



SPEED SHOP SCHOLAR

Welcome to another installment of the "Speed Shop Scholar." This month we are going to dig into a subject that sometimes is a bit overwhelming to the prospective racer; used racing equipment.

On a regular basis, I have people come to my shop with karts and equipment they have recently bought. They explain how it came with a couple engines, extra this and extra that, and several sets of tires. They got all this for what they consider a great price. They want to start out slow, get their feet wet, and if they, or the young driver, like it, then they are willing to step it up. Often, here is where reality starts.

As we all know, this is racing. To be competitive, and have a chance at winning, you must have good equipment. Depending on where you race, and the level of competition, you may need great equipment. Chances are, all that stuff sitting in the corner of someone's garage for the last ten years, won't fit the bill. Many times, all it will do is get you in the way or in the fence. Often, the former leads to the latter. Let's go deeper.

Don't get me wrong, I am not saying that everyone should overlook used karts in favor of new ones. There are quality karts and equipment sold every day at a fair price that are more than competitive. It is the goal this month to educate the potential buyer and help avoid a possible bad experience and loss of hard earned money.

Chassis that have been around for years share a few common issues. They more often than not have been through several hands, each with creative engineering ideas. Parts have been replaced, or repaired by any means possible. This includes a cross contamination of parts and pieces. They suffer from extremely worn components, many of which are no longer available. Some have undergone the wrath of the creative craftsman, who decided to add or remove various bars. Others were manufactured by companies or individuals that only made a few karts. Extreme caution is necessary before buying

anything with one of these issues, but many uneducated buyers make purchases that have all these issues.

When it comes to engines, do a bit of research to see what classes are running in your area. Investing in flathead engines, even at a great price, can be money wasted if the only engine running at your local tracks are clones. Be cautious with any used engine as it can look like a million bucks on the outside and be a complete junk bucket on the inside. It is amazing what powder coat and decals can do for impression.

That pile of used tires the seller is willing to "throw in" to help make the sale, may not be what they seem. Tires that are six months old are borderline at best, six years old are absolutely useless. Just last week, someone brought by a recent purchase that included several sets of tires bearing a date code from 2006, these won't even do a good job of keeping the kart off the ground. Older wheels can also be odd sizes and offsets that render them of little value as well.

How do you avoid these potential pitfalls? Do your homework and become knowledgeable.

Visit your local kart shop and become educated about the local karting scene. Careful inspection and education are your best friends. Before purchasing karts or equipment, ask questions of the seller and write down the information. Share this with the kart shop and other racers for their opinion. Spend a bit of time on the message boards and visit the tracks you plan to race at. Just a bit of time and effort can save you many head aches and make your racing experience much more enjoyable.

Effort spent before buying not only helps you make a better purchase, it will also pay dividends once you start racing. Knowledge is power, and can only help you in preparation for that trip to the winner's circle. Buy smart and be safe. See you next month!