

KIMBALL CLAIMS THIRD PODIUM IN A ROW AT LE MANS

Charlie Kimball continued his impressive form in the Formula 3 Euroseries this past weekend, October 13-15, at the famous Le Mans race circuit. For the third race meeting in a row, Kimball scored a podium finish. Racing on the shorter Bugatti layout at Le Mans, Kimball qualified a season best 8th and raced through to 4th place in Saturday's feature race, and after the grid inversion for Race 2 moved from 5th to finish a strong 2nd on Sunday. The points from the two strong finishes moved the American from 13th to 9th in the Series Championship Standings.

The 21-year-old Californian gave notice of his intentions on the Thursday pre-event test day. His times in the two 90-minute sessions placed him 6th and 5th. He continued his strong showing in Friday's free practice session as on old tires, Kimball was always within the top 10. On his new tire run, there was a yellow flag for a stranded car which meant the time sheets only showed him 13th fastest. However, Kimball knew the car had the pace for a top 10 qualifying position and couldn't wait until the late afternoon qualifying session. His first set of new tires was disrupted by yellow flags and traffic. However, after a brief red flag for another car in the gravel, Kimball made the most of his last four laps on new tires. He improved a full second over his first time and moved into 8th, a mere tenth of a second from 5th. After penalties for ignoring the marshal's instructions from the previous round at Barcelona were imposed on Sebastian Vettel and Kamui Kobayashi, Kimball would start the race from the outside of the third row in 6th.

"I am glad I improved on my second set of tires!" Kimball said afterwards. "I didn't get the perfect lap right at the end which is unfortunate because I could have been on the front two rows. Still, it is my best qualifying of the year and I know I can have a good race and good points from the weekend."

The Signature team driver's race didn't go exactly to plan as he encountered a clutch problem on the start that dropped him from 6th back to 8th on the run to the first corner. After picking his way cleanly through a two car accident at the first corner involving teammate Romain Grosjean and Sebastian Buemi, he found himself back up in 6th, which soon improved to 5th when he overtook Michael Herck exiting the Dunlop Chicane. He was then promoted to 4th when Sebastian Vettel, whom Kimball had held off for his Zandvoort win, spun out of a guaranteed third place completely on his own at the last corner. Kimball went to work chasing his teammate Guillaume Moreau, who was running in third, but the gap was too large and too few laps remained to make a significant difference.

"I am sure I could have been on the podium without the clutch problem at the start but I still managed to get through the first corner cleanly," rued Kimball. "Still fourth is my best result in a Saturday race and now I will start fifth tomorrow and definitely be in contention for a podium position."

The American's words would prove true as he leapt from his fifth place grid position up to second by the exit of the first corner. On the run up to the first corner, Kimball was able to pass Esteban Guerrieri. On the entry to the chicane he passed Michael Herck and then on the exit he slipped past Kohei Hirate. Kimball had lost a lot of ground to pole position man and fellow

American, Richard Antinucci, during the first corner melee. However, he soon put his head down and began to close the gap quickly, as much as half a second a lap. He closed within half a second of Antinucci, but could not find a smart way past and had to settle for second. It was the second Sunday race in a row with an American one-two, repeating the results from Barcelona.

“I knew a podium was a definite chance for today,” said Kimball in the post-race press conference. “I made a great start and then took advantage of everybody at the first corner to move up to second. After that I was focused on chasing down Richard, but couldn’t find a smart way past. It is great to reward the team with another podium, especially at their home race in France.”

Kimball will now prepare for the final race of the 2006 Formula 3 Euroseries championship with a return to the Hockenheim race circuit in Germany, October 27-29, 2006. He will be planning on continuing his impressive late season form to continue to move up the championship table as much as possible in the final race meeting.

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