

BRAVE NEW WORLD



Blazing a new trail, the Burris National Speedway Series is taking a new approach to bringing the sport together. Focused on supporting regional programs and developing the new F200 engine formula, this new program is picking up speed...and many supporters along the way. Speedway USA's Rob Howden spoke with Mike Burris about the BNSS and provides this report.

Karting is an incredible sport for so many reasons. The popularity of motorsport as a whole remains on the rise and karting is providing many of these new enthusiasts with the place to experience the thrill of racing for themselves. All one has to do is step back and marvel at the staggering growth of the NASCAR franchise to see the increasing number of fans that motorsport is currently attracting. Winston Cup racing has become one the biggest – if not the largest – spectator sport in North America and this explosion is happening for a reason. The smells and sounds, the excitement, the drama...they all play a role in making auto racing an alluring attack on the senses. Motorsports is very hot right now... it is the 'in' thing. Karting enjoys that same rush and is positioned to be the ideal step for the racing enthusiast to get up off the couch and into the seat.

Karting has been playing this role since its birth back in the mid-50's. Kart racing provides the thrills of motorsports at a price that many more people can afford. Car racing is expensive, both in terms of start-up cost and regular maintenance. This is where karting bridges the gap. The sport reaches from the grassroots Saturday night kart track to the big dollar programs that chase national championships all over the country. Speedway karting is a diverse sport with many

different levels.

And at the heart of it all is what makes the sport so great: it is fun and affordable. That is the bottom line. But there is a problem with this key component – the sport is getting away from that very characteristic that makes it so great. For many, it is no longer affordable and with the increased expense and miles of travel, it is losing some of the 'fun' factor.

There is no questioning the fact that kart racing is getting much more expensive and there is little doubt that it is getting away from the amateur roots from which it came. The amount of money that has been spent on national competition is staggering. There is far more money in the rigs and haulers at a WKA national than you would see at any well-attended short track stock car race. Think about it...when was the last time you saw someone come to a national with a kart on an open trailer? From cut tires that barely last a weekend to a trailer wall full of motors, the bill is getting high, even for the local racer.

The belief that there is a problem and that something needs to be done about it has been the primary motivation behind the debut and development of the Burris National Speedway Series (BNSS). Over the



Mike Maurini Photo

last two years, the BNSS has steadily developed, adding new tracks while picking up some serious steam. Based on the local tracks and the smaller series, the program is catching on.

Designed and implemented by Burris Racing's Mike Burris, this new program grew out of the company's spec tire program. As one of the largest suppliers of racing rubber for the speedway karting community, Burris works hand-in-hand with track promoters and series organizers to get their product line out to the customers while at the same time attempting to lower costs by implementing their popular spec tire programs.

The basic design of the series is focused on providing a great venue for the 'weekend warrior' – as Mike referred to the grassroots karter when I sat down with him at the WKA Kartfest back in January. In the program's overview, he states that the "goals of the Burris National Speedway Series are to promote karting at all levels and to create an atmosphere of competitive, safe and affordable racing for its participants and their families." This is a very positive mandate and, should they keep it as their direction arrow, this program should grow steadily.

The 'series' is not really a series in the true sense of the word – it is more of an umbrella program that helps provide rules stability and overall unity for the sport's grassroots sector. While there is an opportunity to mirror the NASCAR Dodge Weekly Series National Championship program down the road, the current efforts will remain focused on the immediate goals. In 2002, the BNSS consisted of a total of 18 regional series throughout the United States running under its banner. There were also over 130 individual asphalt and dirt Burris tire tracks that ran with this affiliation as well. It was the contact with these spec tire tracks and their promoters that helped push the BNSS into existence as Burris consistently discussed rule questions and the lack of unity with his customers. The idea was to bring everyone together for the good of the sport.

During our interview, Burris made certain to detail some of the key motivations behind the BNSS.

"There's no doubt that the national programs are geared for the money guys," offered the motorsports veteran. "Our program is really focused on the weekend warrior. We wanted to bring everyone together, keeping the costs down and keeping the number of classes down."

"There's a problem with national racing," Burris continued. "It kills racing on the local level. And we want to strengthen local racing, not make it weaker."

For '03, the package has taken more steps forward, boasting over 150 tracks with a total of 22 series running with BNSS backing and support. The program now boasts series in 16 states from Pennsylvania, Ohio, Georgia and Kentucky in the East to California, Arizona, New Mexico, Washington and Oregon in the West. Big areas of growth can be found in the southeast with tracks and series coming on-line in Georgia and Florida with series being set up for both this season and next season. The Midwest has also come alive, representing almost half of the series total with nine racing programs carrying the BNSS flag.

One of the keys to the BNSS program is the drastically decreased number of classes. In many cases, less than ten classes are on the docket with a focused ladder of development for the younger drivers. This small number translates into a smoother night of racing with more track time. In a time when racing the national circuit means being at the track from 7:00 am – 10:00 pm everyday for three days, book-ended by anywhere from six to 16 hours of driving each way, this approach opens



the door for many more participants, especially those who do not have the luxury of taking Thursday, Friday and Monday off work.

"We want to try to make certain that a guy can be back home in his bed at night," offered Burris.

In the BNSS rulebook, the series included just 18 optional classes that can be officially run under the series' banner within any given regional or local program. As stated, most series run between 8-15 classes each event - a sharp contrast to the 25 classes that are run at each WKA Dirt National. With the traditional stock classes on the BNSS schedule, there is also a provision in the rulebook for what is most definitely the future of the sport – the F200 overhead valve engine.

Burris is extremely excited about the ongoing development of the OHV classes that make up the foundation of the program's F200 class. The new division offers so many upsides for competition and support from the numerous manufacturers that include Briggs & Stratton, Honda, Yamaha, Tecumseh and Kohler.

You will find little argument about the fact that the flathead-style four-cycle engine will eventually be phased out of American kart racing. The future is the OHV package and Burris believes that this clean sheet of paper concerning the rules program offers karting something it has not had in many years – the chance to clear any past technical mistakes by starting off on the right foot. The prices for current race engines are significantly high due to the current rules packages and this cost has driven many people out of the sport. The rules that govern the prep of these motors have opened the door for these prices, as engine builders have needed to do whatever possible to keep up to their competition. The end consumer is the one who pays the price for technical decisions that have chased the problem over the years. Engine life has been drastically lowered due to the performance of these engines and the costs have risen concurrently. The idea behind the F200 program is to end this vicious cycle.

Burris believes that even the new rules for the Briggs Animal imposed by the World Karting Association did not address the existing problems.

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The approach that the BNSS is taking with their F200 package is based on creating a universal engine formula that can be available to all five of the previously-mentioned manufacturers. It is hoped that these open rules will allow 'creativity without excessive cost'. The F200 OHV concept will bring all three players in the package into the ring – the manufacturer, the aftermarket component supplier and the engine builder. The manufacturers will be responsible for providing the base foundation, opening the door for the development of a solid aftermarket, which is extremely crucial to the financial well-being and stability of any motorsport. Without an aftermarket, there will be no one to support the programs through sponsorship and backing. OEM components from the manufacturers will include the block, cylinder head, rocker arms and plates, crankshaft and side cover. Aftermarket items such as the connecting rod, piston and rings, flywheel and camshafts are all available for design and construction with assorted preset limits and materials. With these pieces, every engine builder will then have the tools to put together the best package possible. Competition in all of these areas will provide the consumer with the opportunity to select the best quality at the best price.

The manufacturers are getting behind the program fully and they are all preparing to play significant roles in the future of the class.

"I like the concept and I like what they are doing," said Briggs & Stratton's Dan Wilson. "Anything that is new and fresh for karting is good for karting."

Yamaha is also on board. Although they have long been a fixture in the sport with their KT100, the company is thrilled to be joining the four-cycle set with their new OHV package.

"We are very excited about the F200 program and our new YF200 R1," offered Yamaha's Colin Iwasa. "We couldn't have come this far without the co-operation of Mike Burris. We're behind the program in a big, big way."

FOR THE LOVE OF THE SPORT

Mike Burris has spent a great deal of time making this program a reality and it is the hope of many people that success will come for this venture. No one could ever accuse Burris of not giving back to the sport. There is little doubt that they do well in their business and they should be applauded for that. The free enterprise system is all about this kind of success. But as genuine motorsports junkies, the Burris family has put more than their share back into the sport. The Speedway USA fax machine gets barraged with banquet information every winter and a majority of these reports include a 'thank you' to Burris for donating product to their awards celebrations. Tires, jackets, suits and trophies, it seems like there is always something from Burris on the prize table.

But this article is not about how Burris supports karting through banquet donations or sponsorships, it's about the sport's newest racing program – the Burris National Speedway Series. It's about a program that could revolutionize oval racing as we know it. In an upcoming issue, we'll take a much closer look at the F200 program, outlining each and every one of the motors that will take to the track in '03. **ELSA**



**Honda
GX 200**



**Briggs
Intek 5.5**



**Yamaha
YZF200 R1**



**Kohler
C6 XKE**



**Tecumseh
OHV 5.5**

BURRIS NATIONAL SPEEDWAY SERIES 2003 RACING SCHEDULES

SOUTHERN INDIANA SPEEDWAY SERIES

May 17	Motorhead Park	Spencer County, IN
June 28	Indianapolis Int'l Speedway	Indianapolis, IN
July 26	Seedtick Raceway	Princeton, IN
Aug. 16	North Vernon Speedway	Indianapolis, IN
Sept. 6	Ben Hur Speedway	Crawfordsville, IN

Contact: Greg Zeabart 812-726-4465

GREAT LIL' SERIES

June 14	Great Lakes Speedsports	Bellevue, OH
Aug. 2	Great Lakes Speedsports	Bellevue, OH
Aug. 9	Lil Indy	Carrothers, OH
Sept. 6	Great Lakes Speedsports	Bellevue, OH
Oct. 4	Lil Indy	Carrothers, OH

Contact: Jim Colvin 419-483-7800

BURRIS TENNESSEE SERIES

May 31	Hamilton Co. Raceway	McCleansboro, IL
June 13	Belle River Raceway	Belle River, IL
July 4	Saline Co. Fairgrounds	Harrisburg, IL
Aug. 10	Belle River Raceway	Belle River, IL
Aug. 30	Hamilton Co. Raceway	McCleansboro, IL
Sept. 20	Hamilton Co. Raceway	McCleansboro, IL
Oct. 11	Belle River Raceway	Belle River, IL

TENNESSEE DIRT KARTING ASSOCIATION

April 5	Dale Hollow Speedway	Albany, KY
May 3	Dumplin Valley Raceway	Kodak, TN
June 7	Beechnut Raceway	Blountville, TN
June 28	Toney Speedway	
August 2	Clay City Kartway	Stanton, KY
Sept. 6	TBA	
Sept. 27	Rain Date	

Contact: Lebron Haggard 931-728-8274

BURRIS NORTHERN NATIONAL RACING SERIES

April 26	Waynesfield Motorsports Park	Waynesfield, OH
May 3	Stateline Speedway	Edon, OH
May 10	Waynesfield Motorsports Park	Waynesfield, OH
Sept. 27	Stateline Speedway	Edon, OH
Oct. 11	Waynesfield Motorsports Park	Waynesfield, OH
Oct. 18	Stateline Speedway	Edon, OH

Contact: Scott Longanbach 574-266-6607

HEARTLAND THUNDER TOUR

May 9	Benton Co. Fairgrounds	Boswell, IN
May 10	Kankakee Thunder Speedway	Kankakee, IL
May 11	Pheasant Run Raceway	Clinton, IL
July 18	Benton Co. Fairgrounds	Boswell, IN
July 19	Kankakee Thunder Speedway	Kankakee, IL
July 20	Route 66 Speedway	Pontiac, IL
Sept. 12	Benton Co. Fairgrounds	Boswell, IN
Sept. 13	Kankakee Thunder Speedway	Kankakee, IL
Sept. 14	Pheasant Run Raceway	Clinton, IL

Contact: Mike Gardner 765-385-0173

KENTUCKY KARTING ASSOCIATION

March 29	Dale Hollow Speedway	Albany, KY
May 10	Clay City Kart Speedway	Stanton, KY
June 21	Mannsville Kart Speedway	Mannsville, KY
July 12	Dale Hollow Speedway	Albany, KY
August 23	Clay City Kart Speedway	Stanton, KY
Sept. 20	Mannsville Kart Speedway	Mannsville, KY

Contact: Gary Morris 502-845-6686

NORTHERN OHIO SPEEDWAY SERIES

May 4	Barberton Speedway	Barberton, OH
May 31	Toledo Speedway	Toledo, OH
June 8	Barberton Speedway	Barberton, OH
July 19	Toledo Speedway	Toledo, OH
July 27	Barberton Speedway	Barberton, OH
Sept 21	Toledo Speedway	Toledo, OH

Contact: Jeff Hoisington 330-722-0936

BURRIS NATIONAL SPEEDWAY SERIES

Feb. 15	Burriss Motor Speedway (Day)	Rialto, CA
March 15	Burriss Motor Speedway (Day)	Rialto, CA
April 19	Burriss Motor Speedway (Day)	Rialto, CA
May 17	Burriss Motor Speedway (Night)	Rialto, CA
June 14	Burriss Motor Speedway (Night)	Rialto, CA
July 19	Burriss Motor Speedway (Night)	Rialto, CA
Aug. 16	Burriss Motor Speedway (Night)	Rialto, CA
Sept. 20	Burriss Motor Speedway (Night)	Rialto, CA
Oct. 18	Burriss Motor Speedway (Day)	Rialto, CA
Nov. 22	Burriss Motor Speedway (Day)	Rialto, CA

Contact: Alex or Bert 909-208-767

BURRIS NATIONAL SPEEDWAY SERIES 2003 RACING SCHEDULES

BURRIS MIDWEST SUMMER SHOOTOUT

May 25	Pheasant Run Raceway	Clinton, IL
June 7	Beaver Creek Speedway	Greenville, IL
June 21	Thunder Valley Speedway	Kankakee, IL
July 5	Jules Raceway	Wilmington, IL
Aug. 9	Thunder Valley Raceway	Pearl City, IL
Aug. 30	Bedrock Raceway	Belleville, IL
Sept. 6	Ben Hur Speedway	Crawfordsville, IN

Contact: Steve Rex 815-690-5151

PENNSYLVANIA DIRT KARTING ASSOCIATION

May 3-4	Path Valley Speedway
May 18	Selinsgrove Speedway
June 22	Path Valley Speedway
July 27	Selinsgrove Speedway
Aug. 24	Selinsgrove Speedway
Sept. 14	Path Valley Speedway
Sept. 21	Rain Date

Contact: Butch Diller 717-691-5994

WISCONSIN STATE CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES

May 23	Hi Go Raceway
June 7	CWKA Assoc
June 18	GSR Kartway
June 28	Meadowview Kartway
July 11	Hi Go Raceway
July 26	CWKA
Aug. 16	Meadowview Kartway
Aug. 27	GSR Kartway
Sept. 5	GSR Kartway

Contact: Mike Mitchell 715-524-5379

BURRIS ATOMIC GOLD CUP SERIES

May 10	Arizona Karting Assoc.	Phoenix, AZ
June 8	Tucson Kart Club	Tucson, AZ
Aug. 17	Arizona Karting Assoc.	Phoenix, AZ
Sept. 2	Southern NM Speedway	Las Cruces, NM
Nov. 14	Tucson Kart Club	Tucson, AZ

Contact: Kevin Behrendt 520-891-7223

BURRIS NEW MEXICO SERIES

May 24	Four Corners Kart Club	Farmington, NM
May 25	Harvey Caplin	
Sept. 21	Southern NM Speedway	Las Cruces, NM
Oct. 10-11	Southern NM Speedway	Las Cruces, NM

Contact: John Demartino 505-525-0851

BURRIS CIRCLE TOUR

April 27	Lake Geneva Raceway
May 11	Lake Geneva Raceway
May 25	Rockford Speedway
June 8	Lake Geneva Raceway
June 22	Illiana Motor Speedway
July 6	Rockford Speedway
July 20	Lake Geneva Raceway
Aug. 3	Lake Geneva Raceway
Aug. 17	Illiana Motor Speedway
Aug. 31	Rockford Speedway
Sept. 14	Illiana Motor Speedway
Sept. 21	Lake Geneva Raceway
Oct. 5	Lake Geneva Raceway

Contact: John Nuttall 630-253-8876

SOUTHERN BURRIS CHAMPIONSHIP

April 5	Blue Ridge Mini Speedway	Blue Ridge, GA
April 26	Blue Ridge Mini Speedway	Blue Ridge, GA
June 22	Airport Mini Speedway	Jasper, GA
July 27	Airport Mini Speedway	Jasper, GA
Aug. 30	Blue Ridge Mini Speedway	Blue Ridge, GA
Sept. 20	Blue Ridge Mini Speedway	Blue Ridge, GA

Contact: Dawn Gunter 706-374-3819

BURRIS OUTLAW KARTING SERIES

March 29	Dumplin Valley Raceway	Kodak, TN
April 26	Ashway Speedway	Plaines, TN
May 24	Dumplin Valley Raceway	Kodak, TN
July 26	Ashway Speedway	Plaines, TN
August 30	Dumplin Valley Raceway	Kodak, TN
Sept. 20	Ashway Speedway	Plaines, TN

Contact: George Eldridge 865-397-2990