

TRACK TEST

Birel AR4 Birel R630B



Andy Cox with an AR4 (left) and R630B - we had the photos taken at Buckmore Park before George's test, just in case...

For the second of my track tests for Karting magazine I was invited to sample the current Birel range of chassis by the new importer, Andy Cox Racing, at P. F. International on April 23rd.

Historically, Birel must be one of the oldest and most successful makes in 100cc racing, having won World Championships in the 1960's, 70's and 80's with Sala, Fullerton and Wilson, the driving force behind the company being the Sala family. Oscar Sala who is still at the helm has recently appointed his son Ronnie to manage the restructured Birel Motorsport Team with the aim of putting the company and their products back in the winner's circle at World and European Championships. To this end they have employed some top class drivers such as Rytarbris, Balistreri and Cloostermans, and forged relationships with Ital Sistem and Rotax, and with respected tuners Villa and Miliziano.

Andy Cox, who formed his own kart business in 1992, met the Birel team while at last year's European Junior Championships at Genk, and by July was signed up as the sole importer for the UK.

A very useful aspect is the Birel in-house accessories range marketed under the Freeline label. If Birel has been little known in the UK in recent years, then Freeline is certainly a household name in karting circles. Freeline has a reputation for a very good quality/price balance and can be found as original equipment across a wide range of karts from other manufacturers.

The Birel range encompasses a model for all 100cc classes and short circuit 125cc

racing as well as supplying chassis and components to Italia Motori for their Whisper or Europa 125 kart.

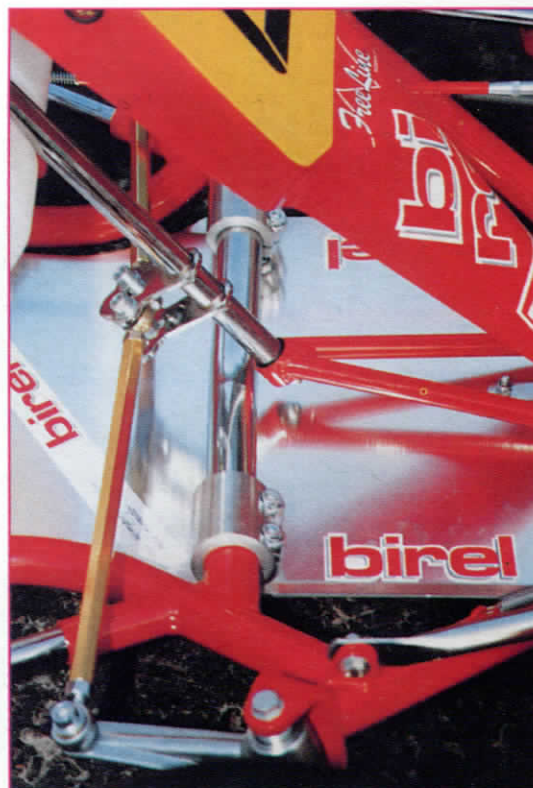
For this year at least, Andy has decided that his niche market lies in JICA, 100C and 100B. Translated into chassis terms that relates to one kart for the Vega XLL tyres used in 100C, and a second, stiffer, model for the Bridgestone YEQ classes of JICA and 100B. The Birel factory has been very helpful to Andy in providing what they and he believe to be as good an option as any for these classes.

We arrived at PFI to find the weather windy, cool but dry. There had been some rain over the previous night but the circuit was almost entirely dry except for some greasiness in the two corners just before the main straight.

The first test was of the 100C kart, model AR4, which is a 3 rail chassis with a short parallel waist and 30mm axle. I am the first to admit that I am not a great fan of the XLL tyre, however the AR4 was instantly easy and controllable to drive, if a little too tail happy and skittery under braking. It also took 7 laps for the tyres to warm up during which time I managed some full opposite lock slides. After 12 laps a pit stop to make some set-up changes resulted in a much more competitive package, the kart responding very well to softening the back, releasing the extra seat stays and widening the front track by 20mm. It was now possible to brake much later with confidence and turn in without the risk of inducing a great yawing oversteer. The kart now produced no nasty

tendencies and proved to have some heat in the tyres when I stopped. I am grateful to Paul O'Donnell from Basilica Computers for the loan of this chassis which was fitted with a TKM KA 100 engine for this test. An AR4 will be used by Danny Watts in this year's 100C Super One Series.

The second test was of the JICA/100B kart, model R630B, again a 3 rail chassis with a short parallel waist and a 40mm axle. This chassis has a removable torsion bar both at the front between the stub axles and at the rear across the outside rails. I immediately felt more at home with the extra grip from the Bridgestones and the friendly power of a good reed valve Parilla MAG95. The kart was once again a little 'taily' which was perhaps accentuated by a very crisp turn-in. The kart needed a very light touch and was correspondingly very light to drive. At the first stop we softened the back and adjusted the tyre pressures. This proved to be THE set-up, the kart was amazingly sure-footed and really behaved like a Formula A kart on CIK tyres. The kart was a real pleasure to drive and seemed to extract the best from the YEQs. Had it not started to drizzle I'm sure I would have been out there until the petrol ran out!



Removeable front bar on the R630B

SPECIFICATIONS

Model: AR4

Chassis: 3 rail waisted.

Tube: 30mm.

Axle: 30mm. Material K (soft) or M (hard).

Axle components: Freeline cast alloy, hubs Freeline extended type.

Brake: Freeline hydraulic, standard fixed cast iron disc.

Steering: Ackerman or standard positions provided.

Bodywork: Full Freeline kit provided.

Engine mount: Included, Freeline alloy undrilled.

Wheels: Freeline, cast alloy.

Steering Wheel: Freeline PVC.

Seat: Birel glassfibre in clear or red.

Chassis Finish: High gloss red epoxy coat.

Tank: Freeline 8 litre.

Successes so far: 1st Clay Pigeon 100C

Super 1 round 1995, 3rd & 5th overall Super

One 1995.

Model: R630B

Chassis: 3 rail waisted with front and rear torsion bars.

Tube: 30mm.

Axle: 30mm or 40mm. M material.

Axle components: Freeline HQ gold anodised.

Brake: Freeline with unique Birel system floating disc.

Steering: Ackerman or standard positions provided.

Bodywork: Full Freeline kit provided.

Engine mount: Included, Freeline undrilled.

Wheels: Freeline, cast alloy.

Steering Wheel: Freeline soft suede grip.

Seat: Birel glassfibre in clear or red.

Chassis Finish: High gloss red epoxy coat.

Tank: Freeline 8 litre.

Successes so far: 2nd & two 3rds JICA

Super 1 rounds 1995.



The R630B is for JICA and 100B

This is the chassis being used this season by Tom Ferrier, Tom Sisley, Matt Jackson and Paul Ringer in JICA in the Super 1 Series and the Champions of the Future TV races.

The karts as tested are all supplied complete with bodywork, engine mount, 8 litre tank and hydraulic brake. The 100C model AR4 is aimed at the club market and can be supplied in any specification required. Although the standard equipment is of satisfactory quality, it is trimmed to keep the price down. The R630 is supplied with all gold anodised axle components from the Freeline HQ range and is the kart used by the factory in low grip situations.

There is a further model for Formula A and Super A which is a true 'A' frame design in 32mm tube designated model M632. Andy does not envisage a big market in the UK for this chassis preferring to concentrate on the volume classes. Since he took over as importer, Andy has brought in 40 karts and reports ever increasing interest. As ever the Birel range is a very well presented, quality product. With the support of the factory and Andy Cox's dynamic approach I'm sure they will become a force to be reckoned with in British racing.

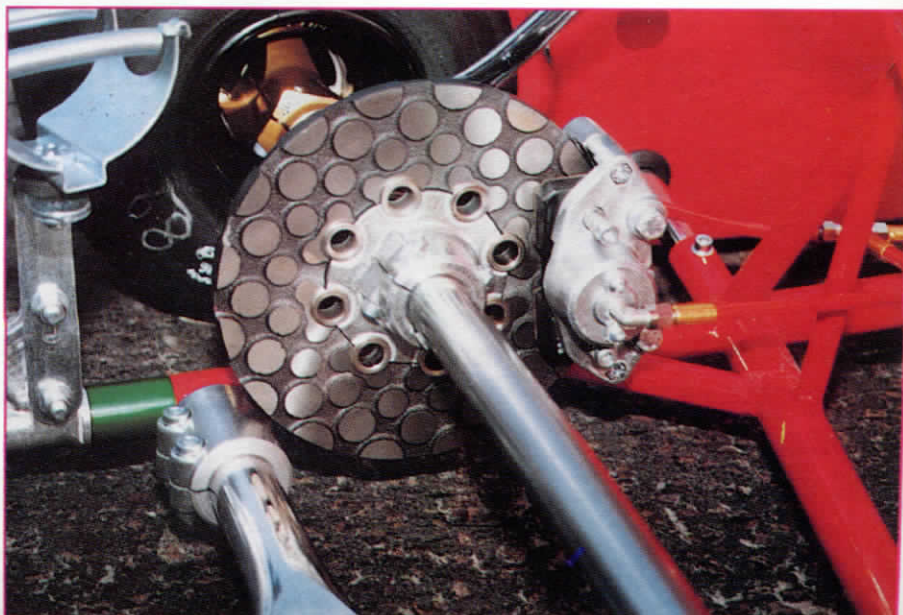
Report: George Robinson
Photos: Keith Lock

Previous Track Tests

Tonykart Esprit, Crono &
Formula Step 3 (Karting Feb. '96)



Optional Freeline ergonomic wheel



Floating brake disc & rear torsion bar