

PRESS RELEASE

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Team Evolution back at the top and focused on securing more titles in 2019

With a hectic summer season program underway, Team Evolution is pushing hard to make every weekend count. Round 4 of the IAME Series Benelux 2019 was no exception, as the British team secured three podiums and notable results amidst the challenging weather conditions throughout the event at the Karting Genk – ‘Home of Champions’ circuit in Belgium. In the X30 Senior category, Joey van Splunteren bounced back to the top, after a less than satisfying Euro Series round recently, outperforming all his competitive rivals for victory and his invitation to the IAME International Final at Le Mans mid-October. Zach Ripley and Herolind Nuredini took a brilliant 2nd and 3rd respectively in X30 Juniors, with Ripley closing the gap on the series lead.

This was the first Final win of the 2019 series for Joey van Splunteren, the defending Benelux champion, well-positioned now to be able to take the Senior title at the fifth and deciding round at Mariembourg in November. However, the 27-year old’s impressive racecraft and skill definitely separated him from the field of 52 drivers at the fourth edition. The Dutchman posted best lap in the first qualifying session running on wet tyres, but the drying track soon left the rubber burnt by the end of the official timed practice. With the second group qualifying on slicks, the lap times were way faster, resulting in a staggered combined result in accordance to the regulations.

With no option other than replacing the rear tyres with the two new wets permitted to be changed for the duration of the event, Van Splunteren was still at a disadvantage in Heat 1 when the group 2 drivers used their brand new set of rain tyres, in addition to having a technical issue. Finishing in P3 for the Saturday afternoon race, he then won both of Sunday’s heats in the wet once again, with a lead of almost 10 seconds and just over 3 seconds at the flag, setting the best lap in each, ranking P2 for the Final grid. Fitting his unused set of slick tyres for the dry conditions, the leading Team Evolution driver controlled the race soon after the start and apart from coming under pressure in the closing stages, held on to collect the winner’s trophy, together with his invitation to the IAME International Final in Le Mans and the maximum race points to further stretch his position at the top of the championship ladder with just one round remaining.

Joey van Splunteren – “Genk was a good weekend in difficult weather conditions. You still always have to have the luck, which we didn’t really have in the qualifying Saturday. The wet tyres were burnt already once the track began to dry and I had no choice other than to change the two wet rears for the first heat later in the day. Then, we had a problem with the spark plug cap as well, so I could not do any better than 3rd. The next day, we were fast in the wet and won both the heats with a good lead over the others. This was very nice. In the Final, I got into P1 on the second lap and could stay in front until the end of the race. Now, we will see how it goes at the last round of the series in November. I know what I need to do to win the championship, so we will focus on winning the race and see how it goes. We’re in a good position.”

With the split qualifying shuffle due to the mixed weather Saturday, Senior teammate Alfie Prince had to fight his way through the field during the heats. The British driver did very well to have three good results highlighted with a 5th place and row 5 start for the Final Sunday, finishing 11th. In the 333 kart, Angus Mouldsdale showed up just outside the top 10 for a best result during the qualifiers, also making the Final grid and stealing some positions along the way in the 15-lapper.

Team Evolution took the majority of the podium steps in X30 Junior, just as they had done at round 2 in France earlier in the year. Showing a welcome return to his previous form, Zach Ripley qualified 4th in his group and 7th overall, before taking a confident victory in the first heat, then setting the race pace to finish 3rd in heat 2. The youngster from Kent in Great Britain lined-up on pole for the Final Sunday, where he earned valuable points crossing the line in second place to strengthen his hopes in the title fight, ranked P2 as the series head towards the last round now.

Herolind Nuredini scored his first Benelux Series podium with Team Evolution at Karting Genk, the German driver impressing with his consistent top 5 results at the fourth round meeting. Following an excellent P5 in official timed practice, Nuredini drove his way to 4th and 2nd in his heats, for a row 2 start in the final, which he maintained to the chequered flag to be classified 3rd. Absent from Belgium on the weekend, Essex junior Liam McNeilly will return to contest the class for 12-15 year olds where he remains a likely podium contender in the 2019 championship.

British X30 Junior teammates Ollie Marsh and Christian Lilley didn't quite have equally rewarding results as they did the round prior, yet made satisfying improvements from qualifying Saturday. Marsh recorded a good top 10 finish in his first heat and 13th in the Final. Lilley, who joined Team Evolution in the series in France back in May, continues to show progress with a superb effort to finish P5 in his opening heat and reach Sunday's final alongside his more experienced colleagues, where he made up 6 places to run mid-field.

Making his comeback to racing after a year away, the UK's Freddy Simpson-Stacey narrowly missed out on the final step of the podium in the X30 Master class. He posted sixth best lap in qualifying and was a front-runner to finish P3 in his initial heat and 7th in race 2, ranking P4. Unfortunately, a penalty dropped the Master to 8th, but being fastest on track was a bonus!

Team Evolution Manager, Ashley Whitcroft – “Our team really displayed great performance in Genk, which is important going into the final round of the Benelux Series. We're feeling confident that we have a good chance for the titles, in both Junior and Senior. The two Juniors worked very well together in Belgium, similar drivers and teammates that you can see work well on track. Joey was outstanding once again in what were very tough conditions and the fastest in the wet and took the win in the final in the dry as well. He's pushed his championship lead even more, while Zach has closed the gap to the leader in Juniors. We're busy testing and preparing now for the upcoming World Championships in Finland, Euro Series in France and the UK racing, so our team has been divided into different countries. We owe a big thanks to our partners – Grice Engines, Freem UK, Tillett Seats & Super B Batteries – whose ongoing support only adds to our success.”

World Championships, Euro Series and beyond...

With preparation well underway for the English outfit in the lead-up to the World Championship for OK & OKJ, Van Splunteren has just returned from Alaharma in Finland where he joined his own personal mechanic to train several of the team's drivers at a scheduled test/race weekend.

“It was a positive test for the four Team Evolution drivers at the Flying Finn event, we actually took 2nd in the Senior Final and our drivers had good speed. Dean and I are working together to help them achieve the best results. We work hard to make everything possible and both want to win; it’s why we won in Genk as well.”

Meanwhile, part of the team was also testing in Salbris, where the last round of the IAME Euro Series takes place this weekend in France. For the seasoned Dutch driver, Sologne Karting has many happy memories from numerous podiums and successful battles. He believes, “Everything is possible, but I just want to win the race. I can still win the championship, but I need an angel on my shoulder. I love Salbris. The IAME Euro Series is a competitive level, never predictable as you always need to have the luck, and that’s how it is. We’ve had some good results too though.”

And, about being awarded his invitation to the IIF 2019 where he was leading the final last year and was disappointingly taken out of contention, “The International Final in Le Mans is another thing, it is always a long week where everyone is working hard and there are some fast local French drivers. It’s always difficult to tell how it will be, but it’s the one I have not won yet and want to win it. So, the way I see it for this season is that everything is still open for our team!”

About Team Evolution:

- We work with drivers from the early stages of their racing career and develop their skills, enabling them to compete at the forefront of European and World championship level of karting.
- We have a great team moral with outstanding staff which creates the perfect platform for success. A real family atmosphere helps keep the drivers relaxed during their time with the team.
- We also work closely with the engine tuner Grice, allowing us to maximise engine performance.
- Unlike most teams, we work with two chassis manufacturers – Kart Republic and OTK. Not every driver’s style is the same, so this really allows us to match every driver’s needs.

Our program in 2019:

IAME X30 Euro Series
IAME X30 Belgium Series
IAME X30 Spanish Series
FIA Karting World Championship
FIA Karting European Championship
Various Club Races in the UK

Our partners:

Grice Engines, Freem UK, Tillett Seats & Super B Batteries

TEAM EVOLUTION

Bayford Meadows Kart Circuit, Kent GB

Contact – **Ashley Whitcroft**

+44 (0) 7789 932134

ash@teamevolution.co.uk