

CNC HEADS SPORTS/SALOON CHAMPIONSHIP – ROUNDS 2 & 3

– CROFT– APRIL 27-28

Despite the disappointingly low turn out, both races provided wall to wall action, with Simon Allaway's Lotus Daytona Esprit V8 and Garry Watson's Westfield SEiW sharing the victory spoils

QUALIFYING

It was officially cloudy but drying for the 15 minute qualifying session. But with a mix up over the session schedule, most drivers never managed more than a handful of laps.

Robert Spencer secured pole in his Stuart Taylor Locosaki, "brilliant, really pleased with that but a pity it wasn't dry though," he said. He had son Joe alongside in his similar car, but 1.782secs down. "All good so far and I have drilled holes in my seat to let any water out, in case it gets as wet as last year," he added.

Defending Champion Dennis Crompton headed row two and was fairly pleased with his BMW M3. "Nice and peaceful and happy with my time," he confirmed. Philip Duncan's Westfield SEiW was alongside, calling on his experience from racing at Croft in the Scottish Sports & Saloons.

Although Watson was only fifth, he achieved his time with only one flying lap. "I didn't hear the tannoy announcement and almost missed the session," he explained. He had Allaway alongside, feeling very uncomfortable with the conditions. "It was horrible, nothing else. I felt no grip and couldn't do anything with it. It was just survival to get on the grid really," he said.

Paul Sampson's Volvo Grand National Coupe was next up, "I just drove around but did get a bit quicker," he confirmed. Sharing row four was Jack Marland's Mazda RX7 which has the same Volvo power unit at Sampson. "I have only driven around Croft once before, so I was still working out where I could change gear. I went for fifth at the Complex and went off onto the grass though," he explained.

Having only made his racing debut in the first round at Oulton Park, Paul Rotheroe's Citroen Xsara was ninth quickest. "I need longer to learn the circuit though," he said. Richard Roundell was also a Croft debutant in his Vauxhall Vectra. "It was slippery, bumpy and I was bedding in new brake pads. I kept locking up and then it cut out, so it was a struggle," he admitted.

Championship stalwart Ralph Underwood was fairly happy with his TR7 V8, "I changed down a bit too quick at Clervaux on one lap and only just held onto it, but at least it didn't rain hard until after the session," he said.

Steven Parker had to take things steady though in his BMW Compact. "The wheels nuts came loose," he explained. Brian Allen's Ford Fiesta XR2i completed the 13 car line up, one of the smallest for a number of years. "I had to pit as my mirror moved and I couldn't see the other cars," he explained.

RACE ONE

It was dry and there was even a threat of sunshine as the grid lined up for the mid afternoon race on Saturday. There were no casualties after the morning qualifying, so all 13 came under starters orders.

As the lights went out there was an immediate three car break with Rob Spencer heading Duncan and Watson out of Clervaux, while Allaway led the next group from Joe Spencer and Crompton.

Watson's charge continued as he surged into second at Sunny and immediately put Spencer Snr under pressure. It paid off as they arrived at Clervaux for the second time, as the Scot emerged as the new leader, with Duncan continuing to shadow them both from third place.

Allaway had also begun to settle and doing his best to hold the gap to the lead trio, while behind him both Spencer Jnr and Crompton were running solo. "I didn't have the best of first laps and got detached," Joe admitted. Sampson also had a lonely race in seventh, but behind him it was all closing up, with Parker being threatened by Roundell, Marland and Rotheroe.

By the end of lap five Allaway was much closer to Duncan, while at the front Rob Spencer was doing his best to stick with Watson. But a lap later Allaway had not only ousted Duncan, but shot past Spencer too into Tower and began to set his sights on Watson's lead.

While Joe Spencer, Crompton and Sampson all continued fairly untroubled, there was chaos at Tower. Marland had battled his way ahead of Roundell and Parker into eighth, but his

rivals both touched which allowed Rotheroe to charge past. But Marland had lost it on the exit, came back across the track and t boned the luckless Xsara. "I braked a bit late and got hit behind, then saw Jack spinning on the grass," said Parker. "I think we all got lost in each others braking zones, because I flicked Steve's rear," Roundell admitted. "It had felt Ok. I was the last of the group into Tower and saw it all happen. Richard seemed to understeer and hit Steven, so I took them both and Jack came over and hit me. At first I thought I had got away with it," said Rotheroe after inspecting his stoved in side.

Back at the front Allaway had the lead into Tower and gradually consolidated his advantage over Watson. "I couldn't believe how easy Simon made that, but Rob had kept me under pressure too, as he was quicker in some parts," Watson explained. "I enjoyed that but it took a few laps to get up to temperature as it's too easy to crash. Brilliant in the dry though, "added the victorious Allaway.

The gap to third had already grown but Spencer Snr had plenty in hand over Duncan, "I used too much track at the Esses and got warned, I seemed to stay with Garry until the backmarkers, then I think Simon towed him clear of me," said Rob. "I had tried hard to keep up but the car was drifting so I backed off. I had started on new slicks that hadn't been through a heat cycle," Duncan explained.

Spencer Jnr's solitary race netted him fifth, with the equally lonely Crompton and Sampson retaining sixth and seventh. "I was lonely and a bit bored, but the car was fine and back where it should be," said Crompton. "There was no one in front that I could see, but I didn't win. Just drove around and wore it out really," Sampson added.

Roundell eased himself well clear of Parker to retain eighth, while Underwood and Allen followed the BMW Compact to complete the finishers. "I threw away my lightening start at Hawthorn, It swapped ends but I didn't stall it," admitted Underwood. "A fine lonely class win," Allen concluded.

Results: 1 Simon Allaway (Lotus Daytona Esprit V8) 15 laps in 21m55.689s (87.21mph); 2 Garry Watson (Westfield SEiW) +3.946s; 3 Robert Spencer (Stuart Taylor Locosaki); 4 Philip Duncan (Westfield SEiW); 5 Joe Spencer (Stuart Taylor Locosaki); 6 Dennis Crompton (BMW E36 M3); 7 Paul Sampson (Volvo Grand National Coupe); 8 Richard Roundell (Vauxhall Vectra); 9 Steve Parker (BMW Compact); 10 Ralph Underwood (triumph TR7 V8). **Class A:** 1 Allaway; 2 Sampson; no other finishers. **Class B:** 1 Watson; 2 Duncan; no other starters. **Class C:** 1 R.Spencer; 2 J.Spencer; no other starters. **Class D:** 1 Crompton; 2 Parker; 3 Underwood; no other starters. **Class E:** 1 Richard Roundell (Vauxhall Vectra); no other finishers. **Class F:** 1 Brian Allen (Ford Fiesta XR2i) no other starters. Fastest lap: Allaway 1m28.732s (88.57mph).

RACE TWO

With the grid for Sunday's race formed on the second fastest lap from qualifying, it was almost the same as the race one line up, with one notable exception.

The Spencer's had the front row, with Crompton and Duncan on the second, But Allaway had Sampson alongside on the third row, as Watson had set only one time and had to start from the back of the grid.

The fourth row was missing completely as both Rotheroe and Marland's cars were substantially damaged in race one. So Roundell and Underwood shared the fifth row, with Parker and Allen on the sixth.

It was very greasy as the cars came out, due to the intermittent showers. Allaway in particular soon found out, after a spin at the chicane on the out lap and another braking for Tower on the green flag, earning him a trip to the Clerk of the Course.

With the 11 survivors safely back on the grid, the lights went out and it was Duncan that outdragged his rivals to lead into Clervaux, from Rob Spencer, Allaway and Joe Spencer, with Watson already into fifth, from Crompton, Roundell, Sampson, Parker, Allen and Underwood.

Joe Spencer shot past Allaway into Tower and Watson followed through into Sunny. "I was noticeably cautious after two spins. I still got a good start but Joe was nibbling and I surrendered," said Allaway.

With Duncan still out front on lap two, Spencer pushed hard to stay with him. Watson was up to third at the Jim Clark Esses and soon had the lead duo in his sights. Allaway was still clear in fifth, but the gap to the four ahead had continued to grow.

Behind the Esprit V8 Crompton held sixth but was unable to shake off Roundell, who also had Sampson closing in. Parker was in ninth and Allen managed to hold off Underwood's ailing TR7 V8 for 10th.

Duncan was given brief respite on lap three though when Spencer Snr dropped back. Spencer Jnr had started to lose ground on Watson too, who once into second rapidly closed in on Duncan's lead and was ahead into the Esses. Roundell had also fallen away from Crompton, which allowed Sampson to demote him from seventh into Sunny. But a lap later Sampson cruised into the pits to retire, "The diff went again I knew something was wrong but I tried to nurse it home," he explained.

While Watson eased himself clear to victory, the battle behind raged right to the flag. Rob Spencer had been pressing Duncan for second and they took the Hairpin almost side by side on lap four, while Joe Spencer briefly lost touch.

Rob made it into second at Clervaux a lap later, as Joe closed in again and began to press Duncan to. Into Sunny for the seventh time Joe went by, but their duel had allowed Rob to consolidate second place.

While all the duelling persisted it played into Allaway's hands who had Duncan in range by the end of lap eight. But his presence triggered the Scot into action and he retook Spencer Jnr.

With Spencer Snr spinning it became a three car train for second. "I was alongside Ralph at the Esses, I thought he had seen me and then I spun," said Rob, after he found himself behind Duncan and son Joe, with Allaway on his tail.

Rob's recovery started by taking Joe into Clervaux, "it was tactical," Joe reckoned. Into the Complex he edged out Duncan too, before they swapped again exiting the Hairpin. This played into Allaway's hands when after exiting the Hairpin in fifth he came out of Clervaux in second place. "What a move, I was nearly broadside on the exit, just hoping it would hold on and it did," he explained.

The gap was too big to Watson who took the flag over 11 seconds clear, "I really enjoyed that, but didn't expect to make that progress so quickly. I think they were more cautious than me," he said. Allaway was still delighted to finish second, "after I lost touch I had to get my confidence back and then pushed on when it felt OK," he explained.

Joe Spencer found himself back in third again when Rob had his second spin at Clervaux, but both he and Duncan continued to swap and change until Rob caught up again. Duncan had gone by at the Hairpin on lap 11 and Rob split them again as they arrived at Clervaux and was back into third himself at the same spot a lap later.

While Rob consolidated second, Joe continued to fight for third with Duncan until they collided at Sunny on the last lap. "I went ahead around the outside, then we touched. It was better than Saturdays race, but I had hoped Simon wouldn't catch us," said Joe. "We got on the oil at Sunny and Joe spun into me which damaged my exhaust. Brilliant though, loved it but our fights let Garry get away," Duncan replied.

Spencer Snr therefore completed the podium from Joe and Duncan. "What an amazing race, but I was bored until my first spin, Rob admitted. Crompton was a lonely sixth again, "no heat in the tyres, no grip just awful and concentrated on bringing it home," he said.

Roundell tailed off too to secure seventh, "I had a masterclass behind Dennis for a while, and learning the circuit more the day before helped a lot," he said. Parker retained a solid eighth, "I was surprised when it began to drizzle, so didn't push too much," he added. Although Underwood struggled, "it just wouldn't peak or if it did I didn't know when," he explained. Whatever of his V8 power he had available eventually proved too much for Allen's little 1600 Fiesta. "I fought him off for a while though," he concluded.

Results: 1 Garry Watson (Westfield SEiW) 15 laps in 22m43.458s (84.16mph); 2 Simon Allaway (Lotus Daytona Esprit V8) +11.223s; 3 Robert Spencer (Stuart Taylor Locosaki); 4 Joe Spencer (Stuart Taylor Locosaki); 5 Philip Duncan (Westfield SEiW); 6 Dennis Crompton (BMW E36 M3); 7 Richard Roundell (Vauxhall Vectra); 8 Steve Parker (BMW Compact); 9 Ralph Underwood (Triumph TR7 V8); 10 Brian Allen (Ford Fiesta XR2i). **Class A:** 1 Allaway; no other finishers. **Class B:** 1 Watson; 2 Duncan; no other starters. **Class C:** 1 R.Spencer; 2 J.Spencer; no other starters. **Class D:** 1 Crompton; 2 Parker; 3 Underwood; no other starters. **Class E:** 1 Richard Roundell (Vauxhall Vectra); no other finishers. **Class F:** 1 Brian Allen (Ford Fiesta XR2i) no other starters. Fastest lap: Watson 1m27.651s (87.27mph).

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