

Off to a flyer...!



As reported earlier this year, Risk UK has entered the sports arena with the sponsorship of a Formula Palmer Audi racing car. Here we catch up with our driver Russell Small to see how the season is going

In the first race of Russell's debut season in Palmer Audi he earned an award for his performance at Brands Hatch for the most positions made up during the course of the race. With the praise still ringing in his ears he moved on to his next challenge at Snetterton, for race two.

Snetterton

"For the qualifying session at Snetterton in Norfolk the weather was overcast but I managed to secure ninth position out of a grid of 22 cars only three tenths off pole position and one tenth off third place," reveals Russell. "This is my best qualifying position I have had in this championship, even when the track conditions were difficult with the track being wet and the cars out on slicks! However once the race started I almost stalled the car on the grid due to loss of turbo boost by not revving the engine enough and ended up being 22nd into the first corner. Throughout the rest of the race I managed to get back up to eighth place making up 14 positions by using the turbo boost wisely and making breath-taking overtaking manoeuvres."

Russell received another trophy for most improved driver and had this to say about the race: "On the start line I tried to get the quickest start possible with no wheelspin but my revs where slightly too low so the turbo boost wasn't there, this caused me to get off the line very slowly and I ended up at the back of the grid. I knew I was quick on this track and I felt very confident with the car so it didn't take me long to get back through the grid. I overtook one person on the outside of the fastest bend with speeds of about 130mph. For Brands Hatch I am aiming to get my race pace a bit quicker."

Brands Hatch (Race 3)

On the Saturday Russell had his first qualifying session where he ended up securing twelfth place despite handling problems and being held up in traffic on the track.



"At the start of the race I had the championship leader in front of me so I followed him closely behind picking off people up to ninth position," explains Russell. "From there on it was a hard battle with everyone from first to tenth within less than six seconds apart. On lap 16 Alex Brundle (son of TV pundit Martin) lost control of his car going through the Surtees bend and came back onto the track causing an unavoidable collision with me ending both of our races."

There was substantial damage to the car (£3,000) with a punctured tyre and a whole corner and front wing taken off. Russell had no way of escaping the incident revealing: "I was coming around the bend doing close to 110mph and I saw Alex on the outside of the track going very slowly I went to right side of the track to overtake him as he decided to turn into the bend and block me. Then I tried to brake as hard as possible and even took to the grass to avoid him but he was going far too slowly for the bend and we ended up making contact with each other. I have to forget what happened and prepare myself for the next race now as I am going to have an old tyre on the car (due to the puncture) so the set-up will be totally different."

Race 4

Sunday was the main day of the event with a crowd of 46,000 and Russell's car had been repaired by his mechanics and was ready to race. Russell started off 14th on the grid once again behind the championship leader. He got off to a quick start overtaking two people down into the first corner but lost out into the second as one of the cars ran wide almost causing a collision. As the race settled down Russell managed to work his way up to ninth wheeling in the pack of six in front of him until the 17th lap when he came off the track due to steering problems and retired.

Russell said: "It's a shame I encountered a problem with the steering. It just started to pull to the left and the car was un-drivable so I had to retire. I was catching the pack in front of me and was only two tenths of a second off the fastest time so I definitely had the pace to be on the podium. It just seems that after my collision the car was not quite right."

As for his future in the sport, Russell is adamant on his targets saying: "I am looking to carry on with the Formula Palmer Audi at the end of the year as I know that I can take the top step on the podium with the experience I now have with the car."

Coming up...

Russell has been selected to take part in the Formula Palmer Audi shoot-out on November 3rd-4th for United Kingdom's best upcoming talent. This is a special one-off race, which will see Britain's finest young drivers competing for a chance to win a position in the McLaren Autosport Award up against five other drivers. This is Britain's most prestige young drivers prize with the drivers judged by former F1 world champion Damon Hill. The winner also gets a drive in a McLaren F1 car.

The budget for this is going to be around £16,000, to help fund this Russell is working as a race instructor at the Bedford Autodrome. If you would like to get involved there are packages for marketing and corporate driving experiences starting from £250. For details call Steve Small on 07977 219493. Russell would like to thank sponsors Risk UK, Senstar Stellar and Nationwide CCTV for their support.