



RKD — The French Connection

The driving force behind the original creation of the French "Racing Kart Developpement" (hence RKD) engine, was Laurent Kocat. A car racing fan, his interest in karting was sparked off in 1977 by Mark Calveyrach, a well respected and talented driver.

Laurent was intrigued by the unusual characteristics of the engines used in karting and it went on from there. He became pre-occupied by the difficulties of the sport. Amongst the problems were the increasing cost, especially in the minor categories; the inability of the drivers to properly look after their karts and engines; the specialist equipment required; the design work necessary, etc. These issues concerned him whilst sponsoring Mark Calveyrach. There were two possible solutions, either to become a driver, or set up a company to produce kart engines. He opted for the second choice and set up his own company with a substantial capital investment in partnership with Calveyrach and M. Thubert, an engineer. At the end of 1980, the manufacturing RKD company was announced. The news was received with a certain amount of scepticism in karting circles as it was seen as a huge gamble in the face of fierce international competition, especially from Italy.

Whilst the engine research section worked at full pace, the company imported PCR engines, Tecno chassis and Dunlop tyres for sale in France. By the end of 1981 research was complete. This consisted of a study of four engines — the CB82 with piston timed induction, the IT3 with rotary valve induction and a booster port transfer system, the IT5 as the IT3 but with a five TT transfer port system, and the reed valve RD82.

The development and establishment of the company was helped by the French government. There are certain grants available, e.g. LANVAR (grants for the promotion of new French products), ADEPA (grants for purchasing machine tools of French design), APRK (affiliated to DATAR, helps the creation and development of industry in the under-developed areas of France). The combination of government assistance and Kocat's determination proved it was possible to produce engines at a competitive price in France.

The company was bought by a larger organisation which greatly increased the capital back-up and development work. This resulted in a batch of new RKD engines homologated by the CIK in 1986, namely a long and short stroke reed valve

engine and a completely new TT short stroke. The present general manager, J. P. Brunet, is continuing the development and expansion programme of the company whilst also diversifying into other fields.

The manufacturing process at RKD is very impressive — all the parts came together neatly to produce the complete engine at the automated assembly area. There is a CNC section with digital central control, and an internal and external dimension controller, also with numeric command, for quality control. High precision, small quantity production and assembly by skilled technicians under the watchful eye of Bernard Mattana, RKD's chief mechanical engineer, ensures an engine of exceptional quality and performance.

The engines, which can be used for 100 National and Super in the U.K., have a three or five transfer port system and are available in a long and short stroke form with dimensions of 53.8 x 48.2mm and 50 x 50mm. The reed valve engines are also available for Intercontinental A 100 Junior. All are available in 'standard' form, 'factory selected' or to 'special order', the latter being personally selected and tuned by Bernard Mattana to full RKD international specifications.

From small beginnings RKD has developed into a competitive engine manufacturer as can be seen from the major results in 1986.

French Championships (rotary valve) — Out of 96 entries, 3 were RKDs, 1st and 3rd time trials, 2nd and 3rd final.

World Junior Championships (reed valve) — 1 RKD out of 80 entries. 6th time trials, 10th final.

European Championships Southern Zone (rotary valve) — 1 RKD out of 60 entries. 3rd time trials, 6th final.

European Championships Final — 1 RKD out of 62 entries. Dry track 2nd and 3rd in heats. Wet track 15th in final, the driver never having previously driven in the wet.

Piston timed engines. Champion of France in the classes Formula France, Cadet and Minime.

The success of the RKD motor at the French Championships and Intercontinental A events is emphasised by the numerical superiority of the other makes of engines used. Dyno testing has confirmed the performance of the engine in comparison with other makes and Red Dragon Competitions, the U.K. importers, are looking for a 100 Super driver to use the engines during the 1987 Super One rounds. Enquirers about the engines etc., should contact Red Dragon Competitions (0269 2759).

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KARTING