

Emmen's sly enjoyable

WITH a delay of one week due to the cancellation of the Varsseveld meeting, the 2006 International Sidecar-cross season opener was staged at Emmen, Holland, on Sunday.

The event counted towards the Dutch Open series and many GP regulars used the event to get in some race time.

The line-up was impressive with 43 crews from nine countries entered, including 13 teams from the world top 20 in 2005 including Willemsen, Sergis, Rupeiks and British champion Stuart Brown, reunited with Luke Peters.

Stuart Brown: "I'm glad that the 2006 season has finally started. Luke is back with me in the chair after his injury sustained 18 months ago in Bulgaria. We are ready. Again we will use Zabel engines and a VMC frame. We have one complete new bike and one from last year.

"Our goals this season is to keep our number one plate in Britain and to recapture our best ever, fifth position, in the World

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Championship and claim our first ever GP victory. In addition to the full GP and British championships, we plan to compete in as many races as possible for the French series. I'm glad that the Dutch Open starts so early in the season. This provides us the opportunity to start here in Emmen and hopefully to take home a good pre-season result."

With 43 teams, the morning timed sessions were important.

The field was split into A and B groups and only the 15 fastest crews from each qualified for the Dutch Open races. Daniel Willemsen/Ramon van Mil and Jarno v/d Boomen/ Henry v/d Wiel. 1:57:592 - considerably faster than Eric Schrijver/Ramon van Mil and Jarno v/d Boomen/ Henry v/d Wiel.

To everyone's surprise, Marcel Grondman/ Martijn Geerdink were fastest ahead



Brown and Peters just made the top ten at the Dutch opener.

of Kristers Sergis/ Kaspars Stupelis and Carlo van Duijnhoven/ Christiaan Verhagen. All took over two minutes to complete their laps.

The first start of the season was spectacular with Rupeiks, Schrijver and Willemsen at the outside. World champion, Willemsen, rounded the left-hander first and charged into the section with the big jumps. Schrijver followed but knew that is was senseless to follow the lightening speed of Willemsen.

Rupeiks in third was followed by v/d Boomen, Janssen and Sergis.

Willemsen cleared off to win with half-a-minute advantage. The three chasers stayed close to each other all the way through.

In the closing stages v/d

Boomen made a final attempt, overhauled Rupeiks and increased the pressure on Schrijver in the final two laps. A hard pressed Schrijver resisted. Janssen/Roenhorst and Van Duijnhoven/ Verhagen long battle for fifth and sixth.

In the end, the hoped for and expected duel between Willemsen and Sergis did not happen. The Latvians used the race for testing but it worked out disastrous for Sergis. After the start Sergis

went through in sixth but lost places every lap and finally called it a day on lap eight, when 17th - not a great result of the five time world champion.

Brown and Peters' race did not work out well. Starting in 20th, the pair missed a sand berm and went over the top. A few laps later they missed the same corner, again. A 22nd place finish is below the abilities of the pair.

Following the race Luke Peters commented: "Well

this was not very good. We missed the same corner twice and found ourselves well down the pack, almost in last position. We did not get the right feeling or the speed to improve. Hopefully, the next heat will be better."

The second race was tremendous!

Again Willemsen trashed everybody and made it a two-man show - Willemsen and his Belgian partner were inimitable. The pair were cleaned up and dressed before Eric Schrijver and Ramon van Mil finished second, 1:48 behind.

From the result it might appear that this race was boring but that wasn't the case.

Behind the World Champion there was a tremendous battle for second right through to 14th place.

The Austrian Martin, again racing with Bruno Kalin, were initially second and used all their experience and trackcraft to defend their fast start.

Schrijver, started fifth, moved up to third but got stuck behind Martin and couldn't find a place to pass. Sergis had a worse start than in race one - 12th - and it looked as if the Latvian

would again have a poor race. However, Sergis went for it and moved forward to sixth, and then worked his way through to second.

Starting eighth, Brown initially lost a spot to Sergis, but by mid-race he picked up the pace and moved forward to sixth. A lap later Brown was fourth.

Sergis, in second, messed up when overtaking a slow team, allowing Schrijver and Brown to leapfrog him for second and third.

This order didn't last for long though, as Stupelis regrouped and regained third spot, leaving Brown in fourth. Marko Happich and Meinrad Schelbert had a steady race to another fifth place.

At this stage of the season Willemsen is in impressive form and ready to defend his 2005 title. Although Rupeiks/Kurpnieks had some mechanical problems in heat two they showed that they will be ready for the GP season. Brown demonstrated good speed in heat two. Sergis is a question mark. There is still a lot to be tested but Sergis is experienced enough to make sure his machinery is in shape by the first GP in Oss at the end of April.

INTERNATIONAL DUTCH OPEN SIDECAR-CROSS CHAMPS

Rd 1 - Emmen, HOLLAND

- 1 D Willemsen/Verbrugge (NLB - Zabel VMC) 50+50 = 100
- 2 Schrijver/ Van Mill (NL - MTH VMC) 45+ 45 = 90
- 3 Happich/ Schelbert (D - Zabel VMC) 36+ 36 = 72
- 4 van de Boomen/ van de Wiel (NL - BSU) . 41+ 29 = 70
- 5 Grondman/ Geerdink (NL - VMC Zabel) . 35+ 34 = 69
- 6 Kuster/ Kneuben (NL - Zabel VMC) 32+ 35 = 67
- 7 Janssen/ Roenhorst (NL- Zabel VMC) 33+ 31 = 64
- 8 Burgler/ Beschart (CH - Zabel VMC) 34+ 30 = 64
- 9 M Willemsen/ Roes (NL - Zabel VMC) 29+ 33 = 62
- 10 BROWN/ PETERS (GB - Zabel VMC) 19+ 38 = 57

SPORTS ROUND-UP

King James triumphs

DUST appeared for the first time this year but James King and Andrew Carter sorted out the problem and a good entry enjoyed the Southern Motocross club's racing at Northchapel.

Darren King dominated the 250 Two-stroke race after Paul Williams pulled out. Harry Ring couldn't hold off veteran Over 40 campaigner Terry Bye in the second place battle.

Tony Priestley took the opening Bel Ray Pre '05 scratch race on his 250 Suzuwaki Four-stroke. Kevin Duffell chased hard on the Two-stroke Honda 250 but was then edged out by the returning Mark Wooldridge.

Zunz West was first to show in the machine age handicap, but Keith Jeggo quickly thrust his TM300 to the front and showed a clean pair of heels to the rest of the field. Tony Priestley charged by Andy Bolton in the closing stages for second.

Andrew Carter took the lead from the start thanks to hiccup by the starter and cleared off to win the ability

handicap. Dominic Durkhan quickly took second and held off a late challenge by Terry Bye.

Mark Goodchild took the early lead in the Gee Catering Pre 85 scratch race, but wild riding Wayne Twidle somehow stayed upright to pass him and win. Chris West, Phil Shaw, Martin Chuter and Mick Somerville squabbled over third with Mick coming through late for the win.

Roy Eastwood took the early lead in the machine age handicap but Wayne Twidle soon grabbed the ascendancy, then Mark Somerville whipped into second from Martin Chuter.

Pip Curtis took the early lead in the ability handicap, then Roy Eastwood nabbed the front, only for Martin Chuter to usurp him, but a last lap dash gave Mark Goodchild (who missed the second race) the win. Wayne Twidle completed a good day by taking second from Martin

Chuter in the run up to the flag.

Tess Hayward was much too good for the others in the Leon Ladies races. Sarah Williams had three seconds from newcomer Charlene Ricketts.

Darren King dominated the A group with three straight wins while his rivals were tripping each other up.

RESULTS

- Moto Mania 250:** 1 D King, 2 T Bye, 3 H Ring, 4 K Duffell, 5 N Noye, 6 A Bolton.
- Bel Ray Pre-05:** 1 T Priestley, 2 M Wooldridge, 3 T Bye, 4 A Bolton, 5 P Mackey, 6 J Russell.
- Leon Ladies:** 1 T Hayward, 2 S Williams, 3 C Cricketts.
- Gee Catering Pre-85:** 1 W Twidle, 2 M Somerville, 3 M Chuter, 4 C West, 5 F Barrett, 6 R Eastwood.
- A Group:** 1 D King, 2 H Ring, 3 D Fearne, 4 T Hales, 5 J Reynolds, 6 R Kimber.
- B Group:** 1 L Salmon, 2 C Fielding, 3 G Steel, 4 B Fields, 5 O Claxton, 6 J Twigg.
- C Group:** 1 M Kimber, 2 S Coventry, 3 S Bartlett, 4 D Wearn, 5 G Williams, 6 G Holt.
- CI Sport Main Champs:** 1 J King, 2 D Hopkins, 3 P Prowse, 4 N Budgen, 5 J Reynolds, 6 T Bird.
- Chequered Flag Support Champs:** 1 M Bye, 2 H Ring, 3 M Skennerton, 4 M Hubbard, 5 D Marks, 6 C Soden.

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