

BKMS Racing

Superkart Racing Team

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No Go At Nogaro!!

BKMS Struggle In The South Of France

BKMS Racing contested the first round of the CIK-FIA European Superkart Championship last weekend at the Paul Armagnac Circuit at Nogaro, Southern France. As expected the event was dominated by the French drivers, who had all had previous experience on the circuit. Paul Kennings was BKMS Racing's lone driver as their other driver Neil Bagley will only compete in the British Superkart Series. The team had a difficult weekend but managed to bring home some points.

The weekend began on Friday morning with the first of three practice sessions. The circuit was completely shrouded in mist so it was not ideal for learning a new circuit! Nevertheless, Paul completed some installation laps on his slower spare engine and old tyres and found the circuit to be quite technically challenging - some said it was like two short circuits connected by two fast straights. The fastest men would be those who had the correct chassis and gearbox ratio setup.

In the next two free practice sessions, the team pre-conditioned tyres for the two Qualification sessions and the two races and also swapped engines to try and obtain a representative setup for gearing. Early indications were that the new tyres weren't performing well but the first qualification session would be the true test.

Saturday dawned dry and bright but quite cool. Paul went out to try and post an early banker time but soon found that the tyres were taking a long time to come up to temperature. His time was only good enough for 20th place and despite trying different tyre pressures to improve the grip, Paul couldn't even break the 1m 32sec barrier. This was more than 4 seconds off the pace! It was plainly apparent that the team needed to do something about the tyre situation and soon switched tyre type for the final qualifying session. However, this session was much warmer and track conditions meant that most people went slower. Paul went out and only had 1 hot lap available, as he needed to save the few tyres he had obtained for the race. This lap was 1.5 seconds quicker than his previous efforts despite the track conditions. This was a huge leap forward in lap time but not in position - the time was only good for 18th place! From this position on the grid, a good finish would always be difficult but the team remained optimistic.

Sunday came and race 1 was held in overcast and cool conditions. Paul made a reasonable start as was soon locked in a gaggle fighting for 9th place. With about 5 laps to go Paul started to push forward and take places but then the problems began! His rear brake started to fade which resulted in some significant loss of efficiency. This meant he could not commit to out-braking manoeuvres with confidence. Paul tried to pick up places through the mistakes of others and was able to do this only to be out braked again! At the same time, the engine appeared to be over-heating which resulted in some slight loss of power. As a result, Paul could only manage 13th place - a disappointing result but in-the-points nevertheless. The pace had improved a little from qualifying and was around the 1m30sec barrier but there was certainly more to come.

Race 2 started poorly for Paul as he was edged wide in the first complex and was nudged just out of the top 20. He soon began his recovery though and was looking good for a top ten finish when the gremlins struck again! His engine started to misfire to the point that it almost stopped. This carried on for around three laps by which time he had lost lots of time. Then, suddenly, the misfire disappeared and he was able to push once more. He managed to get back up to 12th place by the finish but it was another disappointing performance. The points accrued leave him in 14th place in the championship - much lower than had been hoped for.

There were plenty of good performances and surprise results from others. The races were won by Damien Payart (FPE//F) and Benjamin Mahé (TecSav//F). These two were the class of the field. John Riley (Redspeed//GB) took a podium in race 1 with Trevor Roberts (Team Viper Racing UK//GB) a solid 4th on his return to the championship. Kevin Busby surprised many with a storming drive from grid 33 to finish 11th. Lee Morgan (PFP Services) drove a solid race 2 to finish a very creditable 9th on his championship debut. Mark Owens showed promise for the new DEA motor by taking 6th from grid 25. Peter Elkmann (EWUTEC Racing Team) took a podium in race 2 completing the first podium without a British driver since June 2006, testament to the strength in depth of the British scene.

Commiserations must go to three of the top British drivers. European Champion Gavin Bennett (Bennett's Coaches - GB Racing//GB), Vice Champion of Europe Malcolm Crowe (CPC Motorsport - AndersonCSK//GB) and many's pre-race favourite Lee Harpham (Barker Racing) were all made to start from the pit lane in race 1 owing to pre-grid mechanical interventions. Of the trio, Harpham managed to get up to 10th place despite carrying mechanical problems and spinning during the race. Race 2 promised more for them but delivered little. Crowe retired early on, Bennett recovered to 8th following a spin and Harpham retired with a puncture after leading for half the race.

So the British contingent was left somewhat disappointed following the European Superkart opener, including BKMS Racing. Hopefully the next round at the Lausitzring (16-18th May) will bring more luck. Paul would like to thank all BKMS Racing's sponsors for their support and Bob & Neil for top line support during the weekend.



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