



Speed Racer

At 15 years old, Chelsea is already making a name for herself in the world of go-kart racing, proving she is a chip off the old block. She chats with **JANESSA EKERT** about life on the racetrack. Photography by Andrew Watson.

Chelsea Holman is the daughter of local racing identity, Leigh Holman, and living proof the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Watching her father race from the sidelines, it was only a matter of time before Chelsea began racing herself. "I originally wanted to become involved in motor cross, but dad said no," Chelsea laughs. "Then, when I was seven he bought me my first go-kart and I haven't looked back."

As luck would have it, in 2000 the junior go-kart development program opened in Mareeba and Chelsea was the second person to join. She began her go-kart career as a cadet, with the race number 12 – a number she still has today. Over the last eight years Chelsea has honed her passion for speed and racing under the tutelage of her father. "He goes with me everywhere and I can't race without my dad cheering me on," she says.

For Chelsea, a day of competing can be quite hectic, with her racing across three different divisions. "I compete in the junior national light and junior national heavy, where the go-karts have the same engine, but different weights. Another important

race is the junior clubman, which involves a different kind of engine altogether," Chelsea explains. "It can be very tiring. There are days where I have to jump out of one go-kart and straight into another."

As well as racing all over Australia, Chelsea has previously held the Queensland title for go-kart racing, and is often the only girl to compete. As an experienced racer Chelsea knows you have to take the good with the bad, and admits to having her own moments of bad luck. "There have been times I was leading in the competition, only to be taken out of the race completely," she explains. "It's crap, but it happens."

Racing in an all male environment is something she has had to become used to. When asked about the age-old question of boy versus girl, Chelsea admits she has copped her fair share of flack on the track. "It's frustrating when boys only see me as a girl, as opposed to another racer," she explains. Chelsea confesses she has even, on occasion, made another boy cry. "I think it has more to do with being beaten by a girl, than losing in general," she laughs. "Although if I'm ever racing badly, I always say I'm racing like a girl."

Since first developing an interest in the sport, Chelsea admits her dream was to become a Formula One race car driver, and while this dream still exists Chelsea is realistic about her future involvement. "Living in Cairns, it's hard to get the exposure and experience. I have to race away a lot just to get my name out there," she explains. "So I started thinking about what other opportunities are out there."

The answer to Chelsea's questions lay in mechanical engineering. "I came to the decision that if I couldn't race professionally, then I would like to be a mechanical engineer and work with a Formula One or Indy car team." With this in mind, Chelsea has already started on her chosen path by knuckling down at school. "I know it's going to be a lot of hard work, but it's what I want to do," Chelsea states determinedly.

However, for Chelsea this is still more than a few years off. For now, she is happy to spend as much spare time as she can behind the wheel of her go-kart. "It's in my blood," Chelsea professes. "Without it my life would be boring." **CL**