

15/07/2008

First breath of podium air

Place: Estoril
Dates: 11th - 13th July 2008
Track length: 4,1km

Race 1

Grid Position: 6
Result: 8

Race 2

Grid Position: 1
Result: 3

As the season reached its halfway point in Estoril, Tim found himself on the podium for the first time in his Formula Master career. In qualifying, he already had the strong feeling that he and his team were starting to get things right. "The characteristics of the Estoril circuit are actually quite similar to those of Valencia," says Tim. "The track surface is very rough and aggressive, so I had been expecting to have a tough time of it here." But it turned out to be just the reverse. In qualifying, Tim took P6. "I could perhaps have shaved another tenth off my time but I was blocked by another car on my flying lap. Otherwise, I might have taken fourth place on the grid."

But despite that minor disappointment, he was satisfied with the changes that had been made to the setup: "It still wasn't quite optimum but we're heading in the right direction." Unfortunately, the same could not be said of his start when, once again, he had problems with the switch from Formula 3 to Formula Master. "In F3, my starts were always good and I was generally able to pinch a couple of places." In his new vehicle, he is having some difficulty in mastering the start technique, as was also apparent from his team-mate who was having similar problems. "The first time, I went into a wheel spin and the second time, my revs just completely dropped away," explains Tim. "Unfortunately, we can't practise starts and there is no set procedure for this either." Tim's team are unable to help him much, as they themselves have limited experience with the car. "We'll have to carry on making slight adjustments."

In the first race, Tim initially fell away from sixth to ninth but then he managed to push past Norbert Siedler and close the gap to the leaders. "I was creeping up on them by tenths of a second, but in the end it wasn't enough." However, his eighth-place finish not only brought him an additional point but also secured pole position for the Sunday race.

Once again, Tim fell back two places at the start, which nullified his pole position, but over the rest of the race and despite deteriorating rear tyres, he was able to hold off the challenge of Chris van der Drift. "He was pressing me very hard but I didn't make any errors and gave him no chance to overtake." The battle continued over many laps with van der Drift breathing down his neck, but Tim's reward was his first podium of the season. "I'm satisfied, though a victory from pole would have been even better," says Tim. "My team put in some excellent work and P3 represents a step forward compared with our first races of the season." For the second half of the season, the aim is to breathe the thinner air on the top rung of the podium.



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