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Together with an e-kart: First inclusive e-kart slalom trophy with final round at the Lausitzring

- » United in Dreams project enables inclusive motorsport
- » 17 participants with seven wheelchair drivers at the first E-Kart-Slalom-Trophy finals
- » First trophy winner Marc Neuhardt stands for an absolutely inclusive result: "The project is a super thing that everyone can participate under equal conditions, with and without restrictions in the same kart."



The E-Kart-Trophy winners 2022 from left: Tobias Kleiber, Marc Neuhardt and Niels Scheidemann, Photo: PARAVAN

It was a successful competition premiere for inclusive karting and the participants could clearly see the joy. The finale of the inclusive E-Kart Slalom Trophy at the Lausitzring - as part of the ADAC GT Masters - offered young people with and without handicaps the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in direct competition - under equal conditions with one and the same piece of sports equipment. In three test runs, two evaluation runs and a final shoot-out, a fair competition was offered, with a very exciting outcome.

Marc Neuhardt (28), who has been in a wheelchair for 8 years, was able to take home the trophy in the end. He didn't have much karting experience before. "I have now competed for the third time, in Weingarten, at the Nürburgring and now here," says the happy winner. He became aware of the project a good two months ago at REHAB in Karlsruhe. "This is definitely a cool thing that everyone can participate under the same competition conditions - with and without restrictions - in the same kart." The following places were taken by Tobias Kleiber from Klingingen and Niels Scheidemann from Borken, both active kart drivers.

The competition is made possible by the innovative sms revo SpaceDrive e-kart, equipped with the Space Drive driving and steering system from Schaeffler Paravan and PARAVAN, respectively, which can be customized using different joysticks. In 2020, the inclusive motorsport project "United in Dreams" was launched as a cooperation between x4in e.V. and the DMSB. This year, for the first time, several regional sighting runs and a final competition could be organized under the title "Inclusive E-Kart Slalom Trophy". "We want to give people with and without disabilities a chance to prove themselves in competition - with

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the same means," says Robert Maas, designer of the e-kart and co-initiator of the project. "We have two joysticks, for gas and brake as well as for steering. Whether I have a handicap or not, I can use them to steer the kart." In a total of five sighting runs throughout Germany, many young people with and without physical disabilities have shown their enthusiasm for e-kart slalom racing in competition.

"Motorsport as a whole would do well to address and emphasize perceived peripheral issues, which should in fact be central issues, much more clearly and weightily. This applies just as much to sustainability as it does to inclusion," says former Mercedes-Benz motorsport boss Norbert Haug, a committed supporter of the e-kart steer-by-wire inclusion project. "Inclusion is wrongly seen as a marginal aspect of motorsport at best. The current karting action, which also allows people with handicaps to participate, therefore, forms an important signal."

A total of 17 participants, who had qualified in five sighting races, took part in the season finale at the Lausitzring, including seven wheelchair drivers: "It takes a bit of getting used to at first, but it's mega fun. I'm very enthusiastic about motor sports, so it's even more fun when I can finally experience something like this," says Florian Bongard. "So it's definitely fair that everyone drives the same kart and it's mega fun to compete with the others," says Tobias Kastenhuber. "For me, inclusion means equality. That everyone - with and without limitations - can really participate in motorsport on an equal footing under the same conditions," says Christian Kampes from MSC Sachsenhausen.

Some of them were already sitting in a kart before, like Tobias Kastenhuber from Neuötting, or had space drive experience like Bois Nicolai, who has been driving two joystick cars for a good 14 years. He took part in the sighting event in Weingarten in July and finished in 3rd place. "I think it's good that everyone is competing together here. It's a new experience for me and a great sport for everyone to participate in this way," says the Olympian in paraboccia. "The basic principle of Space Drive is the same as in my car. But in karting it feels much more direct and you have greater centrifugal forces than in a car."

For the finale as part of the ADAC GT Masters, there were 17 competitors, including seven wheelchair drivers on the grid for the award ceremony. The overall winner, Marc Neuhardt, himself a wheelchair driver, as well as second and third-place finishers Tobias Kleiber and Nils Scheidemann were presented with trophies in the design of the GT Masters trophies on Sunday as part of the starting grid for the ADAC GT Masters. Overall winner Marc Neuhardt also received an invitation to the GT Masters finale at the Hockenheimring. All three finalists will be invited to an inclusive sailing course in 2023 by the "Turning Point Foundation," which promotes inclusive sailing in the Lausitz region.

The United in Dreams team received a lot of praise for the event and the organization of the project from the participants and from the motorsport community. Already on Friday, GT3 stars such as Raffaele Marciello, Daniel Juncadella, Ricardo Feller or Markus Winkelhock as well as the juniors of the Porsche Carrera Cup took a seat in the inclusion kart to do a test lap on the course. "I think it's a great story that everyone can have the experience here. Even those who don't normally have the opportunity. And the Space Drive system makes it possible for everyone to have this fun in equal measure," says Markus Winkelhock, a development driver for Schaeffler Paravan on the race track since 2019 with Space Drive - albeit with a force feedback steering wheel. "I am convinced that in the future the steer-by-wire system will not only be used in the handicapped sector on the road, but also in racing or here in karting. That's definitely the future."

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The E-Kart-Trophy winners 2022 from left: Tobias Kleiber, Marc Neuhardt and Niels Scheidemann, Photo: PARAVAN



Marc Neuhardt sat in the inclusive e-kart for the third time in the final. He rode a lot of motorcycles in his childhood and loves motorsports. The karting discipline was new to him. Photo: PARAVAN



A total of 17 participants traveled to the Lausitzring for the finale - the winners from the five qualifying rounds. Photo: PARAVAN



Including and for some a challenge to control the kart with the joysticks around the pylons. After a little practice and three test runs, all have mastered the challenge. Photo: PARAVAN

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Making motorsport an experience for everyone and holding competitions for everyone under equal conditions is the primary project goal of United in Dreams. Photo: PARAVAN

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About Paravan GmbH:

Paravan GmbH is the world market leader for highly customized vehicle solutions for the disabled. Around 180 employees develop and produce individually adapted automobile conversions, power wheelchairs. Paravan pursues a holistic approach with the "all-in-one concept". The technological highlight is Space Drive, an intelligent digital control system based on the drive-by-wire principle. Thanks to the active redundancy of the servo motors, it is completely fail-safe and the first in the world to be approved for road use. With the help of this innovation, severely disabled people, some without arms or legs, can drive independently and safely. It is not possible for these drivers to simply intervene in the steering wheel. Worldwide, Space Drive has proven itself on over one billion road kilometers in the last 20 years and is used by numerous industrial customers for test vehicles in the field of autonomous driving. The system is available as a retrofit kit with an open interface for all known vehicle types.

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About United in Dreams:

The United in Dreams lighthouse project has set itself the goal of firmly integrating inclusion into motorsport. In cooperation with the DMSB (Deutscher Motor Sport Bund e.V.), children and young adults with and without disabilities are given the opportunity to participate in the popular and widespread entry-level discipline of kart slalom. Since September 2020, the project has been funded by the "Aktion Mensch" foundation, among others, and supported by partners such as Schaeffler Paravan GmbH & Co. KG and PARAVAN GmbH. To ensure fair competition, a specially converted electric kart is used, equipped with the Space Drive system and controlled with special control devices such as joysticks or a gas brake slider. More info at www.unitedindreams.de