



# MG Tires

## Excelling As The Avis Of The Karting Industry

*Publisher's Note: WR International was just an infant in this industry when "National Kart News" profiled the company in 1994. The principles that the founder established back then have not changed. Fourteen years later it seemed appropriate to see how the company has progressed and how the changes they've seen within the business and the karting industry have helped them be a consistent player in the karting world.*

**Years ago**, Avis Rentals introduced their most successful advertising campaign, "We're only #2, We Try Harder. You would think that an established company would make every attempt to say it is the best, but Avis realized that by being



Wagner Rossi and Helio Castroneves at the 2007 Granja 500 – Brazil.

humble and letting the public know that they could be a force in the rental business despite not being number one that they could still succeed. That advertising slogan turned out to be very profitable for them. Years later, people still remember it.

You can see that scenario with scores of other companies scattered across the country, the karting industry included. MG Tires is just one of those smaller companies that has created a foothold in its particular market through carefully orchestrated marketing but with dogged determination.

Marketed through WR International located in Hollywood, Florida, MG Tires has found itself a comfortable corner in the tire market of the karting business, despite having their tires manufactured in Brazil.

Being a new kid on the block in 1992, WR International founder, Wagner Rossi, had an uphill battle. Not only did he have to compete with the Bridgestones and Dunlops of the karting industry, his lineage as a foreigner in the United States trying to market a relatively new kart tire was like



throwing Daniel in the lion's den. But he was undaunted in his desire to make his mark in the United States.

"It was definitely tough in the beginning," Rossi remembered. "I was alone and didn't know anybody here at the time."

What he did have on his side, however, was his stellar performances in racing karts in Brazil. Though his vocation was piloting commercial jetliners for a living, his adventurous spirit led him to racing on the side—not just for the fun of it, but to win. Being a Brazilian Kart Champion, where racing is the second most popular sport in that country, carried a little pedigree and chutzpah when trying to make a name for himself in the United States.

Certainly it helped having the backing of an established World Champion Formula One racer. "Nelson Piquet was a very close friend of mine. Though he was ten years older than me, I was around that environment as a little kid on the tracks and practices. He's the one who really pushed me to bring MG Tires to the United States," Rossi said.

**It was the first time I went to the track with my tires, and people started laughing at me because they thought MG was just a car manufacturer in England.**



Luis Ruibal,  
General  
Manager.

"It was the first time I went to the track with my tires," Rossi said, "and people started laughing at me because they thought MG was just a car manufacturer in England. They couldn't believe a tire with that kind of name would have any impact. When I won my first race, they began to ask what tires I was running, not realizing that they came from Brazil."

"Many people knew racing was big in other countries, but I don't think they realized how big karting is in Brazil. Look at Helio Castroneves. He started racing karts when he was younger."

In Brazil, Rossi noted, there are only a few tire companies, but 99 percent of the tires racers use are MG's. Good track record. The difference with racing in Brazil and the United States is the intrigue and seriousness of the sport. The United

"I wasn't sure because there were already two established companies, Bridgestone and Dunlop. But Nelson convinced me that I could find my own niche in the tire market with MG Tires."

When he finally landed in the US, he set about using his racing prowess to good use on the race track all the while trying to market MG Tires. He raced in the Miami Karting Championship in 1995 and won with a Yamaha 100cc. Armed with his professed broken English, he was able to start showing the MG Tire brand.

Wagner and Nelson Angelo Piquet, (son of F1 Champion Nelson Piquet) discuss racing strategies at the 6hrs of Brasilia.

mgtires.com

**MG Tires**  
Racing

FOR THE DRIVERS

🇺🇸 954-894-7117  
🇨🇦 519-763-8473



States has more than 100,00 karters, while Brazil has only 5,000. Most of the Brazilian racers, Rossi maintains, are using karting as a serious stepping stone to Formula One or Indy Car racing.

Luis Ruibal, longtime friend and general manager of the company who holds the fort down while Rossi is out of the country, concurs. "Racers put a lot of effort into what they do because they know how difficult and expensive it is. They don't always have the financial resources like we have in the US, but because of their love and dedication to the sport they make those sacrifices willingly."

It's easy to see, then, how MG tires has



Junia Rossi, (The Boss!)

maintained a foothold in the Brazilian market.

The United States was an entirely different matter. Being a foreigner, the potential for some derision from the hometown people could have been a deterring factor, but Rossi insisted it was entirely opposite of what he expected.

"I think the United States people gave me all the opportunity to succeed. Every place I went, whether it was on or off the track, I had huge support system, even

with my poor English. People were very patient with me and many doors were open for me. I was very encouraged by their generosity. I was even amazed at the respect I've received from my competitors."

Being the exclusive importer for the North American market, Rossi started with 100 sets of tires that he sold in Miami. He used his pickup truck and started going to race tracks with his Brazilian chassis. He was so confident in the quality of MG tires that he gave his product away to key drivers in certain classes.

Soon his tires started getting attention from certain magazines and teams through word of mouth and sponsorship of teams. Though the tires were very popular in the beginning, he learned very quickly that product packaging is just as important as the product itself. The dilemma he had to endure was the boxes were too big, carrying 24 tires each. It became quite cumbersome for Rossi and his wife to lug them around. For Rossi's sake, MG Tires changed the packaging, the logo of the company and WR International was off and running.

Wagner had the honor to present the MG Tires



MG Tires Warehouse in Hollywood, FL

**KOKOMO HONDA**  
SHIFTER ENGINES AND PARTS

**ENGINES**

NEW CR125 6-Speed Kit	\$1835.00
NEW CR125 6-Speed Assy	\$2035.00
NEW CR80 Kit	\$1339.00
NEW CR80 Assy	\$1539.00

**PARTS**

	CR80	CR125
CRANK SHAFT	\$95.00	\$132.00
PISTON	\$29.00	\$39.00
RINGS	\$9.00	\$8.00
CYLINDER	\$224.00	\$224.00

**MORE PARTS AT DISCOUNT PRICES!**

**New Products from BEST**

**SHIFTER RADIATORS**  
ALL SIZES \$230.00

**765-864-0500**  
Fax: 765-864-0100

MasterCard, Discover, VISA, FedEx

**LOCK IT - OR LOSE IT!**

**PREMIUM UMAX 50 UNIVERSAL TRAILER LOCK**

**TRAILER LOCKS**

- Wheel Locks
- Towing Locks
- Industrial Applications
- Hi-Tech Ball Locks
- Locks For Every Trailer Security Need.
- No Minimum Order

**RA LOCK**  
ralock.com/trucklocks.asp  
**800-777-6310**

Midlothian, TX

- One size fits ALL
- Keyhole Cover
- Hardened 5/8" (16mm) Steel Shackle
- Corrosion Resistant Finish
- Made in the USA

for the 1st time to the American market at the Elkhart G.P. in 1994. "The Event was incredibly well organized by NKN at the time." I'm still impressed with that event! The race had 900+ entries & I would like to "Thank" Curt Paluzzi, Francine and all the NKN staff for the support they gave W.R. International then and now," commented Wagner.

What started as a husband/wife combo has now increased to five employees. Housed in a 2,400-square-foot facility, Rossi understood the way to be competitive in the tire business was to extend its service to different states with distributorships but still maintain dependent control on what goes on. Now they have established distributorships in California, Chicago, Canada

Danilo Rossi & Wagner Rossi. No relation except for their passion for racing.



At Christiano's house in Brazil.

and Miami. By doing this they have been able to create a better profit margin with the tires. "We can save a lot of freight by having MG send the tires directly to California. And it's even much better in Canada where it's much cheaper with the duties," Rossi said. "We might not have ever done this if we hadn't gained the

confidence of our customers." Still, having to deal with a foreign manufacturer has its own inherent challenges. The currency is too strong against the dollar and part of the raw materials is imported.

"Even with all that against us I think MG Tires still gives us the best profit margin in the business." Rossi confided. "I think it really helps us because we

are an exclusive karting tire manufacturer; we don't have any cars or trucks we have to supply. Even the president of MG Tires is a kart racer. It's not uncommon to see him testing the tires he makes in Brazil before they make it to the United States." "That's been the biggest key to our success, I believe. The karting business is our life, so consequently our attention to service has to be the most important thing to us. It's our livelihood.

Every single compound is thoroughly tested before going into production.



Wagner with his good friend Oswaldo Negri.

"We are the distributor of MG tires, but we are MG Tires in the sense that any correspondence goes through us. Though we don't manufacture the tires, people can come to us with their issues and we can talk to them on behalf of the factory. Believe me, that is a huge advantage for us."

The other advantage, he said, is the cost of MG's tires. Compared to its competitors, Rossi believes their tires are less expensive for

the racer only because when you look at the final cost versus the longevity of the tire, the bottom line makes MG look like the winner all the time.

"We have a product that if a driver tests it, he ends up loving it because it lasts much longer," Rossi explained. "They can get two or three races on a set of tires pretty easily. It's not great from a sales standpoint on our part, but for the drivers they love it."

Still the challenge remains to maintain or even increase its market share. Rossi has seen a continued growth since WR's inception, but he insisted that "you cannot sleep any moment because when you gain one year, it might not

**Digital Gauges by**



**DT160-10CVB RACER'S EDGE COMPETITION DIGITAL PRESSURE GAUGE**

Range: 0/50 PSI      Easy Access 18" Hose  
Pressure Bleed Valve      Pro Angle Chuck w/ Swivel  
Rubber Shock Cover  
Back Lit for Night Use

**DT150-01C PERSONAL GAUGE**

Reads in PSI, BAR, KPA  
Range: 0-100 PSI  
Accurate to 1%  
Automatic 1 minute hold feature.

**DT150-5BCV HEAVY DUTY TRUCK GAUGE**

Range: 3-160 PSI

**Gauges for special applications, readings and fittings**

pressureinc.com      800-672-2626  
Email: dfewis@pressureinc.com      Nashville, TN



last. If you don't keep your eyes open to what everybody else is doing you're sure to miss out."

Because they've been able to establish such a close relationship with their customers, Rossi and Ruibal have been able to be more proactive with any issues that come up.

"You need to have constructive feedback, not just blaming," Ruibal said about how they deal with their customers. "With us when we have a problem, like when we launched the new FZ, we discovered we had a problem with the front tire. Because the front tire is a little round, the contact patch on the tires is very small, so it makes this a little sensitive to temperature. When you have new asphalts and very hot temperatures with the surface it seems with the patches being so small it keeps sliding too much and it creates overheating on them, sometimes blistering.



"The easy way is to blame the tire, but instead of passing the buck, we can take care of it by calling the factory and telling them we need this or that. Maybe in two weeks they can do a prototype and make changes. MG sends the tires overnight and test the tires. We certainly can't pretend we are a big corporation, but we certainly can address things rather quickly. It certainly isn't a bureaucratic relationship."

Rossi would be the first to admit the success of the company could never be tied to what he has done solely. When Ruibal came aboard 7 years ago, the two had already developed a history with each other.

Originally from Argentina, Ruibal moved to Brazil where he lived for 14 years. When his family decided to move to the United States in 1992 (about the same time Rossi did), the two found themselves living at the same condominium complex.

One day, while playing tennis, Ruibal heard Rossi speaking Portuguese and started talking with him. When the subject matter came to karting, they both realized that they raced karts in Brazil at the same time, but they never met each other. They even had common friends.

The coincidences continued in business as well. Ruibal was in exporting, Rossi in importing. Both of them developed a friendship together, but never crossed paths in the business world until 10 years later when Rossi asked Ruibal to be a part of WR International. With Rossi commuting back and forth from the United States and Brazil frequently where he has dual residences, Ruibal has been a valuable asset to the company. Even with the distance, they are constantly on the phone talking about business. A close relationship has developed, so it's served the company well.

"With his extensive experience in motor racing in his life and in the exporting business, Luis has become a crucial piece to the growth of the



**RACE TRAILERS FOR EVERY NEED, EVERY SPEED.**

**pace AMERICAN**

VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT [PACEAMERICAN.COM](http://PACEAMERICAN.COM) OR CALL 800.247.5767

CHECK OUT THE ENTIRE LINE OF KARTING TRAILERS  
© 2008 PACE AMERICAN, INC.





tires because it can help tire control. It's a designed system that handles the tire setup, saving it in the software and comparing pressures and temperatures before and after practice and racing.

"We're very lucky because we're working very closely with Angelo Alfano, owner of the factory, in Belgium," Ruibal said. "He's passionate about racing. On top of all that, when you talk about everybody involved within our circle, Wagner, myself, Angelo, MG, we are all passionate about racing, mainly karting. It makes it so much easier to work together, because we all understand why we are doing what we are doing—it's not just a product to us, it's our life."

company the past seven years," Rossi said

"More importantly though," Ruibal said, "Is that even though he's my boss today, he has become part of my family. We travel together with our wives—and to top it off we both have a common passion for motor racing."

That passion has led WR International to branch out its business into another venture. Rossi came across a company based in Belgium, Alfano, in 2005. Already established in the Formula One and Indy Racing circles and servicing most of the racers in Brazil, Alfano moved into the kart racing business. The company's LCD sensors are a perfect fit for MG



With everyone on the same page and creating an environment of being a unique entity in the kart tire business, not being number one in the business has become more palatable. "Besides," Ruibal said, the customer loyalty alone will propel the company over the next decade to the point where the disparity in market share will steadily come closer. "

"We're extremely happy with the feedback we get from everybody," Ruibal said. "The first thing I always ask is what do the drivers think because that is very important to us. If the driver is not happy, then we need to do what we can to accommodate him. We always structure our business for the end user, but if the word of mouth gets around that we cannot take care of our customers, we will not be here for long."

**PG Racing**  
WWW.PGRACING.COM

**WK**  
**WILD KART**

Exclusive North American Importer  
Dealer Inquiries Welcome

**800-752-2932**  
Wentzville, MO

"Our banners always say, "MG Tires Racing... For The Driver." You see companies talking about doing the best they can for their customers, and for the most part many companies do that. But you always have to remember that it's not about making money; what's really important is what the driver thinks. If you fail to do that, why are you in business in the first place?"



The MG team in Granja, 2006