

FUL TROT

Daniel de Kort, a former asst. managing director of a local bank in charge of treasury turned petrol head, now runs the non-profit SDDK Motorsports which, among others, seeks to promote Curacao motorsports to a more sustainable level. Daniel is a former go kart racer with a couple of podium finishes and a professional mountain motor pro stock car owner and driver. Unbeknownst to most, he's the local Curacao International Raceway track record holder, a FIA-accredited race photographer, a classic car owner and restorer, and a reluctant motorsports event organizer. Daniel will be contributing to Curaçao Sports Weekly with a wide variety of topics regarding motorsports.



Go Karting is Back!

Last week, residents of Brievengat and passersby were witness to some go kart racing near Sentro Deportivo Curaçao, organized by the Curaçao Go Kart Foundation. Go karting, once a very popular sport on the island, is gaining traction of late, thanks to a couple of die-hard fans and business ventures.

A visit to the Curaçao Motorsports Museum allows visitors to trace back the roots of go karting. In 1975, Leo van Veen brought karting to Curaçao from Aruba. Back then, go karts were powered by parillas and BMs and were mostly run on recently paved roads in residential neighborhoods. In April 1975, the first International race was held at the Wayaca track in Aruba, with 2 Curaçao natives ending in 3rd and 4th place. Later that same year, circumstances forced the Curaçao Karting Club (CKC) to lobby successfully with H. Bakhuis for a track at Koraal Tabak. However, conditions were not optimal, and forced the club to seek better options.

Concerned with noise pollution, Cees Bos, the Chairman of CKC and an ALM Airlines captain, pointed out a nice plot of land just beyond the end of the Hato airport runway. In order to lease this 38-acre plot from the government, a foundation had to be enacted. And so, the "Stg. Ter Bevordering van de Kart Sport" was founded. Arie Mulder, a former European karting champion working for Leo van Veen, got the perfect track layout for the property. Bob Kroon, a board member of CKC, who worked at Curaçaosche Wegenbouw, took it upon himself to build the track. He started in early 1976 and worked mostly on weekends, using borrowed company equipment, as the story goes. The track was inaugurated with an International race in June, 1976. According to official documents, the number of spectators that day was 8,000, which was a lot, for the island.

Karting has been practiced on and off during the past five decades, for a variety of reasons. Research has shown that the single red line through its turbulent history has been lack of cooperation between practitioners. Occasionally, disagreements will lead to fallouts. But the fact that the island population is small, and the number of petrol heads is even smaller, forces us to look past our differences and focus on what we have in common. If not, we will just keep repeating history's mistakes. As the saying goes, "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it". Cooperation is key to sustainable motorsports, especially in very small markets.

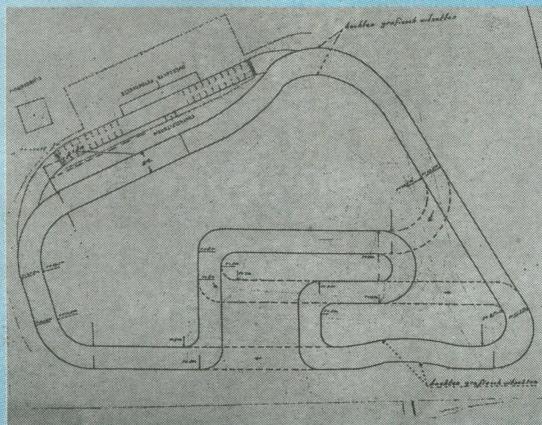
Unfortunately, the go kart track at Shut was lost to time. However, there's another group, headed by go kart veteran Michael Marugg, that's pushing hard towards the realization of an entirely new track at Ronde Klip. In order to ensure that the much-loved sport of go kart doesn't collapse once more, we should all assist in any way possible.



The 1976 go kart track seen from the road.



1976 aerial view of Shut go kart track.



Design of 1976 go kart track at Shut.