

Charlie *Kimball*

Taking the American Dream to Victory Lane

LATE CALL UP TO A1 TEAM USA NETS KIMBALL POINTS IN OPENER

Charlie Kimball made the most of a last minute opportunity to race in the A1GP World Cup of Motorsport's season opener for Team USA at Zandvoort in the Netherlands, October 4th and 5th, 2008. Even with little preparation time for Kimball and the team, now being run by the legendary Andretti Green Racing organization, the 23-year-old Californian made an immediate impression in the new A1GP Powered by Ferrari car- finishing 4th in the second practice session. Kimball was unable to take part in the first practice due to late arrival of parts. Due to untimely red flags and traffic, Kimball could only qualify 9th in Saturday's one hour qualifying session. In the 25 minute Sprint race, he was reasonably cautious, only moving forward to 8th, earning one championship point, as he was acutely aware that the finish of the Sprint race set the grid for the 70 minute Feature race later in the day. In the Feature race, Kimball once again proved the pace he and the Team USA car were capable of, setting fastest lap before being caught out with a gust of wind and ending the race in the gravel trap. Due to a high level of attrition, Kimball still finished 10th, earning the team another point. With the point from the Feature, the point from the Sprint and the point for Fastest Lap, Team USA sits in a tie for 9th place.

Kimball's whirlwind race weekend began at 4:30am in California. He received a call from the A1 Team USA team manager asking him if he was available to drive, if he was interested and where in the world he was! After confirming that his only plans for the coming weekend were a continued training program, that he was extremely interested, and that while he was in California now- he could be in London by 9am the next morning, they confirmed they wanted him to drive at the first A1GP race event at Zandvoort. And so it began. After packing some clothes and his race gear, Kimball's first race was to catch a 1:30pm flight from LA to London. After landing in London, he went straight to Snetterton, a British race circuit where Kimball had won in the past. The plan was to make a seat midday Thursday, shake the newly built car down in the afternoon and travel to the Netherlands on Friday morning. But after parts delays on the carbon braking system, the shakedown was scheduled for Friday morning with a mad dash to the race to follow.

"Usually when the phone rings at 4:30 in the morning, I am not happy about it; however, this time, it couldn't have been for a better opportunity!" Kimball exclaimed. "I was going flat out to get to the airport, make sure I had all I needed for the race weekend as well as rescheduling meetings and lunches. Only when I got on the plane and had some time to think did it really sink in how incredible a chance this was- not only to race for Team USA, but also to work with the guys from Andretti Green Racing."

With a trouble-free shakedown on Friday morning being a testament to the AGR crew's quality, Kimball had high hopes heading to Zandvoort- a circuit that he had won at the last time he competed there. Due to the last minute nature of things and the Ferrari engine team requiring changes at the last moment, Kimball missed the first of the 2 practice sessions. But once the car was together and Kimball got on track, he immediately gave notice of his intentions. He finished the session in 4th place, ahead of many cars that had already done multiple laps in the morning.

The Camarillo, California native gave his impressions of the new car, "After driving the car for the first time, I was even more excited about the race weekend. It is a very impressive design with all the parts working very well together. The brakes, engine, electronics and gearbox definitely rival a top level open-wheel car."

In Saturday afternoon's one hour qualifying session, Kimball was unable to extract the maximum from his new tire runs with both runs being interrupted by red flags and traffic. He still managed a respectable 9th place. After evaluating the data, Kimball realized that with clear laps and a chance to put all his sectors together, he could easily have repeated his 4th place from the morning.



www.CharlieKimball.com

Charlie@CharlieKimball.com

However when Sunday dawned under rainy skies coupled with gale force winds, Kimball knew anything was possible. The officials decided that starting the Sprint race with the standard rolling start would be too dangerous. As a result, the race began under safety car with a single file restart. Kimball avoided a crash before the start line and continued to drive within the limits of the conditions. Rather than taking large risks in the Sprint race, Kimball drove intelligently as the grid for the more important Feature race would be set by the finishing order in the Sprint. After moving up only one position, the American crossed the line in 8th, picking up Team USA's first point in the 2008/2009 World Cup of Motorsport season.

"I knew that finishing the Sprint was going to be the priority," Kimball said afterwards. "I was happy to bring a point home in my race debut and to reward the mechanics by bringing the car back in once piece. Now I can really go for it in the Feature."

Conditions continued to deteriorate during the day and with more rain than ever, the Feature race began once again behind the Safety Car. After a first lap spin due to lack of visibility, Kimball began to make progress through the field. Before the first pit stop Kimball had avoided the numerous crashes of other drivers and set competitive times to move up to 8th. After a clean pit stop by the experienced Andretti Green crew, Kimball passed local favorite Jeroen Bleekemolen of the Netherlands moving him up to 6th. Then as the second pit stop window opened and Kimball had clear sight and clear track, he began to push, knowing that a string of quick laps would leapfrog him up to 4th at the finish. After having just set fastest lap of the race, Kimball was caught out by the tricky conditions at the top of the hill and got pushed wide. As his left rear tire touched the white painted line, the car lost grip and Kimball was spun into the gravel. And while he finished the race in the gravel trap, Kimball was classified 10th, picking up another point to add to the point for fastest lap.

"I was 100% aware of the situation; I knew that if I could keep the fast pace up while there was no spray in front of me, I would finish at least 4th. I had complete confidence that the AGR crew would give me another clean fast stop and I wanted to reward their hard work over the last week with a 4th place," Kimball said. "It hurts not to be able to give the guys the result we deserved, but the proof is there that Team USA will be a force to be reckoned with this year- no matter who is driving."

The next A1GP race is November 7-9, 2008. Kimball's continued participation with Team USA is still under consideration. Until then, Kimball will continue to train and build his racing program, both driving and sponsorship, for 2009.

About Charlie Kimball:

Charlie Kimball is a successful young American racing driver forging a career in the highly competitive world of open wheel racing. He has spent the last few years racing in some of the most competitive racing categories in the world including British Formula 3, Formula 3 Euroseries and the World Series by Renault. The 2009 season sees Kimball returning to the United States as he challenges for the title in the Firestone Indy Lights Championship.

For more information please contact Charlie@CharlieKimball.com or visit www.CharlieKimball.com.



www.CharlieKimball.com

Charlie@CharlieKimball.com