

# TOUGH MONKEYS

## **Buckmore Park Thunder 60 Round 8: 21/10/07**

Right at the end of a miserable week for British sport, I have reason to be smug and happy. The last round of the summer season saw the season long good weather continue right till the end, and Buckmore greeted us with the sun shining low in the blue sky. Not that anyone was remotely bothered by this of course as tonight's race clashed with the final round of the Formula 1 world championship over in Brazil, so the clubhouse was packed to bursting with people watching the TV hoping to cheer on Buckmore's most celebrated graduate. As Bernie Ecclestone seemed reluctant to alter the time of the race, Alan and the gang had structured the evening in a manner that we could all watch as much of the race as possible, and a 45 minute window was open to us to go out and put in 10 qualifying laps as and when we felt like it. It was a bit of a free for all, but I think it went down rather well.

Anyway, while Lewis Hamilton was struggling over in South America, I took to the circuit for my laps. The man they call Dangerous, being Dave Tebbut, came up quickly on me during my out lap and I let him past in order to gauge my speed. It became apparent very soon that I wasn't on the pace as Dave disappeared off into the distance. Added to the general lethargy of the kart was a tendency to cut out momentarily on the drag out of Paddock. I decided to gamble on a change of kart and pitted after four or five laps. I jumped into a second kart and immediately it felt better and gave me a lot more confidence. Darkness was beginning to creep in and the track was a little slippery, but despite this I felt that I was putting in some good times. I headed back into the pits when I came up behind traffic, perhaps not feeling I'd had opportunity to get the most out of the kart, so I was delighted to find that as it stood I was sitting 3<sup>rd</sup> on the grid. I disappeared back off up into the clubhouse to watch the end of the race, and when the last of the engines had died I was pleased to find I was still in 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The results of the F1 race in, we headed back out to find our karts laid out neatly for us on the grid. I was starting behind Si Rudd (as usual) and Dangerous himself. Beside me was Steve Brown Jnr who would be looking to defend his 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the championship from Andrew Mollison who found himself in unusual territory back in 13<sup>th</sup> position. I began the night lying in 5<sup>th</sup> place, with an open invitation to claim 4<sup>th</sup> as Hugo Bush would not be racing tonight. I was concerned however over the other people who could claim that place from me, as both Paul Cox and Adam Michaelis were parked right behind me on the grid.

I'd barely parked my backside in the seat and the race was underway. I'd noticed in the previous session that my seat kept sliding back so had gotten one of the marshals to tighten it up for me. Obviously, it wasn't tight enough as I immediately slid backwards the moment I stood on the throttle. I had no time to consider that minor little issue

however as Conways loomed before me and Steve Jnr was alongside me into the corner. I had to turn on the accelerator as the tyres were now cold but I managed to hold station and tucked in behind Si who had been jumped by Dave.

The first couple of laps saw those two battling away while I seemed comfortable in 3<sup>rd</sup>. Shortly after Si passed Dave I got a bit of a run out of HP1, and went out wide intending to cut back inside Dave, only to find Steve Jnr already there. I had little option but to skip along the geocrete, grazing the tyre wall and slip back in behind Steve. I remained there for three laps before getting a great run out of Garda and drafted past him on the turn into Conways at the start of lap 6. I then set about catching up the gap that had grown to Dave.

At Garda on lap twelve I'd had a good exit from the previous corner at Paddock and put a nose inside of Dave's kart. It wasn't a balls out attempt at passing, but just a toe in the water to see what the grip was like into what is historically my favoured passing place. Dave saw me and as he was guest starring in the series tonight he made the very gentlemanly gesture of allowing me to pass on the next straight. I acknowledged the move and set off after Si. The problem I have with the talented Mr Rudd is that he's so bloody fast, and consistent with it too. From this point on I made no inroads into his lead at all, quite the opposite in fact. His consistent lapping saw him gradually pull further and further away. I glanced across at the clock and saw that there was 45 minutes left of the race, and I wished it would finish straight away. I knew second was the best I could expect, and as I was there already I wanted to conclude events as quickly as possible. Darkness had fully gripped the circuit by now, and I don't mind telling you how slippery it was off line. There were several people during the evening who got to inspect the tyre walls down to this very reason.

One person who had an entirely different reason for a trip off of the circuit was Andrew, who had been mounting a great comeback drive through the field when structural failure of a track rod ushered him effectively out of the race. Prior to this he had set what was the second fastest lap of the night, once more proving he is one of the finer drivers at the club, however tonight was not going to be his night. He would come home a distant 18<sup>th</sup>, but was philosophical about it nonetheless.

My race continued quite nicely however, with me dispatching the endless stream of backmarkers relatively effortlessly. I had a few bumps along the way from some of the newbies, but that's to be expected. The season "suits" were all playing fair, again as to be expected, and I'd have the opportunity to pass almost all of them as I lapped everyone up to and including 7<sup>th</sup> place.

I did have a few moments of alarm towards the end of the race, not least the full course yellow that bunched everyone up again giving Dave the opportunity to close right in on me, but I did manage to put some breathing space between us come the end. There was also a slight breathless moment when I tried to dispatch two backmarkers in one move as they squabble for position. As I passed I was forced onto the geocrete down the main straight, putting me out of position for my braking into turn one. I had to drift sideways around Conways out on the greasy outside line before getting things back under control, and there were a few choice words inside my helmet.

Despite this effort to throw it away I scampered across the line in second place, my best solo finish in a championship event at Buckmore. Si was just unbeatable as I've come to expect, while Dave followed me home just 3 seconds behind.

So, that's it for the summer season. I'd hoped I could finish on a high and that's indeed what I did and in so doing claimed 4<sup>th</sup> in the championship just 7 points behind Andrew. By my own expectations and goals for the season, it's been a fantastic year. I hoped I'd get my first podium at some point, but as it turns out I've got to put up another shelf to hold all the trophies. It's been great to compete with so many talented drivers, both in my class and in the heavyweight division and I look forward to next season.

In the mean time, we have the small matter of the winter season that starts next month. Sadly my spectating duties on the Rally of Wales prevent my taking part, so it would seem I have two months without a race drive. It's great then that I'll go into my close season on the back of such a good result. I've already gone on record as saying that my goal for next season has to be a race win in the Man of Steel, so let's hope I can meet or even exceed expectations once more.

See you next season!