

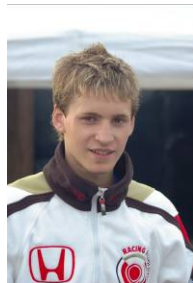
24 hour Endurance Karting **SHATTERED!** World Record



Russell Crowe
Driver



Joe Flay
Driver



Simon Rudd
Driver



Tom Huxtable
Driver



Bob Scott
Mechanic



Pete Hammond
Mechanic

24 hour karting record falls at Teesside

It is 7am on a cold and gloomy morning in the North East of England. Seven men, clutching their first coffee of the day, arrive at Teesside Karting's track on the outskirts of Middlesbrough with the intention of leaving a little over a day later, with a world record. The record in question, as defined by Guinness World Records™, is for "The greatest distance travelled by a motor powered kart in 24 hours on an outdoor circuit", currently 1,709.9km set at Kirkistown, Northern Ireland in 1997.

The four drivers, all from Kent, collectively known as *Equipe Vitesse*, Russell Crowe, Joe Flay, Simon Rudd and Tom Huxtable have a wealth of endurance karting experience with over sixty 24 hour races between them. They won the Autosport International 24 hour race in January and have won their class in the prestigious Le Mans 24 hours four times in the last six years, coming second and third in the other two years. For this event they are joined by Bob Scott and Peter Hammond, both enormously experienced mechanics and Phil Rudd, event coordinator and cameraman.

The kart chosen for the event is a Tony Kart Racer EVS fitted with a 5 speed Honda CR125 motocross engine bored to 140cc. Very fast but surely too fragile to last 24 hours. Russell Crowe explained: "We had a choice, pick an engine that would be sure to last the distance or to go very fast and replace it when it breaks." Clearly he chose option two.

0900 - The kart rolls out onto a track still damp from the overnight rain and Teeside Autodrome owner Bob Pope gets the World Record Attempt under way. The track dries quickly and the lap times start to tumble, the data logger will show top speeds in excess of 100mph at the end of the straight.

1400 - Only 5 hours gone and Russell's engine choice is looking questionable as Joe limps back to the pits with a main bearing failure. Bob and Peter swiftly change the engine and while doing so notice that some of the bolts holding the floor tray have been worn away. The bumpy track is starting to take its toll. As the kart returns to the track the mechanics set about salvaging the good bits from the failed engine. A decision is made to reduce the maximum engine revs, there are 19 hours left and only 2 good engines.

1800 - The first of the rain arrives, but thankfully not for long. One session on rain tyres and it's back to the slicks.



Bob Pope
Circuit Owner



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World Record Race Report Continued



The World Record Kart

21:30 - Simon makes an unscheduled stop with a very sick sounding Honda. This time it is a piston failure and the barrel is beyond repair. At this rate they will run out of engines before the record is broken. The last engine is bolted on. It has the barrel from engine one with a new piston that was run in the day before. Only the mechanics seem certain of the origin of the parts that are currently spinning at 11000 rpm out on the circuit. They watch the kart depart and then set about building another working engine from what is left of the failed ones.

22:48 - The weather takes a turn for the worse and the team fit the rain tyres. They will be used for the rest of the event. Lap times are now around 8 seconds per lap slower and the projected total distance on the team computer starts to fall. The only consolation for the drivers is that driving on the wet track is easier on the body. The combination of grippy surface and bumpy corners was taking it's toll on the drivers (Russell broke a rib after 7 hours). At least now they will get some respite.

23:30 - Some of the floodlights go out (the rain is to blame). Despite his best efforts circuit owner Bob Pope cannot get them working again and the drivers have to rely on memory for the approach to the chicane.

01:00 - Another engine change. Bob and Peter strip the failed engine but find nothing wrong. Assuming an electrical fault they change all the ancillaries and hope the engine will not be needed again. Meanwhile the latest collection of salvaged parts appears to be performing well on the track. 8 hours to go and the only spare engine may not work. The drivers are told to reduce the revs a bit more.

04:20 - **The record is broken!** Joe carries on driving while the rest of the team have a brief celebration.

06:30 - The exhaust manifold fails. Not trusting the only spare engine, the mechanics set about replacing the manifold in situ.

07:40 - Tom comes into the pits unable to change gear. Fortunately it is only a broken J-arm. This is quickly replaced and once again the kart returns to the track.

09:00 - **It's all over** - 1,704 laps - 2056.7km. **A new world record**, beating the old one by an amazing 346.8km.

The team look tired but jubilant as they are interviewed by the local media. The team praised Bob Pope and his staff at Teesside Karting for providing such an excellent venue and ensuring that the event ran to plan.

Russell sums it up - "The team has performed brilliantly, the speed and consistency of the drivers was amazing and the effort put in by Bob Scott and Peter Hammond to keep the kart on the track was unbelievable. Just think how far we could have gone if it hadn't rained."

It sounds like they may be back next year!



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