



It all started at the WRKC Oktoberfest, where the luck of the draw had me returning back to Brazil to be able to compete in the 2008 Granja Viana 500. Last year, I was able to race in the 2007 Granja Viana 500 with the Canadian Dream Team (Jake Collison, Tyler Hendricks, Pearce Herder and Steve Lyons), which turn out to be an experience of a life time. All year I talked about returning to Brazil, and couldn't believe I would have the opportunity again.

Flying in to Sao Paulo, Brazil on November 11 with my mom and dad, we were greeted by Luis Ruibal from MG Tires. Also meeting us at the airport were the rest of my MG team mates from the US, Cody Hodgson, Bradley Dunford, Joe Sturm, and Mike Burrell from National Karting News (NKN). We loaded our gear into the van and headed to the hotel for check in. After check in we went to the track to meet our crew chief Sabia and his crew, and do a kart fitting and weigh in. It seemed like just yesterday I was here, as everything looked so familiar.

November 12, and 13, were practice days where we rotated sessions in the kart, trying to get a good balanced setup for all drivers. Again it seemed like just yesterday that I was in a kart at the Granja Viana Kartodromo, where I was able to turn in competitive lap times. Between practice sessions there is lots of time to take in all the surroundings at the track such as the kart shop, snack bar, pit road excitement, and just to watch the talent on the track. Rubbing shoulders in the pits, and rubbing fenders on the track with names like Rubens Barrichello, Tony Kanaan, Nelson Piquet, and Felipe Massa, just to name a few, definitely added to the excitement.

Friday November 14 was qualifying day, where I had the opportunity to qualify our #29 MG Tires kart. In the morning pre-qualifying practice I was near the top of the score sheet on time, but in my qualifying run I fell short of the top five in our group, where we needed to be to advance to the super qualifying session to have a shot at the pole. The heat of the day and the new tires made the kart too tight. After the qualifying sessions were over we ended up 42nd overall, a little disappointing but we knew we would be ok in race trim. After qualifying we had time in the afternoon to do some shopping at the mall and take in some of the local scenery.

Saturday November 15 was race day. As we got to the track in the morning there was lots of excitement in the air, and with the drivers, media, and spectators, the place was packed. We had our team meeting in the morning where Sabia and my team wanted me to start due to my experience from last year. I was honored and very excited, yet a little nervous to start the 2008 Granja Viana 500. A change from previous

years, the race would start at 1pm and end in 644 laps (500 miles), or 12 hours. The change was made to aid the media and spectators' viewing, as it is a charity race. Approximately 1:20pm I was lined up on the track ready to start with 64 other drivers. We got the 5 minute warning, then 1 minute, and with a blast of fireworks we got the green flag. I got a great and clean start getting 10 spots or so on the first lap. After my first stint I was able to get into 8th spot on the leader board. We fell back to 18th after the pit stop, but Cody was able to bring us back up to 6th place. During Brad's and Joe's stints, they were able to keep us in the top 10. During my second stint I was into 8th place when I went into a sharp left hander and the kart wouldn't turn, I hit the tire wall and sitting beside me was my right front tire. The spindle broke. The crew ran out on the track and picked up the kart, brought it in, weighed, changed the spindle, changed tires, and checked the kart over, and we were back on the track in 16 minutes. Very disappointing, but this year every team had to do a 15 minute lap on the score sheet. Saved by the bell. After all that we were still in it for a top 10 finish, but in Brad's second stint the motor let go. Again the crew did their thing and changed motors. By this time we were down to 31st place when Brad went out to finish his stint. Sabia wanted me to finish the race, to try and get the best finish we could. I got back in the kart for the last time, approximately 10:30pm in 26th place. I drove my ass off trying to get every position I could. At this time of the race the driving was getting really aggressive. Around 12 midnight, and after 644 laps, I crossed the finish line in 16th place to a shower of fireworks on each side of the start/finish line, very cool. It was a very exciting yet disappointing end to the race, because if we hadn't had problems, I am confident we had a chance at a top five finish, but that's racing. After a long day we said our good byes to Sabia and the crew and headed back to the hotel.

Sunday November 16 was our last day in Brazil and due to the race end at night we had the day to ourselves, as our flight didn't leave until 12 midnight. Luis and Wagner from MG Tires took us all out for a nice lunch in the afternoon, and we still had time for more shopping and time to relax. Early in the evening we all piled in the van for the last time, and headed for the airport. At the airport we said our good byes to everyone, exchanged e-mails and headed home.

Other than the missed flight on the way home in Washington, the trip was fantastic, from the hospitality, the weather, and not to mention the racing. I would like to give a special mention to Leo, our van driver/body guard/translator, who was there it seemed whenever we needed help. Also Sabia, and his crew for the great kart preparation and endless work. I would also like to thank Lynda & Enzo Chiovitti and the BSRKC team, for giving racers this opportunity. Last but not least, Mike Adams, Luis Ruibal, Wagner Rossi, and MG Tires for giving racers the prize of a life time. Thank you.

Michael Glaze