

The Perfect Kart Circuit? Karting on the Barrier Reef.

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On the holidays, my family and me went in the airplane to the Great Barrier Reef and to Cairns and to Port Douglas. It was really good to go swimming in the beach and to go diving out on the reef's with all the fish and the sharks too. But the best part was when we went to the go-karts and the racetrack that the man built at Mareeba. It's called MAKOTRAC. This is what happened...

By Ian Salvestrin, (Third Year – KartOz Secondary College, end of term school assignment).



MakoTrac is to karting what the Garden of Eden was to Adam and Eve. Nestled just a stone's throw from the world famous Great Barrier Reef, MakoTrac is so close to being the perfect kart circuit that words don't come close to describing it. When a man by the name of Horst Kipper came home from a race meeting at Cairns Edmonton Speedway covered in mud and with his tent pegs still lost in the flooded pit area, it was the best thing that could have happened to karting in North Queensland, It was then that MakoTrac was born.



The purpose of MakoTrac was simple, build the finest quality kart circuit in the world, nothing would be done by halves and nothing would be left to chance. The end result is arguably one of the most stunning and beautiful race circuits in the world.

The Grand Tour

Our tour begins as you drive in the gate, the garden on either side of you extends all the way around the complex with the 2400 trees now starting to grow nicely and provide the circuit with it's own environment. Don't expect your car to get dirty when you pull up, the entire car park is hotmix bitumen. Firstly we'll go straight to the pit area. Again entirely hotmix bitumen, it's just not possible to get yourself, your kart, your tools, even the soles of your feet dirty, everything is perfectly clean. The pit area itself is spacious enough to cope with 400 karts comfortably, most will be catered for under the all weather pit shelters, others will use the lockable garages which also have a workbench, power and lighting.

Before you go out on the track you will need to put fuel in your kart, this is done in the designated refueling garage which is equipped with fire extinguishers and environmentally friendly drainage for any fuel spillage.

Next door is a kart cleaning area with high pressure cleaners for washing your kart and tools if ned be. Funny thing is, with only manicured lawns on the infield and no dust in sight, it's almost impossible to get anything dirty! Around the other side of this building you can wash up at the end of the day, wash basin with hot an cold water and hand cleaner on tap.

Do you need any mechanical work done? A fully equipped machining shop and engine building facility is located on the opposite side with every type of specialized tool used in karting and engine building. And when your engine needs to be inspected when you finish on the podium, it won't be done in a tin shed sitting in the middle of a paddock. The engine measuring bay is an all weather building and features stainless steel benches, hospital standard lighting, power and of course a clean concrete floor. Of course you'll have to meet minimum required weight before you are awarded a placing, this is done in the weigh in building with scales that measure in 100 gram increments, not 0.5 kilogram increments as at most circuits.

Impressed yet? We haven't even started. Over to the grid which is 100 metres long and features, two correctly spaced 40 kart grids Adjacent to this is a five metre wide mechanical break down lane.

The track itself is superb, 1345 metres in length, 8-10 metres wide with numerous variations to cater for club racing, junior events, through to international class races for both karts, cars and 80cc Grand Prix bikes.

The track itself is surrounded by natural bushland. There are two man made lagoons inside the complex which are actually used to recycle some waste water from the property. An underground sprinkler system draws on bore water from what is believed to be underground lake 100 metres below ground level. The landscaping has been done in such a way that it gives the impression that the complex has been established for much more than it's single year.

Alongside the main straight is an impressive looking building that is even more impressive inside. At one end is a partly enclosed indoor/outdoor dining area with paved



flooring and glass fronted view of the entire circuit. Inside is the most luxurious licensed restaurant you will see at a racetrack outside of a Formula 1 Grand Prix. On the menu is everything from prawns and fried noodles through to the traditional Australian hamburger and chips. Red and white wine or a coffee from the cappuccino machine that is worth roughly as much as two new Swiss Hutless karts.

Upstairs is a super spacious control tower which is used for race control. Starting lights, the track timing system, the PA system (pit area only, spectator area only or both) and everything else that is computer controlled at the track. The timing system is used on each race day and at the end of the day or even each race, each competitor is given a printout of their race with times of each lap, their position and their average speed on each lap and the overall race. As a competitor you could not want for anything. But if you do it will probably be downstairs.

A fully stocked kart shop specializing in Swiss Hutless karts but still catering for all makes, has everything from spark plugs and chains to new engines and new karts. On display in the shop are a variety of machines, the water cooled Italsistem 100cc reed valve Intercontinental A engine, the new Honda 13 horsepower four-stroke kart race engine and the first production Rotax MAX to land in Australia; "Yes, we even had it before DPE in Melbourne," Horst proudly explains.

The amenities block is as good as you'd find in a 4-star hotel, immaculately cleaned tiled floors, mirrors and vanity basins, showers that are probably better, newer and cleaner than in your bathroom at home. Nothing is out of place at MakoTrac.

Over at the hire kart circuit everything is provided over again. These karts have their own fully equipped workshop and service bay, undercover viewing and sitting area surrounded by beautiful lawns and gardens. It is not possible to fault. MakoTrac is so good, it's embarrassing. MakoTrac is an embarrassment to cities such as Adelaide and Melbourne which despite their resources and populations, don't have circuits that come remotely close to the standard set by North Queensland's most prominent raceway. And that's about it, you have the idea that it's probably not possible to build a better racetrack. This place is not only an asset to karting but it also proves that privately owned and run facilities are a far better option than club based circuits. So the lucky people in North Queensland have one of the finest tracks in the world as their own personal playground, but they'd love you to come and visit some time. It's just half an hour from Cairns which is right in the middle of the Great Barrier Reef – Australia's ultimate holiday destination.