



Press Release

European Individual Grass Track Final at Swingfield (UK) Preview



Above British Masters champion James Shanes (#4) and reigning European Champion Jannick de Jong (#2) in action at last year's Final at Staphorst in Holland. In the other photo, the podium of the last year's final in Staphorst, with the runner up James Shanes, 2015 European champion Jannick de Jong and third placed Stefan Katt - Photos courtesy of Jesper Veldhuizen (www.baansportfansite.nl)

Eighteen of Europe's top solo Grass Track riders head to Kent this weekend for the European Individual Grass Track Final, where one of them will be crowned 2016 European Champion. Astra Grass Track Club will host Europe's Blue Riband event at their super-fast Swingfield track, situated six miles north of Folkestone, with the field headed by the defending European Champion Jannick de Jong (Holland). The Flying Dutchman has dominated this event for the past three years and is looking to make this his fourth successive European title. De Jong will be joined by fellow countrymen Dirk Fabriek (three times runner-up), Henry van der Steen, Mark Helmhout, Sjoerd Rozenberg, Lars Zandvliet and seventeen year old Dutch teenage sensation Romano Hummel.

The German challenge comes from Christian Hulshorst, who was going to be joined by former three times European champion Stephan Katt. However Katt has had to withdraw earlier this week following an injury he sustained whilst competing in the World Long Track Grand Prix at Morizes in the South of France last weekend.

Qualifiers from France are Theo Di Palma, and Mathieu Tresarrieu - who won this year's European Semi Final on home soil in July. Sadly Mathieu's brother Stephane (European Champion in 2008) will miss the event through injury, as will Gabriel Dubernard - another rider



who is unfit following a racing accident at the World Long Track Grand Prix in Morizes.

Riders from the Czech Republic also fared well in the qualification rounds with Josef Franc just missing out on a podium place at the Mulmshorn Semi Final in Germany. Franc also represented his country at the recent Speedway World Cup, and has also made Wild Card appearances at Grand Prix level. Martin Malek and Hynek Stichauer complete the Czech line up and the strong list of riders from mainland Europe.

However, there is also a strong British contingent all hungry to have the honour of lifting the trophy on home soil, with 19-year-old James Shanes having enjoyed a fabulous past twelve months.

Shanes became British Masters Grass Track Champion in 2015 and was on the second step of the winner's podium behind de Jong at last year's European Final. This season Shanes has had a number of victories at major race meetings on the continent, was runner-up in his Euro Semi Final in July, and successfully defended his British Masters title last month.

Another young British rider competing is Zach Wajtknecht. At 18 years old, Zach already has three World Championship titles under his belt, winning the FIM 125cc Youth Final twice (2012 and 2013), and following up in 2014 by winning the FIM 250cc Youth Crown. Like Shanes, Wajtknecht is also starting to make a name for himself riding Speedway in the UK.

Current World Speedway Grand Prix rider and Coventry Bees Captain Chris 'Bomber' Harris surprised everyone when he made a return to his grass roots in 2015 as a wild card in the



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British Masters Final. Some thought it was a one-off, but in 2016 Harris has fitted a number of Grass Track events in and around his hectic Speedway diary, and like Shanes, was runner-up at the other European Semi Final in France.

The last Brit to top the podium at a European Final was Andrew Appleton, back in 2010. However, the four times British Masters Champion has not been enjoying the best of seasons, but count him out at your peril; as he'll be being aiming for this one, on what is one of his favourite British tracks. Mitch Godden (who was born and bred in Kent), is possibly making his last appearance in a Euro Final, but when we say his last appearance in a Euro Final, we mean on two-wheels, as Godden has now moved to the 500cc Sidecar class where he has been enjoying further success on three-wheels.

The line-up is completed with two English reserves - Callum Walker, and Paul Cooper.

If the strong line-up of Solo riders hasn't whetted your appetite, the Astra Club have also assembled amazing support classes to compliment the European Championship Final. A Grass Track in the UK simply wouldn't be a Grass Track without the Sidecars on hand to keep you on the edge of your seats. Twelve of the best monster 1000cc crews, along with eight of the top British 500cc Sidecars will complete, in what is sure to be an exciting days racing.

Off the track there is a Fun Fair, food stalls, beer tent and Saturday night entertainment featuring the Night Fever Disco - for further details check out Astra Grass Track Club on Facebook.

So if you're a supporter or follower of any type of motorcycle sport, or you just fancy a great day out with the family, Swingfield near Folkestone is the place to be this coming Sunday.

The actual issue of FIM Europe MAG is online and can be downloaded [here](#).

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