



# STRIKING AVERAGE

Report **M. Voltini** - Photos **G. Cuna**

*Now, the circuit in Muro Leccese certainly cannot be defined as "average" and neither is it mediocre: on the contrary, it is one of the best circuits in Europe, which has stood out for high average lap time. Yes, this is one of the main things that makes it a difficult circuit, but it's not the only thing.*

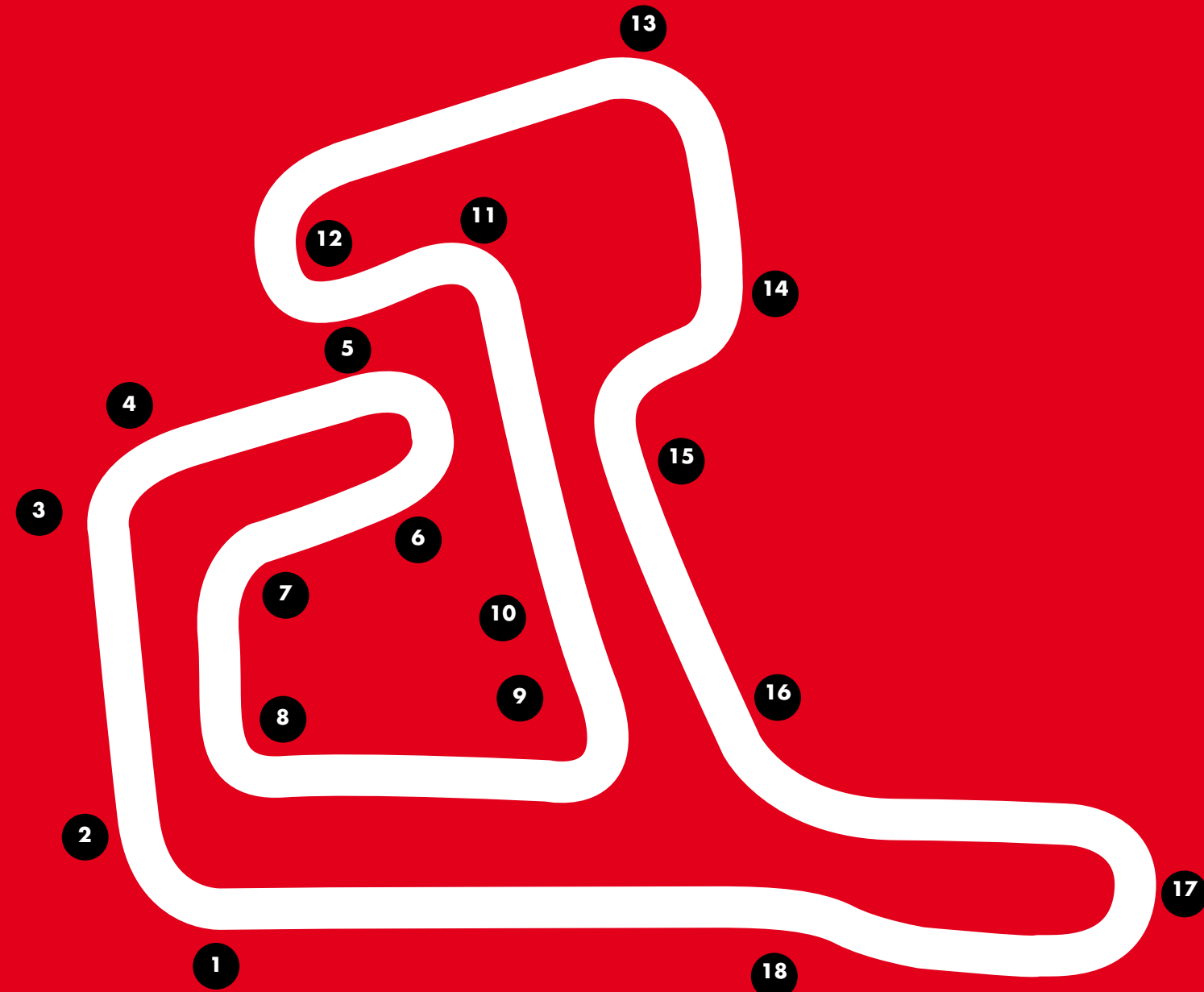
The south of Italy is being appreciated more and more in the world of karting, for the way it backs our sport. We don't just intend drivers, but tracks too: in fact, some of the most important karting circuits in Italy, if not in Europe, are found in the south. Of course like others, Muro Leccese, that is, the La Conca circuit (name derives from the district where it was built) is the one that has invested to suit today's requests, for hosting international championship events.

World Championships included. Remember, Davide Foré won the last World Championship 100cc title and at the same time Ben Hanley lived the luckiest day of his career here. Within an enormous tourist and sports centre, the 1250 meter-long circuit belonging to the De

Donno bros., and opened to the public in April 1998 and was actually "baptised" racing wise in July 1999. At first, it was shorter (1050 metres), and then in 2001 it was extended to present day length.

The main characteristics of the circuit, even without having seen it, but by looking at the general results, is the high average lap time stopped: just think that Roberto Toninelli, on a 125cc gear-class engine, managed to clock a 45"852 lap, a fantastic 98/142kn/h! However, we ought to point out that such average must not be justified (and consequent drive ratios used- too long) by long straights – as happens for the French track, Carole, say – well at least from a purely geometric point, but for the twists and turns where there's hardly any need

to brake to turns where there's no need to slow down at all. The track in Muro Leccese is much more balanced, there is just one narrow turn and straights aren't too long, even if we can't deny that the starting straight is, theoretically, 160 metres long, becoming 250 metres if you don't consider the slight "S" at the start of the straight. Another thing to bear in mind is that, although the circuit counts 14 turns, to tell the truth, there are only 4 braking points, and at two of them you really have to press hard on brake pedal, high speed braking that help overtaking manoeuvres. Now, let's take a look at each section of the track, and if possible give a hint or two to drivers who will be driving here one day.



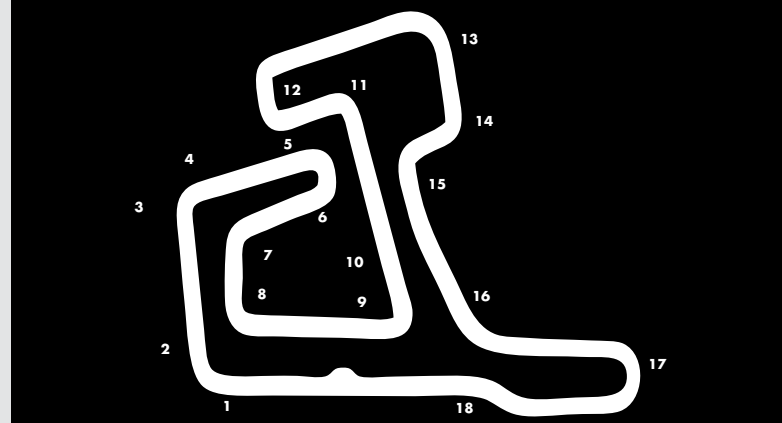
## LAP RECORDS

### NATIONAL RACES - LAP RECORD DURING RACE

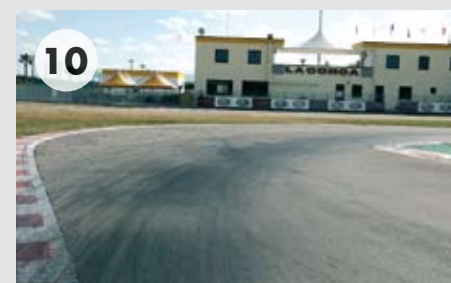
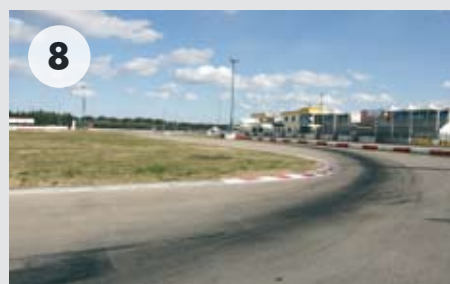
CLASS	DRIVER	TIME	DATE
50	Andrea Spagna	1'11"675	4/12/2005
60 Baby	Andrea Pinto	1'02"554	12/3/2006
60	Luigi Barletta	1'00"347	22/9/2002
60 Mini	Federico Savona	55"258	22/7/2007
100J	Jack Te Braak	48"972	22/1/2006
100 ICA Naz	Francesco Manghisi	47"630	22/1/2006
100 Senior	Francesco Incalza	49"234	22/1/2006
100 Sr. Over	Lino Fiore	50"966	22/9/2002
100 Club	Alessandro Sassanelli	49"843	2/3/2008
125 ICC Naz	Andrea Benedetti	47"261	22/1/2006
125 Senior	Fausto Settimo	46"394	30/6/2002
125 Sr. Over	Gabriele Rizzo	48"541	22/9/2002
125 Club	Giovanni Spinelli	48"132	20/1/2008

### INTERNATIONAL RACES - LAP RECORD DURING RACE

CLASS	DRIVER	TIME	DATE
100 JICA	Felice Tiene	48"577	4/2/06
KF3	Alessandro Kouzkin	48"765	12/5/07
100 ICA	Antonio Piccioni	47"356	26/3/06
KF2	Yannik De Brabander	47"956	12/5/07
100 F. A	Davide Gaggianesi	46"892	21/8/05
100 F. SA	Giedo Van Der Gard	46"545	27/10/02
KF1	Arnaud Kozlinski	47"137	15/3/08
125 ICC	Davide Foré	46"771	26/3/06
KZ2	Jonathan Thonon	46"690	12/5/07
125 SICC	Alessandro Manetti	46"927	7/5/06



## THE CIRCUIT



### DIFFICULT KNOWLEDGE

Without the shadow of a doubt, it is indeed a difficult task to get to know the various turns of the track in Muro Leccese. So we asked two experts who know the track very well, Ignazio D'Agosto (13year-old from Bari, KF3) and Gabriele Rizzo (36 year-old, from Lecce, 125 Club), one for the direct class and the other for gear-class karting. Both say that the track in Muro Leccese is not as easy as it may look, and it takes skill in driving to find the right line. Having tried it ourselves, believe me, they know what they are on about.

This we can see from the first turn (1), where among other things, especially in the 125cc, you'd think that you'd have to brake hard when driving fast, instead, you don't have to slow down much, just a little, so as to maintain speed, allowing your the kart to glide

along dropping into a lower gear with a 125cc. In fact, helped by the curb in corner exit (2) seeing the "U turn" you can almost (but not quite) join the first turn with the second (3) and, here too, (dropping another gear if there is one) get on the last external curb (4). The thing is that with such "intensive use" of curbs as graters, in the end, there is no margin left for mistakes or excessive high speed; then at the same time, you cannot allow yourself to sacrifice a fraction of kilometre per hour in corner entry, because high speed maintained means that there is no time to accelerate sufficiently again (when we realise that we are quite below the limit) and because the amount of time taken over these turns effects time in case of too much caution. D'Agosto was very clear when he said the "the first turn has to be taken on the blade of a razor"...

And we still haven't straightened the steering wheel

yet, but we've reached a sharp braking point (5) before the left turn (6), the slowest turn out of them all, which is covered in second with gear-class karts. Here it is important for a driver to have enough skill to combine hard braking (if you don't want to be overtaken) with smooth driving, especially with the 100cc so as not to waste engine revs, but mainly so as not to be too wide in exit. In fact, it's better to stay at two third of track because the next turn follows immediately left turn 4 (7) needs a bit preparing for, and if you zigzag too much your drive line would be longer and you'd lose the smoothness. Here, without dropping speed, in fourth, so as to increase on exit and enter turn 5 (8) which is one steer with the previous one but only slightly narrower. It's easy to say, but it's really quite a task to find the right the right line here. After decelerating a bit you reach turn 6 (9) in third: After a quick sharp braking, steer left. Here exit

(10) seen in opposite direction to drive direction is important because you have to be able to combine two contrasting elements: a slight slope makes you widen out, or a curb and asphalt that you can make the most of beyond the yellow line. After the straight, there is an interesting sequence of turns: first a left turn, the Prato (11), which must be taken in third, then the Mansell (12), a right turn, rather squarish because it is a double bend. At this point you must take the Prato without widening out too much on exit, so that you can drop to second gear and enter the Mansell without having to go immediately too close to the first internal curb, but get closer to the second, in order to help speed when you reach the wide turn, Ascari (13), which must be taken at sustained speed (fourth gear with a 125cc) and without going onto, although inviting, internal curb, which would at this point only upset balance at a difficult point. In fact, with all four wheels on track, you exit the Ascari and have to get ready for the very fast Senna "S" (14) where you just have to lift foot of the gas pedal a bit. Here too, it's not as easy as it looks: different drive style and set up may require foot to be lifted before the "S" or perhaps even half way through. In any case, the point where right foot is lifted is very important either for mentioned reasons for first turn or for error in timing or any hesitation and the kart is difficult to control and starts jumping. You must be

able to almost touch the edge of the asphalt on corner exit without having to "turn back" steering wheel, an action that would make you drop speed; with a 125 we're just going into fifth...

Almost at top speed, you take the McLaren turn (15), that is, the one that leads to the last braking point (16) of the big final turn (17) just before the finishing line. This one too, is a very important turn as far as time is concerned, but at the same time, you must race round without allowing any of your rivals to slip past. So, determined braking but without pointing too much to the internal part of the corner; as Rizzo says, "it's like we're covering at full speed on purpose so as to straighten up as much as possible on exit". In fact, also at this corner, there are two possible internal apex points but it's better to stay away from the first as much as you can and touch the second in full acceleration, in third gear, both due to the long straight ahead and for the curb on exit that doesn't give room for too much confidence. However, we haven't finished yet, even if the finishing line is there in front of us, there is a slight "S", no problem really, but it is always better to limit steering movements as much as possible, allowing the kart to glide along. If necessary, it's better to cut left curb instead of steering too much to straighten up kart for the straight. So along we go at top speed for the start of another lap.

### INFO La Conca

Length 1,250 mt

Width 9 - 10 mt

Home straight 250 mt

Racing direction clockwise

Right turns 6

Left turns 5

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