

Bahrain karting season roars to life

BIKC hosts exciting back-to-back rounds of heated battles in Sakhir Rotax MAX karting

● Charlie Page and Oliver Spencer claim impressive doubles over the weekend in Micro MAX and Mini MAX classes, respectively

● Sharing the spoils were Shun Sekiguchi and Nathan Joseph in Junior MAX, Luca Houghton and Najashi Rashdan in Senior MAX, and Abdulqader Qasem and Musaad Albassam in DD2 MAX

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Bahrain International Circuit (BIC), 'The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East', flagged off over the weekend the 2025/2026 national racing season with back-to-back rounds in the Sakhir Rotax MAX Challenge (SRMC).

Held at BIC's world-class grassroots motorsport facility, Bahrain International Karting Circuit (BIKC), the SRMC featured plenty of exciting action across its five categories, including the Micro MAX, Mini MAX, Junior MAX, Senior MAX, and DD2 MAX.

The series is being held as a prelude to the 2025/2026 Bahrain Rotax MAX Challenge (BRMC), the Kingdom's premier karting championship, which kicks off at the end of October.

Warming Up

The SRMC is also taking place



Winners celebrate on the podium

to help Bahrain's top karters and others from abroad warm up ahead of their highly anticipated participation in the upcoming Rotax MAX Challenge Grand Finals (RMCGF), which will be hosted by BIC and BIKC this 29 November to 6 December. The RMCGF is one of the biggest international karting events held annually, and Bahrain will be welcoming more than 400 of the world's best Rotax karters from over 60 nations, who will be competing over a full week in Sakhir.

Taking victories in both of season-opening rounds were Charlie Page in the Micro MAX class and Oliver Spencer in the Mini MAX, while sharing the spoils in their respective categories were Shun Sekiguchi and Nathan Joseph in the Junior MAX, Luca

Houghton and Najashi Rashdan in the Senior MAX, and Abdulqader Qasem and Musaad Albassam in the DD2 MAX.

In round one, Charlie claimed his Micro MAX win after completing the nine-lap final in nine minutes 18.624 seconds. He powered to the front early in the race and finished ahead of Abdulaziz Alsarraf, while Shiv Tummala joined them on the podium in third.

In the Mini MAX, Oliver claimed a pole-to-flag victory in 9:01.867 after nine laps. Jude Andrews was the runner-up 1.976s behind, while Tariq Soofi finished third 6.392s back.

Charlie and Oliver were also the winners of the pre-finals in their classes.

Tense Finishes

Shun triumphed in the Junior MAX final after an impressive start that saw him take the lead in lap one. He then defended his position throughout 15 laps and won in 14:11.637. Shun pipped Nathan at the finish line by just 0.192s, while Leopold Juch was a close third, 1.052s back. Nathan had earlier won the pre-final.

In the Senior MAX category, Houghton took the win after a heated battle with Mohammed Alhasan and Tye Mejia. Houghton captured the advantage on lap four and never relinquished his leading position, taking the chequered flag after 15 laps in 13:45.717.

Pole-sitter Alhasan, who won the pre-final, lost two places early on but was able to overtake Mejia on lap 12 en route to finishing just 0.159s behind the winner. Mejia secured the final podium step 0.485s back.

In the DD2 MAX, Qasem was the outright winner after starting from pole. He triumphed with a time of 13:35.974 and completed the 15-lap event 6.021s ahead of Albassam. Raoul Sadi came fourth 7.501s adrift. Qasem had also triumphed in the pre-final earlier in the day.

Champions Consolidate

In the SRMC's second round, Charlie completed his Micro MAX double for the weekend after gaining the lead on lap one and charging on to the chequered flag. He clinched his class after nine laps in 9:21.805, finishing with a comfortable gap from Abdulaziz in second place. Charlie had also taken the pre-final.

Oliver joined him in securing back-to-back Mini MAX wins after a tight battle with Jude in the final's concluding laps. Oliver prevailed in 9:03.933, but was just 0.122s ahead of Jude at the finish. Rayyan Najjar clinched third place 6.439s behind. Tariq put in a strong drive to win the pre-final.

Category Rivalries Intensify

In the Junior MAX category, Nathan overtook pole-sitter Shun on lap one and gradually extended his advantage over the 15-lap final. He triumphed in

13:59.989 and was 4.324s clear of Shun. Ahmed Jawed joined them on the podium after finishing 5.254s adrift. Nathan had also triumphed in the pre-final earlier in the round.

The Senior MAX class saw plenty of heated action throughout the field, as Rashdan was able to get the better of Houghton on lap three and maintain his lead despite a thrilling challenge from his closest rivals until the very end. Rashdan, who also took the pre-final, won in 13:46.907, with Houghton just 0.044s behind in second place after 15 laps. Houghton was able to overtake Fahad Almuqila on the final lap, as Almuqila was forced to settle for third 0.576s from first.

In the DD2 MAX, Albassam led Qasem and Sadi from start to finish, winning in 13:32.685, creating a good distance from Qasem who was 8.500s back. Sadi finished 12.096s adrift in third. The trio finished in the same order in the pre-final.

Season Continues

This year's SRMC features four rounds in all. The series wraps up with another double-header on 17 and 18 October with meetings three and four lighting up the BIKC track.

That will then set the stage for the new BRMC season, which is set to feature eight rounds, flagging off on October 31 and continuing until April of next year.

For more information on the SRMC, BRMC, or other events and activities at BIC or BIKC, visit bahraingp.com or call the BIC Hotline on +973-17450000.



Varma's heroics seal Asia Cup glory for India in dramatic final

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A magnificent, unbeaten 69 from Tilak Varma guided India to a nail-biting five-wicket victory over arch-rivals Pakistan to clinch the Men's T20 Asia Cup in a tense final at the Dubai International Stadium yesterday.

Chasing a target of 147, India's innings was in tatters at 20-3 after a devastating opening spell from Faheem Ashraf (3/29) and Shaheen Shah Afridi. With the top order back in the pavilion, Varma displayed immense composure,

anchoring the chase with a calculated 53-ball knock.

He first steadied the innings with a 57-run partnership with Sanju Samson (24) before a blistering 60-run stand with Shivam Dube (33 off 22) turned the tide. Rinku Singh then smashed a boundary to seal the win with two balls to spare, sparking wild celebrations.

Earlier, Pakistan had collapsed from a strong position of 84/0 to be bowled out for 146. A fiery 57 from Sahibzada Farhan and 46 from

Scorecard

India 150 for 5 (Varma 69*, Dube 33, Ashraf 3-29) beat Pakistan 146 (Farhan 57, Zaman 46, Kuldeep 4-30, Varun 2-30) by five wickets

Fakhar Zaman provided a solid foundation, but Kuldeep Yadav's four-wicket haul (4/30) triggered a dramatic batting collapse, restricting Pakistan to a below-par total.

The victory marks India's second T20 Asia Cup title, adding another thrilling chapter to cricket's most intense rivalry.



India's Tilak Varma plays a shot

Chairman & Managing Director **P Unnikrishnan** | Editor-in-Chief **Mahmood Al Mahmood**

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