

29/07/2008

CONTINUING TO MAKE HEADWAY

Place: Brands Hatch (UK)
Dates: 25th - 27th July 2008
Track length: 3.7km

Race 1

Grid Position: 20
Result: 8

Race 2

Grid Position: 1
Result: -

Tim had mixed feeling about his return to Brands Hatch. Friday brought a sensation of déjà-vu, as he was already familiar with the 1.93km reduced-length circuit from the Formula 3 Euro Series. For the qualifying session on Saturday and without any extra time for free practice, they switched to the 3.7km full-length circuit which Tim and half the other contestants had never driven on before.

"The additional part of the track is very difficult," explains Tim. "There are a lot of very fast, blind corners where you can't see the turn-in point." At least it wasn't necessary to make many changes to the setup. "We'd managed to get it just right for both track configurations." Learning the track was the lesser of his two qualifying problems. As there were only two sets of tyres available, Tim had to use the first of these to familiarise himself with the track. "When I finally fitted the second set, yellow flags and traffic prevented me from getting in a flying lap." Consequently, he had to settle for 20th on the grid.

Even the beauty of the circuit couldn't compensate for that disappointment. "It's a fabulous track," says Tim. "Brands Hatch is traditional race track with plenty of fast sections. It is undulating and makes great demands of a driver. Most modern circuits have a staccato design which is supposed to make it easier to launch passing manoeuvres. But Brands Hatch has a superb flow to it which makes for a really enjoyable drive."

And it's also possible to move up the field, as Tim demonstrated in the first race, managing to improve from his P20 start to finish eighth. "It was possible to overtake, but it was difficult if the man in front was smart and didn't lose speed," concedes Tim. "But I was lucky to the extent that quite a few of the drivers ahead of me had to retire." On the final few laps, Tim was tailing the car running eighth for pole position in the second race. "On the last lap, I attacked but it wasn't enough." As things turned out, that didn't matter, since a disqualification was to secure Tim the pole for Sunday anyway.

This time, he intended to make more of the opportunity than he had at Estoril where he also started from pole but could only manage third spot on the podium. "I got off to a great start and managed to shake off my pursuer." But a safety-car phase was to negate his advantage. "After the re-start, I managed to get away from everyone again and I had a one-second lead on Michael Ammermüller. But then I probably pushed that little bit too hard, and on a fast right-hander, I went up on the grass with one of my rear tyres." The resulting spin brought his race and his hopes of victory to a premature end. "If it hadn't been for that, I could clearly have won the race," says Tim with evident frustration.

All the same, this weekend's outing at Brands Hatch has fired him up for his home race in Oschersleben. "We've shown that we're making headway and that Estoril wasn't a flash in the pan," says Tim with satisfaction. "After the last race, I said that I was capable of more than third place and I almost proved it here."



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