



THE MAX FACTOR

“I’ve never known another driver who has quite the same desire to win as he does. I think we’ve seen instances when he’s wanted it too much and been guilty of overdriving. Maybe if he’d taken a more relaxed attitude on those occasions we’d have had rather more to show by way of championship titles. As it is, he’s won the Cadet ‘O’ Plate this year and finished 4th in the British Championships so we certainly haven’t had a wasted season.” The words belonged to Lars Sexton, a former British Open Champion in Formula A who has been acting as Max McGuire’s mechanic. “Actually, it’s my brother Piers who has done most of the hard work with Max and I’ve only filled in when he hasn’t been available” Lars points out. “I’m always very happy to do so because Max is such a great kid to work with and his entire family are exceptionally nice people.”

Piers Sexton is equally glowing in his tributes. “Max has come a long way in a short space of time” he emphasises. “His commitment is second to none and only first place is ever acceptable to him. This means that he’s always extremely focussed. I’m looking forward to working with him as he moves up to the next stage as his driving style and controlled aggression will be ideally suited to more powerful karts.”

The admiration is clearly mutual as Max points out. “Lars and Piers have helped me a lot and I hope they’ll both be there for me next year” he insists. “I’d like to have moved up into JICA by then but if not then I’ll be looking at Minimax. The problem is my weight. At the moment, I’m around 32 kilos without my helmet. Under next year’s rules I’ll need to gain a couple of kilos body weight. I can’t eat junk food at school any more and that’s a nuisance really as it’s the only way I can put on weight.”

It all began for Max on the day of his 8th birthday in February 2002 when he celebrated with a trip to Manchester’s Daytona indoor kart circuit. “Actually, my 11 year old sister Kelly was quicker than me on that occasion” he recalls. “I started going to indoor karting events quite regularly from October onwards then I found out that my nearest circuit was at Three Sisters near Wigan and went along to check



The results started to come in the latter part of 2005 including 5th place at the Kartmasters GP

things out. Dad bought me a Comer powered kart and I took my ARKS test at the circuit. Nick Abbot from Head to Head ran me in the early days. I completed one novice race at Rowrah and did the rest at Three Sisters

before moving onto yellow plates. Then I spent six months alternating between this track and Glan-Y-Gors. After this period I was racing on a variety of tracks gaining as much experience as possible. In my first season I was carrying 22 kilos of lead on the kart.”

During this period Max got quite a bit of help and advice from Joe Boullen and his father Paul. By the end of 2004, Stars of Tomorrow and S1 were starting to look increasingly attractive. Max’s mother, Andrea, had decided at this point to publish a yearbook covering her son’s chosen sport. She was assisted in this task by Steve McCormack, a business associate of her husband, John. The end product was a very attractive and extremely informative book.

John McGuire once enrolled in the Jim Russell School and did a full season of Formula Ford so motor racing is in his blood. However, John doesn’t claim to be the family’s most enthusiastic karting fan. “Andrea has become totally immersed in the sport and does at least as much of the mechanical work as I do” he says proudly. “Our 15 year old daughter Kelly also makes sure that she gets involved. Meeting different people every weekend at race meetings has certainly helped to develop her social skills. I think the way every member of the family can get involved in karting makes it such a great sport. Max is also fortunate in having the support of his headmaster Mr. Gartside and the staff at Altrincham Grammar School for Boys. They always show tremendous interest in his results and don’t seem to mind him going missing on Fridays, provided he keeps up to date with his schoolwork.”

Andrea’s father was a fairly successful sports car competitor and her sister, Angela Longo, was the All Africa tennis champion while still



A win at the Stars round in Genk was followed a week later by victory in the ‘O’ Plate meeting at Rye





just a teenager. This family heritage perhaps accounts for the strong competitive streak in Max. "It's true that I want to win every race" he confesses. "I don't see the point in going to an event and aiming to finish 2nd or 3rd. My parents have spent a lot of money on my karting and they're working very hard to get me to the top. Piers and Lars also put in lots of effort for me, so if I have a bad result and it's due to my driving then I'm letting them down. There have been lots of times when I've not performed to my best and it's made me feel bad. Whenever I've won though, even if it's just at an ordinary club meeting, the feeling is just incredible."

This season has been full of highs and lows. "I got a really big high by winning the opening S1 round at Wigan" Max recalls. "It was followed almost immediately by a massive low when the officials docked me a place because they believed that I'd impeded Sam Jenkins. I thought that was really unfair and unfortunately I allowed it to affect my next few races. Probably the lowest point came at PF during the Kartmasters GP when I just couldn't seem to get any speed up at all."

Winning the 'O' Plate at Rye House obviously gave me a big boost even though this event suffered from poor entries. However, I like to think that most of the important Cadets turned up and so it was still an important one to win. I also got quite a kick out of winning my first WTP Little Green Man round and setting the joint fastest time with Brad Fairhurst."

Perhaps the biggest high occurred in August when Max went over to Genk for a Stars of Tomorrow round. His motors had looked rather flat leading up to this event and so he used up a fair amount of track time sorting through the equipment. "We combined a holiday with this race so that I could get in some testing the weekend beforehand" he points out. "It was an entirely new experience for me and one that I thoroughly enjoyed. Of course, finishing 1st and 2nd over both days obviously helped as well."

I asked him if he had any favourite drivers. "I'm not a fan of any particular driver although there are some that I respect quite a lot. In Cadets Sam (Jenkins) is certainly one of them and Alexander Albon is another. I also respect Abigail Gerry, not only because she's a girl taking on the boys but also because of her attitude towards racing. In JICA I think that Oliver Rowland is a very special driver and I also like watching James Godbehere and Jack Harvey. Max Goff has had a very good year in Minimax and deserves to win races. I don't usually watch any of the other classes so I can't comment about them."

One person who isn't particularly happy about the way Max is progressing in karting is his music teacher who believes that he

On paper Max has certainly been the most improved driver from 2005-2006. Before he joined Fusion, halfway through last year, he was struggling to get results, although his pace and potential were obvious to me. It took a couple of intensive months of one to one coaching but Max started to turn his speed into results, scoring a 5th at the Kartmasters GP and a top 6 at the last two British Championship rounds, eventually just missing out on becoming a seeded driver.

With his new found confidence he transformed over the winter period, scoring a number of club victories against some really tough opposition, including British Champion Sam Jenkins.

Max entered this season with confidence and drove exceptionally at the first round of Super One, winning the Final with a clever move on the last lap on Sam Jenkins. Unfortunately the officials decided the move wasn't clean enough and reversed the positions. I'm sure this was a factor in knocking Max's confidence, as over the next few meetings he'd lost the spring in his step and that sparkle we'd seen over the winter. Awesome overtaking moves were replaced by less committed attempts, as he was conscious of not receiving further penalties.

Nevertheless Max soldiered on and scored

consistent points to keep himself in the title hunt but it wasn't until the second round of the British Championship that we started to see Max get back to himself. Two podiums at Sherington saw him firmly back on the map.

Despite some engine problems mid season, Max always scored well at every meeting, putting him in the battle for the S1 Championship right until the final round. He took his maiden British Championship victory at the SOT round at Genk, an emotional occasion for me, his mechanic Piers and the whole McGuire family-fan club! When he backed this success up with victory at the British Open Championship he proved just how far he has come in just twelve months.

Max is a complicated young man who does put himself under immense pressure. He is also the only 12 year old I know that you can talk to as if he were an adult and sometimes I wonder whether he is just a bit too grown up for his age. But now he is starting to think positively and believe in himself as much as we all do, he is coupling his intelligence with confidence and I for one predict a very bright future for him.

Dan Hazlewood
Fusion Motorsport Team Manager



Max won first time out in Minimax but would love to do JICA in 2007

could become a world class pianist without the distractions of racing to contend with. However, Max has very clear ideas about where he wants to go in future years. "I always wanted to be in F1 but it all seems a bit boring to me now" he claims. "I'm much more interested in Champ Cars and that's what I'd really love to do." John and Andrea have mixed feelings. "We both are aware of the pitfalls associated with a full time career in sport" says John. "The logical part of me would like to see Max become a doctor, lawyer or perhaps an accountant. However, there's another, more irresponsible side of me that wants for Max the things that appealed to me in my younger days. We've tried to steer him away from the idea of F1 because I know just

how improbable such a dream really is. Chas Cole is an acquaintance of mine who runs Dan Clarke in Champ Cars, a type of racing that's always appealed to Max. Chas has taken a big interest in our karting activities and took Max to a few F3 events where he met Bruno Senna, Ayrton's nephew. Sitting in Senna's car was a powerful experience for him."

In November Max had his first outing in Minimax. James Mills had brought a brand new BRM chassis down to Sherington for him to try on Saturday and he was setting quick times almost immediately. On Sunday, among a field of twenty talented contenders, he set fastest time in each of his three heats and won the Final. "It was a lot different to racing in Cadets.

Apart from the difference in speed, I found it a bit strange having to feed in the power very gradually instead of planting my foot hard on the throttle coming out of corners. It's also a bit weird taking your foot off the throttle and finding that you're actually going quicker. It was still a great feeling winning my first race out in this class though. I'll be doing a lot of club meetings in Minimax but my main target for 2007 is JICA."

Max is a very small young lad with some pretty big ideas. He's also got the talent to match these ambitions and I suspect that we'll be hearing quite a bit more from him in years to come.

Dave Bewley
Photos: Chris Walker

