



Press Release

Busca, ITALY – 4th June, 2009

THE COMPETITION GETS EVEN HOTTER AT THE 2009 ROTAX EURO CHALLENGE

Looking across the Kart Planet paddock at the second round of the *2009 Rotax Euro Challenge*, one could have been forgiven for mistakenly believing they were in Italy for the World Karting Championships. More than 130 drivers raced at round 2 at Busca in Italy, with entries coming from all corners of the globe to contest the European titles in four categories. Since *RGMMC Establishment* began organising the international event for BRP-Rotax [now BRP-Powertrain] six years ago, the level of professionalism has only grown, as has the continued support for what is considered one of the most competitive championships today for the Rotax engine classes. Representatives from the Austrian engine manufacturer were also in Italy to offer support for the many competitors and their teams.

With the traditional 10-day practice ban being lifted, some teams took advantage of testing the weekend prior, which also gave their drivers the chance to become more accustomed to what was "extreme" heat for most. According to the locals, the very summery weather conditions were not normal for this early in the season. The racing itself was nothing short of fantastic, making the second round another successful edition for the Euro. Every class crowned a new winner on the podium, so the championship is even more interesting going into round three.

Reilly makes up for a disappointing first round loss in Senior Max

Britain's Joseph Reilly (Strawberry Racing/Tonykart) claims he had "the right strategy" last weekend at Busca to steal the lead in Sunday's final from his team-mate and victor at the opening round, Luke Varley (Strawberry Racing/Tonykart). Reilly had virtually been unbeatable in Spain last March, but an incident at the start of the final ruined his chances of making it a white-wash, so the trophy along with the series points, were handed to Varley. The "all-green" podium that dominated the Max was also split this round by rival chassis manufacturer Intrepid.

It was New Zealander Josh Hart (Intrepid Force Rotax/Intrepid) now representing Austria at the Euro, who set an untouchable pace in qualifying (59.170) and looked like a favourite when he won two of his three heat races Saturday, while posting the best lap in all. The 22-year old wasn't able to secure the pre-final pole ahead of the English pair, who both had double wins as well, so would start on grid 3. Polish driver Karol Dabski (Uniq Racing/Intrepid) joined Hart on the second row Sunday morning, displaying more of the determination that saw him take P1 at the first ever Rotax Winter Cup earlier this season and be second fastest to Hart in the official timed practice on Friday. Local Italian Simone Favaro (Parolin Racing Team/Parolin) had the outside start on row 3 next to Joey van Splunteren (DFK/Gillard) as the first of the reputable Dutch talent.

With Reilly starting on pole, Varley managed to squeeze in behind at the start, as Dabski immediately worked his way across to claim P3 from Hart, who was left to dice with Van Splunteren. Hart slipped back to 6th, as former Euro Junior champ Mats van den Brand (Team TKP/Intrepid) showed some form to be running in 4th. On lap 2, Reilly lost the lead to Varley, who made the most of his new MOJO D2s when they were at their optimum. A black flag on the next lap signalled a disastrous end to the meeting for Tom Fawcett (RL Race Team/Tonykart), who featured strongly at the Spanish round and was 10th in the series so far. Meanwhile, his new team-mate Tatiana Calderon (RL Race Team/Tonykart) was having some positive results to climb her way through to P6 ahead of Van Splunteren. Hart eventually found his feet and recovered for 3rd behind Reilly, once again setting the fastest lap. Dabski maintained 4th from Van den Brand.

The starter was not satisfied to let them go, so the Senior Max final had an additional two formation laps before the lights changed. This time Hart closed the gap on the pole-sitter, as did Van den Brand off P5; leaving Reilly on the outside to have to settle for 4th going through turn 1. Hungary's Laszlo Marton (Kalman Motorsport/Birel) watched his podium hopes disappear, forfeiting his row 5 start when he had to make some repairs in the breakdown lane following the opening lap. The next time around, Reilly was in second and already had Varley in his sights, which he impressively executed on the third lap. Hart also appeared to surprise the past British Junior number one soon after, to trail Reilly for 2nd, though Dabski was unable to do the same, pushing to the limit to keep Varley honest when he couldn't find a way past. With only 4 laps gone, an amazing drive from Antoine Barthon (MD Competition/Tonykart) to come from grid 16 to 6th, saw the Frenchman who finished 3rd in the last race in Zuera, setting himself up for the chance of another trophy.

The pace-setters varied from Reilly in 1st to Hart, Varley and also top 3 qualifier Sandro Lukovic (Speedworld by MKR/PCR), carving his way up the field from the last row to savour 11th. Well beyond the first ten, there was 27.5 kilometres of nothing but great racing, with less than one second separating the quickest to slowest lap times in the final. Reilly stayed focussed and never faulted to give Hart no opportunity to lead. Varley couldn't close the gap, while Dabski did his best to in 4th, making the slightest error on lap 17 before setting a lap that was a mere 0.008 seconds off Hart's pole time, with just one to go. Barthon had passed Van den Brand for 5th, with the best result for a lady driver in Euro Senior Max to-date going to Colombia's Calderon in 7th. Driving for a new team for the first time in 7 years, Mike Joossens (DFK/Maddox) overtook Alejandro Lino (Speedsupport/Energy) in the latter stages to finish 8th, while Van Splunteren made up the top 10. Missing from the front-runners was series leader James Greenway (Strawberry Racing/Tonykart), who was unwell during the meeting at Busca.

The accolades at the Italian round went to Joseph Reilly, rising to 4th on the points' ladder, *"We made the best decision this weekend to have the right tyres, tyre pressures and ideal set-up to win. The pre-final went well for me; I started from pole and used my old rubber to save my new tyres for the final, finishing second to my team mate Luke Varley, who had chosen to use his new set. It just gave me the edge in the final I needed to get into the lead and stay there for the win. We tried really hard all week to find the right set-up and it all came together in the heats, then we managed to wrap it up in the pre-final and final. The result is good for the championship points and I'm feeling quite confident now going into the third round. I want to thank Warwick and David and Strawberry Racing for all their hard work, and my team mates for being there and 'having my back!' Also thanks to my sponsors back home in London and my parents for all their support."*

Talvar overcomes a controversial start in Juniors to win his first Euro trophy

The Estonian qualified 4th at Busca for a front row grid in the qualifying heats and got off to a flying start, only to have his race victory taken away when he was excluded from the first heat Saturday. It was established that the number 6 kart failed to meet the requirements of the newly introduced clutch regulations. However, it didn't prevent the very confident junior driver working even harder to make up for lost ground. Following his convincing win in Italy, Talvar is now running 3rd in the championship.

The best qualifying time Friday was posted by Ferenc Kancsar (Kalman Motorsport/Birel) of Hungary, when he topped the second session of the 35-kart field to take his first European pole position (59.670). The next quickest was the Team TKP driver Kay van Kemenade (Intrepid), who went on to secure pole for the pre-final with two wins and a 3rd in the qualifying races. Round 1 hero Josh Webster (Strawberry Racing/Tonykart) also had a first place and two P4s to join the Dutch driver on the front row. Without a win but sufficient points to do so, Slovenian Matija Jurkovic (MLM Sportstil/Intrepid) would start on P3 beside British Mini Max-turned Euro Junior Harrison Scott (RL Race Team), making his debut in international racing at Busca. Scott, along with Maxi Gunkel (Intrepid Force Rotax/Intrepid) and Group 1 pace-setter Matt Parry (Paul Carr Racing/Kosmic), each took the chequered flag in one heat on the 21-race program Saturday. Gunkel and Raoul Owens (Protrain Racing/Gillard) made up the third row.

It was Van Kemenade who led from the gate in the pre-final and soon pulled a gap, as the battle raged behind him amongst Jurkovic, Gunkel and Webster in 4th from the outside row. It was finally Webster was into 2nd by lap 2 who held it, while Dave Blom (Team TKP/Intrepid) got involved in the fight for minor placings. The Junior Max is renowned at the Euro for turning on some of the closest racing, which was definitely the case this time. Talvar had come from 17th to 5th within three laps, shadowed by the lady driver Beitske Visser, who had been quickest in the heats. It wasn't to be Harrison Scott's weekend after all, retiring by half-race distance, but instead fellow British hotshot Ed Brand (HRS Motorsport/CRG) was the mover, as the only one to break the minute mark making up 16 places for P7. Near the end of the 11-lapper, Blom spun off and went back to mid-field, so Talvar dived with Gunkel, seeing the German driver eventually winning the dash for the line to take 3rd, with Visser 5th ahead of Jurkovic and Brand. Webster had chosen to use his new tyres in the final and waited until the last lap to punishingly relegate Van Kemenade to 2nd.

The Strawberry Racing polesitter led the field around for a perfect start, but with several of the front-runners using their reserved set of MOJOs, he was soon under pressure. Visser overtook Gunkel for P2 and made Webster work for the lead, which she grabbed on lap 5, joined by her team-mate Van Kemenade for 2nd. Nothing separated the leading group as positions shuffled, with the two TKP drivers exchanging P1 until Talvar pounced and took control. Looking to pass, Visser went wheel-to-wheel with Talvar hoping to hold him out through the corner, but the pack bunched and he was pushed forward, allowing him to get a break. In the confusion, Gunkel had nowhere to go and collided with the kart in front, then rejoining in 19th. The race also ended soon after for Russia's Artem Markelov (IPB Spartak/Kombikart).

Talvar had stretched the lead to just over a second from Van Kemenade, with the Intrepid duo running away with the race. It was Brand who led the English assault, accompanied by race pace-setter Parry, who also moved into the first five ahead of Webster with four laps remaining. In an attempt to gain back P3 from Brand, Visser looked for a way by, which opened up the door for Parry to overtake both of them in the last lap. Coming into the final corner, Parry seemed to overshoot the mark a little, giving Brand room to squeeze through and drive his way onto the podium. Visser couldn't improve on 5th, as much as she tried, while Webster managed to keep 6th place from the likes of Kancsar, Blom, Jurkovic and Miika Kaiho (Hemet Racing/ninar) 10th, who were all biting at his heels. Webster also maintained his lead in the championship, which he admitted was most important this round.

The winner was overwhelmed by his victory in Italy, saying this weekend was a definite career highlight, *"It means a lot to me to win my first ever European round. I've been on the podium before at the Euro, but this is very special. I didn't have such a good start in the final but then I was able to pass the others one by one because I was a bit faster than them. Beitske [Visser] tried to pass me but she touched my back wheel, then someone pushed me and I got ahead of them. After eight laps I was leading and looked back to see the others further back, so I thought at this stage that I could win. Wednesday's practice was the first time I'd driven at this track, but this round the chassis and mechanics were good - so I won! I'd like to say thanks to my mechanic Priit, Tony my engine builder from Supertune, Talvar Racing and all who support me."*

It all comes together for Rotax DD2 driver Maik Barten for a dream finish

Driving his brand new Peter de Bruijn 'Maddox' chassis for the first time at round 2, last season's Belgian champ Maik Barten (PDB Belgium-DFK/Maddox) struggled somewhat to find his pace earlier in the week, but it all came together when it counted. Having some running issues that took a little time to overcome, the team finally got the

package to work like a charm and Maik took pole position (58.140) in qualifying Friday ahead round one winner Ralph Odendaal (Korridas/Intrepid) by 0.016 of a second. The 18-year old Dutchman took the win in two of the qualifying heats, suffering an early retirement to the pits when his rear axle moved in the third race. However, the final went his way in convincing style so he's sitting at the top of the series points as the new leader over Odendaal.

Fresh from his 3rd place at the Spanish round, Daniele Maccini (TJ Emma/VRK) flew the Italian flag in Busca to start on pole for the pre-final, after running in the top 3 in each of Saturday's heat races. The balance of rows 1 and 2 were filled with South African drivers Odendaal, who had a race win, plus Birel team-mates Ian Young (Kalman Motorsport/Birel) and Justin Allison (Kalman Motorsport/Birel). Odendaal not only set the best lap of the heats, but he was the first to break into the 57-second times and consequently the fastest for the meeting overall. 2008 third-placed DD2 Euro entry Denis Thum was starting from P9 behind Barten in the first of the finals, having two wins as well, but a missing jet in his new carby saw him excluded from one heat the day before.

Warm, sunny conditions at Kart Planet were ideal for the pre-final, as the pace-setter slowed the field for the start. A coming together on the tight first corner caused some initial chaos, with the front-runners unaffected. Maccini lost the lead to Young and they traded places again as Allison and Tiago Ribeiro (Korridas/Intrepid) got involved, as did Damien Vuillaume (Freekart Racing/CRG), who was quickest on lap 5. Both Odendaal and Young lost places in their fight for positions, however a red flag following a dramatic collision between Clement Traglia and Danny Brand that brought the race to a standstill.

The restart was repeated after Patrick Pearce, Dennis Kroes and Mirco Rossi failed to get through the first corner, but they were back on track for the final later in the day. Ribeiro was too good for Maccini this time around, taking the lead off him on lap 2, ahead of Barten, Young and Arthur D Huy (MD Competition/Tonykart) in 5th. Odendaal had damaged a rim in the previous part of the race and found the going difficult towards the end in the battle for positions. Thum also had no glory, spending some of the race sidelined on the infield. When the two races were combined, Maccini was declared the winner from Ribeiro, Barten and Young, ahead of Vuillaume and D Huy. The best lap was set by Robin Unger (Team Norbert Bruckner/CRG).

Luckily for everyone, the DD2 final was more of a thriller due to the action-packed racing and not the unfortunate situation that saw the prior race restarted twice on this occasion. Barten off the second row was quick to grab the lead from the pole man, who also lost 2nd to Young, while Ribeiro recovered from a poor start back in 6th. French driver Antoine Ferret (MD Competition/Tonykart) suddenly appeared in 4th, before taking another place and competing with Young for second, until he fell back to 6th. The pace was fast and Vuillaume was all over Maccini in 3rd, while he fought off a challenge from Seweryn Szczepanik (Schepers Racing/Zanardi). Ferret pounced on the Polish driver as the two gave each other no relief.

Maccini bid to take 2nd from Young until they pushed too far, both losing vital positions with only 4 laps remaining. It was all to Vuillaume's benefit, unable to catch Barten nearly 4 seconds ahead, but now a clear gap from Ferret in P3 then Maccini. Szczepanik held 5th from Dennis Ladefoged (Swiss Hutless DK/Spirit), with a brilliant drive from Thum to take 7th from P28. Crossing the line 8th was a disappointed Odendaal followed by '07 British DD2 champ Tiff Chittenden (SFP Parolin/Parolin) and Young in 10th. The slightest sprinkle of rain made the Kart Planet Circuit even faster in the closing stages, as Ribeiro did a 57.996 nobody could match. 1 and 2 – Barten and Vuillaume, were both pretty excited as they took the chequered flag.

For Maik Barten, it was almost the fairytale final where he only had to overtake the polesitter at the start, *"It was unbelievable! It's really great to win the second round here in Italy. I had new tyres for the final so after 4 or five corners I was in the lead. I was pushing really hard... the grip was good, so was the engine and the kart also. I saw the gap I had over second place, so I drove a little easier to the end. The pre-final was crazy but to finish 3rd on the old set of tyres was good. We've been quick so I was confident we could win today. I want to thank the De Feyter Karting Team from Belgium; they built up the new Maddox DD2 chassis for me last week and it was unbelievable!"*

The DD2 Masters class was won by the Rotax World number one from the year before last Christophe Adams (GKS-Gem Sport/Birel), with first round winner Danny Brand (VZ Racing/Maddox) in 2nd and Tiff's sister, Tamsin Germain (DG Racing/Intrepid) 3rd. Adams doubled-up in the DD2 and Max Masters, but explained that he would like to be more competitive in the gearbox class, *"It's a good result that doesn't come easy when you race in two categories in this type of championship. We've improved our engine power throughout this meeting, so in Sosnova I think we'll be more competitive. I would like to finish in a better position in the overall class as well."*

Max Masters narrowly won by Adams and shaping up to be anyone's title

Completing twice as many laps as everyone else has its obvious advantages, but under the hot Italian sun, it was also detrimental for Christophe Adams (GKS-Gem Sport/Birel) driving in two classes. He has now strengthened his Euro campaign by closing in on defending vice champ Jerome Bourquard (BRK/Sodikart), who remains at the top of the table in the points. For the Belgium driver, it's still a long way to Sharm el Sheikh, where he hopes to represent his country by qualifying once more through the Euro Challenge, together with 13 other deserving drivers. In the meantime, the competition is as close as it ever was in the Masters class this year.

Adams won two out of three qualifying heats to take pole for the pre-final, sharing the front row with the fastest Master from Friday's official timed practice. Goncalo Gaivao (Sportkart/CRG) was second only to Adams in the heats ranking, where the Portuguese driver beat the polesitter in the first race, but was defeated in the last two. Starting on grid 3, Bourquard gave it a good shot, but seemed to lose some of the competitive edge he had towards the afternoon, still quicker in the first heat than everyone else over the course of the day during the races. Rotax Winter Sup winner Rui Vieira (Korridas/Intrepid) is always in with a chance of taking the honours, as he joined the Frenchman on row 2 Sunday for the first of the finals.

The ongoing rivalry that has existed between Adams and Bourquard for some time now, continued when the lights went out for the start of the pre-final. Adams lost the lead to Bourquard, but in the opening lap, their battle allowed Gaivao to take advantage of the situation and go into 1st. The front-runners got into a great dice for supremacy about lap 8 of 15, once Bourquard had worked his way back from 4th. He slipped through to take the lead from Gaivao, who then felt the pressure of Adams searching for an opportunity to steal 2nd. The CRG pilot set the best lap and held his place, denying Adams the extra point in the end. They'd broken away from Viera in 4th, under the watchful eye of the leader's team mate Nuno Santos (Sportkart/CRG), who was originally 3rd in the first lap.

Starting on the outside row for the final worked against Gaivao, but instead in favour of Bourquard in Adams as the Portuguese drivers slotted in behind the leaders for 3rd and 4th. Mid-field the racing was nail-biting, with the places beyond Vieira in 5th being shuffled around until the dust settled further into the race. Bourquard had to relinquish 2nd in the race for the podium to the quickest driver, lacking around 2-tenths in the final that meant he had not way of holding Gaivao out. It began to come undone for Vieira, as he slid down the order to 8th and got into some predicaments that didn't go his way; including one with his friend Pedro Loures (JPL Consulting/PCR) and another with Georges Popoff (RKO/Tonykart) in 9th in the last lap, which ended their final.

A mistake from Gaivao running slightly offline didn't assist him in hunting down Adams, even though he still closed the gap to within half a second. The leader continued to get quicker, right up until the second last lap of 19, almost knocking off Gaivao's time from qualifying. 3rd belonged to Bourquard to keep his series lead, while Santos couldn't advance on P4, with Loures making it 3 drivers from Portugal in the top 5. Steve White (SMP Racing/Intrepid) showed a glimpse of his usual Masters form to move up to 6th but it was short-lived when he found himself on the grass and rejoining the race, having to settle for 7th behind Maksim Shaposhnikov (Hugo Motorsport/Kombikart). Japanese driver Katsuhisa Ikuta (Protrain Racing/Gillard) had some bad luck and failed to finish, classified in 10th.

It was an extremely happy Christophe Adams who stepped up onto the podium to enjoy the celebrations at Busca, *"I'm happy, but even happier because I wasn't sure that I could win! We changed everything for the Masters final and it paid off; we were faster than everyone. Racing two categories has been tiring in this heat. It was hard and I made a few mistakes going from the Max to the DD2 kart, which are very different to drive. I'm happy to have won. Also, a special thanks to my family at home for their support."*

The Czech Republic welcomes back the Euro for round 3

The third round of the Rotax Euro Challenge returns to the popular Eastern European location of the Autodrom Česká Lípa, Sosnova in the Czech Republic from July 22-26. Following last year's first visit for the Euro to Sosnova, the positive response from the competitors was the reason for *RGMMC Establishment* taking the event back to the excellent venue. The summer round saw some great racing and welcomed support for the Euro Challenge, so there was no hesitation to make it even better in 2009.

All the race results from round 2 in Italy are online at www.rgmmc.com and can be found by following the *Kart-Data Live Timing* link. The championship points are also available under "Results" for RACE 2. Why not check out the new *RGMMC IP TV* while you're there, jam-packed with driver and team interviews plus lots more from around the Euro paddock, as well as the 2009 Rotax Winter Cup. There's also racing highlights from past seasons of the Euro Challenge. The direct link is www.rgmmc.de

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