

# ***KARTING: FUN ON FOUR WHEELS***

written and photographed by Ed Radlauer





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Karting is a sport for people who like fun, excitement, speed, and engines. It's a sport that gives you a chance to drive, race, and repair a beautiful machine. But it means hard work, too.





Part of the hard work is getting up early. On a race day you may be up before the sun, but it's not so bad when it means a day of karting.





When you load a truck for a day of karting, you take everything. There are tools, extra parts, cans of fuel and oil, helmets, jackets, a spare tire — and the karts.





At the kart track you have to sign up before you can drive. The sound of those engines makes you so excited, it's hard to sign your name.





Some karters are running already. This track is for sprint or sport karts. Even with curves and tight turns, you can hit up to fifty miles per hour on a straightaway.





Here's an early model at the track. It was made when the sport of karting was young and someone found that a strong frame with a two-cycle engine made a small but fast racing machine. These old karts still run if you treat them right.





All tracks have a pit area where people park karts and do repair work between runs. In the pits you unload, put in fuel, and hope for a quick start.





The best way to start kart engines is with a battery-operated electric motor. First you squirt some fuel into the carburetor for a prime start. Then the electric motor gives the engine a spin to get it running.





This driver gets his friends to give his kart a push start. His hand on the carburetor chokes the engine to make it suck more fuel. When the engine starts, the driver stops choking and the friends stop pushing.





Since karts will go as fast as fifty miles per hour, you need safety rules. One rule requires drivers to wear a regulation racing helmet and heavy jacket. It's a good idea to wear goggles or a face bubble, too.





Sometimes, during a friendly race, two karts almost bump when they come to the same turn at the same time. Skillful driving turns these dangers into thrills. Besides, karts steer easily and stop quickly.





High-speed, two-cycle karting engines need many repairs. In spite of their power, these engines weigh only about ten pounds. A good mechanic can remove an engine in less than fifteen minutes.





Sometimes there is a store near the track where kart parts are sold. While the parts seem expensive, it really helps to get the free advice that comes with them.





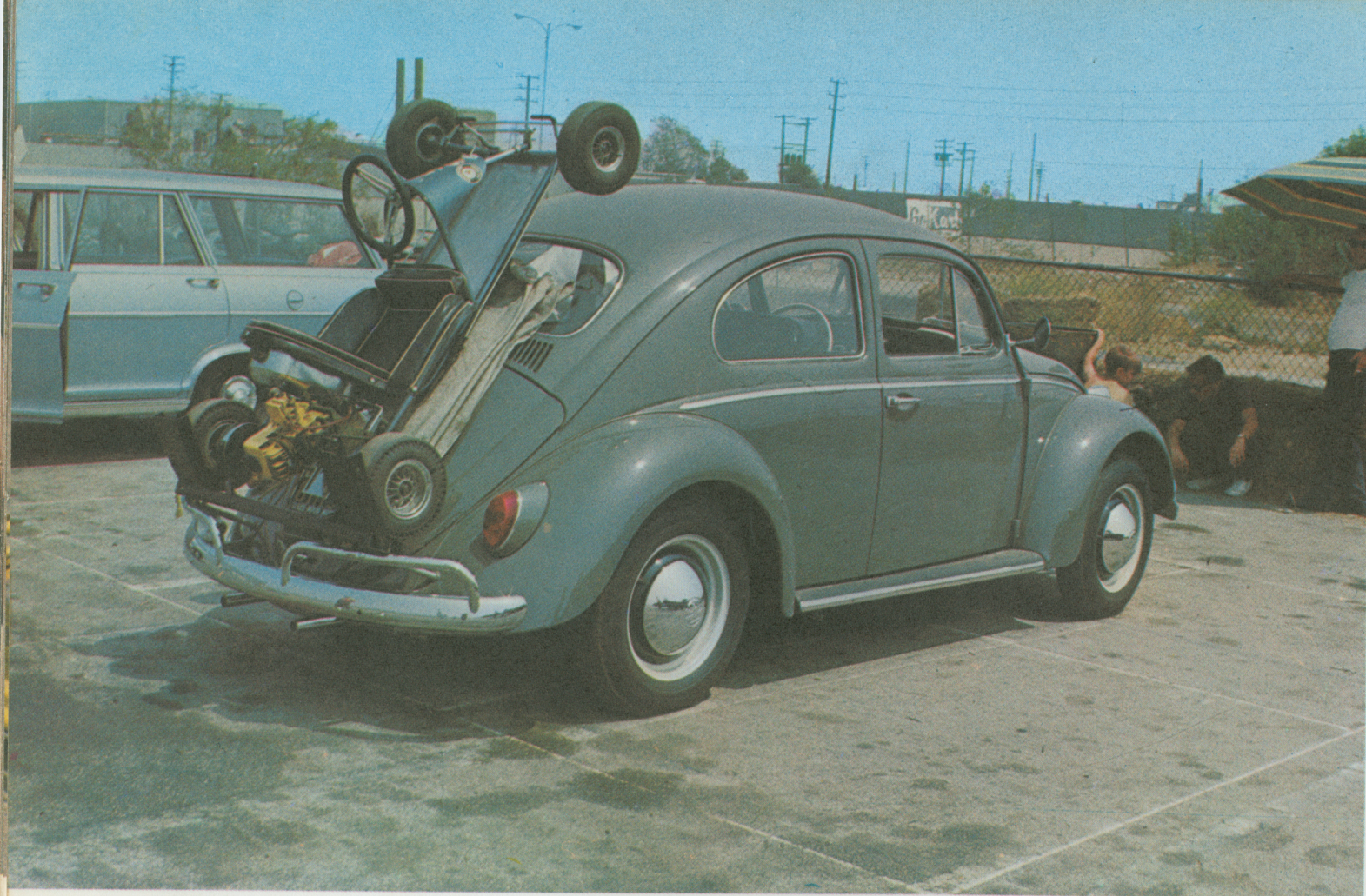
After plenty of hard work you are out running again. This banked turn can be tricky, especially if you come in too fast or hit the brakes too hard. That would mean a spin-out!





People who are more serious about karting may drive machines that cost over \$1000. But what is really good about sport karting is that a \$50 machine can be as much fun, and sometimes as fast, as any other kart.





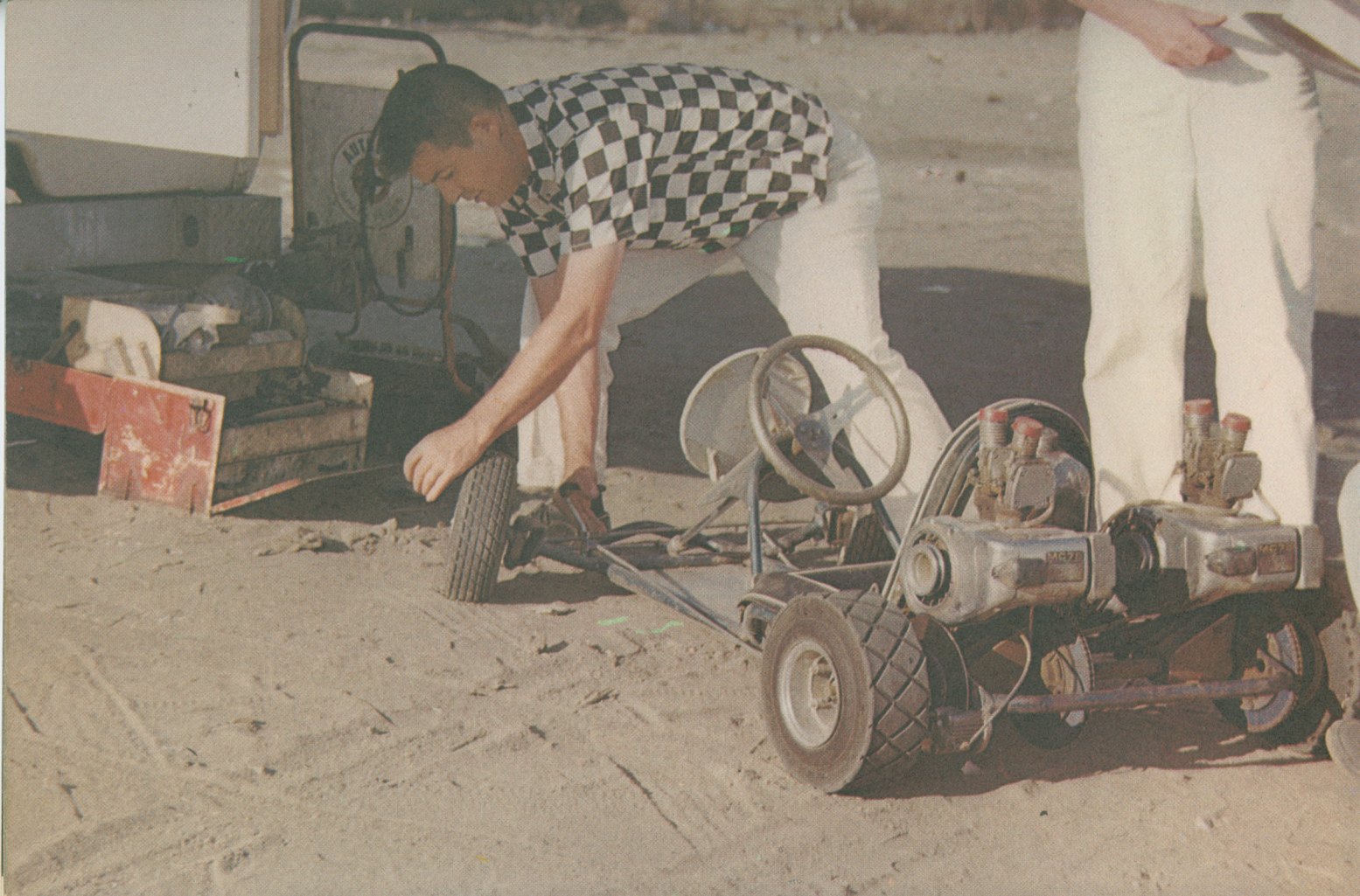
Here's a good idea. Which one is the kart? You don't need a truck to carry a kart around. Some fit in the trunk of a car or in the back of a station wagon.





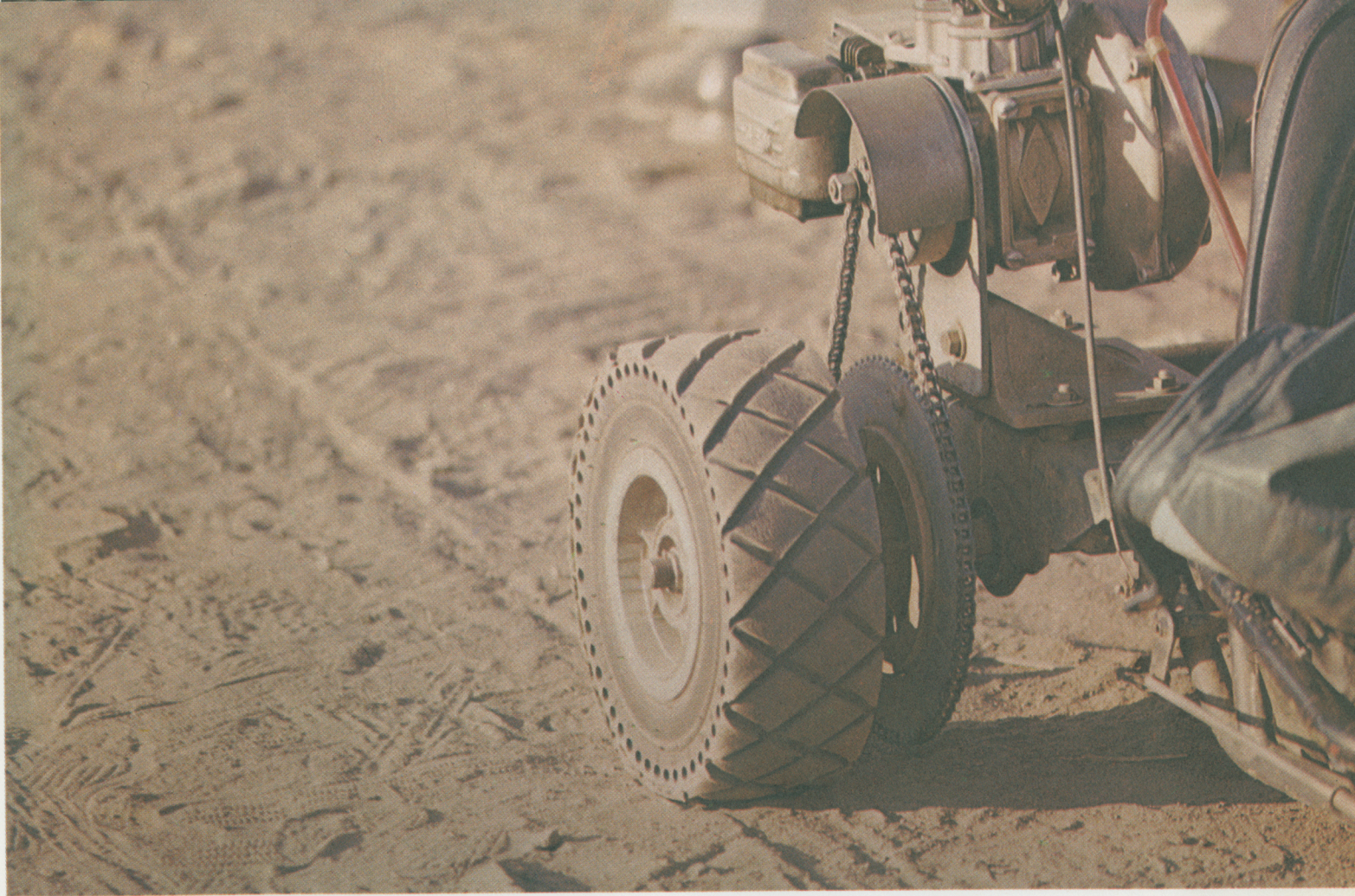
Professional karters drive for trophies and money in dirt track, sprint racing. Only the very best drivers are allowed in these races.





You'll find only the best karts, too. Rules require that inspectors check the brakes, wheels, and steering of every kart. Without the inspector's o.k., you just don't race.





When the dirt on the track is soft, drivers use a different tire to get a better bite. This tread allows just enough slip, so the kart can slide around the turns.





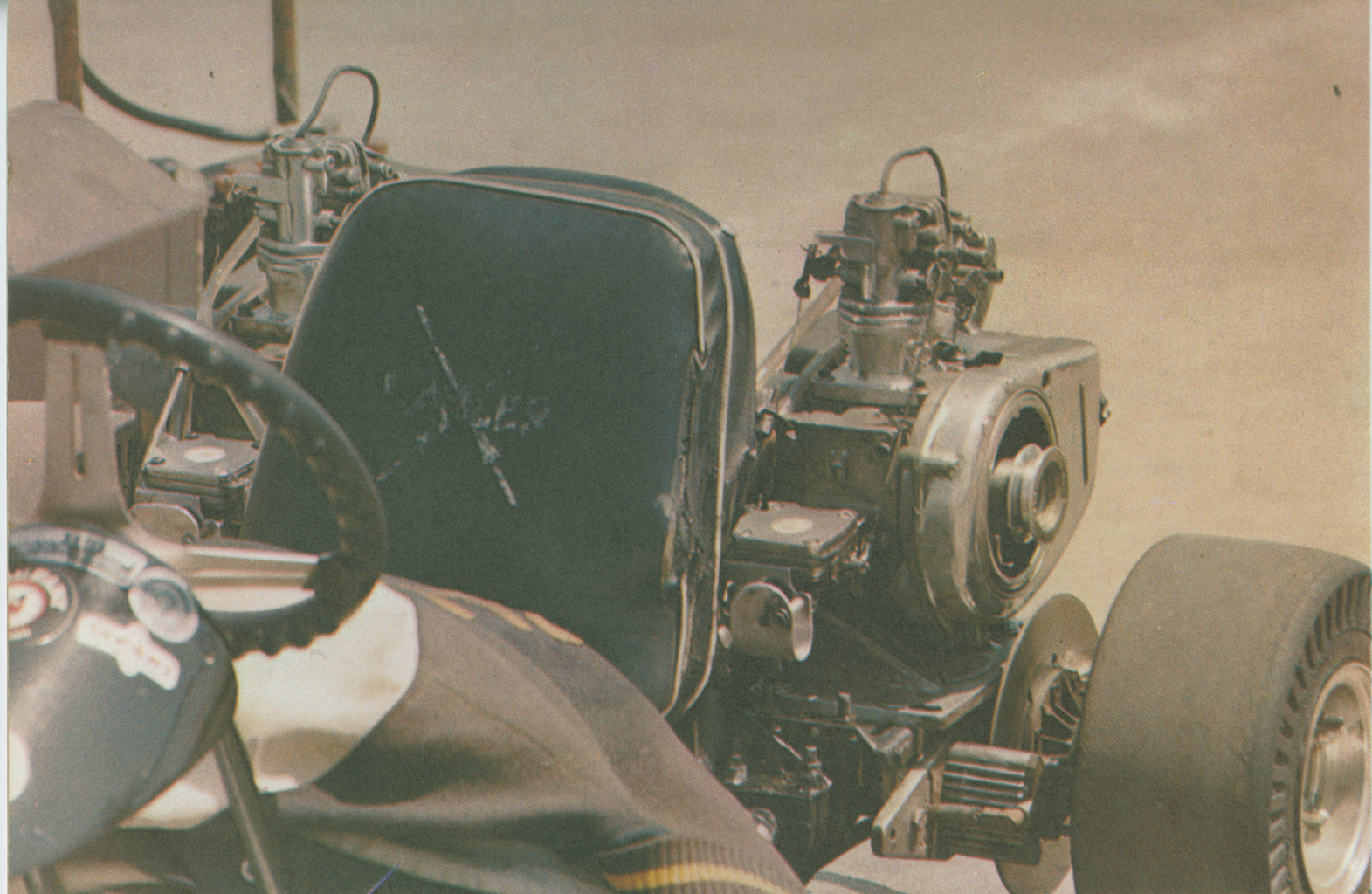
Dirt track karting means clouds of dust! It's rough on engines, tires, drivers, and even the spectators. Some drivers use air filters on carburetors to keep their engines clean. A handkerchief serves as a nose and mouth filter.





If you don't like to eat dust, try sprint racing on an asphalt track. Except for a few changes in gears and tires, these are just like the dirt track karts. On straightaways these racers have been clocked at over seventy miles per hour.





Between the wheel and the engine, you can see the disc brake. Two hard pads grab the disc to slow it down. The friction makes the disc hot enough to burn your hand.





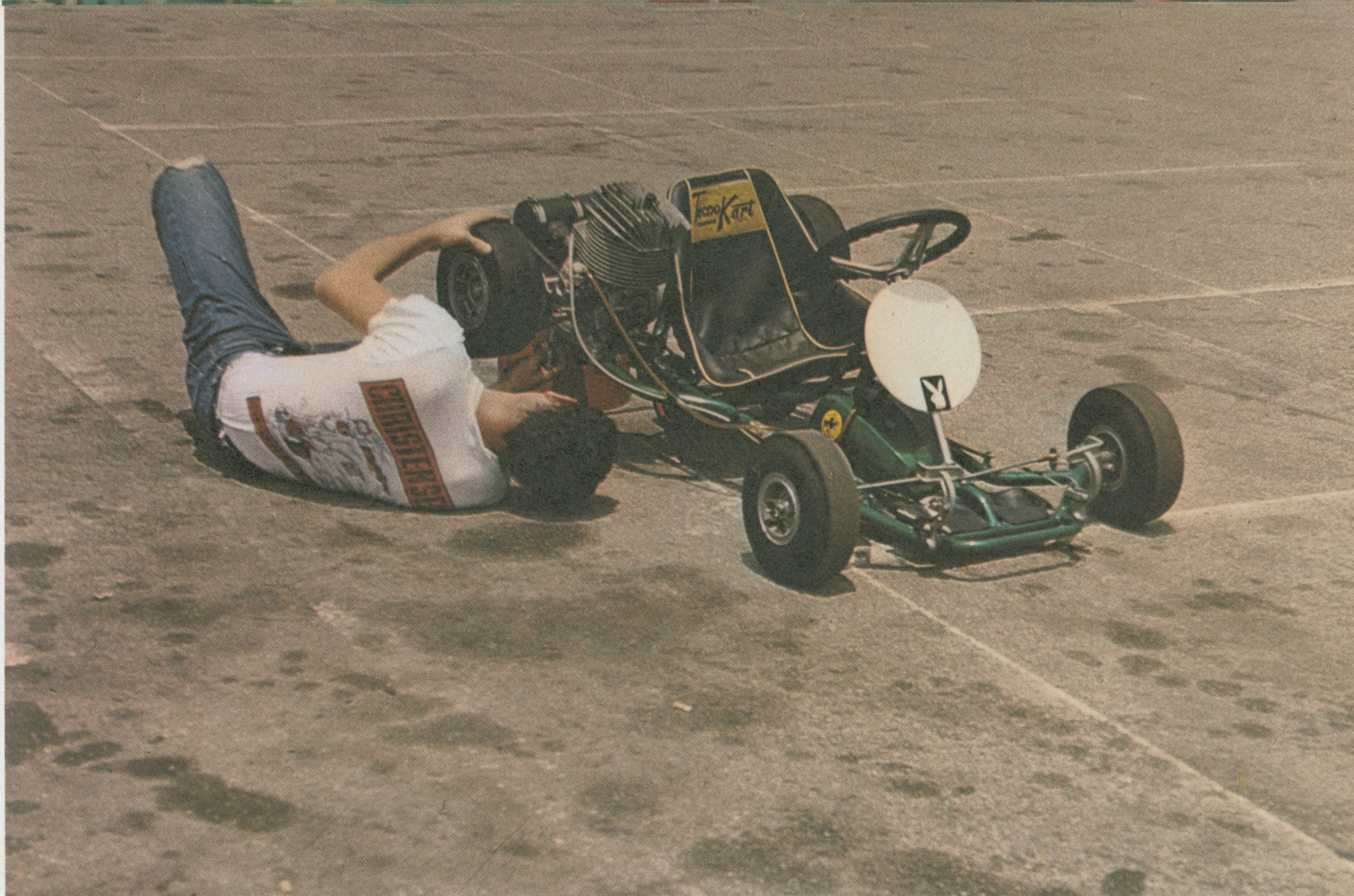
Some drivers like to use twin engine karts. You may not get faster top speed out of two engines, but you really get a jolt as you accelerate out of the curves.





High-speed, wheel-to-wheel racing takes plenty of know-how. Racers study each other's driving habits, hoping to get a small advantage. Tire tracks on the asphalt show where others didn't make this turn.





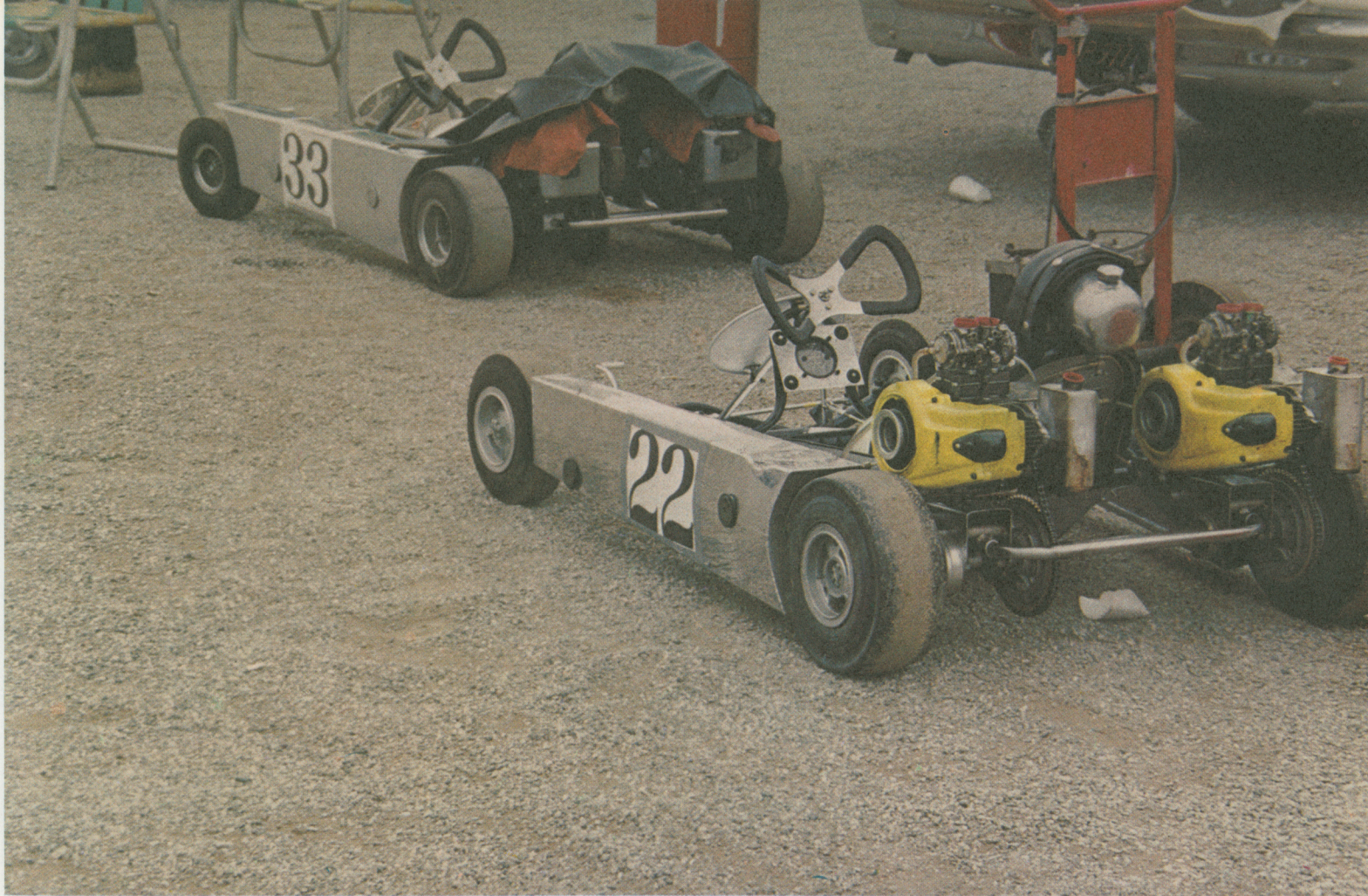
There is more to kart racing than driving. Careful engine tuning helps you get the best speeds during the ten or fifteen quarter-mile laps. This sprint kart, engine and all, was built in Italy.





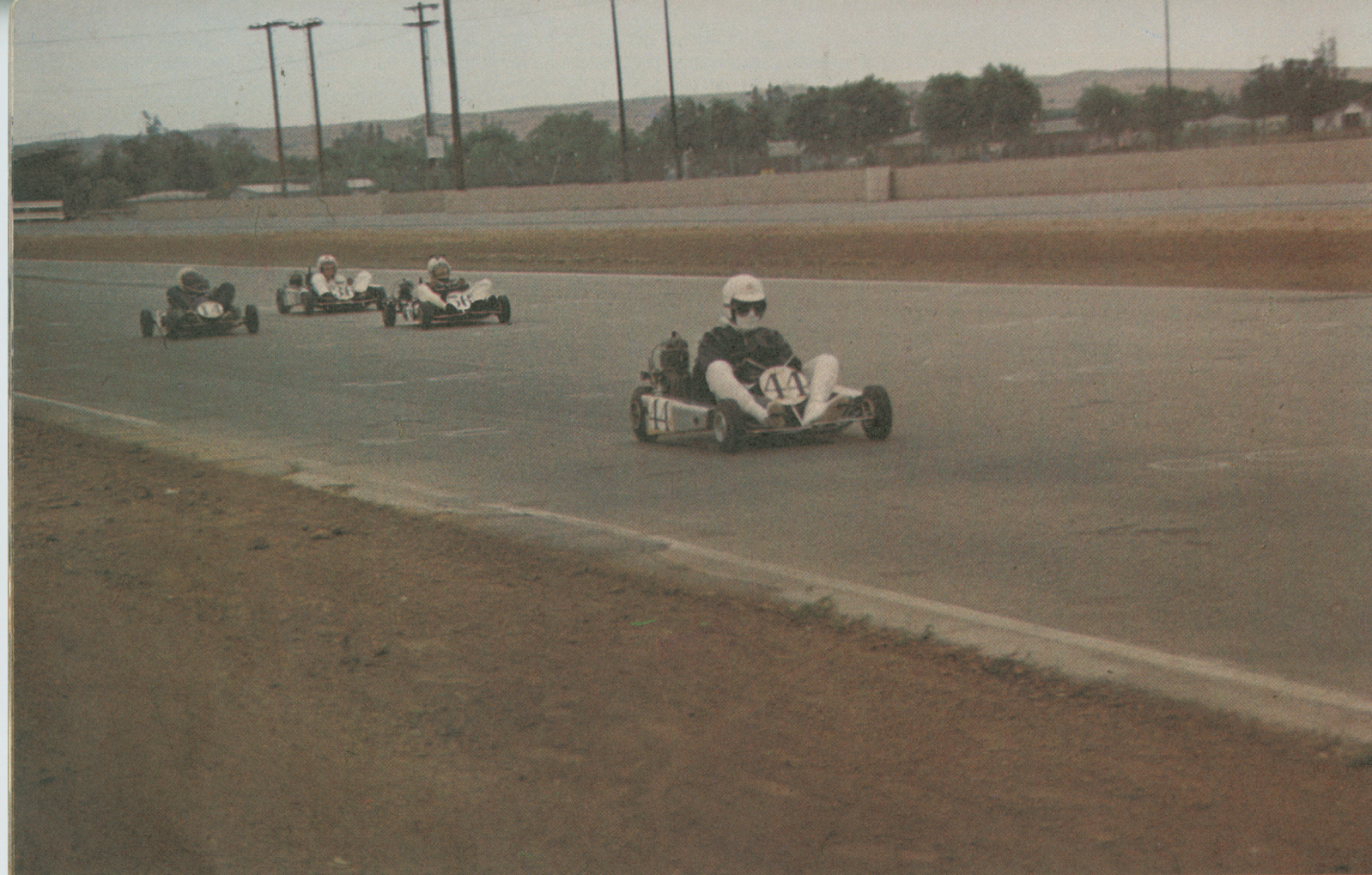
Here is the start of still another kind of karting, enduro racing. Enduro races may run as much as thirty-five, two-mile laps. That's a lot more than ten times around a quarter-mile sprint track.





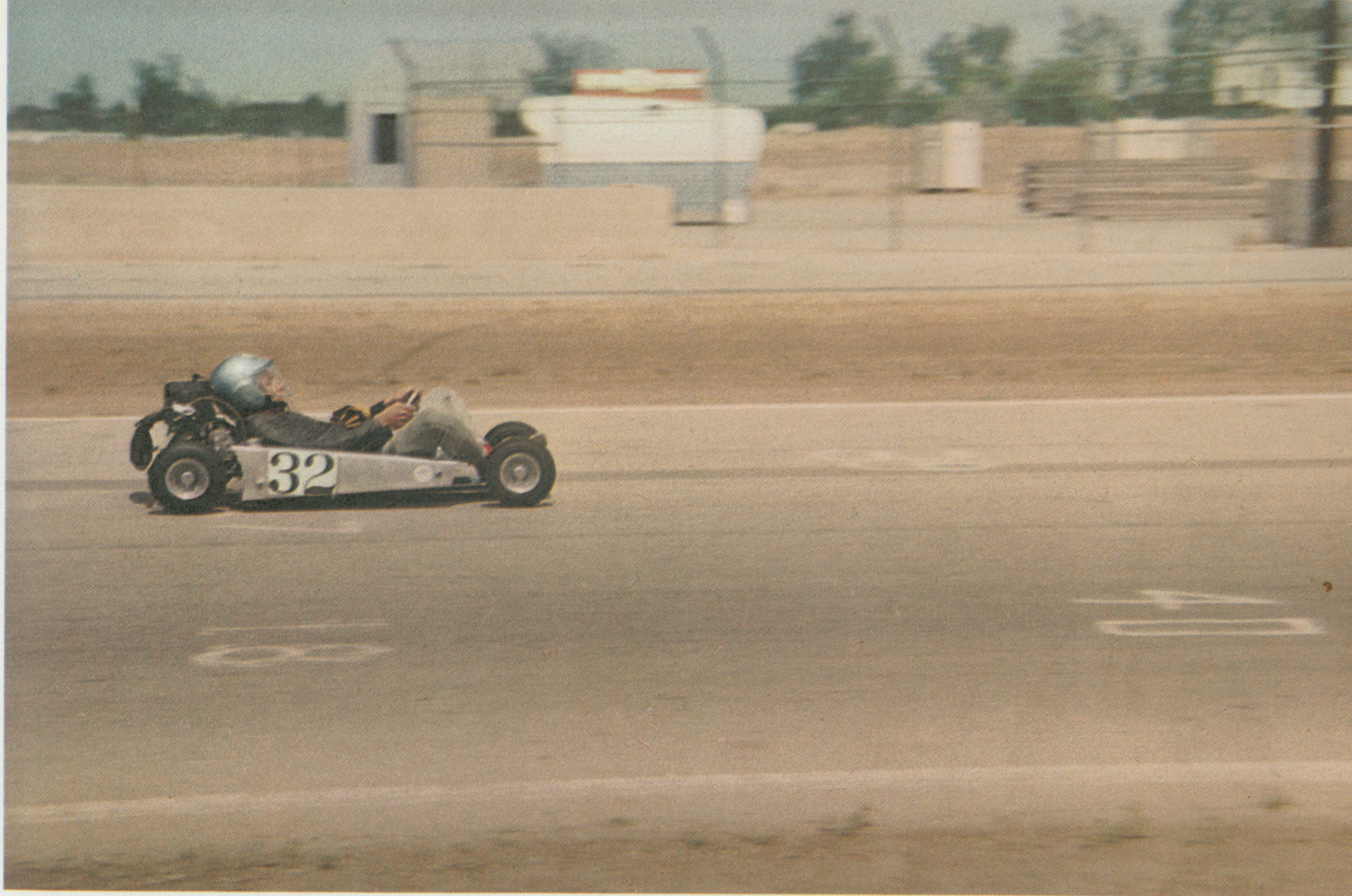
Enduro karts carry side tanks of fuel for the long race. As in all karting, races are run in classes. Enduro regulations set classes according to number of engines, driver's age, and total weight of driver and kart.





Because of long straightaways and engine gearing, enduro karts reach speeds above 120 miles per hour. Some enduro karts are built so the driver can lie down to keep the weight close to the ground for better cornering.





Here's a lie-down kart built for comfort as well as speed. The hum of the engine could sing him to sleep. Hey, driver! No snoring at 100 miles per hour!





While no one really sleeps in his kart, there are some who will not even leave them to eat lunch. Well, that's how it is in karting.