



Son-of-Shoestring, Gary Chapman, winning the Rissington round of the Super One championship. Photo: R. Calvert.



## RACING ON A SHOESTRING

By Steve Chapman  
PART FIVE OF A SERIES TO  
HELP THE BEGINNER

Those of you who have only been racing 100cc karts for a few seasons may wonder what it is like to take part in one of the big meetings that occur each year. The following is a typical, well almost typical, day at one of these meetings.

Seven twenty on a cool Sunday morning. All the equipment was loaded in the caravan last night, so it's a matter of loading up the family and we're off.

It's Sunday 12th May and the 2nd round of the Super One Series at Little Rissington. The journey to the circuit was accomplished in almost total silence, time to think of what has passed and what fate has in store for us. Thinking back, we have in three big events this year been unable to finish a final. At Rye House; fourth on the grid for the final, only to be knocked off at the first bend and unable to restart. At Wombwell; second on the grid, the engine became swamped by spray after 19 of the 20 laps. Rowrah; "pole" for the final only for the carb to freeze after 2 laps, it was snowing though!

Gary was in Scotland on a University field trip forcing us to miss the first round of the Super One Series, so it is important we have a good run today, as the best 5 out of 6 count for the Championship. What competition will there be? Mark Beddall, a friend since the days we raced Junior Britain, took 2nd in the first round of the Series, and being a Rissington regular, will be difficult to beat. Andy Clarke won the first round and gave us a couple of good races at Rye earlier in the season. Steve Hazlett has a good reputation and came 3rd in the first round. Darren Gibbs has had a superb season in all the big meetings so far, he knows Rissington and will be very competitive. Then there are the quick locals, Phillip Cooke and Mark Powell, both friends from Junior racing.

Even though we arrive early at the circuit the extensive pits are

pretty well full, and the scrutineering queue massive. By the time we have sited the caravan and unloaded, unofficial practice is just starting. We have been having some carb troubles so Gary suggests we get out, and come back for scrutineering before official practice. Fill up with fuel, spray the chain and up to the grid. I grab a healthy looking pusher, and we push Gary off. He seems to be running quite well. Although he is staying with Phillip Cooke reasonably easily, he seems to lack a little bottom end. Pushing the kart back to our pit afterwards Gary feels that the carb is off. It is reducing the acceleration out of slow bends, then coming in once the speed has built up slightly. The quickest way to correct the problem is to try another carb, and as Mark Barnard has prepared two others for us, I collect these and fit one. This proves to be all right when tested in an eight lap second session, so we move onto scrutineering. No problems. Back at the pit we check over the outfit. Lifting the head the mixture is a little too rich, Gary makes an eighth of a turn adjustment. Removing the barrel shows no problems. When walking up the pits to the grid for official practice I bump into Mr. Beddall and Mr Powell "Dads of the two Marks" "Hey you guys let's have a smile."

"Its fine for you," says Graham Beddall. "You know that you won't finish the final, we don't!"

With the help of recently arrived assistant, Dave, Gary starts easily. He is going well passing kart after kart. He seems to have the same bottom end but more middle and top end. Weighing in we are 3 lbs heavy with half a tank of fuel, just right.

Now we have a break before drivers briefing. We discuss the handling, Gary feel that the rear end is sliding a little too much, so Dave moves the rear hubs in by 1cm each side. I lift the head, still too rich, and check the pistons,

it's fine. We feel that just a little more bottom end is needed, not enough to warrant an extra tooth, so I lengthen the exhaust flex by 1cm. This should retain the top end Gary prefers for easy overtaking, without bringing the power in too late on the tighter bends. Time for a quick bacon sandwich and coffee, then Dave and I check the kart from end to end, oil the chain, and top up the fuel.

Gary goes off to drivers briefing, while I wander up to the Redhill van and chat with Mark Barnard (Hey, aren't there a lot of Marks in 100cc karting) and Graham "Charlie" Waldron. He is also finding that Mark's new carbs are giving better middle and top end. Mark suggests that we are ready to win this one, whereas I will be satisfied just to finish the final. I bump into Graham Beddall again and discuss the new Britain regulations, deciding that they are over the top. We are now running virtually a National engine with a restrictor, not really an economy class!

Our first race is number 3. It's still very cold but no sign of the clouds that were predicted. On the grid, we are starting off 15, I notice several drivers with new tyres, not for us, this is racing on a shoestring! The O.K. signal comes, I take the engine side "Good luck" and he's off. They are all away, I grab the trolley wheels and run to our spectating position where Rita (my wife) is waiting with the stopwatch and board.

I should fill you in on the Rissington circuit. It's just over 1000 metres long, it is fast and tricky; there are many bends which are taken on full throttle. In a race the start and finish is taken flat out and is followed by a flat out 90 right. Down a slight hill to another 90 right with adverse camber: very slippery in the wet!

A short straight leads to a swinging 180 left. A very wide bend which requires a tight line to move neatly into the next short straight. A 180 tight hairpin right is followed by an uphill straight with a kink left near the start. On the racing line the kink is hardly noticeable. The end of the straight drops down to a nasty left-right dog leg. This complex is very tight, opening out into a climbing right hander, which is taken flat. A short straight brings a driver up hill to a tight 90 left, leading to the start finish complex.

Here they come round to the starter, and they are off. Gary's had a demon start, he's pulled up three places going into the first bend. One more on to the main straight, and another underbraking into the dog leg. Up the inside out of the dog leg, gosh here it goes, two more nicely up the inside at the start left hander. Mark Beddall is out front with Andy Clarke, but we are not far back in 5th. Catching the leaders down the main straight... "he's gone straight on!" He's spinning on the grass, he's stopped! The next group have spun in sympathy. Chaos! Oh dear, the motor we are using is TKM 8236 which would not start at Rye. Will it start now? It's O.K. It's down hill at the dog leg, he's away. Relief. Must be about 17th now, out of 21.

Why did he go straight on? Was it the mechanical brake? Did he make an error? He has never been keen on the brake. Shoestring racing requires sacrifices, and a hydraulic brake was one of them on our Kali. So far most of our racing has been in the wet, so a real report on the brake has not been possible.

He's throwing the kart about scrubbing his tyres. Perhaps it was the tyres that caused him to

spin? Rita cannot believe the next lap, time; 45.98 is the first time we have ever been under 46 at Rissi. Four laps at 46.28, 46.24, 46.35, 46.3 and he is up to 13th. The flag falls with Mark Beddall and Clarke in front, with Gary at 13th.

As I walked back to our pit I'm thinking that if it was the brake Gary's face will be like thunder. If there is a smile it was his own fault that he spun. He's smiling! The front tyres did not warm up quickly enough, and he just did not turn into the dog leg at all. Gary's very happy with the way he is able to overtake, the motor/carb are great. We adjust the front track to give more toe out, this will make the front tyres work harder and warm up quicker. Check the piston crown to judge the mixture, still a little rich. In with the high speed jet by another eighth of a turn.

Our second race is from 17th on the grid. It will be very interesting because Beddall and Clarke are near us, chance to evaluate our performance against theirs? Gary's start is as good as usual; up two places on the first bend. There is no doubt that he is taking the dog leg very carefully, but he picks off two more, up the inside at the start left hander. Beddall and Clarke have had equally good starts, and are now just in front of Gary as he approaches the start left hander for the second time. Gosh! He's taken them both! With warm tyres he's really flying! Laps of 45.94, 46.37, 46.24, 46.20, and a real flyer at 45.76, easily pull him through to 4th.

At the weigh in, the Club Stewards suggests we are very near to the weight limit, but a quick check shows us to be three pounds over. Gary is delighted with the way the outfit is performing and we set a target of 1st for the last heat. There are no problems with the brake, he actually comments that it is working well. Checking the top of the piston I see that we are still a little rich, and lifting the barrel the piston is still in one piece and nicely oiled. The whole team is worked up, looking forward to the third race. We need a win to hit 17 points, which would give us a final grid of about 6, and a great chance.

I get a chance to have a look at some of the other races. Our friends are doing well in Senior Britain Clubman, and it looks as if Gary Moynihan is running a new Wright with large diameter tubing. I know that Charlie Brown is using a big tube Kali, and there is a big tube Allkart, clearly big tubes are the latest trend. No new names in the front runners in National, but the racing looks as competitive as ever.

We top up the petrol, spray the chain, and push up for the last heat. Off they go, starting problems for the pole man, but inside the two rolling laps he takes his position.

They are off. Wow! Number 11 is up to 3rd in front of Gary before the first bend, quite a start from 6th on the grid. It's a waiting

game at the moment as the tyres warm up. We are in a close 3rd as the second lap unwinds. Smithie, number 41, is going well today and is holding us off with great competence. With two laps under his belt Gary slips through to 2nd, making the most of the Kali's handling through the start/finish complex. Thompson is a good 30 metres ahead by now driving very smoothly. The times show Gary to be trying hard, a 45.61 and a 45.44 cut the gap to the leader by more than half. Closing still further, down to the sweeping left hander. "The leader must see him now. The leader has spun, we are in front!" Two smooth laps at 46.21 and 47.31 gave us our first victory in a big meeting this season.

A break allows the grid positions to be sorted for the finals, giving us plenty of time to check our outfit. The piston crown is still a little damp, it's sides look good, no engine problems. Tyre pressures. Fill the fuel tank to the top as it's a 20 lap final. Spray the chain, it's a bit loose so I am moving the engine forward a little.

Graham Beddall comes up for a chat, he suggests we are going too quick. We gather a little group of drivers and mechanics, handling and tyres are the topic of conversation. Graham wishes us luck as Gary reports that he is on grid 5 for the final. Hazlett, Beddall, Clarke and Branfield are in front of us. A pot noodle and a coffee help to kill some of the tension, but I dare not leave the kart alone. Every nut and bolt is checked and double checked — "to finish first, first you have to finish" — Colin Chapman, Team Lotus. Dave is invaluable, a double check by a second mechanic always picks up the odd point that has been missed. Finally we are both satisfied, all that we can do is wait!

The National "C" final is underway, John Weatherley is going very well, but he has a long way to go to reach the final. Robert Husband wins the British Clubman's final in fine style, with a driver from our village, Martin Sears, in 2nd place.

On the grid, waiting for our final, a few spots of rain! Great! Dave and Martin Jones, also one of our little group, collect the wet tyres, while I sort out the spanners and wet box. The National "B" final is being started on a slightly damp track, enough for a quarter of the field to spin on the 90 right leading into the sweeping left. "Charlie Waldron" is hustling as he enters the main straight. Oh no, the guy in front spins launching Charlie into the air. It looks like another "bent chassis" job! It's clearing, with no black clouds in critical positions, I think it will stay dry.

Here we go. "Good luck G go on and show 'em." A couple of rolling laps and they were off. A steady start from Gary, we want to finish this one. Holding 4th with a first lap of 49.06. The pace is quickening slightly on lap two, we are holding position with a 46.66. Out of the dog leg on lap three. "Come on son." He has let

Paul Branfield up the inside. It's OK he is hard on Paul's tail. Side by side over the start/finish line in 46.38. Gary takes back 4th place exiting the next right hander. There is some distance to Steve Hazlett, who is following Beddall, with Clarke just in front. Lap four complete, powering after Hazlett with a 46.31. Gary is closing as they swoop down from the start/finish complex towards the sweeping left hander.

"The leaders have spun." "Hazlett's on the grass." "We are in the lead!" Gary's off on his own. Clarke and Beddall came together, and we are in the lead. A 45.80 lap has us about three seconds ahead. Another at 46.2. He seems to be settling into a rhythm now, 45.55, 45.54. I give him the well ahead sign, twelve laps to go. Darren Gibbs is 2nd, so I put the watch on the gap; 3.97 seconds down. Gary has eased a little to 45.70, and 45.83. Darren is catching up too quickly, he is just over 3 seconds behind now as Gary laps in 45.75. The gap is noticeably closing. Darren is flying down the straights, pulling back to 3.1 seconds, 2.8, 2.5 I give Gary the "watch your tail" signal. Three quick laps, 45.54, 45.53, 45.50, but Darren is still closing. Very close now, a 45.48 from Gary is not going to be enough. He must be able to see kart 39 out of the corner of his eye on some bends. The starter indi-

icates five laps to go; too many! Four laps to go and I think Darren will be through on the next straight. He's on Gary's tail as they go through the dog leg, the time suggests an error which dropped .2 of a second. Three laps to go, and it's nose-to-tail down the back straight, both drivers ducking down to reduce the wind resistance. Darren makes his effort as they enter the sweeping right hander. "Gary's spun!" "Oh no!" I go to turn away, it's happened again? "No he's spun through 360 and he's still going." "We are going to win." We are fifty metres ahead, Darren went on to the grass but he's still 2nd, we are going to win after all. The last two laps were uneventful: we made it!

There was great spirit in the weighing enclosure at the end, handshakes all round. No problems with any of the fuel and engine checks, what a final? Who would think that having a poor run of luck in three finals we should have it all come back in one go for the fourth. It just shows you, never stop fighting, work hard at it and you will change your luck. Special congratulations from the Beddall family, the Husbards, and many more. The tyres had worked very well, no brake problems, no handling trouble at all, and the head was still a little wet; there is more to come!



Ray Hull, Northern Sales and Marketing Manager for LEP Transport Ltd and Kurt Luby with his LEP liveried Phoenix and some of his bigger pots.