

INTERVIEW: GIANCARLO TININI'S 2021 REVIEW



Max Verstappen and Giancarlo Tinini - Photo Credit: FM Press

Now that 2021 is definitely over, CRG boss **Giancarlo Tinini** draws up a **sporting and commercial review** of the past year, anticipating the most important themes of the upcoming new season. **In 2022 CRG celebrates 36 years since its birth**, confirming itself at the top of a sport like karting, of which it has contributed to writing the history with its **sporting successes** (*over 20 World Championships and countless international victories*) and with the many drivers on their way to professionalism towards the top of motor racing. In this regard, the success of **Max Verstappen**, who became **World Champion in F1 and grew up competing in karting with CRG**, is highly topical.

Our chat with Giancarlo Tinini absolutely needs to start from his comment on the title won by Verstappen:

"I have lived the last F1 season with a lot of involvement, as both Max and Lewis have raced with us in karting and with both of them I have a close relationship and many wonderful memories. I think they both deserved the title and offered an incredible show, but above all they showed their talent once more, just as they had done in karting. Max raced with us from 2010 to 2013 when he won everything, becoming European Champion and World Champion in the season. He has traveled all the way in karting with us, ever since his father Jos gave him his first CRG "Puffo" at the age of 4, a go-kart that is currently on display in Max's official store in Swalen in the Netherlands. Later he raced and won in the Micro and Mini classes of Rotax and then he arrived in our official team for his debut in KF3 in 2010. In International karting he won a lot, but above all he refined his driving skills, control, determination, which are the same that today allow him to make a difference in F1. In his growth, I keep saying how much importance his father Jos' role has played, always being alongside him in karting as an exceptional mechanic and coach. Obviously, I also have exceptional memories of Lewis who won a European Championship and the World Cup in 2000 with us, highlighting the qualities that the whole world was able to appreciate in his incredible career".

Let's get back to the Karting world. What is your review of the year that has just ended?

"From a sporting point of view it was quite positive, providing us with the feedback we wanted, especially in KZ, the category that in the racing segment is among the most important for us from a commercial point of view. We invested at the beginning of the season in order to have experienced drivers with us, because we wanted to develop the technical material in view of 2021 FIA homologations and obviously have a competitive team in the most important international races. Having won the KZ2 European Championship with Giacomo Pollini of the NGM team is a very positive fact from this point of view, as well as the victory in KZ in Adria and the various positive results we have achieved with the official drivers of the Racing team. The market and the racetrack have also given us strong positive feedback in Mini Kart, a category that is increasingly

“weighting” in terms of numbers considering the young age with which drivers can switch to cars. We were more discontinuous in the direct drive classes, where for our team it was also a bit more complex to manage the engine part, but at the OK World Championship, both Gabriel Gomez and Olin Galli were competitive, just as we were on several occasions also in Junior. On the sidelines of the International activity and the Racing team, I am also satisfied with the successes and appreciation that our products have had in many national markets, where every year we are among the most successful brands “.

In 2022 in the Racing segment there will be the challenge of the new FIA homologations for the chassis and accessories:

“Yes and for this deadline we have worked a lot with our technical department, with the Racing team and with our more experienced drivers to introduce important evolutions on the chassis and some interesting news on accessories, in particular, as regards the brakes. The most important innovations consist in the new brake pump, which we presented by homologating the new VEN 13 system, both for the direct drive classes and for the KZs; this pump is equipped with a mechanical system that allows you to adjust and modulate the braking avoiding “blockages” on the rear axle. The look is also completely new for our karts thanks to the new, more aerodynamic fairings and the new graphics, while for what concerns the chassis we have renewed the homologations of the Road Rebel, Heron, KT2 and KT4 models by introducing some updates on the bodies, while the KT5 model will be completely new, made with 30 mm tubes and a 32mm front end. “

Regarding the Racing Team, can you anticipate something about the 2022 season?:

“For what concerns the drivers, we want to give continuity to the work done in KZ last year, so we have confirmed Iglesias, Irlando, Tonteri, Pescador and Nilsson, who will also be joined by Gustavsson, who in addition to KZ will also take part in the OK races. Soon we will present the complete line-up for all categories, including the Mini Kart. As for the

competitive programs, the focus will be on the FIA events, then European Championships and World Championships, which we will also prepare with a program of WSK and Champions of the Future races. From a technical point of view, in KZ we have a solid motoring partnership with TM and we are discussing how to make it even more extensive and narrow as regards our racing department. For all manufacturers, the "mission" of the racing department is to promote the brand through sporting results, but also, and above all, to provide us with a know-how to be transferred to our series production and, all our partners and suppliers, as well as technicians, together with the experienced drivers we have, provide us with an exceptional feedback".

We think that it is mandatory for you to comment on the effects produced by the pandemic on the Karting world:

"Regarding our sporting programs, I need to say that, despite some inconveniences and complications due to travel and the restrictions in place in many countries, especially at the beginning of last season, our sport has respected all the competitive commitments on the calendar and we have not had any negative repercussions. I think we have wisely chosen to run the OK and OKJ World Championships in Europe rather than Brazil, but other than that, the 2021 season was a regular one. The effects of Covid, on the other hand, are much heavier on the production and are greatly affecting the commercial activity. There is a shortage of raw materials in our sector and prices have risen exponentially. All this is generating many disservices for the scheduling of deliveries, in addition to the increases that we have had to partly imposed upon the price lists. It is a situation that we try to keep under control, but certainly we will need more time to get back to normality. Obviously we also have to wish that new variants of the virus and new waves of infections do not create further slowdowns and restrictions, because everything would be even more difficult. The positive aspect that I can grasp from this emergency, if you like, is that it has not curbed the desire and passion for our sport, which perhaps even increased after the lockdown. "

Do you believe that the high costs's issue, we have talked about in many occasions, takes on a role of greater concern in this scenario of economic crisis accentuated by the world pandemic?:

"Certainly yes, and I am quite discouraged by the inability of all the insiders to address this issue in a concrete way. For example, at the international level, we should rationalize the number of races, reduce the travel days of each single one and study other initiatives to reduce costs, thus favoring the entry of new teams and drivers into these events, but we are unable to follow up on the intentions even if a large part of the constructors and teams basically agree that something needs to be done. Perhaps there is also a lack of a real regulatory contribution from the International Federation and the individual ASNs on these issues. Having said that, on other market segments functional to broadening the karting base, however, I believe that we are doing our part as a company and also in a concrete way, both by developing many Rental Kart activities, and by supporting low cost competitive programs such as the Briggs Kart. "

You talked about Rental Kart, can you give us a current picture of this very important market for all manufacturers?:

"For CRG it is a very important market segment and in which we continue to invest a lot of resources. We have a complete range of products that includes all types of karts, both electric and with 4-stroke engines and in 2021 we have further grown in terms of sales substantially with all models, even if the most encouraging data come from the range of the electrical karts. It is precisely this type of "green" vehicles that we believe have a future of great potential if we think of all the restrictive regulations for internal combustion engines that are coming into force for indoor activities; Electric karts are increasingly interesting also for the performances and reliability they offer, as well as having substantially zero operating costs. If we think that due to the pandemic many racetracks were forced to close for a few months last year, the positive data of this sector are even more important. The market is rewarding more and more quality and "premium" products, because many tracks' managers have

realized that saving something in the purchase of a fleet and then spending twice as much on spare parts was not a big deal. Quality has always been an essential point for us and I believe it has been a far-sighted choice. For the Rental Kart we have also focused a lot on customer service by creating a staff of consultants able to provide our customers with complete pre and post sales advice, also managing tools such as leasing or exchanges of used fleets. Finally, we are also very active with promotional events that contribute in an important way to making our rental karts known and appreciated and among these, the 24 Hours Karting that we have been organizing for some years with the collaboration of the Adria Raceway, certainly has a relevant place”.

The Briggs Series is also growing among your promotional activities. What do you take stock of this project?:

“It is probably too early to take stock of it, because we are starting the 4th year and we have gone through a pandemic that is not over yet. Despite this, in Italy the numbers are encouraging and there’s a growing interest in this project born from the collaboration with Briggs & Stratton. The 4-stroke engines of the American company are one of the strengths of this initiative, because they require minimal maintenance and give the real chance to race with a budget which is accessible to everyone. We have implemented every initiative to keep costs under control even on the race formats, which take place on a single day, while maintaining high standards of services for the drivers. Last year in Italy we have had a total of more than 140 drivers registered in the Series and the spread of these categories is gradually reaching central and southern Italy with the entry of new teams and dealers. Once the format has been refined here in Italy, the goal will obviously be to grow abroad and some countries are already following us with good results”.

What are the goals that CRG has set itself for 2022?:

“From a commercial point of view in the Racing segment, we believe we have introduced some innovations with the newly approved chassis that we think can give us excellent results in all categories. We have also made

new investments in machinery in the production departments and therefore we continue to improve ourselves to always offer products with excellent quality standards. For the Racing sector we have certainly placed the KZ categories at the center of our attention since last year, which represent one of our "core business" and where we have an important winning tradition, but at the same time we expect positive sporting and commercial results in all classes, from Mini Kart to single brand Trophies. For the youth sector we are also defining some tailor-made" projects to better enhance our tradition in drivers' training. From the Rental segment, however, I expect the positive trend to continue and the only concern at the moment is linked to the problems mentioned on the raw materials and some external supplies that could gradually affect deliveries and sales consequently. Looking outside of our company, however, the first thing I hope, like everyone else, is that we can definitively get out of this pandemic because we can have a period of economic revival to be exploited also for our sector, while for what concerns racing I would like to see some concrete action also in the medium term towards the reduction of costs and the harmonization of categories in the National Championships, where the market is always more divided. If the CIK-FIA takes a step in this direction or opens a serious discussion table, it will always be able to count on our support".