

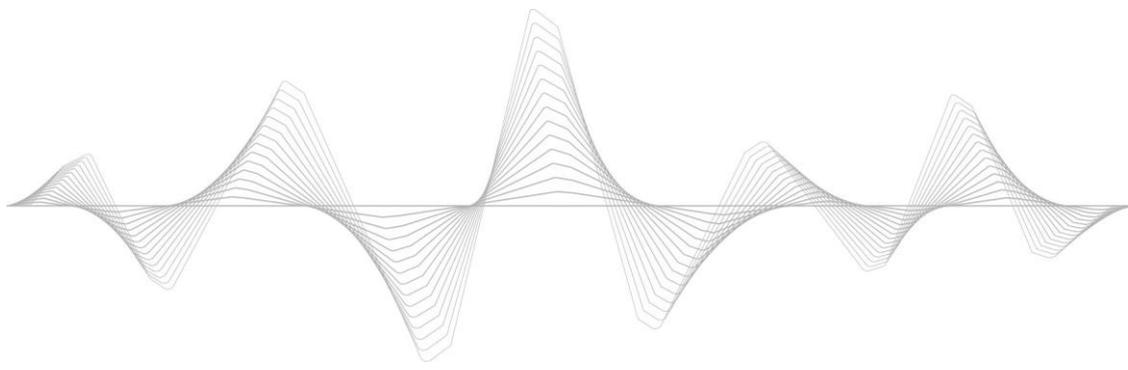
2021 ROTAX MAX CHALLENGE EURO TROPHY KICKS OFF: WEATHER MIX MAKES FOR THRILLING RACES AT GENK



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Gunskirchen / Genk, April 11th, 2021 – For its 2021 season opener the Rotax MAX Challenge Euro Trophy welcomed a full house from April 9th to 11th at Karting Genk, Belgium. A remarkable field of participants, representing drivers from more than 20 different nations, turned the first of four championship rounds into a truly international battle, which offered three days of exciting action on the 1,360-metre long circuit in Flanders – even if there were some restrictions due to the pandemic situation.

Following the regulations of the Belgian authorities, only the categories clearly marked as professional sport were allowed to start in Genk. These were the classes of Junior MAX, Senior MAX, DD2 and DD2 Masters, while the categories of Micro and Mini MAX had to skip the season starter. Nevertheless, the response for the remaining classes was great; exactly 153 drivers headed for the first round of Europe's RMC premier league to be in the early running for the prestigious titles and the nine invitational tickets to the Rotax MAX Challenge Grand Finals 2021 in Bahrain later this year.



The weather made for a very special challenge this weekend. After springlike conditions on Friday, there was continuous rain on Saturday, while Sunday put the drivers to the test with cold temperatures and rain showers. This did not affect the action on the track at all – on the contrary...

Junior MAX: Wins for Gerhards and Braeken

In Genk the defending champion Kai Rillaerts (JJ Racing) continued where he left off at the end of 2020: at the top. The Belgian clearly set the best time of the juniors in qualifying and was in a class of his own in the rainy heats, so he started the first final race as a favourite. But here, he did not reckon with Tom Braeken (SP Motorsport). On the wet track, the KR pilot took the lead quickly, while Rillaerts lost a few positions. After recovering from this setback, he caught up again and launched an attack on Braeken, who resisted without hesitation and secured his position up to the finish line.

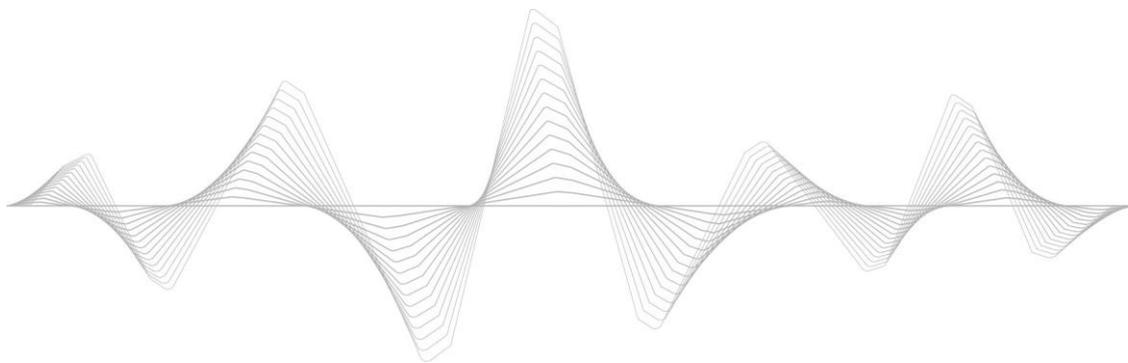
In the second final, it was Tim Gerhards (SP Motorsport) who had taken the chequered flag in third place in the previous race. The Dutchman made a perfect start and was able to break away from his opponents on the drying track. In the end, he won by over four seconds ahead of the Belgian Thomas Strauven (Strawberry Racing) and Kai Rillaerts. Tom Braeken dropped back to fourth place. In the day's classification, SP Motorsport celebrated a double victory with winner Gerhards and runner-up Braeken. Rillaerts climbed onto the podium in third place.

Senior MAX: Mark Kimber risks and wins

It was an extremely tight competition in the field of the 70 senior drivers. This was already apparent in qualifying, in which no less than 58 drivers were separated by just one second. At that time, the Brit Rhys Hunter (Dan Holland Racing) was in the lead before he was dethroned by Mark Kimber (Strawberry Racing) after the heats Saturday.

The pole-sitter wasted no time establishing his position in the first final. On a wet track, Kimber was quick to take advantage of starting on grid 1 and celebrated a safe start-to-finish victory. Behind him, his team-mate and compatriot, Callum Bradshaw, completed the one-two for Strawberry Racing, while local hero Dylan Lahaye (GKS Lemmens Power) rounded off the top three.

The second final became a thriller: a drying track faced the drivers with a difficult tyre choice. While rain tyres were the safer option, slicks were obviously the bolder and riskier choice. Interestingly, the two first-placed drivers, Kimber and Bradshaw, like some others too, went for slicks and had to deal with the consequences right after the start. The duo dropped back position after position and disappeared into the middle of the pack. Meanwhile, Dylan Lahaye, who seemed to control the race, established himself at the top. In the last few minutes, however, the track dried up rapidly and the time had come for the slick-equipped drivers. In lightning-speed, Kimber and Bradshaw made their way through the field and ultimately both managed to catch up to leader Lahaye, who then had no other chance but to leave the way and victory to his rivals. In the end, Bradshaw crossed the finish line first ahead of Kimber and Lahaye.



There were a couple of time penalties that followed though: Lehaye received a penalty for pushing and Bradshaw lost the victory due to a bumper penalty. So in the end, Kimber inherited his second success of the weekend, equally winning the event's ranking ahead of team-mate Bradshaw. Lachlan Robinson (KR Sport) from the United Arab Emirates completed the podium in third place.

Rotax DD2: Lund and Van Leeuwen share victories in Genk

The DD2 class showed a highly-balanced competition at Genk. In qualifying, local hero Glenn van Parijs (Bouvin Power) dominated the class, but in the rainy heats he could not defend the top position as his younger compatriot Xander Przybylak (SP Motorsport) secured pole for the first final.

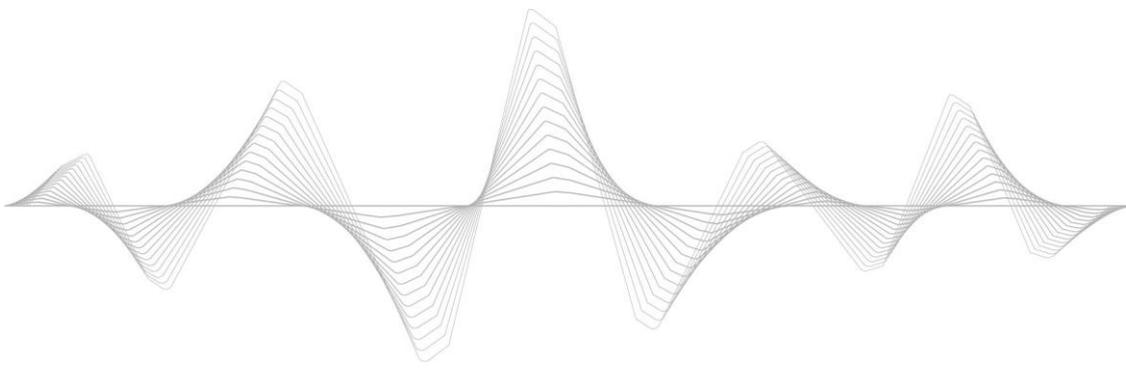
However, the defending champion was not able to maintain his leading position, dropping back to eighth place in the Final 1 and failed to play a decisive role in the second race as well. This did not apply to Mathias Lund (RS Competition) with the Dane winning the first final on a wet track ahead of Frenchman Paolo Besancenez (KMD) and Czech Petr Bezel (KSCA Sodi Europe). Yet Lund could not retain his lead in the second main race Sunday afternoon. The dry track made for new conditions and new faces at the top. Having started the race from sixth position, Martijn van Leeuwen (Schepers Racing) drove in a class of his own. The Dutchman overtook short-time leader Petr Bezel and extended his lead to over five seconds, taking the win ahead of the Sodi driver. Mathias Lund saw the chequered flag in third place, still gaining enough points to win the event's classification. Bezel and Van Leeuwen took the following positions in the total ranking.

DD2 Masters: Paul Louveau reigns in Genk

Paul Louveau (DSS) was the man of the weekend in the DD2 Masters. The Frenchman was in excellent shape right from the start and established himself in the lead from qualifying. It was only after the heats that Louveau was not as dominant, which put him in second place behind his compatriot Rudy Champion (Sodi). When it came to the finals Louveau restored the old order. On both, wet and dry track, he was unbeatable and celebrated a double win, taking the triumph in the day's standings. Second place on the podium went to a Rudy Champion and Swiss Alessandro Glauser (FM Racing) finished in third place.

Meik Wagner: "Cannot wait to see more of it"

Meik Wagner, organizer of the RMC Euro Trophy, was happy with the season kick-off, "Of course it was a pity that we could not welcome the Micros and Minis, but health is ranked first in the current situation. After we unfortunately had to cancel the RMC Winter Cup in February due to the pandemic situation, I am happy that we were finally able to get started at the 'Home of Champions'. We tried hard to implement the safety and hygiene measures, also offering testing options on site. All those involved behaved in an exemplary way and made their contribution to the success of the event. A big



thank you for this. We have not been disappointed in terms of competition either; we had full grids, very exciting races and, in the end, four deserved winners. I cannot wait to see more of it."

For now, the RMC elite will have to be a little patient: The half-way race on the Adria Karting Raceway in Italy will be held from May 28th to 30th, 2021. Then the championship visits Germany, where the so-called Arena E in Muelsen and the Prokart Raceland Wackersdorf will be the final venues of the season.

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