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Paying it forward: FRD Motorsports Chief Instructor Pete Olson shares his karting knowledge with formula racers in Asia

By Melanie Glover - Marketing Assistant, Jim Hall Kart Racing School

When FRD Motorsports' lead driver Pete Olson was gearing up for his first Formula Renault race at the Shanghai International F1 Circuit in May, he immediately reflected upon the Jim Hall race series he completed eight years ago.

"I was thinking of JHR a lot, and of what I did to win," wrote Olson in a May e-mail to JHR Sales & Marketing Manager Megan Fong. Two months prior he signed his first pro contract with the biggest race team in Asia. "I was thinking of all the nights in the gym, all the practice, the endless hunger, and the positive feedback I got from everyone there."

Olson also mentioned a gold plaque on a wall at JHR's previous location, which contained a list of former JHR students turned pro. "I used to look at that board before every race for inspiration," he said. "Now, he can finally put *me* up there."

After racing karts at JHR in 2001, Olson won the Bridgestone F2000 MTP race series in Canada in 2007 and then moved to China to be the Chief Instructor for FRD Motorsports. There, he passes along the skills gained from JHR karting to his own students.

Just last week, we conducted an e-mail interview with the busy man living the racing dream, revving it up in China.

JHR: Any more updates since we heard from you in May? How's it going with FRD?

PO: Things are going great. Although I am on the other side of the world from JHR, I still look at the Web site monthly for the race updates; it's a source of inspiration for me. I instruct Formula Renault, Ferraris, and more. It's still a bit odd to me some days to come into "work" and be told that I need to test a quarter million Ferrari. It's not "work," it's a passion. It's living a dream. Coaching is rewarding and fun – seeing how much I can make a driver improve, especially in Formula Campus or Formula Renault, and of course I am passing on knowledge that I learned from the instructors at JHR, as it is the same techniques for speed that I was taught in JHR.

JHR: Technically, how has a background in karting helped with the style of driving you do now?

PO: I think the best way to answer that question is not even my own driving (doing pole position times on old slicks during testing), but through the application of techniques I learned in karting, which I used today to coach a new formula car student. Threshold [maximum] braking, trail braking into corners, maximizing corner speed, steering input/smoothness, exit throttle application, etc.

JHR: What advice do you have for someone hoping to drive down a similar career path?

PO: Simple: Just keep at it... When people in this profession see your determination and passion, opportunities will start to happen. [It takes a lot of effort...], emotional ups and downs, a lot of sacrifice, personally and financially. But if you are willing to do whatever it takes, you can make it happen.

JHR: When did you first know that you wanted to be involved in racing?

PO: Since I was a kid, I always wanted to be a professional race driver. However I had no idea of what career path to take, and I didn't have an ex-pro racing father to mentor me. But the more I read about karting, the more I realized that was the way to start: It was affordable, taught professional driving skills and race craft. When I look back on all the years in racing, I realize that even if I had been able to afford to go directly to formula cars, I would have been at a disadvantage. For instance, when I went from JHR to Jim Russell, I set the fastest lap times of all the advanced Formula Mazda students, despite being new to formula cars. My first few races were on a Sportbike, Ninja ZX6R. Despite the thrill and speed of the bike, karting taught me much more about race driving.



JHR: What's the biggest obstacle you've had to overcome thus far?

PO: Two obstacles: funding and being consistently hungry. "Being hungry all the time" as Richard Petty said, is a big thing. Karting is racing in its purest form – but when you get into team formula racing, there's a lot of pressure. I have to admit, despite the glamour of racing at the Shanghai F1 circuit in front of 20,000 people in a 170mph pro Formula Renault, I still miss the challenge, camaraderie, and pure fun of karting.



"Karting is racing in its purest form – but when you get into formula racing onto a team, there is a lot of pressure. I have to admit, despite the glamour of racing at the Shanghai F1 circuit in front of 20,000 people in a 170mph pro Formula Renault, I still miss the challenge, camaraderie, and pure fun of karting."

NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER

JIM HALL KART RACING SCHOOL

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SPRINT KART PROGRAMS

Sprint Kart Programs feature the Emmick kart powered by a 17 h.p., 80 MPH, Italian HPV 100cc motor. With no shifting, just a centrifugal clutch that engages at 7,000 rpm, sprint karts allow beginners to focus on learning the racing line and the techniques of high-speed driving, while helping experts perfect their smoothness and kart control. But make no mistake, with 0-60 MPH times clocked at 6.5 seconds and cornering ability some 40% better than a high-performance street car, these sprint karts are pure racing machines.

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DAY 1A: Accelerated learning curve in performance driving. Work up to racing speed with on-track and in-class instruction. Driving dynamics in steering, accelerating, cornering and braking. Focus on the racing line. 3 on-track sessions.

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DAY 1B: Extensive racing line instruction with a one-on-one lead/follow driving session, observation, and timed session. Increase your speed with practice and expert guidance. 3 on-track sessions.

Day 1A & 1B combined \$395 (\$55 savings)

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For Day 1 graduates wanting wheel-to-wheel racing experience. Challenging passing and braking drills, inside/outside racing lines and qualifying to race. Pace laps, gridding and green flag race starts. Demonstrate your new understanding of race strategy and driving performance. Interclass competition. 6 on-track driving sessions.

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FULL DAY & HALF DAY PROGRAMS

This program is run in our Emmick Kid Kart with a Comer 80cc Engine. The class is specially designed to fit your specific needs. Participant must be between the ages of 7-10 years old, and between the heights of 4 feet - 4 feet 8 inches. Pricing and classes vary for each participant; contact Jim Hall to design your Semi Private Kid Kart Program.

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Advanced students looking for additional challenge and aspiring racers wanting to prepare for competitive karting can step up to our TAG kart courses. The program takes you from fundamentals to intensive competition training intended to ready you for racing.

125-cc Touch-And-Go karts are the hottest trend in the industry. And with 25 h.p., 4-wheel disc brakes and pulling 0-to-60 in under 6 seconds, they offer an even greater challenge and reward for advanced drivers. TAG karts are the fastest growing class in the amateur ranks, and our fleet of state-of-the-art TAG's are the ideal tool to prepare drivers for competition.

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TAG A: (Must be Day 1 Sprint graduate with instructor approval). Extensive 125-cc TAG kart instruction in power-band/dry clutch engagement, 4-wheel braking techniques, detailed track walk, critiqued driving session and timed session. 3 on-track driving sessions.

TAG B \$255

HALF DAY PROGRAM

TAG B: (Must be Day 2 Sprint and TAG A graduate with instructor approval). Braking and driving line refinement, inside/outside line exercises, passing, qualifying, rolling race starts and interclass competition. 3 on-track driving sessions. **TAG A-B combined \$475 (\$35 savings)**

LAPPING CLASSES

FULL DAY & HALF DAY PROGRAMS

Practice, practice, practice makes for a great driver. This class is designed for graduates of Day 1 or TAG A who simply want more seat time. Use one-on-one instructor to driver sessions to hone your skills.

Sprint Lapping: (Must be a Day 1 Sprint graduate)

- 4 on-track driving sessions — \$245
- 6 on-track driving sessions — \$365
- 20 on-track driving sessions — \$1,150
- 40 on-track driving sessions — \$2,225

TAG Lapping: (Must be a TAG A graduate)

- 4 on-track driving sessions — \$285
- 6 on-track driving sessions — \$425
- 20 on-track driving sessions — \$1,275

Classes offered 3 times a week, Saturday and Sunday.
 Visit our website for Program Schedule or call the office for availability.
www.JimHallKartRacing.com

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| Condensed 1A | \$149 | Day 2 | \$445 | TAG B | \$255 | Sprint Race Sunday | \$445 |
| Day 1A | \$225 | Sprint Lapping..... | \$245 | TAG Lapping | \$285 | TAG Race Weekend | \$695 |
| Day 1B | \$225 | TAG A | \$255 | Sprint Race Weekend | \$635 | TAG Race Sunday | \$495 |

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|------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Day 1 (A & B combined) | \$395 (\$55) | TAG A & TAG B | \$475 (\$35) | Sprint Lapping Package of 5 | \$1,150 (\$75) |
| Day 1 & 2 | \$795 (\$100) | Day 1 + Day 2 + TAG A | \$1,025 (\$125) | Sprint Lapping Package of 10 | \$2,225 (\$225) |
| Day 1 + TAG A | \$625 (\$80) | Day 2 + TAG B | \$1,250 (\$155) | TAG Lapping Package of 5 | \$1,275 (\$75) |

*Prices are subject to change without notice - visit our website or call for current pricing.

Former JHR TAG series winner Thomas Asseo paves his road to success with smooth driving and funding strategies

By Melanie Glover - Marketing Assistant, Jim Hall Kart Racing School

Funding is a huge obstacle young drivers encounter as they try to fulfill their racing dreams. But former JHR student Thomas Asseo is taking it one step at a time – working on and off the track and gaining scholarships through races like our JHR TAG series, which Asseo won in February 2008 along with a Russell Racing scholarship prize. But what has he been up to since he was lapping head-to-head with our instructors? 2008 was a great year for the 27 year-old, as he won second place overall in the Formula Russell Championship, placing first in his class. The promising racer shared where he's steering next with us last week as he was – *where else?* – stuck in L.A. traffic.

JHR: Let's get an update: What are you doing these days?

TA: I'm working on a program for Formula Atlantics with indy car driver Townsend Bell, who's helping out with sponsorship. This year, I raced the Formula Russell again, but I was only able to race three quarters of the season due to funding. I was leading the series up until the last race I drove.

JHR: What are your ultimate goals with racing?

TA: Atlantic is a really good step up the ladder, and Russell has a great platform for making that step. I'd like to get into indy racing, or possibly the American Le Mans Series. Racing prototypes would be great but it seems geared toward guys at the end of their careers. Really, I just want to race professionally with indy cars here or in Europe.

JHR: How are you able to apply what you've learned at JHR to what you're doing now?

TA: With JHR, I learned the basics of driving. Racing cars is a totally different ballgame, but the basics are the same. I think what separates me from other drivers is that I drive really smoothly. Jim's karts are really direct and with racing, the cars are sharp and technical. I think now I tend to be one of the smoother drivers – keeps me out of trouble.

JHR: Do you see a difference between drivers who jump right into competing and those who go to karting schools first?

TA: Every driver on the grid doing well has karting as a background, and it's pretty obvious. But some racers go from Porsches right into an open-wheeled car, and they tend to have a really hard time [adjusting]. Karters will always have a better foundation. It seems to be more of a struggle with cars – the balance and finesse it takes to drive them. Go-karts prepare you for that.

JHR: Do you have a favorite memory at JHR?

TA: When I was racing with Jim I was racing against a guy named Rick Schaffer, and it was just pure rivalry. Every race with Rick was really close and we'd out-qualify each other by a hair. That did a good job of preparing me for the pressure of racing cars. Jim was always tough on me, but it turned out good in the end. At first I was too aggressive, but he helped me tame myself.

JHR: What advice do you have for someone who is hoping to be a successful racer?

TA: I'm looking for advice myself! Unfortunately, a lot of it is finding a budget, but there are some good ladder programs. The school series definitely offer run-off competitions where you can win a partial or full season. Skip Barber and Jim Russell have one coming up. Doesn't mean you are the fastest driver, but if you do well you can win some funding in order to become faster. After that, it takes a lot of education. I'm still at the beginning of my journey. Ask me again in a couple years.

