

TOUGH MONKEYS

Buckmore Park Ironman Round 6: 13/07/06

This won't go down as one of my better performances. I didn't feel confident in the days leading up to the race, but then I rarely do, but having seen the weather forecast promising torrential rain I was still looking forward to the prospect of my first wet race at Buckmore.

Sadly, this wouldn't be the case. Despite visibility being measured in inches on the M25, Buckmore was found basking in sunshine. I'd arrived early and spent an hour hanging over the armco talking to fellow Ironmen John O'Brien and new boy Nicholas Jorgensen. Though the tarmac was wet when I arrived, the corporate sprint race we were watching had quickly dried the track.

Being level on points with rising star Adam Michaelis going into the race, I was hoping to at least be able to keep him behind me, but a shocking qualifying stint left me languishing in 18th position on the grid. I didn't feel totally confident in the kart during those laps, but gave up the opportunity to swap to a new machine as I put it down to my inexperience in the changing conditions. Even so, I was disturbed by how quickly I was being past by top runners such as Darren Pullen and Steve Brown Jnr.

The race began with me once more on the outside line heading towards the first corner. I got a relatively clean start and sneaked to the inside line heading into turn one and held station around the first hairpin and stayed where I was all the way around till the same corner on lap two. Trying to steal a place I was pushed wide and lost a couple of places and was mugged at the second hairpin also.

It seemed that each and every time I tried to overtake someone I would end up losing out and dropping a couple of places. I had some shocking early lap times, taking eight laps to break under 53 seconds.

Sadly it was to stay like that. I was suffering hideous understeer and couldn't get the thing to turn into either the fast or the slow corners. I must have dropped into the high 20's before I found any pace, and I certainly wasn't anywhere near leader speed.

Adam, however, was flying. He was up in 6th position and on for his best ever Ironman result. Unfortunately, he became victim of a shocking move by a rookie backmarker and was punted into the tyre wall leading into Pullmans. Not the place you'd choose to have an off, and he was wedged there for several laps. It left him languishing somewhere behind me, which meant he was way back!

There was quite a lot of that behaviour going on though. Two karts in particular were causing me all kinds of headaches. Whenever I'd pass one of them, he'd come skipping across the kerb/grass up the inside of the next turn to retake the position regardless of whether I was in his way or not. He picked up a couple of warnings for his behaviour, but only when he'd do the same to the leaders as they lapped him.

From whatever lowly position I'd dropped to, I dragged myself back up to cross the finish line in exactly the same position I'd started. A highly disappointing evening, but we've all got to suffer the lows to enjoy the highs.