
Gabriella de Luca – Karting Vice-captain



What course do you do?

Animation

Why did you join your club when you came to DMU?

I joined DMU Karting because karting and motorsport in general has been a passion of mine and my family since as long as I can remember.

Unfortunately, motorsport is a very expensive sport, but my family worked really hard to give my brother and I the opportunity to race in karting.

We would always train every weekend trying to improve our skills and become better drivers. Then, in 2011-12 we decided to compete internationally against highly skilled drivers. However, to keep up with these level of competitiveness not only we had to train harder but also we would miss school often since we had at least one race every month and the races will last almost a whole week (from Tuesday until Sunday).

When the championship ended, it was the most fun I've ever had and I became very passionate into the sport. However, as my father always said, karting was a hobby not a profession. So, after that year, even though we became high skilled drivers and good at the sport, we realised that we couldn't keep up with that level of competitiveness since we had to concentrate in our studies as we were getting older.

So, in 2013 we stopped training and we would only do a couple of races just for fun when we had time. Then unfortunately, in 2014 we had to stop karting since my brother was in his last year of school and had to concentrate to enter a good university and I moved to England to a boarding school.

For four years I did not get into a kart or even saw a kart in real life. However, as soon as my brother enter university (2015), he told me how British universities have societies and that his university had a karting society. So, for four years I was looking forward to get into a university with a karting society so that I could drive a kart and compete again.

What made you want to get involved in the club?

What really catch my attention and made me join DMU Karting was because we compete at the BUKC championship (British University Karting Championship). The BUKC is a fun and competitive karting championship where we compete against many other drivers from another universities. My brother also competes in this championship, so it gives me the opportunity to race with him even though he competes for Southampton University

Have any females in sport inspired you and how have they inspired you?

Unfortunately, women in motorsport are very rare to see, but when I was 8 years old and my brother was already competing in karting, there was a girl in his category, and she was really good. She would win almost every race, if not she would always be around the top. So, I remember telling my dad that I wanted to compete in karting too and be like her!

What advice do you have for any other females looking to get involved in sport or physical activity?

Don't overthink and just go for it! Sports are great! So, join a sport that catches your eye. Then, if for some reason you don't end up liking that sport try another one! There are plenty of different sports out there to try. Also, don't get too frustrated if you aren't good at it. Nobody is great at a sport when they are new. That is what practise is for. Everybody has had to go through the same things that you are going thought. Thus, because of that reason I would recommend joining a team sport because then the people on your team will help you and support you to become better at the sport. After all you are a team and have to work together. Then, the best part is that you can look back and see how much you have improved.

Would you ever try another sport?

Yes, 100%, I absolutely love sports and I have tried many of them such as basketball, handball, gymnastics, tennis, athletics and my favourites skiing, snowboarding, football, and the ones that I am involved right now, indoor skydiving and karting

How has playing sport helped you in your day to day life/career?

Sports are a great way to improve your mental and physical health.

I think I am lucky that I have had the chance to try many sports specially team sports. Not only I have met a lot of people, but it has helped and show me discipline, to respect others even if they are your opponents, and to help those who are trying to improve in the sport.

Karting has greatly impacted me in my life, specially nowadays.

Unfortunately, for the past year and a half, I have had few problems with my stomach. I had a bacteria, *Helicobacter pylori*, that really irritated my stomach and the treatment was very strong since I had to take a lot of antibiotics.

Then this summer I got worse again. We realised that because of the strong antibiotics my stomach has become very delicate and can't handle any lactose or fructose. We also discovered that there were too many bacteria on my stomach and that I had to take antibiotics again to remove the extra bacteria. Unfortunately, because of this issue I lost a lot of weight and muscle (even though I am already quite tiny and skinny). Thus, I was very upset, since because of my very strict diet that I must currently follow, I started lacking on glucose, iron, and folic acid, hence I would be very dizzy and have very low energy throughout the day preventing me to do any activity without struggling.

However, I did not let this issue stop me from doing the sports that I love. So, when I came back to Uni, I knew that it was going to be hard to get back into a kart and race. Thankfully I have the best karting team I could ask for and friends that are supporting me everyday to get stronger and get back on track.

Racing in karting has never been an easy challenge. I have always had a physical disadvantage since I race against men that are way bigger and stronger than I am. However, that has never stopped me, if anything it makes me want to work harder for it.

Karting and sports have made me stronger mentally and physically. It has taught me how to respect others when you win and congratulate and respect those who win.

Favourite personal sporting moment?

Winning one of the karting races at Lanzarote from the local Canary island championship in Spain. My karting team, family and I were really proud of the win.

Favourite female sporting role model?

Maria de Villota