



EURO ROUND 2 TURNS UP SOME SUPRISSES AS THE SERIES GETS INTERESTING

Wackersdorf, Germany: June 3

It was an exciting edition of the 2010 Rotax Euro Challenge at the ProKart Race-land circuit at Wackersdorf, when the championship returned to Germany once again to be faced with the crazy weather that we've become accustomed to this year. However, the series remains anyone's for the taking at the halfway mark, while the racing continues to be very competitive keeping things interesting with new faces gracing the podium.

As was the case in the opening round for the season, the temperamental weather played its part as the week unfolded and managed to determine the outcome yet again significantly. The event saw nearly 150 drivers in total turn out for the meeting at the popular Bavarian location renowned for the ever-changing climate, which is considered as a true "drivers'" circuit. The real winners proved to be the punters who gambled on slicks on the fast-drying track, as compared to those who struggled to decide or others left with a mixed alternative set-up.

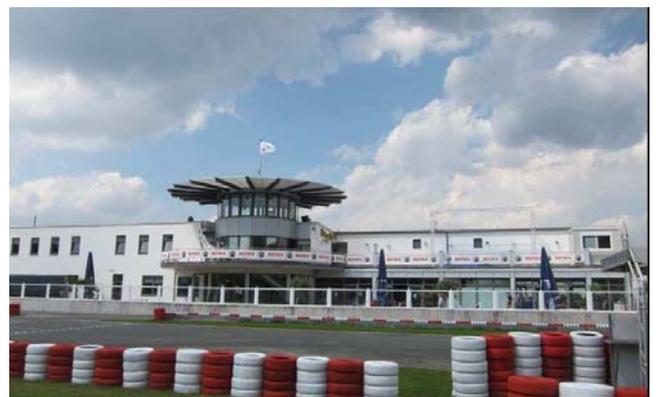
ROTAX SENIOR MAX

Last year's Junior vice champ Ed Brand was the pacesetter in Seniors, topping the timesheets in the opening split sessions of official timed practice in the largest class of the event. The Brit was too good for the likes of local Steven Hees and fellow UK rival Tom Fawcett, clocking a best time of 51.067 on his second lap. Series leader Mats van den Brand came closest to stealing the first grid in the next group out, lacking 0.111 seconds on Brand's quickest. Always in with a chance, Joey van Splunteren took P3 behind the other Dutchman, ahead of senior rookie Ferenc Kancsár a mere 0.008 in arrears.

It came down to a Dutch-British clash for the qualifying race honours, as Strawberry Racing team-mates Van den Brand and Fawcett claimed two wins each with just a point between them. With one victory and all top 3 finishes, Van Splunteren took grid 3 to split the English team-mates for the pre-finals sitting alongside James Greenway, who'd only completed 3 laps of Friday's timed practice to rank 13 before he was forced to retire. He was fastest in the morning warm-up and two heats the next day. The last of Saturday's races was won by Jack Dex by a narrow margin over Van den Brand, with Dex still just one point short of doing better than 5th overall for the pre-final. His DHR colleague Ross Wylie took triple 3rd places to join him on row 3 Sunday.

The Second Chance heat is the race nobody wants to be in, yet everyone in it wants to win. This "sudden-death" decider turned out to be 11 action-packed laps that brought out the best of some drivers; like Wes Phillips of the US and Harry Drysdale who climbed from the middle-order rows to the pass the cut-off mark at the first six. It was also unfortunately the end of the road for a list of others who could have easily been amongst the winners when it came to the finals that afternoon.

The heavens took over the event at this stage though, creating a chaotic pre-grid as mechanics scrambled for the best choice of tyres for the scattered conditions; dry or wet. Van den Brand on pole lost the lead to Greenway, until Fawcett overpowered him following what he claimed was a "nerve-wracking" start. Wylie then diced for second as the gap to the leader was gradually reduced by the end of the 14-lapper, with Greenway managing to pull away from pacesetter Wylie to maintain 2nd. Van Splunteren pulled a clear advantage over Niek Vos in 5th caught by Second Chance survivor Barrie Pullinger, coming from grid 32. The pole man followed his team-mate across the line in 7th.





The Steam was rising off the asphalt and a shortlist of drivers made the decision to risk going on slicks, although the skies were growing darker. It seemed Fawcett would be hard to beat coming out of pole for the Senior Final, but Van Splunteren pushed his way through to relegate Fawcett to P2 in front of Pullinger. Greenway ran wide losing four places from 4th therefore letting Brand take his position, running side-by-side with Finland's Morten Nomme as they closed-in on the pair in front. On lap 4, Pullinger moved to 2, only to be overtaken next lap by John Friberg appearing out of nowhere running slicks. The Swede started on grid 19 and was being tracked by Nomme through from row 6 of the recharge, determined to find the chequered flag before the rain bucketed down.

As Fawcett attempted an unsuccessful challenge on Nomme, Miss Kelly Zondervan pounced to secure 2nd with 3 laps remaining after setting the best time of the race. Then suddenly, the rain began to fall as the race wound down proving disastrous for the lady driver, who left the circuit and didn't rejoin. A red flag came out soon after when Michael Cool was involved in an incident with two other drivers so the race was declared at lap 14 and Friberg unbeaten. Back into 2nd, Van Splunteren couldn't cut the massive 38.627 gap the winner had over him, but managed to salvage p2 ahead of fellow Dutchman Berry Torenvliet. Drysdale and Pullinger took 4 & 5 respectively, followed by Vos 7th and Topi Toikka of Finland 8th. The top 10 was completed by Fawcett, Ross Wylie and Tom Oliphant. Ed Brand finished 11th which lost him positions and vital points in the championship, where he's now at 6th on the overall table. Van Splunteren leads the title race by just 3 points to Fawcett then Van den Brand, who was 15th on the day in Germany.

John Friberg - *"It's really good to take the win here today. I chose to put on slicks for the final, which was great and it seems it was the right choice. It was a gamble, but I saw the steam coming off the track and thought 'why not?' Thanks to my father, Stefan Olszen, Stefan Irlander & Robin Ankaraskiold."*

ROTAX JUNIOR MAX

Rain began to fall right on schedule as predicted just a few laps into the first group of Junior Max official timed practice Friday afternoon, which led to a little panic by some drivers believing they should come back into the pits. Of course, those who stayed out had the benefit of the shower passing and the track in fact getting quicker. Round 1 winner and series leader Tristan Vidas was the fastest in the opening 15 minute session, only 0.003 seconds to next best lap from the Euro's first Turkish entry Kaan Onder. The times in the second session were immediately better, so pole came from this group led in the latter stages by Ukraine driver Danyil Chupinin with a 51.546 which was 0.016 quicker than the Junior Max World number 1 Ukyo Sasahara. Martin Rump had the 3rd best laptime overall, with Vidas qualifying 6th fastest with 51.692 when the two groups were combined.

The racing Saturday was extremely close in the Junior qualifying heats, with the field of 43 divided into 4 groups, each doing 3 races to determine the pre-final grid positions. The confident British youngster Jack Barlow made it a clean sweep to take 3 from 3 for an undisputed pole position Sunday.





Arch rival James Singleton was victorious in two races to share the front row of the grid, while Danyil Chupinin won the other heat. The 14-year old Estonian qualified on P3 alongside Viidas who finished with one 2nd and two 3rd places. Row 3 was the IFR team duo of Ukyo Sasahara and Stefan Locsmandi. Some bad luck and misfortune resulted in several likely front-runners way down the order.

Last minute drizzle for the pre-final added to the mixed results of the juniors, with an amazing shuffling of the grid when the 11 laps were exhausted. On the opening lap Viidas became a spectator and Singleton then dropped some places, leaving Barlow to assume the early lead before Locsmandi and Sasahara took turns at the front. It was great viewing for the race fans as the fight raged on, with Affolter joining in the charge to lead by lap 5 as Harry Crawley made an appearance in the first 3 from P21. He passed the Japanese driver and took 2nd before finally taking the lead some laps later. It was non-stop place-swapping amongst the pack, seeing Barlow drop to 8th behind Sasahara and Locsmandi. Crawley maintained 1st to take the chequered flag half a second ahead of Bas De Laat who put in an incredible effort as well to come from 29th on the grid. Affolter was 3rd, then Singleton and another Dutch second chance qualifier Jasper De Brouwer making up the top 5 from P30.

Well, the sun came out after a huge downpour just in time for the start of the Junior Max final. The kids were a fraction anxious and had another formation lap. The polesitter led on a water-logged track from Affolter and Barlow who connected with Sasahara sent spinning to then rejoin rear of field. The number #57 kart of Affolter got the mechanical defect flag and had to come into the breakdown lane for another chain guard to be fitted. He rejoined a lap down which was never recovered. As Crawley stretched his lead, the battle behind for minor placings was terrific. Czech driver Petr Bezel up 10 spots from where he began was forced wide by Barlow but then claimed P4 and diced successfully to defend his position with Slovakian rival Sandor Jakab. It was an easy win for Crawley to cross the line just short of 8 seconds in front of Singleton and new series leader De Laat. Singleton's team-mate Nathan Harrison overcome the challenge from Barlow to secure P6 towards the end of the 14 laps, followed by Martin Steinerts in 8th setting the best lap of the race. In 9th was Viidas – all the way from grid 34, adding valuable points to his 2010 championship campaign, while Latvia's Reinis Nitiss drove well to hang on for 10th. After the round, Singleton has jumped to 2nd in the points only 4 ahead of Barlow, who is equal 3rd with Bezel including all finals so far.

Harry Crawley – *"I'm really happy with the win today. After the problems we had earlier in practice and qualifying, it was a surprise that we ended up being so competitive. I didn't think it would be as easy in the end with a lot of other good drivers who were fast, but I just put my head down and kept pushing. To win the final and pre-final here at the Euro Challenge is great! I want to say thanks to Evolution Racing for their help, to Ricky Grice for the excellent engines and to my family for supporting me so that I can race."*





ROTAX MAX MASTERS

The current World number one in the 'seasoned' Rotax Max Masters category claimed pole position Friday in the qualifying session, admitting he hoped that it was not going to rain - although he was quoted at the previous round as saying it made life easier when you're driving in two classes on the same day. Christophe Adams set a time of 52.709 to outpace Mikko Laine as the winner from the Salbris event by 0.131 seconds. Frenchman Alain Guesdon was 3rd quickest with just 0.005 separating him from a front row start for the heat racing the next day, where he'd join Anton Chupinin on grid 4.

It appeared to be shaping-up as a showdown between the GKS driver on pole and Laine who shared the honours 2:1 for the qualifying heats Saturday, although 2010 Rotax Winter Cup champion Florent Lambert also had three top 3 results, but just lacked the extra pace he needed. He was to share the second row of the start grid for the pre-final with Guesdon, edging out Chupinin by just one point. In an interview following the official timed practice, Adams expressed his opinion that it was a real shame that there are not more Max Masters racing at the Euro Challenge, seeing that there are so many drivers in the thirties and older competing around the world in the Max class who would no doubt enjoy the racing with others from various countries at an international level.

Adams took the early lead in the Pre-final, as Laine got sideways in the slippery conditions going up the hill into the first corner and spun. He rejoined at the back while the leader came under pressure from Chupinin, who overtook him at the beginning of lap 2. They swapped again the next lap with a slight gap back to Jan Vos, who was up from P8. He soon had his own battle with Laine, already into 3rd after several laps following his mishap. As the laps got away, the Fin was vying for 2nd and took it with 4 to go. The next time around, he stole the lead from Adams who was being chased down by Chupinin in 3rd, then came Vos and Melvin Francis. It was definitely a comfortable win for Laine by more than 3 seconds, impressing with his speed to be around a second faster than Adams' best.

The final was a nail-biter until the flag stopped proceedings at 75% or 5 laps officially short of the scheduled 18 planned. An altercation between Adams, Lambert and Vos gave the race stewards something to investigate at the start, as Laine held his lead. This was short-lived when Chupinin made it his race for the next lap, continuing to fight it out with Laine who resumed his position at the front on lap 3, only to lose it again. By this stage, Adams was back into 4th and trying to find a way past Francis. The pair moved up to P2 and 3 by lap 5, and then Francis snatched the lead closely hunted by Adams moving up too, as the race intensity grew.

Four laps later, it was Adams' setting the best lap of the race and his turn for P1 as Laine tries for 2nd, but Francis holds him out to bid for another shot at the lead. They go side-by-side into the last corner of the Raceland circuit, but the polesitter headed the field at the half-race distance. The rain began to fall however, seeing Laine in 2nd spin off and drop back to 7th. Adams was overpowered by Chupinin and forced to settle for 3rd as Francis takes P2. The flag signaled an end to the race so the count back to the lap prior gave it to Adams. Therefore Chupinin is 2nd ahead of Francis and Guesdon. Russian Master Maxim Shaposhnikov narrowly beat Lambert to the finish, followed by Laine and Vos 8th. Adams for now leads the series by 4 points over Laine to Lambert 3rd.

Christophe Adams - "Naturally I was happier to be on pole than off 2nd this weekend! It's a nice track, but very slippery in the wet. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to give 100% effort to competing in the DD2 Masters class as well here because I had to go straight from one race directly into the next... but I'm pleased to win the Masters today and now lead the championship. I am aiming to be the first driver to win a Rotax World title three times this year if I qualify for the Grand Finals in Italy."





ROTAX DD2

Cracking the 49-second mark, the 2-speed gearbox class hit the track for the last of the official timed practice sessions on the program Friday, headed by the Rotax Max world number 2 at the 2009 Grand Finals event, Mario Vendla with 49.858. The Estonian racing for AGS who never expected to take pole position, was one of only two drivers to break the 50-second lap time, with former French champion Damien Vuillaume 0.086 off the best lap. Making his debut, Simas Juodvirsis was 3rd fastest and is a multiple Baltic champ who realistically has to be the tallest Euro competitor to date.

Juodvirsis made a lasting impression by the conclusion of the qualifying heats Saturday, but this was from his driving, not his height. The 18-year old from Lithuania won all three of his races in the 32-kart field to take pole for the first of the finals. Interestingly, Vendla predicted in the press conference the day before that it would be Juodvirsis and possibly Vuillaume that he would have to contend with if he was to battle it out for the top of the podium in Wackersdorf. Also starting from the first row for the pre-final Sunday would be Christof Huibers driving the nominated Haase chassis for the new DD2 Masters class that BRP has introduced into their Grand Finals event this year. Maxi Fleischmann was the best placed local competitor at the second round and he ranked 3rd to line-up beside Clement Traglia, with last season's Euro number 3 Maik Barten on inside grid 5 opposite Vuillaume off 6.

As the track began to dry, rumor had it that just one kart was fitted with wet tyres in the parc fermè which seemed like the wrong choice until the drops of rain began to fall just before the pre-final. The polesitter lost his lead to Huibers in the opening lap as the racing got furious from the word go. Vuillaume was soon up to 3rd and looking for opportunity as Juodvirsis in front of him was applying pressure to the leader. The sun shone through the clouds as Barten set into chasing Vuillaume, only to find himself swamped a while later by the race pace-setter Dennis Ladefoged. The Danish champion made a brilliant move to steal 4th and the two begun dicing, giving round 1 winner Andreas Jensen the chance to pass them both. The greasy conditions were tough for the drivers as the rain fell, but it was exciting stuff for the many spectators who turned out whatever the weather to watch some fantastic racing. On the second last lap, Huibers went off the track and recovered for 10th, handing the lead and the victory to Juodvirsis. Vuillaume was just over 2-tenths behind him, Jensen was too quick for Barten and Ladefoged was 5th ahead of Fleischmann. The worst was yet to come!

The RGMGC girls looked glamorous as they laced the start grid, also showing they're not afraid of a little rain shower. However, the drivers may have argued the point soon afterwards from a racing perspective, as the drenching rain got heavier and made it much more difficult for the long 18 laps. It was without question the wettest race of the day as Juodvirsis led the standout fluorescent yellow-green helmet of Vuillaume in a vast spray up to the first corner. Running 3rd, Jensen lost traction and slid off the circuit mid-track in lap 1 rejoining ROF and giving Patrick Pearce P3, until he also ran wide next lap. As the conditions deteriorated, Huibers was then 3rd ahead of Martins Lapins, Barten, Vendla and Giel Bronder.

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With yellow flags being waved in places as some of the back-markers struggled to stay on track, Vuillaume tried desperately to defend 2nd but Huibers eventually got through. As a safety measure, the drivers who chose to opt for slicks were being directed back to the pits by officials as the amount of water on the circuit made it almost impossible to remain in the race. By lap 5, Huibers' retired, as did Barten, Ladefoged and a list of others. RKV Racing's hero Juodvirsis stretched his lead to 4 seconds, while Lapins and Vendla had the pace to pass Vuillaume and make the Euro podium. 5th went to Pearce closely followed by Meindert van Buuren and Jensen, then Tomasz Krzeminski 8th ahead of the youngest DD2 driver in the series, Matthew Di Leo from Canada. Tiago Ribeiro has to be commended to finish 10th after an unavoidable accident at the start of the pre-final left the Portuguese driver's kart damaged so he started from the back of the grid. As far as the fight for the title goes, Jensen is the only one to keep his lead after two rounds, with Pearce and Martins in 2 & 3.

Simas Juodvirsis – *"I never really expected to win this weekend, but after the heats I knew I had a good chance. It wasn't an easy race in the pre-final and I was so lucky that the leader went off in the last laps. Now, I'll continue to drive at the Euro this year and hope to win. A big thanks to my team RKV Racing, plus my mechanic and trainer, because without him I would never had won."*

The Rotax DD2 Masters was won by Simas Juodvirsis's team boss from RKV Racing Gudzenko Vitalijus who took 13th place overall. Tamsin German was 2nd in the 2-speed Masters class and Carl Cleirbaut took 3rd. On the series points table, Christophe Adams tops the DD2 Masters ahead of another former World number 1 Dennis Kroes and 3rd is Carl Cleirbaut.

Gudzenko Vitalijus – *"I also never thought that I would win here in Germany. It was hard racing but the Maranello was very good. It's only my second year driving and to win the DD2 Masters trophy at the Euro Challenge makes me very happy. It's a great result for our team at RKV Racing. Congratulations also to our young team driver Simas Juodvirsis who won the DD2 class."*

17,000 race fans tuned in to watch the live timing during the racing Sunday and to hear the live commentary of the racing from Wackersdorf. You can find the results online at www.rgmmc.com by following the LIVE TIMING link for downloading all sessions from Friday morning plus the updated championship points table at 'EURO CHALLENGE RACE 2' on the website.

RGMMC TV also brings you some track highlights and interviews out of the ProKart Raceland paddock from throughout the event. Just follow the link to RGMMC TV at www.rgmmc.com

