



KF1, WKC, Day 2: De Vries retains his World title

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Dutchman Nyck De Vries was in no mood to relax the grip which he tightened on the CIK-FIA World Karting Championship 2011 in the first two races on Saturday. Second place behind Ignacio D'Agosto in the race 3 was good enough to clinch the Crown, but as a good champion should, the Dutchman went out of karting with all guns blazing when he won a superbly contested race 4 to close his kart racing career with not only the world championship but a Farewell race win.

Italy's Flavio Camponeschi (Tony Kart/Vortex) had been quickest in Qualifying to secure pole position but Holland's Nyck de Vries (Zanardi/Parilla) had no repeat of yesterday's Qualifying disappointment. He was 2nd quickest for a front row start ahead local hero Japanese 'wild card' Kazuya Ishii (Birel/BMB) and Italian Ignazio D'Agosto (Tony Kart/ Vortex) on row 2. Englishman Alex Albon was classified only 10th quickest for a row 5 start.

Race Three

De Vries immediately took the lead from the outside of the front row and was followed by Kazuya Ishii. The local driver took a surprise lead but the anticipated close race ended abruptly when, following significant contact, Ishii spun off. De Vries resumed the lead but was again immediately under pressure again this time from D'Agosto. These two pulled well clear of the chasing group and had a close battle for the rest of the race. The Italian got close to the champion several times but De Vries held off the challenge each time. Behind them, Karol Basz (RK/BMB), Flavio Camponeschi, Libor Toman (Birel/BMB) and Alex Albon (Intrepid/TM) had their own individual battles. On lap 13 Albon went past Toman and into 5th where he stayed. But on Lap 17 D'Agosto's constant pressure was rewarded and he took the lead. De Vries tried to respond but he had to settle for 2nd best in this race with Basz again on the podium' this in time 3rd. Immediately after the race there was strong speculation. Was De Vries now the Champion? Would he be called before the Stewards for the crash with Ishii? It then emerged that Ishii's motor had seized and De Vries was unable to avoid contact. It was a disappointing end to local hopes for a Japanese victory.

D'Agosto explained that he was very pleased. 'This is my first World Championship race victory after 2nd places and other podium appearances. I have been competitive all season but without a win - until now.'

Race Four

The pressure was off the champion but the race was fiercely fought. Contact on turn 1 led to place changes with De Vries going from 1st to 6th and Albon was heavily struck and had to

come in with a damaged kart. He returned for a token drive at the back. Daiki Sasaki led briefly but D'Agosto went back in front. De Vries picked off places up to 4th when he went past Camponeschi, by which time Sasaki was leading in front of the home fans. Camponeschi went out on lap 8 and at half way, De Vries was 3rd behind D'Agosto and Sasaki. Meanwhile, Kiyoto Fujinami was making great progress from his 15th place starting position. By early on lap 15 De Vries was in the lead having gone 2nd 2 laps earlier, and it appeared that he would go on to victory. But a determined drive by D'Agosto saw the Italian back in the lead. There was some excellent racing from all of the top 5 drivers as they closed together. On lap 18 De Vries was back in front and on the last lap D'Agosto was caught and fell to 5th, a position not reflected in the quality his racing. But Fujinami was on a charge and he completed his drive from the 8th row by passing compatriot Sasaki for an excellent 2nd place with Sasaki completing the podium. It had been a great race to close the 2011 World Championship and so good for Japanese karting for 2 'Home' drivers on the podium.

De Vries was elated. 'It's the best thing that could have happened to me today' he said. 'This was my last race in karting. So to end my career with the World Championship and a win in my very last kart race is the best I could have hoped for.'

Fujinami said 'Up to race 3 I hadn't settled and couldn't give my best. But it came right in race 4. I tried to give best because this could also be my last race in karting'.

Sasaki told us that 'I have some regrets from yesterday. I had the speed to go better. I couldn't quite make it but in the end but I am happy because this was a solid race and achievement'.