



Radical Australia Team Manager Garth Walden, was given a rare opportunity by both Radical Sportscars and Radical Australia, to race an SR8 RX in Round 5 of the Radical European Masters, at the famous Red Bull Ring in Spielberg, Austria. Here's the drivers view of an up and down charge on an unfamiliar circuit.....

“We arrived in Spielberg on Thursday 23rd August to a toasty 36 degrees. Red Bull have put significant effort and funding into planning the refurbishment of the Red Bull Ring, making it a venue that the infamous company could be proud to call their own. The place is absolutely stunning and Radical Sportscars run a fantastic championship that I was pleased to be involved in.

Friday, Practice

Another beautiful 36-degree day with 3 unofficial and 2 official practice sessions. All practice sessions went well and we ended the day 4th fastest. The car was in good shape for qualifying on Saturday and my team (Warren Ambrose from Radical Australia, plus local boys Woody and Ross) just had to make a few changes over night.

Saturday, Qualifying

Once again 36 degrees with 2 x 20min qualifying sessions in the middle of the day, separated by just 5 minutes break to change tyres etc.

Qualifying 1.

Things were looking good, we went out early and I managed to get some relatively clear track. We completed 3 timed laps with only one traffic free, and were sitting on pole for most of the session, watching the monitors and saving our tyres. With 30 seconds to go the 2011 European Masters champion Stuart Moseley stole pole by 2 tenths. I was a little disappointed but still happy to start on the front row.

Qualifying 2

We went with a low fuel strategy, refueling in the break between qualifying sessions & changing tyres. After the pit stop I had to pass through a remote controlled gate that separates paddock / marshaling area and pit lane, at any other time it has been open with a marshal controlling it. However arriving at the exit gate it was closed with no marshal in sight. Q2 was well under way, but I was out of the car trying to find someone to open the pit gate! Long story short, the boys found me and hunted down the marshal.

Finally the car exited pit lane with 7 minutes to go & a frustrated driver on board. We put the car on P4 for race 2, not a bad result but circumstances hadn't worked in our favor and we had hoped for pole. However, Sunday looked promising.

Sunday, Race day

Goodbye 36 degree days...hello 18 degrees and heavy rain. Race one was going to be interesting with no one having experienced wet conditions.



Race 1

The officials decided to allow 2 warm up laps before the rolling start to sight the standing water. After several spinners, they decided to delay the start by 15 minutes in the hope the rain would stop.

Unfortunately the rain didn't ease so they decide to run the race in by far the toughest and most dangerous conditions I've ever driven in, visibility was only 5-10%, and that was only following one car – I was relieved to be near the front.

My plan was simple, to be first into turn 1 & avoid the spray. Mosley got a small jump and squeezed me towards the pit wall, I knew I couldn't brake until he did. We braked side by side and I had the inside run into turn 1. I hit a large puddle, locked the rear brakes & the car stepped sideways. I caught it but had no hope of pulling up for turn 1, so straight on we went! Frustrated, I managed to stop before the wall and rejoined in 10th with a lot of work to do!

The visibility was zero, with the prospects of a massive accident never far away, we decided to pay the safe card and try to get a rhythm, without doing anything too silly, although over the radio I kept hearing of the leader pulling out 3 - 4s a lap from the rest of the field.

Not long after our pit stop I'd worked my way back up to 3rd and was the fastest car on track, reeling in the leaders in by 2-3 seconds a lap. I'd left my run too late and we were 4 - 5 laps short of catching them, but very happy to bring the car back without a scratch in the terrifying conditions and step onto the podium.

Race 2

Finally conditions improved and it stopped raining a few hours before the race. Our spotter checked track conditions during the F3 race before us, and my team leader stopped the winning car on its way to Park Ferme, to ask what he would do if he was about to race! He confirmed our decision of slicks, despite an 80% wet track.

During our sighting lap I was relieved to see the drying track on my slicks. Most other teams changed tyres during the 3 minute grid up to start on slicks, and at the rolling start we got a good run from P4, to exit turn 1 in 3rd.

The top three pulled out from the rest of the pack and were separated by 2.5 seconds. Conditions we still tricky with only one dry line, and overtaking was treacherous until the track dried further

We were looking good in third, I was faster than the co driver jumping in the lead car during the pit stop and I had a 5 second shorter CPS than Mosley in second place. The plan was to leap frog everyone in the pit stop and maintain it from there. It all sounded simple and I was maintaining our gap in third.

With the track drying every lap I entered the hairpin at turn 2 with more speed than the lap before, jumped on the throttle on the exit with my outside wheel on the white line, turning the car around. A rookie error! I would have only lost one position, however the engine failed to start and I had to complete a full reset, re-joining in 12th spot.

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Incredibly frustrated I had some work to do. I completed my CPS & was in 7th place. Now it was time to charge, I set the fastest laps of the race and worked my way up to 4th with 8 minutes to go, closing on third every lap. Then the heavens opened with rain falling only in some sections of the track before spreading. It worked in my favor and I tripled my closing rate on the 3 cars in front and with 3 minutes to go, I was in 2nd only 7 seconds behind the leader and closing.

The rain was coming down heavily and with cars on slicks many were falling off, so the race was red flagged taking the results taken from back 2 laps back, which saw me drop back to 4th spot.

All in all I was reasonably happy with the result.

I would like to give a big thank you to Radical Sportscars, Radical Australia and my amazing team: Woody, Warren and Ross, as well as a thanking my Mum, Dad & girlfriend Myriam, for travelling all the way to Austria to support me.

Competing in the Radical European Masters is a must do for any Radical driver, it's certainly a life changing experience....