

Gault appears before 126,000 at Brands Hatch

MOTORSPORT

By Judith Tonner

ALEX Gault's second appearance in the European STK600 championship yielded 14th- and 11th-place finishes at Brands Hatch before 126,000 spectators.

The 16-year-old from Carlisle was the youngest competitor in the field at the world superbike championship event as he deputised for absent Suzuki rider Chris Leeson.

He had some narrow escapes in practice as he missed his braking point at the famous Druids hairpin and ran off the

track, although he kept his bike upright and rejoined the session to finish 17th.

Gault moved up three places in the first official qualifying session, hitting a top speed of 150 miles per hour.

However, he dropped down to 24th place on the grid for the race itself after suspension adjustments backfired and he became the only rider not to improve his session time, although he again averted a crash after sliding into the gravel pit.

However, he produced a stunning race when the heat was on, showing a level head to move up five places in the first lap alone, ultimately claiming European championship points by leading a pack from then on and finally working his way up to 14th place.

Suspension again played a part in the second race, with adjustments to the rear end of the bike actually making it dan-

gerous to ride. The youngster failed to get off to such a good start and this time completed the first lap in 21st place, later slipping down to 24th as the bike experienced difficulty in accelerating out of difficult corners.

He took around half of the 11-lap race to become accustomed to the unusual handling but then began to push harder and managed to move up to cross the line in 18th place.

Dad Alex senior said: "Considering the circumstances, this was a good result, although not the one we were looking for.

"We had said that a top-ten place would have been acceptable, but it was a good weekend and a decent finish.

"We would like to thank all of our supporters who made it possible for Alex to compete, and especially Mist Suzuki

and the Cruciani Suzuki Italia team, particularly Ninetto, Alessandro and Danilo Surlano and Roberto Roncella for all their help and Barbara Surlano for translating."

Gault is now turning his attention to this weekend's Scottish supersport 600 championship at East Fortune near Edinburgh.

Meanwhile, supporters can see a circuit through the young rider's eyes thanks to a clever video of his test day at Donington Park, which he made by taping his camera phone to the front of his bike during a practice session.

The result from aboard the Suzuki GSXR 600 can be viewed on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jdn-POgrRfKs> or from the news page of Alex's official web site, www.minimotoracer.com.