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# GAME ON

YOUR GUIDE TO THE WEEKEND'S BEST SPORT

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# JOSH DRIFTS INTO ASIAN CHALLENGE

## National champion tackles new world

By JAY BUCHAN

HAVING conquered Australia, Josh Boettcher has taken the next step into Asia and another world.

The 2010 Australian Pro Drift champion made his debut in the opening round of Formula Drift Asia 2011 in Singapore last Sunday, finishing seventh.

"It was the most incredible experience," Boettcher said.

"I learnt so much and have had my eyes opened to a whole new world. I went into the stands and it took a while because so many people wanted autographs and photos."

Where 1000 people might turn up to an Australian Pro Series event, in Singapore there were upwards of 5000.

Most of the fans seemingly knew who Boettcher was, despite it being his first foray into Asia.

The competition was another thing Boettcher had to adapt to quickly.

"It is a different style of drifting," he explained.

"It's very tactical. The drivers know a lot about everyone else.

"That's something we learnt going over there - the level of involvement required. If you're fast in some way they make sure they push up the speed, or if you're leading they will change their line to cover your speed."

In a drifting heat two drivers take a turn each in leading around the course.

Drifting is judged based on line, angle, speed, and show factor, but passes can be won by overtaking, so long as it is done under drift, or by increasing a lead.

Boettcher proved a fast learner, beating Formula Drift USA's Charles Ng in the round of 32 and Thailand's Jo in the round of 16 to reach the top eight.

"This was my first time competing overseas," Boettcher said. "I believe I am the first Australian in an official Formula Drift Series event and I made the top eight."

Boettcher's next opponent was Formula Drift USA veteran Ken Gushi.

"I had taken out Charles Ng, one

of the four big name drivers that Sparks Motorsport had brought to the event," Boettcher said.

"I was hoping to do it again with Ken and I was first to chase this time.

"As we entered the first corner he only just got ahead of me and was slow through the first corner. I had to adjust my line a lot, and that was the difference in the end.

"I was able to run a nice clean, fast line on the lead run but he was able to stay close and took the win. My final position with qualifying taken into account was seventh."

Boettcher could only watch as Japanese drift legend Daigo Saito took out the event, with Gushi finishing third.

"Saito was simply incredible during battles," Boettcher said.

"No matter what speed the car was in front of him, he was on the door the whole time.

"His 800hp drag car that turned into a drift car when it got to the corners was amazing to watch."

Boettcher has his sights set on the Queensland Raceway King of Drift title on July 30, but hopes to be back in Asia for the remaining three events of the series from October to December.

"The Australian title is obviously very important but if I'm getting results over there and it means I will miss out on events here, I'm happy to," he said.

"It is really about the support you get - the sponsorship. It is not at the level you can earn money.

"In the US you can but not here or in Asia. But the better you do, the more attention you get.

"The US is a long term goal and if I keep finishing seventh (in Asia), the consistency of results can put you up there."

Boettcher is fortunate to be backed by GT Radial tyres at a time when tyre manufacturing for drifting is getting more competitive.

"GT are very good," he said.

"Being in the Asian series all the time would be great. It is quite big over there and gaining momentum. They want to get on board and tyre manufacturers are competing with each other."



**SOLID BACKING:** Australian Pro Drift champion Josh Boettcher (above right), with Ian Boettcher Tyres manager Trevor Franz. Franz helped organise Boettcher's sponsorship with GT Radial Tyres, enabling Boettcher to compete at the opening round of the Formula Drift Asia 2011 championship in Singapore last weekend (right), where he finished seventh.

Photo: Rob Williams

