

sport **rebecca tsui**



Did you know? Houston Rockets won the NBA championship in 1994 and 1995

Teenager loves life in the fast lane

Matthew Solomon started kart racing at 10 and is determined to become a Formula One driver one day

Karting

Many 13-year-old boys are interested in assembling model cars. But Matthew Solomon is not your normal teenager. He has been a kart racer for almost three years. Despite suffering serious injuries in a karting accident two years ago, Matthew is determined to become a Formula One driver one day.

It all started about three years ago, when a friend told him about a new karting track that had opened in the city. Before long, the student from Chinese International School had fallen in love with karting.

He was a gifted driver, and within a year, he had won the Hong Kong junior championship.

However, Matthew suffered a severe setback during a race in Macau in December 2007. He was driving at more than



90km/h when another competitor crashed into him. Matthew was thrown to the ground, and to make matters worse, the kart landed on him.

"I was unconscious ... then I woke up five hours later on a hospital bed," Matthew said. He suffered several broken bones and was forced out of the racing scene for about a month. Everyone, including his mother, thought he would give up racing, but he didn't.

Even as Matthew spent most of his time in bed that Christmas, he was still thinking about racing. When his mother asked what he wanted for a Christmas present, he answered: "A new jersey." There was no doubt he loved the sport, but the accident had shattered his confidence.

"I was so bored I got back to the racing track after three weeks. My skill was still there but not my confidence," he

I managed to finish second. It was a huge confidence boost. From then on, I did very well and finished the races quite high up

said. "I was so scared to mix with the pack and pass other karts. I tended to keep a good distance from others.

"I was once a very aggressive racer, but I turned out to be a different person in 2008.

"I actually thought about quitting, but I couldn't. I just loved racing."

Matthew's passion for the sport kept him going and he finally returned to form in Thailand last year.

"I managed to finish second [in a race there]. It was a huge confidence boost. From then

on, I did very well and finished the races quite high up," he said.

There is a saying "tough times make people grow stronger". This is certainly true of Matthew who has conquered his "inner fear" and is now more determined than ever to join the Formula One circuit. He has been coached by Marc Hynes, who is the mentor of current Formula One drivers Lewis Hamilton and Kimi Raikkonen.

Earlier this month, Matthew won the Philippine National Championships.

Kart racing is the cradle for many good Formula One drivers. "I want to be a Formula One driver. Winning the world championship is my main goal in karting. I hope I can gain as much experience as I can and be competitive as I prepare to race in Formula One," Matthew said.



UP-AND-COMING KART RACER MATTHEW SOLOMON IS BACK TO HIS BEST AFTER A SERIOUS ACCIDENT IN MACAU.

McGrady returns for season debut

Basketball

Just over nine months after risky surgery on his left knee, Tracy McGrady made his first appearance of the season for the Houston Rockets and they won 107-96.

With almost eight minutes left in the first quarter against the Detroit Pistons on Tuesday night, McGrady entered to a standing ovation. After he'd missed his first shot, then lost

the ball in the lane, McGrady prompted the loudest cheers of the night by swishing a 3-pointer. Replaced for the second quarter, McGrady had three rebounds and missed two free throws in addition to his lone basket.

He said before the game he was "extremely nervous" to be playing for the first time since February 9.

"Everything I went through last year and what it really took

in the off-season for me to get back, to put myself in a position to be on an NBA team, it's a great feeling," McGrady said. "It's a very humbling feeling."

He was in and out of the lineup all of last season and played in only 35 games. He averaged 15.6 points, his lowest total in a decade and admitted that he was playing in constant pain.

The Rockets tried limiting his practice time, and rested him



TRACY MCGRADY (WHITE JERSEY) RETURNED FROM INJURY. PHOTO: ASSOCIATED PRESS

for two weeks in January, but the knee didn't improve.

He opted for the high-risk procedure, with a recovery time set at six to 12 months.

"My career definitely could've been over, with the type of surgery that I had," McGrady said. "It's good to be back, playing in front of the great fans here, competing with great teammates and doing something I really love to do."

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