



Debut pole for Wesemael gone in a blizzard

**DONINGTON PARK
RBG SPORTS 1000
MARCH 17-18**

On-track running at Donington Park for the first 750 Motor Club meeting of the year was a case of 'blink and you'll miss it'. The entire weekend was abandoned after lunch on the opening day in sporadic blizzard-like conditions, and with forecasts threatening more. Just over three hours of track action, and no races, had been completed.

Yet there was still time for something extraordinary to happen in the RBG Sports 1000 qualifying session. Making his debut for Mittell Cars, Christopher 'Chippy' Wesemael set the fastest time in his Mittell MC-53 to bag pole position for the opening race that never was. Wesemael had replaced 2015 champion Scott Mittell, who will instead compete in Bikesports, in the team's driver line-up.

Wesemael took pole by 0.4 seconds, ahead of the Mittell team's chief rival,

reigning champion Billy Albone (Spire GT3). Wesemael's team-mates Paul Smith and Danny Andrew (who was impeded by a wiring issue and not wanting to push his new engine) were more than a second off his lead.

Most extraordinary of all, this was Wesemael's first car-racing meeting of any sort, as he was making his debut straight out of karting. He noted that the jump required a lot of adaptation.

"It's been more difficult than I would like to admit," he conceded. "It's the high-speed corners and medium-speed corners that are a bit of an issue for me, just because I'm not used to the downforce and carrying all that speed.

"I got lots of help from everyone here at Mittell Cars. It's been going well."

Wesemael said that the abandonment of the meeting made his pole achievement bittersweet. "I really would have loved to take the car out in the race," he said. "Especially the 25-minute-long race [where Wesemael was to start second behind Albone, based on second-best times].

"I was really looking forward to that, to see if we could have a fight with Billy, and just see what happened. Unfortunately we'll just have to wait until Brands now.

"I was a bit worried. I've done no

starts at all in the car!"

He admitted to being taken aback at the qualifying result. "I was very surprised, actually. I had Scott on the wall with the pitboard and coming round I was about 0.5s behind Billy, and I saw the lap was a lot quicker than that one, so it just kind of all came together when it needed to."

Snow was blowing in the air throughout, but Wesemael reckons the outcome wasn't explained by track conditions varying within the session, saying that the grip level changed "not overly". But he did suggest that the unusual circumstances were to his benefit.

"With it being so cold and the snow blowing across constantly, the first section and Craner Curves especially were very slippery. I think that might have played into my hands," he said.

"All these guys have lots of practice on a normal track. With changeable conditions all of us are on more of an even playing field. So that was probably good for me."

Wesemael's pole lap wasn't a case of throwing caution to the wind, either.

"No, being my first race here I hadn't really driven it in the dry at full revs until qualifying, so we were just building it up lap by lap; that's why my fastest lap was a lot quicker than the other ones that I did. >>

