

# TOUGH MONKEYS

## **Kartsport Endurance: 13/01/05**

We returned to Caxton for the annual Milbank Karting Challenge as champions and we knew they'd be in no mood to let us take the trophy away from them for a second time. We'd got a strong team again this year, despite losing our team captain from last year. Trevor Poole, number two in Hanson Building Products hierarchy was again present and we were also joined by my department manager Neil Baxter who had driven competitively in previous challenges.

We'd had a fortunate grid position for a change, and Neil led us off with a commanding early stint by putting the team well into the lead. However, a minor discretion led to a black flag and a trip to the sinbin, losing the lead and dropping us back into the pack.

The other guys in the team had their stints before I got out with about an hour and a half to go. Trevor, now team captain, had decided that he was going to leave me out once more till the end of the race to emulate last year's performance. I wasn't aware of this, but guessed that might be the case as the minutes went by. When I'd taken to the track, we were down in third position and a couple of laps down.

Now feeling more like an experience karter, and knowing this particular track very well, I was hacking time out of the two guys in front, taking second place quiet easily and making inroads into the leader. Unbeknown to me though, politics were happening in the pit lane. Despite the briefing stating that there were no restrictions on driver changes or how long drivers stayed out, the organisers weren't happy to see their top team having huge chunks of time taken out of them. Around the same moment that I pulled up onto the rear bumper of the lead kart, an announcement came over the tannoy telling our team to pull me in or be disqualified.

When I came into the pits, and leaped out of my kart, I went in search of why I'd been pulled in. He'd been informed that I was a danger to other karters because I was tired having been out there nearly an hour. I wasn't even remotely tired, an excuse I had made a complete mockery of by posting the fastest lap of the entire evening two laps before I made my premature return to the pits.

There were all kinds of finger pointing going on, and at one point I fully expected my dad to lamp Mr Milbank. I didn't get involved in any of this, even though I knew that the manoeuvre stank. While this was happening, the racing was continuing for the last half hour of the event. Trevor had gone out and had gotten a black flag dropping us over a lap behind the leaders. Trevor came in a little after this, replaced by Neil who took the kart to the finish without drama.

The race left a bitter taste in the mouth, however I took many positives from my own performance, and look forward to taking up the challenge next year.