

Leclerc on KZ podium for ART Grand Prix European bid

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The second and conclusive round of the European KZ Championship added a trophy to ART Grand Prix list of successes, a very prestigious podium place in the most competitive event of international karting, together with the World Championship. The team managed by Armando Filini proved excellent in overcoming the extremely unpredictable weather conditions, hitting a consistent series of results that gave both drivers the opportunity to fight always at the top.

Friday morning free practice didn't have much to say. The track conditions were too variable due to the unstable weather to have a meaningful value. But the qualifying practice held in the afternoon showed that ART Grand Prix drivers were on for business, with Leclerc and Hanley stopping the 6th and 11th fastest lap respectively. On Saturday, the weather was even more unpredictable, with a wet set-up in the first heat proving ideal only for the first part of the race. In the first lap, Leclerc and Hanley moved right up to 4th and 7th respectively, keeping a very good pace that allowed both to be in contention for a spot in the top-5. Then the track started drying out, and the young driver from Monaco dropped two positions, finishing over 2" off 5th place, with Hanley a further 4" down in 7th.

The second heat was held in the afternoon, and by that time the track conditions had stabilized. Strong of a dry set-up, an impressive start and a mismatch after the first corner that eliminated main title contender Verstappen, the two ART Grand Prix boys moved up the ranks quickly, Leclerc ending the first lap in 3rd and Hanley in 6th. A tough battle for the lead ensued in the first few laps, and Leclerc was able to make it stick to 2nd on lap 4, never relinquishing the position. Different story for Hanley, 5th until 3 laps to go, then displaced to 8th in the last few laps, and later advanced to 7th after the exclusion of a rival.

With these results, the Monegasque and the Brit grabbed 4th and 7th on the prefinal starting grid.



Sunday morning warm-up took place in decent weather, which ended up not being a factor unlike the previous days. And the two ART Grand Prix drivers stopped 1st and 2nd fastest lap, an excellent result that bode well for the rest of the day.

The prefinal proved a war of nerves, with Leclerc moving up to 3rd right after the start and keeping the position until a very fast Verstappen came through displacing the Monegasque with 5 laps to go. But with one lap to go, Leclerc regained 3rd due to his direct rival retirement. Hanley's race was also very consistent, lapping in 7th place for most of the race and advancing one position on the last lap. Unfortunately, a 10" penalty for a jump-start would see him drop down to 18th place, finally compromising his weekend.

The final was nothing more than a repetition of the two-sides weekend, with Leclerc sticking to the leaders in 4th from the first corner, and Hanley having to recover from a tricky position near the back. His final would end in the first lap with De Brabander mounting over his kart and forcing him to retire. Leclerc instead stayed with the leading group, he built a gap over the chasing pack, and with 10 laps to go took advantage of second-placed driver mechanical troubles to move up to 3rd, where he finished. His final podium would see Charles moving up the ranks also in the championship, closing in 5th position tied at 20 points.

Armando Filini (Team Manager)

"The Belgian weekend is somewhat bitter-sweet for us. We did everything we could to match the fastest drivers, our equipment responded very well but a podium place was the best we could aim for today. Charles had a very consistent weekend all the way through, he showed great speed, as he also proved the fastest in Sunday morning warm-up. Ben was just as fast, but lady-luck was not on his side this time, getting 10" penalty in the prefinal and then forced out in the final by an overanxious rival. All in all, our package is very competitive, there is some margin of improvement and we will be ready for the fight at the World Championship in Varennes."

Charles Leclerc

"I'm quite happy for the final and the podium, but in all fairness we didn't have the speed to win. I must thank everyone at ART Grand Prix, particularly my two mechanics Marco and Roberto for the amazing work, Fast Kart, all my sponsors, All Road Management and Formula Medicine!"

Ben Hanley

"What a shame we had to start the final from the back. Without the jump-start penalty I got in the prefinal I could have definitely aimed at a top-5 result. We had everything we needed to perform well – good set-up, pace, new tyres – and to end the competition like that is quite disheartening. Nevermind, our motivation will be even greater in Varennes for the World Championship."



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ART Grand Prix next race

14/07 - WSK Master Series Rnd.4, Castelletto (ITA)



Results CIK European KZ Championship Rnd.2

Q	H1	H2	PF	F	CHAMP. / PT.			
3	B.Hanley		11	7	7	(7) 18	DNF	- / -
34	C.Leclerc		6	6	2	(4) 3	3	5 / 20



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