

Bathurst 12-02-2010

By Phillip Eggins

The alarm went off at 3.45AM. The day has finally arrived. Out, shower, dressed, cup of tea and toast.

Shauna and Wayne arrived at 4.45AM and it's still dark but the stars are out (good sign but we are only at Emu Plains). Lots of chatter between Wayne and I as we drove to Bathurst. Shauna, supposedly asleep on the back seat but there was often some smart remark directed at one of us.

We arrived outside Mount Panorama circuit at about 6.50AM. Nearly everyone else was there. The last couple arrived and we transferred a few people to other cars as we were only allowed 6 cars into the circuit. Wayne passed out the car passes and our "supplier" passes. We did not get "competitor" passes as we technically were not competing.

The convoy drove into the circuit and parked while we checked where we were to pit. We were told to pit in the Scrutineering area so we moved our convoy to there but the scrutineers had not been informed of what was to happen. They obligingly provided some space for us.

The karts were unloaded and placed in line along the fence for anyone to view, and many people came past for a look. We were on the Program. While checking this with David Kidd (Race Administration) he informed us that there were only going to be 3 test drivers. Some quick double checking and all was well for the test with 6 drivers (everyone breathed a sigh of relief). Indemnity forms were passed to all drivers to be collected later. We were to come back at 12.20PM for a special briefing with Stephen Preece (Race Control and CAMS Safety Manager).

Back in our pit area all was looking good and we all struggled into whatever shade was available. It was stinking hot and very humid. Now the clouds started to roll in from the west (typical for Bathurst).

I had signed in with the scrutineers (no scrutineering stickers to spare so another walk to the tower in the heat) and then did a final Audit of each of the Karts. As expected there were no issues with this hand picked bunch. On with the stickers, sign the log books, fill out the audit report sheet and I was done.

We did a photo session in front of the karts and another in the foreground of the Hotel at the chase to get the "Mount Panorama" sign in the background.

Back in our pit again and I noticed either constant chatter from some while others were very quiet (and some constantly going to the men's room). We all deal with thing

differently. Was there tension in the air. Yes, we had to complete 3 laps with all karts, without incident, and preferable with out a breakdown. The pressure was on.

Lightning, thunder, and then the rain bucketed down. The place was a river. The red flags came out. Racing stopped. Recovery went out. Racing started again. Rain stopped (phew). Rain started again (bugger), yellow flags, safety car. It just went on and on.

At our meeting with Stephen Preece, he emphasized the importance of an incident free test (great, more pressure). Do we have wets, Yes. Do we normally race in the rain, Yes. The problem was that the Dep't of Meteorology predicted torrential rain. If it happens the test would be abandoned !!!!!!!!!!!!!. After all, it is his head on the block if it all turns to you know what. We were informed that 20 minutes before the test we would be told if the track was declared wet (wet weather tyres compulsory).

We then had a discussion with the promoter of the 12 Hour. He was instrumental to the whole changing of the track licence process with us and a really nice bloke to boot.

Back in the pits and the rain is now coming from the opposite direction. I've been to Bathurst on many occasions and it always throws ever thing at you.

The minutes, hours tick by. The weather constantly changes, rain, stop, track dry, pouring down again. I pace a lot and I'm not even racing. I just want this to be a success for us all.

Neil Turner arrives at our pit with his headset on for communication with Stephen. There is a major storm approaching from Orange. We look to the west, black as can be. The last practice session is on the track and they only have 7 laps, bugger the safety car is out. The time drags by. The black sky gets closer. They're racing again and I'm counting the laps.

Neil clicks the switch on his radio "wets boys".

Hell breaks loose as pit crew spin spanners, tyres off, tyres on, spinning spanners, nervous chatter (even a quick pee).

Push, push, push, pop bang and they're alive. All 6 head for the pit lane, 250 inter at the front, 125 GP behind and the MAX's last but not least. After months of planning, it's finally happening.

F#\$K the sky is really black. Fingers crossed I run to the top of the pit block to see as much as I can.

The track is mainly dry but the call for wets was to be "safe". That sky really is black and the temperature plummets. I look to Mountain straight and the 250s are long gone but you can hear them scream up the mountain towards the cutting, AWESOME. The 125's and MAX,s chase behind.

I can even hear them across the top.

Pop, out of the chase past the hotel they come.

I hang over the rail at the start finish line, Warren (that's 1) Garry (that's 2) Reedy (that's 3) Ian (that's 4) Dodgy (that's 5) Wayne, all six have one lap under the belt. I look up, bugger.

The mountain echo's to the sound of screaming two strokes.

There is not one person in the paddock; they're all on the pit wall or any other vantage point they can get.

Zing goes Warren, zing Garry, pause, Reedy then Ian, Dodgy, Wayne. All six and 2 laps down. All's good so far. One to go. The time ticks by painfully then the chequered flag is out, Warren, Garry, Reedy, Ian, Dodgy and Wayne. Everyone on the pit wall is cheering and punching the air. What a sight.

My heart starts again. We've done it! Superkarts at Mount Panorama. I almost go base over apex running down the stairs to the pit.

Smiles like "split watermelons" everywhere.

It's starting to rain but no one seems to notice or care.

While everyone packs up Wayne and I head to race control to thank all concerned for the help and support. A job well done by all.

By what I'm told by the drivers all the flaggies were cheering as they went past so we must have made quite an impression on everyone.

There are now six superkarters in the world (or universe for that matter) that have driven Mount Panorama.

Warren McIlveen

Gary Pegoraro

Jeff Reed

Ian Mash

Alan Dodge

Wayne Horswell.

I personally would like to thank all the pit crews, officials, staff, organisers and in particular the drivers, for a sensational day.

A great cohesive group that worked together to a common goal.

We still have a way to go, but we have ticked another box.

Congratulations to all.

Phil Eggins

Secretary, Superkart Club of NSW

CAMS Scrutineer.