

17/06/2008

WE'RE ON OUR WAY

Place: Brno (CZ)
Dates: 13th - 15th June 2008
Track length: 5,4km

Race 1

Grid Position: 10
Result: 11

Race 2

Grid Position: 11
Result: 8

On the third race weekend of the International Formula Master season, Tim Sandtler recorded his first success, notching up his first championship point in Brno (Czech Republic). It had been a long time coming, with technical problems in Valencia and Pau frustrating him on his first two outings. "Those problems didn't exactly make my job any easier," says Tim ruefully, "but these things happen. It was just my bad luck that it happened to me twice on the run." He sees the point scored in Brno as a sign that his fortunes have now taken a turn for the better. "We're on our way," says Tim who is keen to add to his points tally at the next race event.

And yet it wasn't all smooth sailing this weekend either. During qualifying, a sensor in the air restrictor failed. "I couldn't always get full throttle and the engine kept misfiring. So instead of two qualifying attempts on new tyres, he only managed one. "That was risky because of all the red flags, and in any case, we were having difficulties with the setup." In view of these problems, tenth place on the grid was a reasonable outcome.

The start of the first race was a curious affair. Just in front of Tim, team-mate Filip Salaquarda was battling it out with Spanish driver Arturo Llobell for ascendancy going into the first corner. When Tim saw the pair of them, he could see that it was going to be tight. "I needed to avoid them, so consequently I lost speed and had to concede two places." The pursuit was limited by two factors: firstly, the Brno track isn't exactly renowned for offering many overtaking opportunities and secondly, Tim's car was understeering so badly that his front tyres were under excessive strain. "I was unable to accelerate out of the corners and maintain momentum," he explains. "Which meant I never really had the opportunity to attack." All the same, he made the best of the situation by taking eleventh place.

He was to compensate for this in the second race. Overnight, Tim and his team worked on the setup and made some progress in the right direction. "I got off to a good start and moved up several places over the first few laps," Tim reports. He then found himself in the thick of the race action and battled his way up to eighth: "But then, after three or four laps, I had the same problem that had affected my performance in qualifying: I couldn't get full throttle any more." Despite this handicap, Tim managed to defend his eighth position and record his first point of the season.

"Our first point and a some neat overtaking manoeuvres. That shows that we've taken a small step forwards," he says, summing up the situation so far. During the break leading up to Estoril, they will be performing data analysis so that they can carry on improving the setup. "I'm optimistic," says Tim. "When we tested at Estoril, we were good. We showed that we have the potential to be up with the front-runners. I'm still aiming for regular podium appearances."



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