

BKMS Racing

Superkart Racing Team



Couldn't See A Thing At The Sachsenring!

BKMS Racing Claim 4th Place In Final European Championship Rankings

BKMS Racing travelled to the Sachsenring in eastern Germany this weekend to complete Paul Kennings' European Championship campaign. The Sachsenring circuit, host to the German round of Moto GP, was new to most of the drivers so was to provide some surprise results in the 3rd and final round of the CIK-FIA European Championship. The event would be incorporated into the ADAC GT Masters car event along with a German F3 series round.

It was looking like the championship would go to Gavin Bennett (GB//Bennett's Coaches) as he had a healthy lead over Malcolm Crowe (GB//CPC Motorsport/Anderson-CSK) and with Damien Payart (F//Malm-FPE) withdrawing for personal reasons, the title race would be decided between these two. Paul's championship could have gone either way – an improvement on the 5th place going into the meeting was possible, as Payart was absent and Michael Wörn (Team JP-Racing) was only 1 point ahead. However, Paul needed to be concerned with the whereabouts of other drivers behind, particularly Lee Harpham (GB//Barker Racing), Peter Elkmann (D), John Riley (GB//Redspeed Racing) and Mark Owens (GB//Shift).

The only driver to have already raced the circuit was 2005 German F3 Champion Peter Elkmann. The former 1251CC vice-champion of Europe has also won a round of F3 Euroseries, a series that Lewis Hamilton won on his way to F1. Without F3 budget for 2007, he returned to Superkart at Assen where he was vying for victory in race 2 but was denied by a fuel system fault.

In Friday's first free practice, Elkmann signalled his intentions by posting the fastest time. Mark Owens showed his credentials with 2nd. Paul posted a steady time in 15th but there was more to come - the primary gear ratio was incorrect. Paul said that the circuit was technical and physically demanding with many blind corners making it difficult to see through the corner and find a consistent line. The circuit is very hilly, punctuated by the awesome 'waterfall' section – the steep downhill section resulting in 155mph top speed at the bottom. The unusual anti-clockwise layout included a section of left hand corners lasting around 35sec; very demanding for the driver as most circuits are clockwise (mostly right hand bends) so the muscle groups are not as developed to cope with these loads.

Elkmann topped the second Friday free practice session by a huge 0.9sec margin back to Lee Harpham in 2nd. Elkmann's time was now much quicker, breaking the Moto GP lap record of 1m 21.8sec by 0.3sec. Paul was finding his feet slowly and with the correct gearing was able to go 1 second quicker but was still some 3.7 seconds off the lead owing to traffic.

For the first qualifying session on Saturday at 8am, the circuit was wet due to overnight rain. Paul took to the track late on in the session on dry tyres just to lightly scrub them for the races. His time was good enough for 15th place. Elkmann was again the fastest, this time by an amazing 1.5sec from Gavin Bennett. In Q2, around midday, Paul posted a qualifying time on his first flying lap 2 seconds quicker than his previous

effort. However, he soon lost grip due to a blistered right-front tyre. Once the damaged tyre was changed he went out to try and better his time but he could not improve which meant he qualified in 14th place for the races. Part of the reason for this was that his neck could not handle the lateral G-forces of the unusual amount of left hand bends. At some left hand corners it was not possible for him to look into the corner properly as his neck did not have the strength – in some areas he could hardly see a thing. This was a serious concern as the race was in only 4 hours time so recovery was not possible. For the front of the grid, Elkmann had posted an amazing benchmark of 1m19.8sec (best by 1.0sec – a massive margin at this level), beating the MotoGP lap record by 2.0 sec and the 250cc GP Motorbike record by 5.2sec. Tyre degradation was a big issue for all competitors. The unusual circuit layout was unusually hard on right-hand tyres so most drivers suffered tyre blistering.

For Race 1, at the end of Saturday's programme, Paul had found a fellow competitor willing to lend him a neck brace. Gavin Bennett had also felt the need to use a neck brace. Paul started well but kept a steady pace to conserve his tyres. It soon became apparent that Paul was suffering from another problem – the neck brace he was using pushed his helmet up at the front, which was dislodging his glasses. Again, he was struggling to see anything but for a different reason! Despite this he had a successful battle with Bengt Albertsson (S//Ravenol powerKART Racing), mono-cylinder European Champion Guido Kleinemeyer (D), Poul Petersen (DK//PVP Kart), Olaf Dau (D) and Jürgen Reinke (D). Paul finished in 8th place, enough to retain his 5th spot in the rankings. Surprisingly, Malcolm Crowe beat Peter Elkmann by 10sec to win - it was an excellent drive from Crowe as he had not seen the circuit before Q1 owing to travel delays, which ruined his Friday free-practice preparation. This was not good enough for the championship however as Gavin Bennett managed to claim his 5th successive podium – he is the 2007 European Superkart Champion. The race was a great result for Russell Anderson (Anderson-CSK) who prepares engines for both drivers.

In Race 2 on Sunday afternoon, Paul's championship could have ended up with 3rd or 9th dependant on how other competitors fared so it would be a nail-biting race. After a fraught start (Kleinemeyer tangled with Albertsson and Chilcott among others, Albertsson missing Paul by centimetres) it was into tyre conservation mode once more. Paul dropped a few places but kept them in sight until he could push harder. Sure enough that time came and he was able to get back up into 8th place. With the race going to Riley (GB//Redspeed Racing) followed by Bennett and Phil Featherstone (GB//PFP Services), this was enough for Paul to claim 4th spot in the rankings.

So, as they drove West into the sunset, BKMS Racing were thinking of their next race – Cadwell on 7th Oct to attempt to tie up the British Series at this, the penultimate round. Paul has a healthy lead in this series. The last round is at the Nürburgring on 21st Oct.



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