes. Although others pointed out that the CIK position is based on emission and toxic particle output, this was countered by the possibility of electronic controlled direct injection 2-strokes such as the new Aprilia engine. It was agreed to form a working group to investigate the 2-stroke future.

Gearbox class amendments

At a special gearbox class sub-group meeting prior to the AGM it was agreed to put forward an amendment to permit 250 International karts to have radiators to the MSA specification, rather than the CIK's i.e. further forward than 55cm from the axle. Since the Rotax 257 is no longer in production, long circuit drivers

have proposed that 250 National engines be permitted in the International class without reverting to their original carb and ignition as now, in order to boost the grids. This was agreed for long circuit only. Some had also asked for a relaxation of the original ignition rule for the Rotax, but this was not agreed as a new German engine might be homologated for the class. (Subsequently the BSA long circuit championship decided to free up ignitions anyway.) It should be noted though that ignitions must be un-modified, e.g. machining is not permitted. Some errors in the new Gold Book were noted for amendment, in 250 International regulation 19.4. (h), the carburettor is VHSB 39nd and not as shown. The ignition rule in Appendix 4 D.3 is superfluous and will be removed as the rules are incorporated into each class regulation. A 2001 Appendix 2 for eligible engines is still to be issued.

News from the Steering Group Meeting

Chairman Steve Chapman has asked for a review of the role of the ABkC. He wondered whether it should withdraw from being an "Association of associations" and re-form the steering group purely from elected members of clubs. He condemned the lack of clout with the MSA, in that new classes keep being approved without any recourse to either ABkC or even the MSA's own Kart Sporting Committee. Steve Chapman proposed that the next meeting be devoted to two items, firstly the future role of the ABkC, and secondly to insurance and liability issues within the sport. Member clubs are welcome to send observers to the meeting at Donington Park Farmhouse Hotel on Tuesday 3rd April and ideas and comments should be sent to the secretary Graham Smith before then with any extra names for attendance. The Chairman also expressed concern about some member clubs not following the ABkC rule book, and thought that perhaps separate coloured sections in the Gold Book would make it clearer which were ABkC rules and which were commercial class or MSA rules.

Tranponder Timing

The MSA Timekeeping Advisory Panel has opened the way for transponder systems to be used to time short circuit kart races to two decimal places. This area will now be addressed by the Kart Sporting Committee before it may become law, with the possibility of time penalties taking a higher profile in kart racing. Comparative tests were carried out at a circuit using karts and the MSA Advisory Panel have now accepted transponder use. If a Kart Timekeeper official is present, and the decoder has been certified for use, the systems using the AMB TranX160 can also be used for timed qualifying. Approximately sixteen ABkC member clubs are now equipped with the HS Sports Challenger system and a new annual support structure for weekends and updates has been negotiated. A judge of fact will still have the final say when a very close finish is observed, and the exact position of the transponder on the kart may have to be re-looked at for 2002. Final approval will now be sought from the other relevant MSA committees. Clubs should be

prepared to pass information around, for instance a transponder can be changed during a meeting so long as the computer is updated.

The future of 2-strokes

The ABkC has set up a sub-group to gather information on the environmental aspects of continuing to race 2-stroke engines and discover how they can be improved to meet modern standards. The FIA-CIK has ruled that 4-stroke engines will be used in its premier championship classes from 2004, and has gone out to tender for a £700 'world' 4-stroke 'starter' class engine. Although these decisions cannot be altered, there is no reason why 2-stroke racing cannot continue in countries such as the U.K. For instance Bombardier have committed to producing the Rotax Max engine in the longer term. Whereas some ABkC members see the introduction of 4-strokes as reducing noise and emission levels, others state that bespoke 4-stroke racing engines will be expensive, noisy, and have lower power to weight ratios as well as more moving parts and higher technological introductory and running costs.

'O' Plate Meetings

The 'O' Plate meetings for 2001 were allocated by vote to Rowrah (Cumbria) for the gearbox classes on 4th March (since postponed), Kimbolton (Hunts) for the TKM classes on 12th August at their TKM Festival, Clay Pigeon (Dorset) for the Rotax Max and Junior Rotax UK classes on 23rd September and Rowrah again for the Cadet and remaining 100cc classes including Formula A on 21st October. It should be noted that there is to be no 'O' Plate for Formula Libre. The Gearbox O Plate will not include Formula 250E or Europa. The chairman pointed out the lack of applications for the 'O' Plate championships and encouraged clubs to have their 2002 nominations with the ABkC by October.

Eligibility Checking of Equipment

The MSA representative reminded clubs that if their club championship or series Scrutineer is not licenced as an eligibility Scrutineer engines cannot be dismantled at the race meeting for internal checks. Only external measurements of engines or chassis can be carried out. Of course engines or parts can be sealed until an eligibility Scrutineer or Technical Commissioner can check later. The appointed series or championship eligibility Scrutineer does not need to attend the race meetings.

More amendments in the pipeline

Some new amendments over and above the twelve already issued by the ABkC were discussed. A series of detail amendments are being issued for the Honda classes. The NJR marked wet tyres in Rotax Max will be permitted until the end of 2001, and not just until March as currently shown. The Dunlop SL2000 slick tyres for Formula Libre will be further extended until 1st July, and SL4's not marked ABkC will also be allowed until then. A clarification will be issued on rear bumper uprights so that commonly used configurations are permitted. The French-made replacement crankcase will be permitted for the Rotax 256 twin as used in Formula 250E. TKM were asked to consider some small dimensional changes in seat stays and to define the secondary brake cable sizes. Their representative promised to look into the request.

Fit to be a Kart Champion

ARKS are to sponsor the MSA scheme for selected 14 to 17 year old kart drivers attending a programme at Lilleshall National Sports Centre. The two assessments, in August and October, will embody elements of

sports fitness and training, diet, nutrition, mental focus and preparation for competition. A session for parents is also planned. Application forms will be available soon.

Travel

Competitors racing abroad are reminded of the possibility of cheaper ferry fares. Two companies that specialise in this are Alternatives on 01934 824138 and Harbour Shipping on 01304 211919.

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