

TRACK TEST

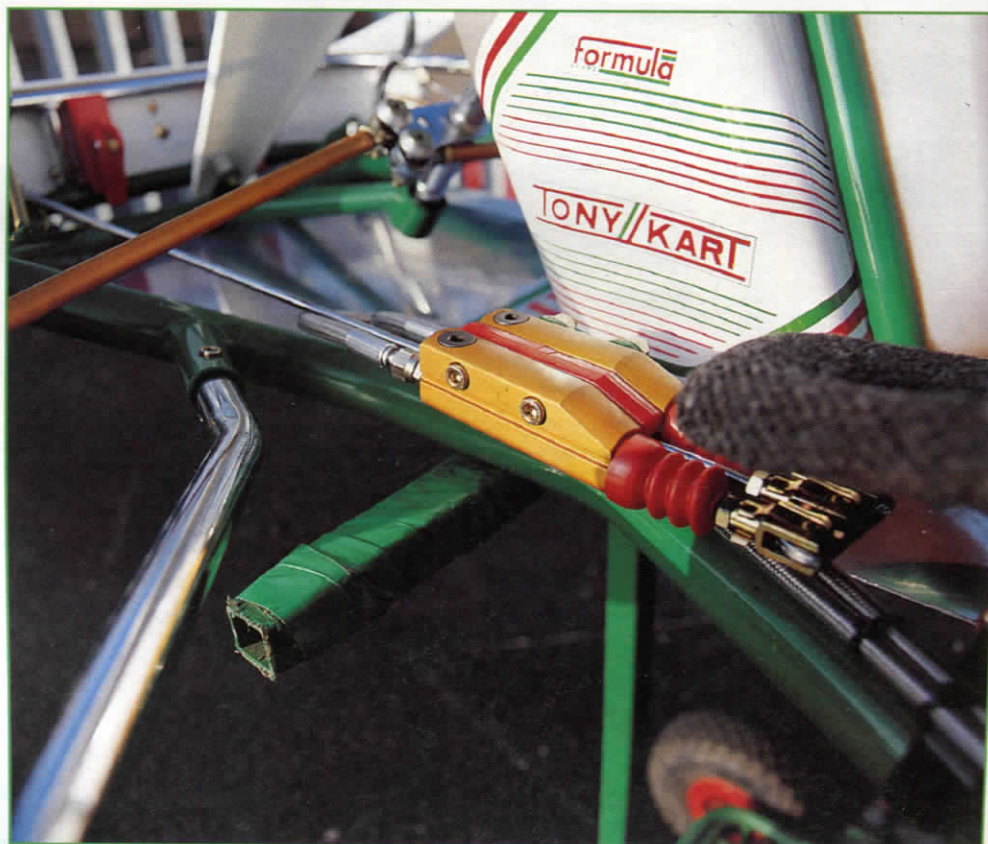
Tonykart Esprit
Tonykart Crono
Tonykart Formula Step 3



Thanks to the invitation of Mike O'Neill of O'Neill Racing I was given the opportunity to test the current popular models of Tonykart at the new P.F. International circuit in Lincolnshire.

This was in fact my first visit to P.F., my usual venues being the other side of the Channel. I tend therefore to be less than complimentary about most of the aged circuits in this country and wax virtuously about the superb facilities abroad! P.F. International is clearly the exception to the rule. The circuit itself has a good variety of high and low speed corners. I understand that it is now even better than before since the kerbs have been lowered and the circuit resurfaced. Even more impressive than the circuit itself are the facilities supporting it. For those of you who have not experienced P.F. International it's well worth the journey and the club membership.

Mike O'Neill had arranged for three models of Tonykart to be available for the track test. Firstly the well proven and successful Esprit. Secondly the less well known but also successful Crono and thirdly the almost unsung, Formula Step 3. Because the circuit was damp, although it did not rain, it was decided that for ease and speed of comparison each kart should be set up and ready to go. The karts were all

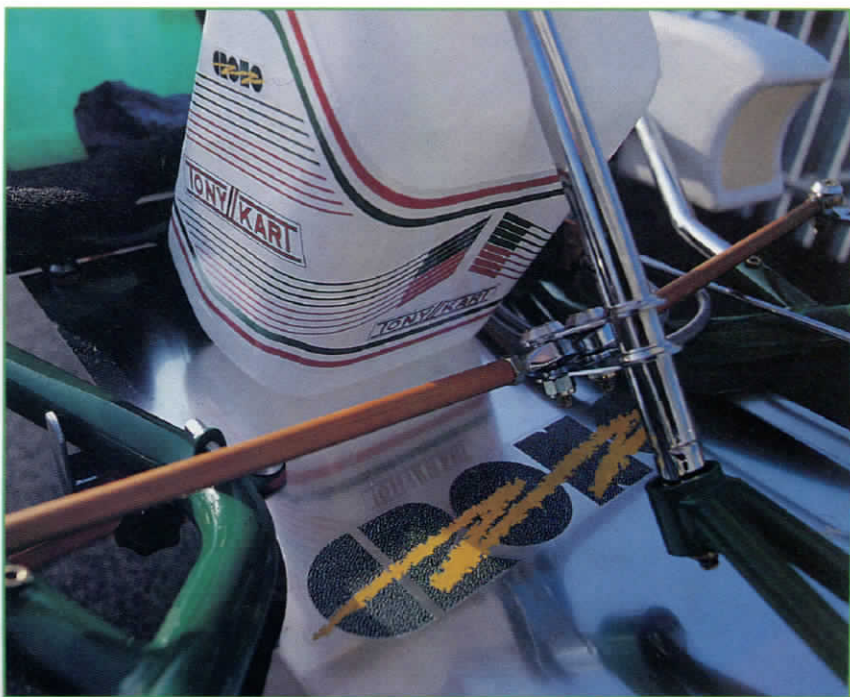


All three models have a double circuit hydraulic brake system

fitted with David O'Neill's World Championship Vortex rotary valve engines and Dunlop R6 tyres. The engines were all of very similar performance and in this way the drivers could hop straight from one kart to the next. I drove the Esprit kart first. The circuit was still slippery with only half a dry line, however the Esprit coped well with the conditions. The kart was very predictable and gave a good deal of confidence under braking. The kart turned in extremely well and had a good free running exit from the slower corners. The set-up of this kart as explained by Mike changes very little from circuit to circuit. The tyre pressures when hot proved a well balanced chassis with no excessive gain in any one tyre.

The second test was on the Crono. This chassis is a departure from the usual Tonykart parallel waisted design as it is an 'A' frame as pioneered by the DAP Greyhound. I prefer not to be negative but for me the Crono was much more nervous under braking and consequently more inclined to lose speed in mid corner. The kart was less forgiving and required a more precise and smooth driving style but was in fact slightly better than the Esprit in fast sweeping bends. I suspect that with some time spent setting up the kart it could prove to be very good, however while the Esprit is also available, more user friendly and easier to set up, I'm not sure there is a serious niche in the UK market for the Crono. On reflection I think the Crono could well prove to be very good on high grip circuits or "on the rubber" abroad.

The third test was on the Formula Step 3. This chassis is a development on the ultra successful Formula model which was available in 28 or 30mm tube versions. The Step 3 is fundamentally the same design as the Formula but in 32mm tube with a detachable second rail on the brake side. The kart instantly gave the driver confidence and the



The Crono is of an 'A' frame design

early laps were immediately faster than either the Esprit or Crono. The kart was very progressive under braking and turned in with only a trace of understeer. After 5 laps there was some evidence of too much grip in the faster corners and the kart was losing some speed. This was on Dunlop R6 tyres. We fitted the Vega XLL 100C tyres and the kart behaved excellently being utterly predictable and well balanced. This chassis would be my choice for the harder tyre classes especially in the rain or the Winter.

SPECIFICATIONS

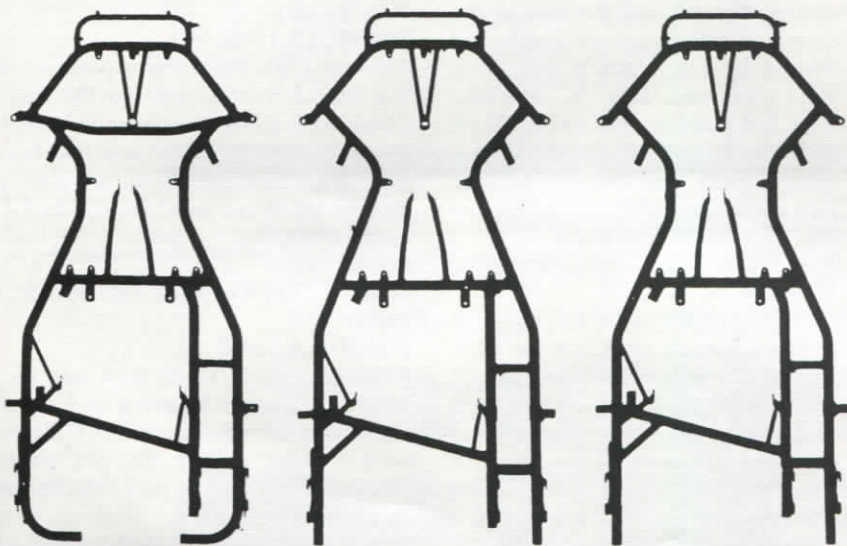
All three models share a similar specification. The chassis are chrome moly tube and are now robot welded, the 40mm rear axles are held in 3 bearings. The hubs, disc and

sprocket carriers are in cast magnesium alloy. All fittings are produced in-house by Tonykart. This includes the brake, wheels and bodywork.

The three chassis differ considerably in design. The Esprit has a cross member between the kingpin yokes, a detachable second rail on the brake side and a rear torsion bar. Tubing is a mix of 30mm and 32mm. All the chassis have a 125mm engine mount rail width which is unique to Tonykart. The Crono is, as previously stated, an 'A' frame design with detachable second rail on the left and is mostly 30mm with a 32mm front bar. The Formula Step 3 is entirely 32mm tube with detachable 2nd rail on the left. The cross member behind the seat is also further forward than on its cousin the Formula.

The chassis are all well engineered, the standard of finish is very high on all the components and I think the standard of welding is even better now that robot machines are being used. The traditional Tonykart green shows off their chassis well. As Henry Ford said about black, from Tonykart you can have any colour you like as long as it's green! Since Mike O'Neill took over the import agency almost four years ago the sales have grown steadily. O'Neill Racing have now sold over 500 karts. Add to that engine sales from Marechal and Vortex and you have on your hands one of the country's proper kart businesses. Since this growth was taking up more and more time Mike employed Bobby Game. Customers can now expect excellent service and advice from Mike, David or Bob.

Thanks again to Mike for the opportunity to test these karts. If the track test idea is well received I hope we can make it a regular feature.



From left to right: Esprit, Crono and Formula Step 3

George Robinson