

Florida Winter Tour

Pair of Canadian qualify for 2010 Rotax Max Grand Finals



Daniel Morad is headed to the Rotax Max Challenge Grand Finals. PHOTO BY PAOLO PEDICELLI

The 2010 Formula Kart Productions Florida Winter Tour recently concluded its 12th season, after having visited three of Florida's finest race tracks over a period of 11 weeks.

The series staged its opening event of the year at the exciting new Orlando Kart Center, made a much-celebrated return to the revamped Palm Beach International Raceway karting facility and wrapped up its year in traditional fashion at the superbly repaved Ocala Gran Prix facility.

Since its inception in 1999, the Florida Winter Tour has set an amazing trend of increasing its participant numbers each year. This year was no exception, as the FWT Rotax Max Challenge grew an impressive 12 percent over its 2009 numbers. Once again, the series has maintained its status as the largest RMC in the world. And for the first time, the FWT averaged over 200 drivers per weekend at all of its Rotax events; there were 220 drivers at the Orlando season opener, 205 at Palm Beach and 201 at the Ocala finale.

The FWT also continued to be a global leader in Rotax, as the debut of new Rotax classes and important Rotax announcements are commonplace in Florida.

This year during the Orlando event, BRP-Rotax executive Christian Mundigler personally attended the FWT and divulged that there will be a new, separate Masters

class for the 2010 Rotax Max Challenge Grand Finals (RMCGF). That revelation was accompanied by the news that the FWT Masters points champion would earn a transfer spot to the 2010 RMCGF, joining the transfer spots going to the FWT champions in Rotax Senior, Junior and DD2.

» FOUR HEADED TO ITALY

And, with that announcement, the FWT will now send four drivers directly to the RMCGF to be held this November at La Conca, Italy. In cooperation with MRP Motorsports, SRA Karting and BRP-Rotax Austria, Formula Kart Productions confirmed that US drivers Nick Neri and Robby Mott, and Canadian drivers Pier-Luc Ouellette and Daniel Morad will represent their respective countries and the Florida Winter Tour at this year's RMCGF.

The continued success of the FWT Rotax Max program inspired a new direction for the FWT Formula Kart Championship Series weekends, as the FK class configuration shifted towards single-make-engine classes with simple rules structure. As a result, Pro Rotax, IAME Senior, IAME Junior, Vortex TAG Cadet and Honda GX made their FWT debut in 2010.

Each class showed solid potential, but none so much as the Honda GX categories. Low costs and high levels of talent are the hallmarks of this engine platform, which is immensely popular in Canada.

GX racers in three classes were welcomed to the FWT and they delivered competitive racing marked by close drafting and multiple lead changes that made them a paddock favorite. Darryl Timmers, Scott Nagel and Steve Lyons were the trio of FWT Honda GX Cup champions.

Lyons will join fellow FK points champions Brian McHattie, Robert Francis and Sam Beasley to form Team FWT at this year's Granja Viana 500 annual karting extravaganza held in Sao Paulo, Brazil. As part of the FWT's awards and prize structure, all four drivers have earned entry, airfare, lodging and equipment courtesy of MG tire importer WR International.

Beasley in particular grabbed the lion's share of the 2010 FWT awards program; along with the trip to Sao Paulo, his IAME Senior championship netted him a large chunk of the FWT's \$20,000 cash purse. Furthermore, the Ohio driver was hand-picked by Skip Barber Racing Schools for a three-day competition course and guaranteed paid entry into the Skip Barber Karting Scholarship Shootout.

He'll be joined by another at-large choice, Shawn Sharkey, whose season-long consistency and improvement contributed to his selection. Finally, IAME Junior champion Austin Self staged a come-from-behind victory to snatch the final Skip Barber school and scholarship competition entry.

The FWT enjoyed an expanded relationship with Ferrari in 2010, as not only did the fabled marque renew its Ferrari Driving Experience award for the Rotax Masters class, it also offered a pair of scholarships aimed at the Rotax Junior competitors. Eduardo Martins was the winner of the Ferrari Driving Experience, and will get a two-day thrill ride to drive the new Ferrari 458 Italia, 430 Scuderia, and the 599 GTB Fiorano on the Circuit Mont-Tremblant.

Based on their racing resumes and essays, Marc Antoine Cardin and Jesus Rios Jr. were the junior scholarship recipients, each receiving paid entry, tires and oil for all six rounds of the 2010 FWT season. •

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