

Flying Dutchmen

Report: LEEN VAN DER SLUIS
Picture: BERT VAN DER SLUIS

ONE month before the start of the GP season opener at Pernes-les-Fontaines, some of the world's top sidecar teams used round one of the International Dutch Open Championship at Lochem to get in some bike time.

An advantage of this race is that there are few early season competitions and GP-teams that normally can't be tempted to race in Holland, now enter readily.

With 36 teams present qualification was necessary and Brits Daniel and Joe Millard entered the meeting hoping for some good racing.

Competing against guys like Willemssen, Bax, Hendrickx, Adriaenssen, Rozehnal and Happich provides an indication of speed and condition of both man and machine.

Fastest time in Group A was set by Dutchman Etienne Bax who has changed his team for this season.

In Kaspar Stupelis he has found an experienced, former two-times world champion passenger.

Millard qualified seventh in Group B as Daniel Willemssen, with Harald Kurpnieks in the chair, was fastest.

Willemssen headed the field off the line in moto one followed by Etienne Bax.

Marcel Willemssen was up with the front runners but hit trouble and came out of the wood at the back of the field.

Millard didn't start too badly, but ended up in the fence when he was pushed off the track.

Restarting two-minutes down Daniel and Joe were able to continue, but saw nobody on the first few laps before they finally caught the back of the pack.

From there they continued at a good pace to finish 18th.

In front Willemssen and Bax rode off together, with Adriaenssen and Hendrickx giving chase, followed by a trio of Clohse, Van Duijnhoven and Visscher.

Jan Hendrickx/ Tim Smeuninx passed Adriaenssen/ Auvray, but the leaders were already gone.

Willemssen and Bax were



The Millards (above) get in some track time and (below) Etienne Bax/ Kaspar Stupelis lead Daniel Willemssen/ Harald Kurpnieks at Lochem, Holland.



circulating extremely fast and at mid-distance Bax passed Willemssen, who had no answer.

Hendrickx/ Smeuninx finished a distant third.

It was already dusk when the sidecars went out for heat two.

Again Willemssen and Bax took the lead, with Marcel Willemssen/ Gertie Eggink third and Millard 13th.

Hendrickx/ Smeuninx knew that they had to attack immediately otherwise the two Dutch teams would be off again.

The Belgians moved to third by overtaking Clohse/ Godau and Willemssen/ Eggink on the second lap.

Willemssen had the lead but was put under tremendous pressure by Bax who was clearly faster.

Bax caught Willemssen and a lap later was past and moving off into the lead which he held to the flag.

Hendrickx/ Smeuninx kept sight of the battling duo but the Belgians had to be content with third place.

The Millards kept moving steadily through the pack to finish seventh.

The first race of 2012 promised plenty of action for the upcoming world championship.

The team of Bax/ Stupelis are the 'new kids on the block' planning to make life miserable for Daniel Willemssen, who is chasing his tenth world title.

With Jan Hendrickx, Joris Hendrickx and the Daider brothers all in the mix, the 2012 season looks set to be a cracker.

RESULTS

OVERALL: 1 Etienne Bax/ Kaspar Stupelis (Zabel WSP) 50 + 50 = 100 points, 2 Daniel Willemssen/ Harald Kurpnieks (Zabel WSP) 45 + 45 = 90, 3 Jan Hendrickx/ Tim Smeuninx (Zabel VMC) 41 + 41 = 82, 4 Carlo van Duijnhoven/ Elvis Mucenietiks (Zabel VMC) 36 + 35 = 71, 5 Marko Happich/ Martin Betschard (Zabel VMC) 33 + 36 = 69, 6 Marcel Willemssen/ Gertie Eggink (Zabel WSP) 27 + 38 = 65, 7 Thijs Derks/ Robbie Bax (Zabel EML) 32 + 33 = 65, 8 Daniel Millard/ Joe Millard (Husaberg WHT) 23 + 34 = 57, 9 Gert van Werven/ Rick Sellis (KTM) 26 + 31 = 57, 10 Jason van Daele/ Ben van den Bogaart (Zabel VMC) 28 + 29 = 57....

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2012 Dates & Venues

Round 1 24/25th March - Fatcat Moto Parc

Round 5 22nd July

Round 2 22nd April - Mepal

Round 6 11/12th Au