

KARTING 05 TOP GUNS

Karting is widely recognized as the training ground for aspiring car racers the world over, however, there are an increasing number of drivers who are choosing to become career karters. With the exception of only the highest categories of motorsports, karting offers the stiffest and most vicious competition anywhere—and at a fraction of the cost of racing cars. Combine that with a paddock atmosphere that's more X Games grunge than the polo shirts and scripted responses of Indianapolis or Daytona and you can see why so many excellent racers choose to stick around. Here are four career karters who are working hard to improve the perception of their sport and help it move ever closer to the mainstream.

(BELOW) Alex Speed, brother of the highly touted Scott, has chosen to build a career in shifter karts, (RIGHT) Alan Rudolph is a great ambassador for karting—and super-quick with it.



Alex Speed

Back-to-back national titles mean that 19-year-old Alex Speed has solidified his position as the dominant driver in the sport of shifter kart racing. After winning the



championship in '03, Speed reinforced his reputation in '04 with three victories aboard a KLS Racing/GP chassis; a late-season switch to MRP/Birel produced a victory at the Stars of Karting finale in Orlando and a second straight national title. Younger brother of Red Bull F1 Driver Search standout Scott Speed, Alex has chosen a different route and has turned down many car racing opportunities in favor of what he feels is the more competitive arena of shifter kart racing. Individualistic and opinionated, Alex is the template for the career karter as this form of racing begins its shift toward the extreme sports category.

Alan Rudolph

There may not be a better ambassador for the sport of karting than Alan Rudolph. From his early days racing on dirt ovals in the Midwest to his rise as one of the top shifter pilots on the continent, Rudolph has been involved in karting for over 20 years. During that time he's competed in the biggest races against the biggest names and come away with a resume filled with victories and championships. A four-time winner of the Rock Island Grand Prix, 2004 was a renaissance for Alan as he gelled with Richard Buxman's RBI outfit and returned to

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