

PRESS RELEASE

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Koolen shines with Team Evolution at IAME Euro Series opener in Mariembourg



It was a case of “The student outdriving the Master” at the opening round of the IAME Euro Series in Belgium over the weekend, when 17-year-old Niels Koolen showed his real potential with a superb performance to secure his podium place on Sunday, ahead of his personal coach and leading Team Evolution teammate Joey van Splunteren. For the British-based team, it was an excellent way to begin the 2019 European X30 Series, as they take on the some tough rivals.

Taking second place in both the pre-final and final at Mariembourg, Niels has definitely made an impression, competing against a power-packed field in the X30 senior class at international level. However, the young Dutchman had his work cut out from the onset, failing to get through the traffic in the official timed session, which left him way down in P33. He was still on the pace and determined to continue his great season form, having already taken two podiums in Spain. In his last heat, Niels came from grid 13 to 1st, passing his mentor on the charge in P2 without hesitation.

His Evolution teammates and supporters were all cheering and clapping as he returned to the pits. “I had a good start in the final and could follow the leader Callum Bradshaw,” explained Niels. “We slowly pulled away from the others and I kept my focus. To finish second was my best result ever at this level [of racing].” He added, “I’m very happy with the support from Joey and Team Evolution. They are able to give me good material and the knowledge of the team helps me a lot. The atmosphere in the team is great and this makes me feel good to be racing with them.”

After qualifying second in his group and ranking 5th in the senior field of 78, Joey van Splunteren was clearly a strong contender with four top 3 finishes in the heat races Saturday, to start on the front row for the pre-final. The current IAME International Open and Belgium Championship title-holder suffered his own challenges during the weekend though, but his skilled race-craft and experience brought him through to be fighting for the chance to join his fellow countryman at

the prize-giving ceremony. Despite being forced wide during the final and dropping back to P12, the 27-year-old battled it out until the closing stages to the flag, crossing the line in 4th.

“I’ve had some problems, but in the end I cannot complain. We’ve enjoyed the weekend,” said Joey. “I think I was fast enough on the new set of tyres to win, yet still had to move forward through the field in the final. My goal is to win all the championships this season, so I’ll try to win the second round in Italy. The team is working like a family and it feels like home now. It’s where everyone works for one goal; winning!” As for his teammate’s success, Joey admitted he was not at all surprised, “Niels went like a rocket! He’s very motivated and does everything well. Finishing in P2 at this level is exceptional and I knew he could do this. And, he did it – just perfect!”

With good conditions for racing all weekend, Team Evolution was well-prepared coming into the first round of the championship at Mariembourg. They had put the effort in during the winter months and worked hard over the last year, so it was rewarding to see the signs of progress. With three juniors and five seniors in total at the initial Euro Series event, team manager Ashley Whitcroft was ecstatic to have one of their talented drivers coming through to be a front-runner, “We’re really happy, especially for Niels taking his first major podium with us. It’s a very good result for him and for our team, considering the high level of the competition, which included a lot of past European and World champions. Niels was driving really well. We had some great results in Seniors with Joey too, after he qualified well to eventually finish 4th.”

Urbeltz Moar (SPA), Yarne Goovaerts (BEL) and Jort Coone (NDL) are part of the X30 team line-up for the Euro Series in 2019. In Juniors, it was #49 Herolind Nuredini (GER) who turned on an outstanding performance for the ‘drive of the day’ in the class, climbing an amazing 25 positions to take P7 in the final from the back of the grid. All three juniors, including UK drivers Liam McNielly and Zach Ripley, posted times within the top 10 in Friday’s qualifying practice.

The second edition of the four-round series takes place at Castelletto in Italy from May 28-31.

About Team Evolution:

- We work with drivers from the early stages of their racing career and develop their skills, enabling them to compete at the forefront of European and World championship level of karting.
 - We have a great team moral with outstanding staff which creates the perfect platform for success. A real family atmosphere helps keep the drivers relaxed during their time with the team.
 - We also work closely with the engine tuner Grice, allowing us to maximise engine performance.
 - Unlike most teams, we work with two chassis manufacturers – Kart Republic and OTK.
- Not every driver’s style is the same, so this really allows us to match every driver’s needs.

Our program in 2019:

IAME X30 Euro Series
IAME X30 Belgium Series
IAME X30 Spanish Series
FIA Karting World Championship
FIA Karting European Championship
Various Club Races in the UK

Our partners:

Grice Engines, Freem UK, Tillett Seats & Super B Batteries

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