

CNC HEADS SPORTS/SALOON CHAMPIONSHIP – ROUND 5

– MALLORY PARK – JUNE 23

Robert Spencer once again proved to be a master of the wet conditions, his Locosaki had the lead on the opening lap, and was aided in his escape when Garry Watson went off at Shaws Hairpin.

But Watson came storming back and was only 0.543s down at the flag, with Joe Spencer third.

QUALIFYING

With damp and showery weather forecast tyre choice became a bit of a lottery, but most opted for slicks.

Watson's Westfield secured pole with a stunning 47.651s. "That was more than I was hoping for and it was as fast as I could do, so I pitted to save the car and tyres. The grip was awesome, very surprising," he said.

Simon Allaway's Lotus Daytona Esprit V8 was only 0.354s back in second, "once the tyre temperature was up it was fine, but I had expected worse," he added. Fractionally behind was Championship debutant Graham eTilley in his Caterham CSR. Tilley raced FF1600 particularly at Mallory many years ago

and is keen to do some more CNC rounds. "I had contact with Dennis' BMW at Shaws Hairpin though, as I didn't think he saw me. It was my first time on slicks with this car and since I raced a Radical in 2006," he explained.

Robert Spencer completed the second row, "I was only 0.5s off my best time, so pleased with that and couldn't expect more. The grip level was amazing in those conditions," he said. Joe was just fractionally slower than father Rob, "I spent a lot of the session with Simon and ignored Dad's pre session instructions," he

Completing the third row was Brian Dean, hoping to get further than the opening lap on this occasion in his rebuilt Westfield. "I just tried to settle in and when it got wetter I stopped," he said.

Paul Woolfitt was back with his Z Cars Mini for his seasonal debut. "I had a big spin at Gerards, nothing broke and I really enjoyed it," he stated. Alongside was another returnee, John Morris with his Vauxhall Tigra Silhouette. "I only did one race last year and nothing the year before. But the car was too light at the back in the damp conditions," he said.

Heading the next row was Richard Hall's nimble little Ginetta G20, "it was easy to drive and drier than I thought," he reckoned. Steven Hibbert was happy with his Lotus Elise too, "it made me laugh at all the slicks and then it rained. But I always choose the wrong tyres," he said.

Paul Sampson was next up, "I made a tentative start but then got going a bit," said the Volvo Grand National Coupe driver. Although it had been 10 to 15 years since Richard Roundell had been to Mallory, he had nothing to complain about with his Vauxhall Vectra. "I nearly past under yellows though when Paul Woolfitt spun," he admitted.

"Qualifying was good for me to, not fully wet just damp," said BMW Compact driver Steven Parker. Alongside to complete row seven was Pete Edwards' Ford Escort RS1800, which looked considerably quicker than the time he was credited with. "I spun at the Hairpin when Garry Watson braked early, but the car felt good and was entertaining sideways," he said.

James Aukland started on slicks but changed to wets on his Capri. "Once I had the perfect tyres I just wanted to finish the session," he said. Alan Collinson had a slight misfire with his TR7 V8. "Probably not enough fuel in it," he reckoned. He still had the legs of Ralph Underwood's similar car though.

Defending Champion Dennis Crompton was down in a lowly 18th after cutting his session short due to contact with Grahame Tilley at the Hairpin. "I couldn't get heat in the tyres and no grip too," he said. Jamie Cryer had "a bit of oil smoke but plenty to build on" as he brought out his Toyota MR2 hopeful of a race debut.

Brian Allen's XR2i was the penultimate qualifier, with Jack Marland's Mazda RX7 completing the grid. "I was struggling to get above 5000 revs and a bit hesitant," Marland admitted.

RACE

All 21 cars made it to the grid but with more heavy rain having fallen, wets were essential for the 20 mins race.

Watson made a good clean start and led into Gerards, from Rob Spencer, Tilley, Allaway and Joe Spencer, before an immediate gap to Woolfitt in sixth and the head of the next group.

But Rob Spencer made his move as they powered onto the Stebbe Straight and Watson was unable to hold him off. While into the Esses Joe sneaked inside Allaway for fourth and chased Tilley up to the Hairpin.

Watson's push to regain the lead came unstuck at the Hairpin on the second lap, "I couldn't believe it, I was flying and hit the brake and throttle at the same time and went straight on. I only moved them for this race," he explained.

Joe was still chasing Tilley for second, while father Rob had an increased lead of five seconds. They finally swapped from second on lap four, with Joe then under pressure from the recovering Watson, after Tilley was playing catch up behind Allaway after a spin exiting Gerards. "I was struggling for grip, it was diabolical," said Tilley.

Edwards Escort had been settled in sixth after ousting Woolfitt on the second lap, but was reeled in by Crompton, who had rapidly climbed from 13th at the end of lap one. Crompton took the place into Gerards on lap seven, while behind their duel Woolfitt was under pressure from Hibbert.

Dean had started well but from ninth on the opening lap, he gradually slipped down the order, having moved Roundell into the top ten.

Watson's charge regained second into the Esses on lap 13 and suddenly Rob Spencer convincing lead started to ebb away as the minutes ticked by. "I didn't see the last lap board and was just waiting to have a go at Rob, but then the flag came out," said Watson. "I didn't realise he was catching me like that though, after I had lapped Simon I thought I was home and dry," said Spencer Snr, having had his once huge lead reduced to only 0.543s.

Joe was the only other runner on the lead lap in third. "I just couldn't keep up with Garry, he must be doing something different. But I had a good start and race with Tilley, but don't know where he went," he said. His rival had regained fourth from Allaway on lap nine, but was a lap down on the lead trio at the finish. "That's the first time I have ever been lapped in the wet. It was Ok fully wet, but when it started to dry I had no grip and I am not usually a tail end Charlie," he reckoned.

Allaway survived in fifth, "I loved the last lap board and the flag. I just couldn't push it in those conditions and couldn't see the others never mind reel them in," he said. While Crompton retained sixth, Edwards looked set for seventh until Woolfitt pipped on the line. "It bit sneaky wasn't it, but it was hard work in those conditions and I loved it," said Woolfitt. "It was a good race for me, coming through from the back and had the right tyres on this time," Crompton added.

Edwards was not only disappointed in losing a place at the flag, but being unable to make any progress. "A plug lead came off on the first lap, so it just wouldn't push," he explained.

Hibbert and Aukland completed the top ten, "I was stunned, no problems but I do like the wet," said Hibbert. "I am still saving the car for Anglesey and it went much better on smaller rims, just wet enough for fun," Aukland added.

Roundell's challenge ebbed though, from an early 10th. "I went off at the Hairpin and expected to be stuck on the grass, but remembered I had wets on, set off after Stephen, but lost a place to James before the end," he said after finishing 11th.

Having stalled at the start Underwood was not only pleased to recover to 12th place from the end of lap 10, but to have lapped rival Collinson too. Sampson was next home, with Parker in 14th. "I spun at Gerards, a complete 360 and then the exhaust went. I braked too hard and lost it," he explained after falling back from 11th. Dean had only himself to blame for his slide down to 15th, "the car was fine but the driver was rubbish," he reckoned. Despite a spin at the Hairpin on the first lap Marland, the misfiring Collinson and Allen completed the finishers.

Morris had retired after the opening lap, unhappy with the handling, Hall joined him with a lack of grip, "maybe I should buy some tyres," he pondered. Cryer also vacated overheating after 15 laps.

Results: 1 Robert Spencer (Stuart Taylor Locosaki) 24 laps in 21m32.924s (90.21mph); 2 Garry Watson (Westfield SEiW) +0.543s; 3 Joe Spencer (Stuart Taylor Locosaki); 4 Graham Tilley (Caterham CSR); 5 Simon Allaway (Lotus Daytona Esprit V8); 6 Dennis Crompton (BMW E36 M3); 7 Paul Woolfitt (Z Cars Mini); 8 Pete Edwards (Ford Escort RS1800); 9 Steven Hibbert (Lotus Elise); 10 James Aukland (Ford Capri). **Class A:** 1 1 Allaway; 2 Aukland; 3 Paul Sampson; (Volvo Grand National Coupe); 4 Jack Marland (Mazda RX7). no other starters. **Class B:** 1 Watson; 2 Tilley; 3 Woolfitt; 4 Brian Dean (Westfield Sei); no other finishers. **Class C:** 1 R.Spencer; 2 J.Spencer; no other starters. **Class D:** 1 Crompton; 2 Ralph Underwood (Triumph TR7 V8); 3 Steven Parker (BMW Compact); 4 Alan Collinson (Triumph TR7 V8); no other finishers. **Class E:** 1 Edwards; 2 Hibbert; 3 Richard Roundell (Vauxhall Vectra);no other finishers. **Class F:** 1 Brian Allen (Ford Fiesta XR2i) no other starters. Fastest lap:

Published by Peter Scherer for BARC NW, May 29th, 2013