

# TOUGH MONKEYS

## **Buckmore Park Elite Championship Round 4: 12/07/09**

And so it came to pass that the Monkeys would once more find a great way of blowing a good result. I've lost count of the times this season when we've suffered avoidable loss of time in the pit lane through being unable to restart the kart correctly. Twice it happened in race one. Once in race two. Race three the stops went relatively smoothly and we had a good kart but a lacklustre grid position and a blown exhaust put us out of contention. Okay, I lied, I have kept count. Three incidents of losing precious time stuck in the pit lane awaiting a restart and three very poor results.

Today was to be no different, but this one would be much harder to take as we had been in such a strong position. Fresh from our Le Mans excursion both Mig and I were very much looking forward to getting straight back into the kart. I had been pumped up all week and was being very single minded in my ambition about doing a sub 46 second lap of Buckmore for the first time. The weather had been threatening a downpour all week but in the end it was warm and sunny for the duration of the race. Rain overnight had left the track a little greasy but not excessively and there were twenty one teams entered for the fourth round.

Briefing seemed to have been delayed for whatever reason but that served to give us all good opportunity to gather in the clubhouse and reminisce about Le Mans. Most of the drivers that were there last weekend were back out to play this weekend except for Graham and Dave. Stu was also in the clubhouse to come and say hello with his girlfriend Brynie (excuse me if that's not the right spelling) but wasn't racing. It was a bit of an odd atmosphere really as although we all get on very well together we're still there to race against each other so usually teams tend to stick together in their little groups. Today everyone was mixing with everyone else and happily chatting about tactics.

Practice was there to remind me that the Prokarts we used at Le Mans are very different creatures to the C100s we were using today, especially it would seem in the brake department. I came spanking out of the pits and up to Garda, put my foot on the brake and suffered a clenched buttock moment and naff all seemed to happen. As it turned out the brakes were perfectly fine but have a much longer travel than the Prokarts. Virtually all the people that had driven at Le Mans had said the same thing, so it wasn't just me being simple as usual. It took a while for me to re-adjust to driving the 2-stroke kart but settled into a rhythm soon enough. I was catching everyone in front of me and passing them cleanly, even though I was missing countless turn-in points at Garda and HP1 while I continued to familiarise myself with the brakes. I was concerned however that with each passing lap Mark Figes appeared to be closing in on me. He's very quick, but because of the weight difference between us I wouldn't normally expect him to be closing in the manner he was. It would reveal itself in qualifying however that he and team mate Justin Dobson, my chauffeur for last week, had received a rocket ship for this round.

Qualifying duty was to be the responsibility of Barry for this round, and boy did he do a good job. Our qualification sessions of late have been utter junk but this time we had something to celebrate as Barry stuck the kart on 5<sup>th</sup> place on the grid with a 46.4. There was practically nothing separating the top ten and for once we'd be starting ahead of CFM who had a kart that would happily turn one way but not the other. The race at a frantic pace and Barry managed to pick up a position during the opening melee while at the front Chris Hanson led

out the pack from Justin Dobson. Dobbo was to prove why he's in the Le Mans team and soon took the lead which he and his colleague Mark Figes would never relinquish.

As normal we made our customary early pit stop and Barry handed over to me for what was a thoroughly enjoyable stint. I had a great battle once more with Carl Matthews who with a little help from the questionable antics of a back marker I was able to get the better of. I was also able to sit on the tail of a very fast Mark Figes for a long time which I was very happy with given the speed of their kart today. I handed back to Barry with us in a strong podium place and he continued the good work before coming in for the changeover to Mig.

And then it went wrong once more. Mig had the recurring problem of the kart refusing to fire in the pit lane. We pushed it all the way down on to the circuit but it wasn't going anywhere without the help of the pusher kart. In one moment we'd gone from a podium finish to the lower orders. I was about as cheesed off as I recall being in a kart as for the first time this season we had a strong chance of a podium and it was gone in an instant. To his eternal credit Mig put in a stellar stint to bring us back up into the top ten. His average flying lap time was 46.83 which was almost identical to my 46.81 average despite his weight disadvantage. Barry's average for the race was 46.97 so we were all pretty even.

I've got to admit this was a disappointing race for me and the rest of the team. It's left us with nothing to play for in the championship as there's really little chance of us even being able to scrape a top three finish in the table. The next round is only two weeks away so hopefully our luck will change but as far as this season is concerned I'm already writing it off.