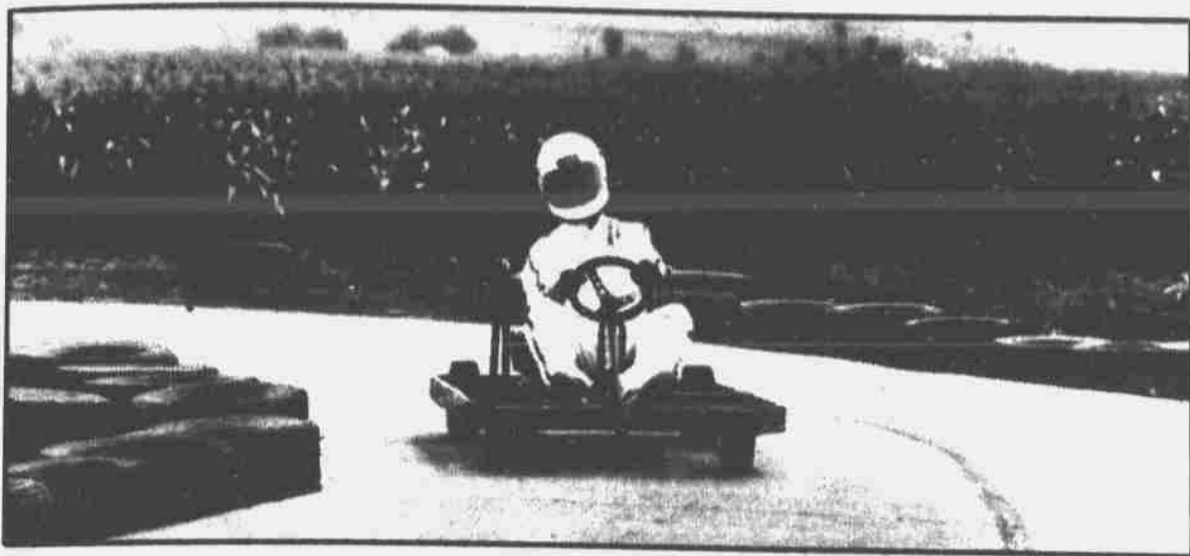


Kart & Putt brings the thrill of Indy to Lincoln



Staff Photo by Dave Bentz

A little-league Mario Andretti takes the corner at Kart & Putt.

By C. Scott Thompson

You strap on your helmet as you carefully inspect your vehicle, driving gloves securely fastened. As the engine revs, the smell of gas and burning rubber seeps into your pores. You mount the driver's seat. There's a sweaty anticipation of acceleration. Your asbestos suit itches. Sweat rolls off your face. But you don't care because you are one with your car and every nut and bolt in it responds almost instinctively.

Is it Daytona? Monaco's Grand Prix? The Indy 500? Mailbu? Kart & Putt?

Kart & Putt?

Located just past the Interstate 80 overpass on Cornhusker Highway, Kart & Putt is the city's newest speedway. It offers a dirt-bike course, a dirt track for amateur racing and a paved track for those who need to rent their wheels.

A \$1.75 for five minutes may sound a little steep, but five minutes on a figure-eight track is about all you need to get that quasi-NASCAR feeling you're after.

Not having my own go kart, I opted for the rental model that was equipped with a five horsepower Honda engine and capable of speeds to 30 mph-plus. However, according to owner Lee Bring, all rental models are fitted with governors that restrict the ve-

hicle's top cruising speeds. On test laps I was clocked at speeds reaching 13 mph, and at 6 inches from the ground, it was quite a thrill.

All rental models have low-torque, one-speed transmissions. Side framing provides plenty of protection for the accident-leary and there's plenty of tires around the track sides, to restrict those would-be off-track enthusiasts.

I test drove the track solo, but Bring said as many as 10 drivers can race simultaneously. Bring's dirt track is reserved for those hardcore go kart drivers who have their own set of wheels.

"A lot of guys are getting into go kart racing," Bring said, "because for the money it'd cost you to buy a stock engine, you can get

a complete go cart." And of the thrills and spills, Bring said, "well, they're just the same."

Bring supervises all of the racing to minimize wipe-outs, but admitted they've "had some pretty good spills." He went on to say, however, that accidents on the paved rental track are rare.

What's it cost to own your own set of thrills on wheels?

Well, it may look like something you messed around with in grade school, but Bring had a model for sale in his office that goes for \$800 without an engine.

Bring said the engine you put in the frame is the decisive factor in the cost of a go cart. "You can get a pretty good frame and en-

gine for around \$1,300," he said.

The dimensions of the racing-class go carts are substantially different than the rental ones I tested. Bring said he's clocked drivers on his track hitting top speeds of more than 60 mph. That's 60 mph at 6 inches

off the ground. Imagine passing a station wagon on I-80 in a go cart.

Bring opened Kart & Putt about two months ago. As the name might suggest, there's also a miniature golf course available for the more pedestrian. Bring also has installed a couple of vid-

eo games for those extended pit stops.

So the next time you feel like playing Monaco Speedway on Capitol Parkway and for the grit of oil fumes and squealing rubber, remember Kart & Putt is closer to Lincoln than Daytona.



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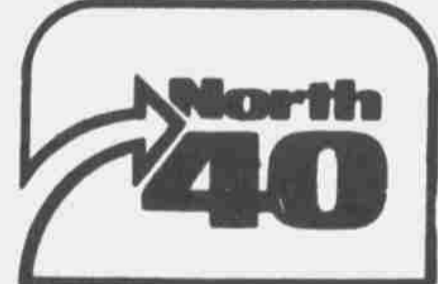
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