

# TOUGH MONKEYS

## **Buckmore Park Winter Man of Steel Round 3: 20/01/08**

Another week and another race at Buckmore. One week on from the slippery old Team of Steel victory and the weather on the drive down suggested it was going to be a wet one for the third round of the winter Man of Steel. It was quite natural then for Buckmore to be completely dry by the time racing got underway.

After the howler of last month I was looking to find some form and finally get the championship under way now that the finish line is in sight. Series leaders Jack Harding and Steve Brown Jnr would surely start as favourites, while Aaron Stapleton would be their biggest threat. GP86 team mate Mig Morland joined me in some mild confidence ahead of the race as we were both feeling good after last weekend's result.

The heavies went out for their qualifying first, and lap times were hardly melting the tarmac, but they were considerably faster than I was when us lightweights took to the track. I was initially behind Steve and Mig so would quickly be able to tell if my kart had any pace, and it soon became clear it didn't. I stayed out for a couple of laps in the hope it would come to me but I soon decided to commit the rare act of diving into the pit for a change. I headed back out onto the track astride the new kart and swept into turn one.....and very nearly fell out of the kart. I suspect the strut that secures the seat to the chassis was loose or broken and as I took a right turn the seat flexed and did its best to eject me from the kart. There was nothing wrong pace wise with the kart, but deciding this was one problem I couldn't drive around I once more headed to the pit lane.

I hoped that this would be third time lucky, but I had precious few moments to set a quick lap in the new kart. I just had time to get some heat into the tyres and put one flying lap in before the flag dropped. Before that lap I was lying in 22<sup>nd</sup> place, but my efforts had been rewarded with 6<sup>th</sup> on the grid for the start, alongside Steve and behind Jack. Aaron had claimed the pole while the rest of the upper reaches of the grid were the usual suspects. A quick glance also reveals that father really is like son as Carl and Adrian Matthews set identical times on the same lap to share the sixth row.

Racing soon began for real and starting on the outside of the track I was expecting a battle to keep position, which led me to be very surprised when a huge gap opened up in front of me and I leapt from 6<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> by the first hairpin. I slipped in behind Jack and kept an early close vigil on the leading trio. I was more than acutely aware that Steve and Dave Waters were right behind me, and it was Steve who made the first move.

There then followed a race long battle between 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> starring the three of us. Positions changed regularly with my kart appearing to have more straight line grunt while Steve could carry more speed through the turns. We traded places constantly, however I was able to remain in 4<sup>th</sup> for much of the first half of the race. Unfortunately a backmarker was to prove my undoing on lap 30. Closing rapidly down the hill I was following him through Paddock and primed for a move into Garda, however had absolutely nowhere to go when he span mid corner leaving me no option but to T-bone him and come to a complete halt. Dave went right and Steve went left and I was suddenly several seconds adrift of the scrap I had until moments ago led.

It took a few laps to get back onto my previous pace and the gap to Dave was quite significant. I would be coming out of HP1 while they were exiting HP2, however through traffic and a brief but timely period of drizzle I was able to scamper back up behind them. I was hoping the drizzle would become rain and throw a few spanners in the works, feeling that I could take advantage and climb up the order. The leader was still in sight and it wouldn't take much of a mistake for the top 6 to be back together.

Sadly, this didn't happen and my visor soon cleared of moisture which was great because it gave me a clear view of Dave who I was no back on the tail of. I followed him closely for several laps, unable to see where I was significantly quicker to put a move on him. I eventually got a great run out of turn two up to HP1 and held the inside line to claim 5<sup>th</sup>, but my next lap was scrappy and Dave was soon back past. I tailed him closely for the remaining laps, on several occasions pulling out of some possibly too daring moves. We had to negotiate a whole armada of backmarkers in the closing laps but I was never able to make a clean move so crossed the finish line right where I had begun the race.

It was a cracking race long battle, and I was sweating buckets as I returned to the paddock. Aaron had proved his pole lap was no fluke and taken an excellent victory, leading Jack home by over 7 seconds. Heavy boy Stuart Hatcher had done a supreme job to take third overall just behind Jack and by a similar margin ahead of Steve. Mark Figs and John Mahoney completed the heavies podium in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> overall. By his own recent standards Mig had suffered a poor race down in 14<sup>th</sup> and Adam Michaelis limped away from the track with some baffling reasoning after coming home 12<sup>th</sup>.

So the circus rolls onto the last round of the winter season before the Bermuda shorts come out for the summer championship. There is the small matter of the final round of the 2hr to go before that though, and GP86 and GP07 will be doing their very best to secure both class titles. That's a whole two weeks away though....suppose I better do some work in the mean time. Sorry boss.