

King City's Formula 4 star itching to return

By Robert Belardi

King City native and 15-year-old Formula 4 driver Nicholas Christodoulou continues to train as the NACAM Championship's restart is in limbo. The Scuderia Martiga driver says he spends his time at home on his racing simulator, exercising and watching movies. "Keeping busy is mostly, spending time on racing. So, that means being on the simulator for many hours a day and then, working out and watching movies. Just pass the time so this can be over," Christodoulou said, over the phone with the King Weekly Sentinel. In a period that has simply, stifled the excitement for the world of sports it is difficult to continue to motivate oneself. But, not for "Nico." This teenager has his set sights on the Formula 1 and will stop at nothing to achieve that goal. He remembers his first podium finish in October; a race, right before the Mexican Grand Prix. In front of a sell-out crowd in Mexico City, Christodoulou stood, atop of the podium with smiling faces staring at him. It is a feeling he will never forget and one, that continues to motivate him on a daily basis. "That is the biggest thing I think about and another one of the parts of winning that, that I think about, is seeing everyone's face with a giant smile coming off the track." Now, at home, he works out using an exercising schedule from a trainer. He eats cleanly of course, with his diet consisting of carbs, meat and vegetables. He uses iRacing, a program that elite racers of the same skill level and above use to train off the track. He currently participates in the Road to Indy series online with other drivers. He is currently competing against drivers ranging all the way from F4 to as high up as Indy Car. He says it's really good experience. The British F4 is currently using iRacing as a platform to host a competitive tournament where the winner of the esports competition will have the lucky chance to race in real life. Although there is nothing like that in Mexico, what Christodoulou is hearing, is the delay of his racing dates. Otherwise, there is not a whole lot of traction coming out of the F4 with a set plan. Simulators don't have the same impact as practicing in the real car so coming back for most drivers, will be a whole new world once again. "No one has been able to go to a track and step into a go-kart or a car. A couple months out of a go-kart or a car, you're going to feel it after. You're going to get in and you're going to feel like you don't know how to drive a car anymore." And that's not the only concern. Sponsors who invest money into these drivers are suffering financially and that can have negative repercussions; especially in a sport, that relies on sponsor money as one of its leading, financial securities. A domino effect surely remains in the balance. The Formula 1 is currently struggling with money and there is no insurance for the Formula 4 either. Nico's mother, Sherry says she has paid in advance for races and is unsure what will occur with that money. She also says, that other schedules in racing can overlap with other competitions. "What could happen to, a lot of race series is because everyone is scrambling put their races into months that still have good weather, that could end up impacting another race series," Sherry explains. With nine races left in Nico's season, he is unsure when those will be scheduled. He also, has his sights set on the F4 championship in the United States once Mexico's is finished. The vision to qualify for the European competition is right after America. The hope is, race weekends do not overlap, or that will be problematic. This isn't the first time the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), has shut down because of a pandemic or an outbreak, Nico says. Inevitably, this will be resolved and the Christodoulou family hopes it is sooner rather than later. For now, Nico enjoys racing on his simulator and keeping in touch with other drivers he has grown close with on his racing journey. One of them being Eduardo Barrichello, son of the former professional Formula 1 driver, Rubens Barrichello. "Every couple of weeks, we'll jump on the simulator and we'll race for a couple of hours in the night. Then, chat a little bit after in a chat room and talk about what's new," Nico shared. Christodoulou is in second place in the drivers' championship with wins in Mexico City and in Amozoc, Puebla. He is 33 points behind the leader, Noel Leon.