

...champion, the for book suggests they shouldn't have been. This year Albon proved that he can make the step up to top-level karting and cemented himself as a future star of British motorsport. Despite finishing second overall, his nine podiums and three race wins showed huge potential – potential that can take him to the title next year if he decides to stay in the sport.

"This year has been the hardest ever

fourth place finishes. His main rival however had taken four wins. "We learnt so much at Wackersdorf," he says. "I look back at that opening round as the downfall to our season. If we had started out well and got the set-up right, we could have carried more momentum to Suzuka and put a bigger dent in de Vries's points tally."

With almost six weeks before the second round at Zuera in Spain, the Intrepid team went back to the drawing

Euro Series. Although he had contested two rounds of the Italy-based championship, he had yet to take a win, so the double victory at La Conca marked real progress for the team. "I had worked closely with my engine tuner and the hard work made a difference at La Conca," he says. "We then went to Zuera, got two firsts, a second and a sixth, and were right back in the title hunt."

Eighteen points separated the two as

beginning eight weeks later, and by the end of the third round the gap was down to 11. Four podiums at the Belgian venue meant that strong performances at Sarno in Italy in the fourth round could have put Albon in front for the first time. Two wins for de Vries kept Albon at bay and had built up to a thrilling finale at Suzuka. "We knew Japan was going to be all or nothing," says Albon. "The engines were running well, we had gathered lots of data and we thought we had a shot."

prevailed. Incurable oversteer problems and difficulties with the chassis left Albon in a distant second, 45 points down on de Vries.

"It was gutting," he says. "De Vries was too good and if you are going to lose to anyone then Nyck is probably the person you want beating you. Next year if I do the championship again I will be one of the favourites and I can't wait to give it another try."

With de Vries now out of karting, 2012 could be Albon's year. ■

## REPORT: ROTAX WORLD FINAL

# COOPER TAKES WORLD FINAL WIN

**Rotax Max Challenge World Finals: Al Ain, UAE**

By Graham Smith

Organiser: BRP Rotax When: November 26  
Where: Al Ain Raceway, UAE Starters: 265

**B**en Cooper triumphed in the Senior Rotax World Final last weekend in Al Ain, in what was otherwise a tough event for the Brits.

The Euro Max Challenge champion was on his second visit to the track. In 2007 he was thwarted by a puncture, but this time he dominated the heats to claim pole position for the pre-final.

Babington: taken out

In the pre-final he was chased all the way by Australia's David Sera, while Sean Babington made a late dive on Ed Brand to take third for the final grid. Andy King came off on the first lap and retired.

A great start in the final helped Cooper to get away, while Sera traded second with compatriot Tyler Greenbury and Babington. As Babington was lining up Sera, Greenbury attacked and took him off at the penultimate corner. "He locked up, scraped across the kerb and lifted me up," said Babington.

Greenbury fell back and was penalised ten seconds. Brand slowed with fuel escaping at the start, and slotted in behind the leader a lap down to furiously waving blue flags, which later earned him an exclusion. "The filter in the

carb wasn't in, we couldn't find it anywhere later," said Brand.

Japan's Hirotaki Sasaka tounded out up the podium with a third place finish, ahead of France's Alexandre Finkelstein and Stepanova Nekeel of the USA. Briton Andy King finished tenth after starting from the back.

Japanese star Ukyo Sasahara, looked after by the UK's Paul Carr, repeated his 2009 Junior

triumph with a runaway victory. He was third in the pre-final where his compatriot Tadasuke Makino charged out of the last corner with two wheels over the inside kerb to just pip Joseph Mawson to victory. But Sasahara leapt to the front in the grand final, and eased away from the fast starting Nathan Harrison, who had climbed from 17th to ninth in the pre-final.

Harrison slipped back to sixth while Mawson chased down Sasahara in vain. James Singleton fought up to a podium position from 13th on the grid



Cooper claimed big win



Photos: kartpix.net

A great start was key to Cooper (number 222) taking the win

### RESULTS

#### Rotax Senior Final (all karts Sodi)

1 Ben Cooper (UK) 21 laps in 20m 03.78s (54.81mph); 2 David Sera (Australia) +0.94s; 3 Hirotaki Sasaka (Japan); 4 Alexandre Finkelstein (France); 5 Stepanova Nekeel (USA); 6 Josh De Maio (Australia). Fastest lap: Joao Correia (Portugal) 56.76s (54.87mph). Heat Winners: Stefan Babington x2 (UK); Karol Dabiski (Poland); Stefan Reiner (Austria); Cooper x2. Starters: 72.

#### Rotax Junior Final (all karts Birel)

1 Ukyo Sasahara (Japan) 18 laps in 17m 32.54s (53.80mph); 2 Joseph Mawson (Australia) +2.56s; 3 James Singleton (UK); 4 Jordi Van Moorsel (Netherlands); 5 Neri Fukuzumi (Japan); 6 Nathan Harrison (UK). Fastest lap: Jack Barlow (UK) 57.85s (53.81mph). Heat Winners: Sasahara x2; Jesse Lazare (Canada); Mawson x2; Tadasuke Makino (Japan). Starters: 72.

#### Rotax DD2 Masters Final (all karts Haase)

1 Cristiano Morgado (South Africa) 21 laps in 19m 51.55s (55.30mph); 2 Danny Brand (Belgium) +4.77s; 3 Guillaume Berteaux (France); 4 Gerry Hartigai (Hungary); 5 Brent Coghlan (Australia); 6 Christophe Adams (Belgium). Fastest lap: Stuart Clark (Canada) 56.07s (55.55mph). Heat Winners: Morgado x3; Martin Victorsson (Sweden); Berteaux; Scott Campbell (Canada). Starters: 47.

#### Rotax DD2 Final (all karts CRG)

1 Pier-Luc Oullette (Canada) 21 laps in 19m 40.25s (56.71mph); 2 Jason Pringle (Australia) +0.06s; 3 Georg Vason (Estonia); 4 Damien Ward (Australia); 5 Marc Murray (South Africa); 6 Kyle Herder (Canada). Fastest lap: Murray 55.40s (56.23mph). Heat Winners: Nicholas Latifi (Canada); Murray; Oullette x2; Mika Laiho (Finland); Pringle. Starters: 69.