

Sports

Va-Va-Vroom



UNDER CLOSE SUPERVISION: The writer (left) receives one-to-one coaching from Richard Bradley in a two-seater kart. (Below) Bradley giving lessons to 11-year-old Gabriella Teo. PICTURES COURTESY OF CHERYL TAY

FIT TO KART

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TEN minutes may be enough time to get yourself from City Hall to Novena.

But on the go-kart track, the same amount of time is enough to give an unfit driver aches for the next five days.

I had the privilege of attending a go-karting crash course at the newly-launched Kartright Academy – a go-kart school by local karting facility Kartright Speedway.

Prior to this, the only karting experience I've had was in rental karts at the Caltex National Karting Challenge 2007 and with friends at the Permas Jaya track in Malaysia.

But one afternoon in the hands of Singapore-based formula car racer Richard Bradley, I took on the 750-metre track at Kartright in a two-seater kart – a leisure kart as well as a race kart.

Born in London, 18-year-old Bradley is one of the instructors at Kartright Acade-

my and he coaches there when he is not racing at the Formula BMW Pacific championship rounds.

Having just moved into single-seater racing this year, Bradley is very experienced at his craft as he was karting at the Super KF1 (Karting Formula 1) level – the highest level of kart racing.

I was a bit nervous of embarrassing myself but Bradley and Leonard Kong – another instructor at Kartright Academy – were very professional in conducting the lesson, putting my nerves at ease.

The session started off with a theory lesson, where I learnt basic karting techniques including the driving line, cornering and braking.

For example, the trick to taking corners is to enter wide, hug the apex and then exit wide.

Every lesson at Kartright Academy consists of theory and track time, regardless of levels – introductory, beginner, intermediate or advanced level.

Heading onto the track with my head full of techniques waiting to be applied, I was first put in the 4-stroke 270cc two-seater kart with Bradley.

Only one person could control the pedals, but either one of us could choose to steer.

After taking me around the track a few times to show me the hypothetical driving line and the braking points, it was my turn to steer as he controlled the braking and accelerating.

Beauty

The beauty of having the two-seater tutorial was having Bradley correct my mistakes on the spot and directing me immediately.

I got into a 4-stroke 200cc leisure kart after that and was free to explore my own driving line and style.

Also known as fun karts, these are the rental karts that will be used in the introductory course at Kartright Academy, as well as for the five-day intensive school holiday programme that they are organising this June.

The next part was the most exciting – go-karting in a race kart.

I geared up with a race suit, racing

shoes and racing gloves before I mounted a 2-stroke 125cc race kart with a Rotax engine.

Sitting in the race kart itself was already a very different experience as the seat is supposed to be fitted to your body such that it hugs you tight as you zip around the turns and corners.

Driving it was exhilarating and you can go as fast as 130 kilometres per hour if you are brave enough.

I was also careful not to stomp on the accelerator too hard as the speed might be too much for me to handle.

Slowly but surely I found confidence, and soon I was flooring the accelerator on the straights.

At the end of the lesson, I was exhausted from my personal go-karting crash course where I experienced varying levels of go-karting in a day.

I also learnt the importance of fitness that is required in karting.

Despite the bruises and sore muscles I got, it was a fulfilling time that left me tempted to purchase my own race kart and start pounding the track.

