

Press Release:

Alex recalled for another F3000 Italia drive at Mugello – finishing 4th

GP Racing invited Alex back to help develop their car at last weekend's F3000 Italia series race at Mugello, near Florence, following Alex's strong performance in Imola, a fortnight ago, which was unfortunately cut short by a gearbox failure in the race, but demonstrated tangible progress in the team's knowledge and setup of the car.

Mugello is a fast sweeping circuit, known well to lovers of motorcycle racing, and is also used extensively by Ferrari for testing its F1 car.

Alex didn't know and hadn't driven the circuit before, but the progress made in Imola was immediately apparent, as he finished the one and only test session in 7th place, albeit still over a second behind the dominant ex-Durango Fisichella Motor Sport cars, and the Astromega cars, who have had 3 years knowledge of these cars. Alex's team mate finished the session 9th of the 18 runners, and was equally buoyed by the progress.

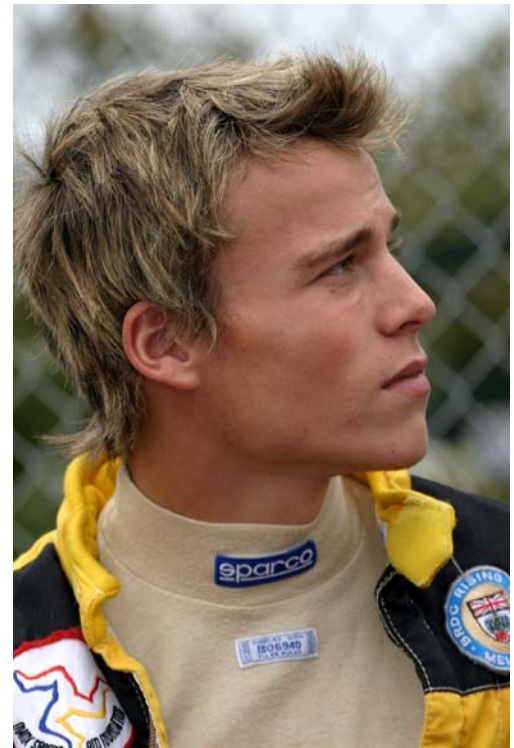
First qualifying on Saturday morning was warm, and further improvements on the car setup were made, Alex finishing 5th, and rather unhappy that his quick lap was, in his opinion, deliberately baulked by Alessandro Ciompi (pronounced "Chompy") in one of the FMS cars. The data subsequently showed that Alex was 4/10ths up on his previous best time, with just 2 corners remaining, when he came across the dawdling FMS car – a time which would have put him second on the grid. His team mate, Juan Caceres, finished the session in 7th.

Unfortunately, Alex's gearbox had experienced a problem with 4th gear, which the team tried in vain to repair before second qualifying, later that afternoon, but there was insufficient time to fix it, and Alex was not able to take part in the afternoon qualifying session. Fortunately, the session was hotter and slower, and Alex's 5th place remained unchallenged, the first four places being predictably occupied by the FMS pair and the Astromega pair.



On Sunday, in the cool morning warm-up session, Alex was quickest of all in the full-fuelled race configuration, and was optimistic for the race itself that afternoon, although his team mate was a little less happy in 16th place.

The race was hot – almost 30°C air temperature and 41°C track temperature. Alex drove a strong race to finish 4th, but the race pace of the car was not as good as expected in the high temperatures, with the two FMS cars disappearing at the rate of over a second a lap from the rest of the field. The two Astromega cars were slightly quicker than Alex's GP Racing steed, but not by much, which was encouraging, as this was Alex's first full race distance with the car, and the differences in performances could now be analysed. Alex's team mate retired after a first-lap clash.



The team are now extremely keen to retain Alex for the remaining rounds of the championship, at Magione on 24th July, Monza on 25th September, Pergusa on 9th October and Misano on 23rd October, but it remains to be seen whether this can happen.



"I don't know if it will be possible for me to compete in any of these rounds", Alex commented, "as I may now have other commitments, but it would be great to continue with GP Racing to help develop this car into a race-winner, and it is increasingly clear that we are closing in on this now.

"At the moment we have only been able to concentrate on getting a banzai qualifying lap out of the car, as we hadn't completed a race distance until now, and so we didn't know how the car and its tyres would perform.

Now we have a better idea where we need to make improvements, as the car was not pleasant to drive in the second half of the race, sliding and slithering on what felt like melted rubber – it gave me no chance to push as I would have liked. The car behaved very differently than it did on short runs on new or nearly new tyres, and I missed the second qualifying session on Saturday afternoon, which may have given us a pointer for the race conditions. The FMS cars in particular were significantly quicker than us in race configuration on this very hot track, from beginning to end. Had it been cooler, I think we could have been more competitive in the race, and that knowledge itself will serve us well for future races"



In addition to this possibility, Alex also has the possibility of funding for a further race in the Renault World Series championship at Donington later this year, if an available seat can be found.

If you wish to contact him personally, Alex can be reached directly by email at the address below.

