



Sports/Saloon Car Championship Seasonal review

Celebrating its 50th year the BARC North West Sports Saloons Championship is probably as strong as it's ever been. Over the 12 rounds during 2014 apart from Cadwell and the first Anglesey visit there was never a grid below 30 and in total 62 drivers have taken part at some point or other.

Reliability paid dividends for this years overall Champion Steven Hibbert, as apart from routine maintenance he hardly had to lift a spanner to his Lotus Sport Elise. He won his class in every round and was only one point off a perfect score, after Jamie Cryer snatched a fastest lap at Cadwell.

Overall it was new boys Saker that proved to be the ones to beat, with Paul Rose and Steve Harris. Rose won on eight occasions and was second overall in the championship. He did have a few problems however, losing power in the second Donington race and failing to start the second Cadwell when his clutch failed.

With Rose's dominance only three other drivers visited the top step of the podium, with Garry Watson at Anglesey and Cadwell, Rob Spencer at Donington and Joe Spencer at Anglesey, for his maiden victory.

The Spencer's shared one Locosaki this year with Joe in action for the mostpart. It was Watson and Spencer that tended to set the early pace as Rose's Saker wasn't built for standing starts. Watson did enough to secure class B in the Championship and was fifth overall, but had some very dramatic retirements. After winning the first Anglesey round he led the second until a last lap tap from a backmarker dropped him to second. He started from the back in the first Donington after electrical problems, but still came third, but in the second visit to Anglesey he suffered a catastrophic propshaft failure which pierced the transmission tunnel, when he was leading. His season ended on a low too, when the diff seized at Oulton Park.

Joe Spencer topped class C and had six overall podiums, but had to bed in a new engine after it went in round three at Anglesey. Dad Rob was second in the opening round at Oulton Park, but then only came out at Donington, for a win and second. David Fuller took second in the class in Joe's old car and improved tremendously as the season went on, ending with fifth overall in the final round. Daniel Prendergast was the only other class C participant, but after taking fifth in the first Anglesey, he retired from the second race and failed to reappear.

While Rose was taking the wins team mate Steve Harris usually found the dramas. He had four podiums with his best weekend at Cadwell, taking a second and third despite a couple of grassy moments. In round three at Anglesey a clutch problem left him at the start but he still got fourth, but his best excuse was in round eight when his seatbelt came undone at Oulton, after rubbing under the steering wheel.

Iain Gorrie's Ultima followed the Saker's in class A and gradually got quicker as the season went on, after sorting some electrical gremlins. His best finish was the penultimate round at Oulton, when he was fifth. James Aukland's ever battle scarred Capri saw more action this year and usually found someone to race with on his way to fourth in class. Bod Buckby joined at Donington and was soon on the pace, but a recurring oil leak on his BMW after round eight ended his year. Paul Sampson's Volvo Grand National Coupe joined in from Anglesey in round six, while John Seery's Westfield V8 appeared at the first and last Oulton rounds only.

Duncan Aukland's Grand National Coupe only appeared at the July Anglesey meeting, while Ric Wood brought out a selection of his cars during the year, including his rebuilt DTM Astra in the finale. Jack Marland's Saxo, Darren Smith's TVR Tuscan and Chris Whiteley's Ginetta G50 also appeared.

In class B Cam Forbes Westfield led the chase to Watson's similar car. Having missed last season he was still trying various modifications with his car, including a paddleshift. He had six top six finishers in the first eight rounds, until sliding off at the top of Cadwell's Mountain section, before returning for the Oulton finale.

Philip Duncan was absent for the first half of the year, first appearing at Anglesey in July. Gear selection problems lost him a top six on his return, but after fifth in round eight at Oulton, he just missed the podium at Cadwell with a pair of fourths in two dramatic races. His persistence was finally rewarded in the final round with third overall, securing third in class too.

Having spent years aiding Iain's Gorrie and occasionally driving too, Eric Bamber had a full campaign in a Ginetta G20. He had a few excursions but learned a lot more, doing enough for fourth in class. Fifth placed Luke Armiger was another newcomer in his Vauxhall Tigra Silhouette, commuting from Essex. His pace was unquestionable and his one podium at Anglesey in July belied his pace. He pitted from third at Donington with a smokey engine, had a couple of engines go and even managed to finish the final Oulton round in one wheel drive after a driveshaft broke.

Brian Dean's Westfield made occasional appearances and had top sixes at Donington and Cadwell, while Stuart Deeley first appeared in his old rally spec Europa, before making the finale in a new built for racing version, with a few teething problems. Matt Simpson's Tigra

Silhouette came out for the Donington rounds and Chris Maries appeared in the MK Indy previously raced by his brother Dave and usually duelling with Champion Hibbert.

Ric Wood's debuted his ex Tarquini BTCC Honda while Anthony Bennett brought his Caterham from the South Coast at the beginning and end of the year, but blew the engine in third place in the last round. Steve Owen's Westfield only came out at Cadwell and got a fifth, while Alistair Chalmers did the opener in third place, before selling his Caterham. Richard Morris' Mini Clubman, Colin Robinson's Escort and Stuart Pearson's Ginetta G20 also made the occasional appearance.

For once Paul Dobson's Mazda RX7 didn't have class D to itself as both Ilsa Cox's Seat Leon and Garry Wardle's Ginetta G50 gave some stern opposition. Dobson took the class nine times to take third overall in the championship, but Cox's win at Oulton Park in round eight on split grids, made her the first female race winner in the championships history. Wardle came on leaps and bounds after he got used to his new car and was rewarded with a class win at Donington. Oliver Thomas' Subaru Impreza was fourth in class and made some lightning starts, briefly leading one of the Oulton Park rounds.

Steve Parker's season was interrupted when his BMW Compact blew an engine midseason, but he was always in a battle with someone somewhere. Ralph Underwood's TR7 V8 had a few troubles starting but made it through to sixth. Mike Hurst's Vectra didn't appear until Anglesey in July but had his results affected by a series of driveshaft problems. Tony Ellis' Mazda RX7 was another quick starter, and finished sixth in the first round, but a few too many excursions affected his final standing. Alan Collinson's TR7 V8 had a couple of outings at Oulton and Anglesey, but finally cured his misfire at the final round and Bob Claxton's trusty Renault 21 Turbo came out a couple of times.

With Hibbert dominating class E it was left to the rest to fight for second. Despite having his first season in a Ginetta G20, Kevin Cryer took the position after overcoming some diff problems and a strong challenge from son Jamie's similar car and Paul Rotheroe's Citroen Xsara. Rotheroe tied with Cryer Senior on points as he had finished second in class twice to Kevin's five. Jamie was third in class but missed out on the final Oulton double header double ponts rounds after a crash in qualifying.

Richard Roundell's Vectra had a few handling problems and usually found the scenery at some point in the races, but a blown engine at Cadwell ended his season. Graeme Laslett's Elise and Leslie Kirk's Renault Clio were both new this year and got quicker as the season progressed. Piers Grange brought his Escort out a couple of times and there was a one off by JJ Ross's Fiesta at Donington.

If he started in class F he usually won, that was the case for Mike Nash's Peugeot 106. He missed Donington and gave Matthew Darlington's Peugeot a double, but as he only did one more of the following rounds the class title was sealed. Helen Allen took third in her XR2i

after husband Brian blew his Fiesta's engine at Oulton in round eight to end his season. Howard Affleck's Mini took a couple of podiums too to secure fifth in class, but after electrical problems sidelined David Bird's Honda in the opening round, he failed to return. The various Mini guises of Stefan Di Resta, Keith Wilkinson and John Marsden also contested the class.

FINAL CHAMPIONSHIP POSITIONS 1 Steven Hibbert 108pts; 2 Paul Rose 103; 3 Paul Dobson 103; 4 Mike Nash 91; 5 Garry Watson 79; 6 Steve Harris 72; 7 Cam Forbes 67; 8 Ilsa Cox 66; 9 Garry Wardle 66; 10 Kevin Cryer 58 etc. Class A: 1 Rose: 2 Harris; 3 Iain Gorrie 50; 4 James Auckland (Ford Capri) 25; 5 Bob Buckby (BMW M3) 21; 6 Paul Sampson (Volvo Grand National Coupe) 19; 7 John Seery (Westfield V8) 11; 8 Duncan Auckland (Grand National Coupe) 7; 9 Ric (Opel Astra DTM) 2.

Class B: 1 Watson; 2 Forbes; 3 Philip Duncan 47; 4 Eric Bamber (Ginetta G20) 43; 5 Luke Armiger (Vauxhall Tigra) 42; 6 Brian Dean (Westfield SEi) 21; 7 Stuart Deeley (Banks Europa; 8 Matt Simpson (Vauxhall Tigra) Chris Maries (MK Indy) 11; 10 Ric Wood (Honda Accord); Anthony Bennett (Caterham) 10; 12 Steve Owen (Westfield SEi) 9; 13 Alistair Chalmers (Caterham); Richard Morris (Mini Clubman) 7; 15 Colin Robinson (Ford Escort) 2.

Class C: 1 Joe Spencer 54; 2 David Fuller 36; 3 Rob Spencer 20; 4 Daniel Prendergast (Pell Genesis Evo) 9.

Class D: 1 Dobson; 2 Cox; 3 Wardle; Class E: Hibbert; 2 K.Cryer 58; 3 Paul Rotheroe 58; 4 Jamie Cryer (Ginetta G20); 53; 5 Richard Roundell (Vauxhall Vectra) 44; 6 Graham Laslett (Lotus Elise) 30; 7 Leslie Kirk (Renault Clio) 26; 8 Piers Grange (Ford Escort) 12; 9 JJ Ross (Ford Fiesta) 8.

Class F: 1 Nash; 2 Matthew Darlington 49; 3 Helen Allen 48.4 Brian Allen (Ford Fiesta) 35; 5 Howard Affleck (Mini) 29; 6 David Bird (Honda Civic) 5; 7 Stefan Di Resta (Mini Cooper) 3.

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