

# Loughborough Kart



**BUKC Report**

**www.jaguarlandrovercareers.com**



## BUKC Report...

Once again the Loughborough University Kart Club represented Loughborough in the British Universities Karting Championship this year. With their sights set firmly on retaining the top spot taken last year by the Loughborough A team, narrowly beating the squad's own B team on race wins. While only 1 point back both Oxford Brookes and Swansea finished a very close 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> respectively and with 58 teams entered this year was set to be another huge challenge.

With the Loughborough squad receiving support from Jaguar Land Rover Careers a total of four Loughborough teams could be entered for the first time ever into the competition.

A new Championship format was put in place for 2009 with a total of 7 rounds held all over the country of which each team's best 6 results count to their final score. With the biggest change being the introduction of 2 qualification rounds to cope with the extra Universities wishing to enter this year's championship.

Loughborough were drawn in the Northern Qualifier at Warden Law near Sunderland along with two of the other favourites for 2009, Oxford Brookes and Warwick.

However Loughborough looked to be the pick of the field, adapting to the Karts and the tricky wintery conditions to state their intentions by toping the time sheets and qualifying as the No.1 team. Meanwhile the B team looked in good form taking 3<sup>rd</sup> place on the day behind the Oxford Brookes A team, with the C team placing an impressive 7<sup>th</sup> and even more impressively having the depth to qualify a D team in 15<sup>th</sup>.

Now, with the entries whittled down to just 55 teams the season started in anger at the first circuit and host for rounds one and two. Whilton Mill, a 1.2km international standard circuit located near Northampton.

Round one kicked off with a sprint format, seeing the four individuals from every team race in one 25 minute sprint each. The grids were pre-determined to ensure they averaged out over the round. It turned out to be a morning of mixed fortunes with solid performances coming from the B, C and D team drivers. While the reigning champions, Loughborough A, were let down by poor engines, a few costly errors on track and a collision resulting in a black flag, which was served in the form of a 10 second stop/go penalty. This made for an unexpected leader board at the end of round one, while Warwick, Oxford Brookes and Coventry were found at the top. Loughborough took 6<sup>th</sup> with the B team and 16<sup>th</sup> for the C. Many of the D team's drivers were at their first competitive BUKC event and managed a respectable 29<sup>th</sup>. Yet the real talk across the pit lane was caused by the number 1 kart found down in 30<sup>th</sup> going into round 2.

The second round took the form of an endurance event, a combination of two, one hour races with two mandatory fuel stops and a driver change. Winning in these events requires drivers that are both fast and consistent, with an ability to pass backmarkers seamlessly. Teamwork becomes hugely important, with the work done in the pits often separating the top teams from the rest of the pack. For Loughborough's top flight it was a return to form, dictating both races with back to back victories, a result made even more impressive when you consider only two other teams were even on the same lap. Loughborough B meanwhile had a frustrating round, with a black flag due to contact dropping them to 17<sup>th</sup>, not far in front of the C's in 26<sup>th</sup> and the D's in 33<sup>rd</sup>.

Round 3 consisted of more sprint racing and was held in Kent, at the renowned Buckmore Park Circuit. Blue skies greeted the teams and despite the low temperatures, Loughborough had high hopes of reaffirming their title challenge.

The racing was hard fought, with mere inches separating karts, even after 40 laps of racing. Yet despite setting fastest laps, the A Team were disappointed to finish 8<sup>th</sup>, just ahead of the B Team in 10<sup>th</sup>. The D team fared well, showing massive improvements in their driving standards and battling with A Teams from other Universities to end up 29<sup>th</sup>, only 2 places behind the C Team. However, even with these strong performances from the Cs and Ds, round 3 was a missed opportunity as Loughborough failed to close in on the championship leader.

A return to Buckmore for the Round 4 endurance then and Loughborough appeared almost a new team. Dominating performances from the A Team saw them climb from 32<sup>nd</sup> on the grid to record a win in the first heat, followed by a formation 1-2 with the B Team in race 2 giving the A's a round win and the B's a 3<sup>rd</sup>. A special mention must go to Mike Chaplin, who maintained his 100% winning record at Buckmore this year. The C Team also performed well to finish 21<sup>st</sup>, whilst the D Team had a nightmare, brake failure relegating them to 44<sup>th</sup>. But all in all, round 4 was a success, putting Loughborough's two top teams firmly back in contention for the BUKC title.

The title contenders regrouped in Wales for the 5<sup>th</sup> round, a sprint event at Llandow race circuit. Despite dark clouds and spots of rain, the track mainly stayed dry and the scene was set for another day of action packed racing.

Loughborough D certainly seemed to take inspiration from the inclement weather conditions as they drove superbly to record a top ten finish in the first sprint race. A fantastic achievement for the team and a sign of things to come. Unfortunately for them, however, the stewards decided their 4<sup>th</sup> place finish in the second race was not achieved in quite such a fair manner and this disqualification saw them end up 31<sup>st</sup> for the round, despite another top ten result in their 3<sup>rd</sup> sprint race.

Loughborough's A team traditionally do very well at the Llandow event, but despite obvious pace and indeed a 2<sup>nd</sup> and a 1<sup>st</sup> in their races, a poor 3<sup>rd</sup> sprint saw them narrowly miss out on a podium in 4<sup>th</sup>. Although this was slightly disappointing, it was nothing compared to the torrid time that the B's and C's were experiencing. The B's results told a story of two halves, with the good results offset with some poorer results which saw them end the round in 17<sup>th</sup>, nearly 20 places in front of their C team counterparts.

Round 6, the endurance races at Llandow featuring more of the ominous weather that characterises the Welsh events. Loughborough A really had the bit between their teeth here, achieving a 1<sup>st</sup> and a 2<sup>nd</sup> that easily outclassed their nearest opponent and allowed them a maximum points haul. The B team also drove very well, and despite a spin in the first endurance they managed to redeem themselves by driving superbly to 2<sup>nd</sup> in the next race and an 8<sup>th</sup> place for the round. Further down the order, Loughborough C continued their consistency with a 25<sup>th</sup> and the D's came home in 32<sup>nd</sup>.

To the final round then and a damp Clay Pigeon Raceway in Devon. With ominous weather predicted, it was a relief to see the sun come out and dry conditions prevailed for the conclusion to the 2009 BUKC. Sprint racing was the order of the day, and tension was running high.

Coming into the round, only three teams could win the title, Loughborough A, Oxford Brookes A and Swansea Metropolitan A. The competition was fierce, with the teams boasting international kart drivers, race driving instructors and even a former Formula Renault driver. Yet Loughborough appeared to suffer in the early races, with carburettor problems ruining the chances of one of the drivers and a black flag the chances of another, although a strong performance later did give hope. However, Oxford Brookes A capitalised by taking a 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the sprints and with Swansea also doing well, it really was down to the last race...

The last sprint race of the round featured all three teams, all desperate to win and to take the championship. The teams were all starting mid pack within a handful of grid spaces, but for Loughborough to win the BUKC, only a win in this race would suffice. After a blistering start, Loughborough A had soon taken care of Swansea, and set about chasing Oxford Brookes. What followed was a superb display of driving talent, with the karts so close together that they appeared to be touching. Brookes defended well before Matt Cornwell grabbed an opportunity to dive into 3<sup>rd</sup> behind Cardiff and Coventry, the title was up for grabs. But it wasn't over yet, the Oxford Brookes driver knowing that this race was key to the win hadn't given up yet and on the penultimate lap, just as the leading pair were in range, he made his move... Holding on to the line... Giving Brookes the BUKC title win...

Loughborough were devastated. But next year, we will get back the title.



However, let us not forget Loughborough B, C and D. The B Team played a superb back up team on the day, sacrificing some points to aid the A and yet they still managed to finish 13<sup>th</sup> and only a few points back. A fantastic performance considering the situation and the team know that next year they will have the chance to take the fight back up at the top of the table. On the day, Loughborough D also managed to beat the C Team, which is no mean feat, to claim 27<sup>th</sup>, beating many vastly more experienced drivers and producing the best ever result from a fourth team in the BUKC. The C Team wound up 31<sup>st</sup>, but with their drivers development over the year they are a team to watch in 2010.

So, the final championship positions for the Loughborough teams are as follows,

Loughborough A: 3<sup>rd</sup>

Loughborough B: 10<sup>th</sup>

Loughborough C: 25<sup>th</sup>

Loughborough D: 33<sup>rd</sup>

(77 teams entered).

Special thanks to Jaguar Land Rover for their help and support this year. It really has been exciting for the team to have such an association and has been invaluable in our club successes, whether BUKC or at club level.

## ***Special Thanks to...***

