

Ready, set for bumpin' and bangin'

Villages Motor Racing Fan Club to race go-carts Sunday

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By Jessica Green

If there was a checkered flag, George Glotfelty would have taken it during a recent practice go-cart race at the Ocala Grand Prix.

However, returning challenger Corky Eck has hopes to change that during Sunday's second annual Villages Cup at Fruitland Park's Original Speedway Park.

Last Sunday, Glotfelty, Eck, Jan Veenendaal and eight other members of The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club took to the track to get a little practice in beforehand.

"He gave us a pretty good whipping up in Ocala," Veenendaal said of Glotfelty. "He's got good car control. I think he's going to be pretty hard to beat."

Last March, 32 members of The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club raced go-carts during the group's inaugural event at the track.

Those who have driven them warn not to be fooled by go-carts' pint-sized appearance.

"When you say 'go-cart,' people think about putt-putting in the front yard. These are racing machines – it's pretty exhilarating," said Terry Turman, board member for the Original Leesburg Micro-racing Association, the nonprofit organization that operates Original Speedway Park.

"You might be going 40 miles per hour, but you feel like you're going 120. It's quite a rush," said Gerry Hafer, president of The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club.

That, of course, is what's fun for those who get behind the tiny steering wheels.

"Speed and competition – you can't beat it," Veenendaal said.

However, several club members who participated in last year's race know that the combination can be a little too potent.

There were two wrecks and one broken toe.

Some club members' desire to drive the carts without the pressure of participating in an actual race prompted one of the few format changes to this year's event: a noncompetitive heat.

Last year's competition was Silky Meegan's first time driving a go-cart.

"My goal last year was not to hit anybody, not to hurt anybody and to finish," she said. "But after the third lap, I was lapped."

This year, Meegan is looking forward to taking more leisurely passes around the track.



Mark DiOrto / Daily Sun
Members of The Villagers Motor Racing Fan Club practice Sunday at the Ocala Grand Prix for an upcoming go-cart race.

"I just like the experience of driving the go-cart and being out there," she said.

Whether driving for the win, for the experience or just taking it all in as a spectator, those who were there last year say it's a fun-filled day for all involved.

"You see a bunch of very old children out there in go-carts – it's a spectacle," Meegan said with a laugh.

Turman enjoyed watching the previous event, as well.

"You ought to see the smiles on the faces of these guys and gals when they get out of the cart," he said.

About 100 people came out to watch last year's event, and Hafer is hoping that number will be even larger Sunday.

The 2011 Villages Cup is free to attend and will get under way shortly after noon with the noncompetitive "fun run." The first round of heat races is set to begin at 1 p.m.

Drivers will battle for five laps around the one-eighth-mile clay track during eight heat races and a semifinal. The consolation run and the championship race will pit drivers against one another for 10 laps.

As for the defending champion, Glotfelty just hopes he gets a good cart.

"If I draw a good car I think I've got a good chance (to win again)," he said. "It's going to be fun. I think there's going to be a lot of 'bumpin' and bangin' going, on," he added.