



TAMIYA Eurocup 2000

European Finals in Madrid Freeston Flies Day One in Spain

The venue for the 2000 Tamiya Eurocup European Finals, the ninth in the series, was the fabulous Alcobendas circuit located 10km to the north of the centre of Madrid. Recently renovated, this is a huge, wide, smooth circuit with fast, flowing bends and a long, long straight - makes Tibshelf look like Rascal Decca! The weather was scorching hot - too hot really - so it was fortunate that the teams could pit under cover. Unfortunately, although the circuit was large, the pit area was not and teams were crammed in like sardines. For once I was glad not to have to work there!

Following the upsets last year concerning the illicit use of tyre additives, I am pleased to report that this year the organisers took the sensible decision to allow its use. Guess what, it worked, and I don't think anyone came away thinking that the contest had been anything other than fair!

The Britpack

Our team comprised Richard Isherwood (Team Leader), Stephen Fabray (Admin Manager) and drivers Pete Stevens and Lee Woodhams (F1/Le Mans), Andy Childs and Rick Draper (4WD GT), Mark Poulton, Paul Bennett and Sam Newcomb (Stock Touring), and Jon Winter and Mark Freeston (Rally). Supporters included Steve Bennett, Peter and Rob Chaldecott, Keith Draper, Dave Morris, Stacey Newcomb, Pete Norfolk, Andy Pratt, Marc Puddle, Mark Williams and the girls, Emma, Lynn, Sam, Sarah and Vicky.

The Brits!



Thursday 7 September saw a number of us assemble at Heathrow for the flight to Madrid. Richard Isherwood having already departed earlier direct from Manchester was there to greet us and there then began the long and tedious negotiations to hire three mini-buses! Our appointed destination, a very large hotel in the heart of Madrid.

Day Two

Day two was set aside for controlled practice, cars going out 15 at a time in 10-minute slots. As usual, it wasn't necessary to marshal, the organisers providing some very smartly dressed ball boys and girls for this function.

Apart from getting car and driver right, day two doesn't matter though ... it's what happens on days three and four that counts!

Day Three

This was the day when things really started in earnest, with four of the five qualifying rounds on the menu. As in the UK series, qualifying did count towards the overall result, so the

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Stephen Fabray did his usual first class job as team Admin. Manager.

objective here was to try to make the A-final and, if possible, with a reasonable grid position. Mathias Reber of Germany was quite fantastic in F1/Le Mans and by the end of the day had almost 5 seconds on Italian Silvano Gilioli, who in turn had Austrian Oliver Grimm less than a second behind in third. Of the Brits, Pete was seventh after rounds 3 and 4; whilst Lee was fifteenth after round 4.

In 4WD GT, Andy Childs looked set to repeat his pole-winning performance of last year and



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Concours winners - two out of four again for the Brits!

led the field at the end of round 4. It was close though! Italian, Guido Barbera, was only half a second behind, whilst Tiziano Faedi of Switzerland was just two hundredths of a second slower in third. Rick Draper was only 14 seconds behind Andy, but such was the closeness of the field that this was only good enough for sixteenth.

Except for Sam Newcomb, who was amazing, our Stock Touring boys were in all sorts of trouble. Paul Bennett's choice of the FF02 looked to be the wrong one, whilst Mark Poulton just couldn't hook up a quick one. Sam, on the other hand was going great and finished the day ahead of both Mark and Paul! After round 4, the class was led by Germany's Stefan Baldauf with Austrian Stefan Elsigan in second and Belgian Muhannad (the hair) Alwani third. Sam was a fantastic eleventh after rounds 3 and 4. Mark Poulton was twelfth after round 4. Paul Bennett was eighteenth after rounds 3 and 4. Clearly Mark and Paul would have to dig deep to find something special for the final qualifying run in the morning!

The Rally class started off badly for the Brits when after just 4 laps Mark Freeston's car broke following a heavy landing after the second jump. Once Mark's car was repaired though, he was flying (literally!) and held TQ from round 2 to the end of the day. Swiss driver Marc Pfenninger was dangerously close, though, only one tenth of a second slower, whilst Jason Joldersma from Holland was some 5 seconds back in third. Jonny Boy held a steady eighth fastest all day.

So, with the Brits holding two provisional pole positions out of four, it was all looking pretty good but it's never over 'till it's over!

Day Four

The morning started with the final run of qualifying and this is where it all started to go wrong for our brave lads! First, Andy Childs lost pole in 4WD GT to Frenchman Sebastien Wartelle, and then Mark Freeston dropped from pole to third when Switzerland's Marc Pfenninger and Austria's Alexander Sekanina both went faster. In my view, this almost certainly cost Mark outright victory and the ticket to Japan.

In F1/Le Mans, Mathias Reber held on to



Mark Freeston leads leg two of the Rally A-final.

pole, but was run very close by Oliver Grimm who improved to second. Roskam Hessel of the Netherlands was another to improve and was third. Pete Stevens held on to seventh, but sadly Lee Woodhams couldn't improve on fifteenth and had to be content with the B-final.

In 4WD GT, the order was Sebastien Wartelle from Andy Childs and Guido Barbera. Rick Draper improved by some 4 seconds and moved from sixteenth to fifteenth, but like Lee had to be content with the B-final.

In Stock Touring Stefan Elsigan toppled Stefan Baldauf from pole, whilst Austrian junior Philipp Ernst grabbed third from Muhannad Alwani. Mark Poulton at last got it all together and improved from twelfth to ninth, and must have breathed a sigh of relief at scraping into the A! Sam Newcomb dropped two places, but nevertheless was still a very creditable thirteenth. There was nothing poor Paul Bennett could do with the FF02, though, and he dropped a place to a disappointing nineteenth.

In Rally, the order was Marc Pfenninger from Alexander Sekanina and Mark Freeston. Jon Winter dropped from eighth to tenth, but nonetheless was still in the A. Disappointingly, this was the only class where both our representatives made the A.

The Finals!

The finals comprised three-leg A-finals, two-leg B-finals and one-leg C-finals.

In the F1/Le Mans B-finals, Lee finished eighth in leg one and fourth in leg two, which gave an overall result of sixth. To give you some idea of how competitive it was, though, I should tell you that the B-final was won by Gernot Urbanek who was on the podium in Hungary last year, and Lee was only one place behind Belgian champion Bart Loomans! Don't let anyone tell you that Eurocup racing is not for the very best drivers! As expected, Mathias Reber won the A-final from Oliver Grimm. Pete finished sixth in legs one and two and fifth in leg three, giving him a final result of sixth overall, one place better than last year.

In the 4WD GT B-finals, Rick finished sixth and fourth, which gave an overall result of fourth. In the A-finals, Guido Barbera was unbelievable and took overall victory with two wins and a third. Watching someone like Guido drive made us realise that we've still a long way to go yet! Sebastien Wartelle was second and Damien Gallay of France was third. Andy was sixth in leg one, then had a controversial

Stock Touring A-final at turn one.



The rally cars had two stupendous jumps to negotiate along the main straight. This is the second.

leg two which had him classified as ninth, and finally was a magnificent third in leg three. This gave an overall result of fifth.

The Stock Touring B-finals featured Sam Newcomb and Paul Bennett. Sam was fantastic, winning leg one and finishing fourth in leg two, giving an overall result of second. Paul struggled once more against the TLO1's and finished fifth in leg one and eighth in leg two, giving an overall result of sixth. Stefan Baldauf won the A-final from Stefan Elsigan and Italian junior Eric Fagnocchi. Mark Poulton was really up against it, and finished ninth, tenth, and seventh, which placed him ninth overall.

Leg one of the Rally A-final was a disaster for Mark Freeston, when another breakage sidelined him and dropped him to last. A superb run in round two gave him the win, but in leg three, third position on the grid prevented him from getting to the two in front. A first and a third was not enough to beat the first and a second of Austrian Alexander Sekanina, so Mark had to settle for second overall, if only he could have hung on to pole it might have been so different! Still, at least Mark had the consolation of being highest placed Brit! If nothing else, Jon Winter was consistent, finishing seventh in all three legs. This gave a final result of tenth overall ... if only he could have mastered the jumps better who knows what might have been!

Concours

To complete the event there was a quite magnificent concours competition and the usual display of new Tamiya products.

But back to concours ... as usual the Brits acquitted themselves well, once again taking two out of the four prizes. Jon took Rally with another of his imaginative artistic creations and Mark Poulton won Stock Touring with his new Honda NSX!

Next Year

So, what news of next year? Well, the European Finals will take place in Germany, but disappointingly on carpet once more. See you all next year! **RRCI**