Tips on Buying a Used Kart for 206

Often people start their journey into karting by buying a used kart. It can make a great deal of sense, given there tends to be a big supply of them, and they can be very low cost compared to a new kart. A new chassis will lose a great deal of resale value after just a few races. It tends to be a bad investment.

Unfortunately, starting with a used kart can be somewhat problematic. I recently worked with someone that had purchased a used starter kart. He asked me for help to try to cut down his lap times, as he was struggling and far off the pace. I went through the kart and found numerous issues including: kart was bent, brakes did not work, tie rod was bent, spindle was bent, kart did not have the correct manufacturer's standard setup, seat was mounted incorrectly, engine was not mounted correctly, and the clutch was junk. Having that many issues sounds ludicrous, but given this driver was new to karting, some of these things were not completely obvious. There was no way this guy could have been competitive with this kart given the problems it had. Unfortunately, I tend to see this fairly regularly with new racers. A kart in this condition surely makes it difficult to progress quickly. It is certainly no way to be introduced to karting. Hopefully this article may help someone and keep them from having similar issues. There are lots of folks will to help, don't be afraid to ask questions.

I can understand folks want to enter the sport by not spending too much money. They may just be sticking their toe in the water to see what karting is all about. I do typically recommend for folks to start out with a used kart, to save money. To some degree this does them some disservice. If you can afford the investment, starting with a new kart with a good setup from someone that knows what they are doing, is the optimal situation. It will likely shorten the learning curve, which in karting can be steep. But, being realistic, that is probably not in the budget for most folks. This article is an attempt to give some advice on how to pick a used kart and get you started well into the sport.

A real good strategy is to find a used kart run by drivers that run major national races. They often will run only a few races on them, sometimes only 1 weekend. Given the level these folks are trying to compete at, they buy a new one for nearly every big event. This often occurs with people running the top level of karting, Super Kart USA (SKUSA) events. The price of these karts can be half of a new one, but still be in excellent condition. As long as the kart was not wrecked and does not have some major issues.

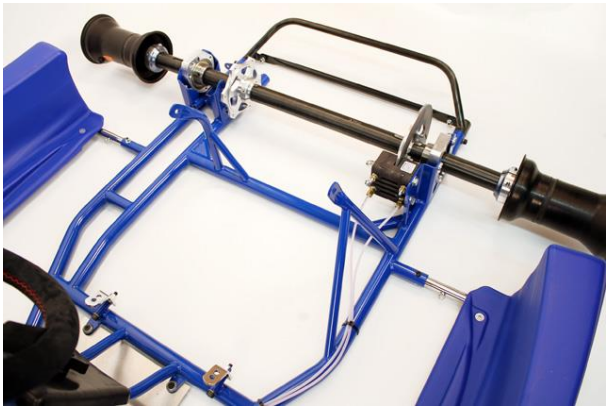
Another great opportunity is to find someone that bought a new kart starting out in karting, but hardly ever used it. I have seen karts that have actually never even made it onto the track that have sat in someone's garage for a couple years.

I have owned many karts over 13 years of karting, here are some things to consider when looking at purchasing a used kart:

- **Check the kart to see if it is straight.** If you have a pair of snipers, put the kart on the ground, sit in it, then put the snipers on top of the spindles. They should line up. If you have to turn the wheel to do so, it is bent. You can also put the kart on the kart stand, take off the front wheels and hub and check the kart with the snipers. If the caster pills are in correctly and in the same position on both sides, the camber should be the same on both sides. Usually 1 to 2 degrees negative. If you have scales, put the kart on the scales and sit in it. The front wheels should have roughly the same weight on both sides. If you don't have snipers or scales, you can also push kart along the ground on a flat surface and see if it pulls one direction or another. The best way is to put the kart on a table. A kart can be straightened in a couple ways. Best way is on a table by someone that knows what they are doing. Alternate approach is to just jump on it and twist it. Straightening a kart may come out OK and once fixed will be fine. However, sometimes karts that have been bent a number of times, can have a memory. When run, it will quickly go back to being bent again after being straightened. Bottom line: know what you are getting.

- **Make sure all tie rods, spindles, hubs, etc. are not bent.** Look at all kart components. Some of these might just have minor tweeks and not be obvious. Most parts can be easily replaced, but it will cost you some money. It is also could be a sign the kart has been in wrecks and could have other issues you should look for.
- **Choose a top brand kart.** This is not a straight forward statement. Clearly there are some kart manufacturers that have risen to the top and are the largest suppliers in the world. This would include OTK / Tony Kart, which is by far the number one kart manufacturer. Most 2-cycle karts are a modified version of the Tony Kart design. Tony Karts are sold with a couple different brands including Kosmic Exprit, and FA. These brands are identical other than the paint and stickers. Freeline/Birel and CRG are

probably next biggest manufacturers. There are many, many kart brands, but most are copies of the OTK design. Most karts are made in Italy. No offense to our American manufacturers, but the Italians use far better technology. Often with high tech automation. However, 206 karting started in the U.S. as most 4-cycle racing has. Briggs & Stratton is here in Milwaukee. The Europeans all run 2-cycle karts. Some of the American karts are more designed specifically for running 4-cycle engines making them good choices. The karts are typically much narrower (43" front / 50" rear) vs. 2-cycle karts (47" front / 55" rear). Given 206 karts are for low horsepower and lack acceleration, the narrow kart will be freer going through a corner and can have an advantage. European 2-cycle karts typically have more grip. 4-cycle karts also typically have the seat offset more to the left. The picture on the left is a Comet Eagle. Notice how vertical the left seat strut is. Compare this to a typical Tony Kart and you will see how much more left the seat is. As a 4-cycle engine is heavy and bulky, you need to get the seat over to have proper engine clearance. A mistake is to mount the clutch outboard. Having the clutch outboard puts a lot of stress on the crankshaft which will wear the engine faster and reduce performance. Even if you buy a 2-cycle kart it is good advice to bend the left frame rail up and move the seat further left. Here are some good choices for 206 from American manufacturers including: Comet, MGM, Margay, and Coyote. I would tend to steer people to purchasing a kart specifically designed for 4-cycle.



- **Check to see if the kart has been welded.** Wrecks happen in karting. This can cause karts to get cracked. Usually at weld joints. It can also break just from stress of running it. I would be very cautious about buying kart that has been welded and had past issues. Another place karts can break is the seat struts. So, look under the seat to see if it has broken off in the past. While this can be rewelded, it often will keep breaking on you. If tabs for sod pods or bodywork have been welded, I would be less worried about this, as it is not critical to the performance of the kart on the track.
- **Check the serial number tag.** The tag should have the model number. It typically will allow you to identify what year it was manufactured.

- **Look underneath.** Look underneath the kart to see if it has scrapes. So, minor scratches is no big deal, but karts that have done a good deal of curb hopping can be badly scraped and can actually be weakened as the tubing thins out. A kart that is well maintained should have plastic chassis savers underneath. These can make a huge difference. If the kart is OK without them and you purchase it, first thing you should do is install them to protect the kart. This will not only protect your investment but will also help the resale value when you do go to sell it.

- **Check the brakes.** You should look at brakes and brake pads to make sure they are in good order. If you have faulty brakes you aren't going to be able to drive into a corner deep and you are going to be slow. Press the brake peddle and see how firm it is. The rear wheels should fully lock up easily and not move. If they are mushy, the brakes may just need to be bled. However, it could be an indication that there are issues with the seals. Also check out the pads. Pads are pretty easy to replace. **Most importantly, make sure your brakes are in good condition before you head out the track!** This is a safety issue. You should get in habit of always checking them. I usally always test when prepping the kart before racing. I know one young man, who was a expiring top driver, that went out in a kart with no brakes and suffered serious leg injuries. These injuries took him a couple years to fully recover from. Brakes are also critical in running your best lap times. They are especially important in passing other drivers. If you can out brake another kart, you can typically make a pass. Without, it can be quite difficult.
- **Make sure you get a kart that is not flexed out.** This can be hard to determine. You can really only look at how old the kart is and how much it has been run. Why is this critical? Unlike race cars, karts don't have a suspension. Their ability to flex is their suspension. A flexed-out kart can perform badly. The lack of flex will not allow the wheel to lift going through a corner and will have a push. A new kart is always going to be faster than an old one. For top national drivers, you will see them not running a kart more than a few weekends, as there is a slight drop off.
- **Make sure the kart is setup well.** If the kart is not setup well you are going to struggle with it. You won't know if it is your driving or the kart. If you can find a kart that has been running up front in races that may be a good choice. Or find a kart of the same make/model and mirror the setup of that kart. Here at Kart Start we can help you with you kart setup. We post out setup sheets on our website (https://kart-start.com/setup-sheets)

- **Get the right size seat and position it correctly.** It is very important the seat you have in your kart fits well. It should fit very snuggly to keep you from sliding around. If you slide around it will keep prevent the kart from working properly and getting inside rear wheel lift to get the kart to turn. It should also be comfortable. Seat position is one of the biggest influences of kart performance. It affects the kart balance. The kart should scale correctly. Good scaling numbers are: 50% left, 49.5 cross, and 43% front. Many kart manufacturers have seat placement charts. Look for these and get it right!

- **Don't worry too much about bodywork.** Bodywork is easy to replace and make good by putting a new sticker kit on it. Look more at the chassis and don't ever buy a kart just because it looks good. Your priority is to check to see if the kart is straight and all the components are in good shape.
- **Buy used motors with caution.** If you buy a used motor, make sure it was well maintained and still runs good. People that have really strong motors, don't tend to sell them. They will move their old used motors and keep their good motor for the next kart they buy. Ask how much run time it has on it. These motors do last a long time, so a motor that has been used a year, still has lots of life. You could buy a new short block to refresh it. I believe it is much safer to buy a new one and the best strategy to get you started. They are relatively inexpensive. You can almost view 206 motors as consumables when compared to racing 2-cycles. The Briggs 206 usually runs well right out of the box with no extra work.
- **Plan on purchasing a MyChron.** Many folks buy a kart without buying MyChron for capturing data. This is a mistake. Being able to use data to help you improve your driving is very important. I highly recommend a MyChron 5 over a MyChron 4. Track maps are built into the MyChron 5 and it comes with a GPS built in. You can download GPS data and overlay it on a track map. This is a great way to figure out where you are losing time. Another good strategy is to have ave a top driver jump in your kart and then compare your data to his. You will quickly see where you need to improve. You can add a GPS to a MyChron 4, but I find it harder to use and not as accurate with more GPS fade.