



Sports/Saloon Car Championship - Round 1 2015

Rose blooms in opening round.

Paul Rose's Saker began his 2015 campaign as he had finished 2014, with a dominant win in the opening round of the CNC Heads BARC NW Sports & Saloons at Oulton Park.

It was wet for the qualifying session which was cut short with oil down on the track. But Rose had done enough to secure pole by over two seconds from Joe Spencer's Locosaki. "The track was drying and a lot of traffic, but I eventually got a clear lap," said Spencer.

Double Ginetta G20 Challenge Champion was third quickest in his G20, with returnee Nick Cresswell's Caterham R400 alongside. Steve Harris in the second Saker had a plug lead come off and ran on three cylinders, "I only really managed a couple of reasonable laps," he said after lining up fifth best, with debutant Mark Burton alongside in a third Saker.

Defending Champion Steven Hibbert, felt his session was "OK." He was seventh best in his Lotus Elise, "it was my first time back in the car since the final round, so I was a bit rusty and surprised by Pearson's pace in my class too," he added. Luke Armiger's Vauxhall Tigra did well to be as high as eighth after trouble seeing. "It was so misted up," he explained.

Piers Grange brought his Escort out to qualify ninth with Paul Rotheroe's Citroen Xsara completing the top ten. In 11th Kevin Cryer took it steady with his Ginetta G20, "I was struggling for grip," he said. Garry Wardle was alongside in his Mini Cooper S rather than his familiar Ginetta G50. Next up was Roddie Paterson's Caterham with Les Kirk alongside, having swapped his Renault Clio for a more potent Fisher Fury.

Steven Parker's BMW Compact shared row eight with Jamie Cryer's Ginetta G20, and Graeme Laslett's Lotus Elise, Paul Sampson's Volvo Grand National Coupe, Ralph Underwood's Triumph TR7 V8 and Bob Claxton's Renault 21 Turbo rounded off the top 20 qualifiers.

Down in 21st Ric Wood brought out his Nissan engined Audi V8 Star for the first time in three years and just did his three laps and pitted. New boy Dave Harvey was next in his Locost, followed by a cautious Richard Roundell in his Vauxhall Vectra. "The car is now on throttle bodies and was on new wet tyres but I locked up at Knickerbrook and then took it steady," he explained.

John Marsden's Mini, Helen Allen's Fiesta, Colin Flynn's Mini, Eric Bamber's Ginetta G20, Clive Dix's Ford Puma, Dave Chilton's MK Indy and Mark Bratley's Toyota MR2 completed the grid.

RACE

Spencer made a terrific getaway as the lights went out but Rose was soon hunting him down and made his challenge as they exited Lodge on the opening lap. "I tried to hold him back and gave him two choices, to take the long way around or come down the pitwall. He squeezed though against the wall and was ahead at Old Hall," said Spencer.

Harris had been fourth into Old Hall but was up to third at Island and looking to close on the lead pair too. With Pearson losing out at the start, Armiger was into fourth but had lost time initially when Burton's Saker was slow away.

Cresswell was into fifth, from Patterson, the recovering Burton, Hibbert, Pearson and Rotheroe, while further back Roundell had made nine places on the opening lap to lie in 14th behind Kevin Cryer, Parker and Wardle.

Wood was also quick to move through the order and was into the top 10 by the end of lap two, before pitting to retire four laps in. "It broke the diff and I lost the brakes," he explained.

Back at the front Rose continued to ease himself to another victory, eventually taking the flag over 10 seconds clear. Spencer had second under control but had to be aware of Harris' threat. "Every time we were in traffic I could see Steve's lights gaining and then I had a moment or two near the end where some mud had got onto the track," said Spencer. "The traffic just kept equalising it so I had to accept third," added Harris.

Armiger had started to look safe in fourth until he hit trouble on the sixth lap, "it just cut out up Clay Hill short of fuel. So I had to override the fuel pump and I couldn't blame anyone else as I filled it up myself," he admitted. But the delay had allowed both Cresswell and Burton to go by leaving him to settle for sixth.

Usually Hibbert knows it's near the end of the race as he gets lapped, but not on this occasion. He was into seventh from lap four when Paterson retired but spent most of the race fending off Pearson for the class lead. "He had the best start but lost places at Old Hall. He really hounded me for four or five laps and it was the hardest I have had to work in the car in ages," he said.

Kirk was a clear ninth and Kevin Cryer completed the top ten after a hard battle with Roundell, Rotheroe and Parker. "I managed to keep them back after getting Rotheroe at Island on lap six. I made a poor start though," Cryer admitted. Roundell was not quite close enough to have a go at Cryer but on the penultimate lap his race came to an abrupt end. "I had gained a lot of places early on after taking Steven Parker I was right with Kevin. But he

got away under breaking. Into Cascades he braked earlier than I expected and I was off onto the grass, but when I rejoined it destroyed the engine," he explained.

Parker therefore reclaimed 11th with both Harvey and Laslett gaining places when Rotheroe slipped up on lap six and finished 14th. Wardle and Underwood were next home, with Sampson, Claxton, Bratley, Marsden, Chilton, Allen and Flynn completing the 23 finishers.

RESULT

1 Paul Rose (Saker) 10 laps in 17m34.623s (91.88mph); 2 Joe Spencer (Stuart Taylor Locosaki) +10.723s; 3 Steve Harris (Saker); 4 Nick Cresswell (Caterham R400); 5 Mark Burton (Saker); 6 Luke Armiger (Vauxhall Tigra); 7 Steven Hibbert (Lotus Elise); 8 Stuart Pearson (Ginetta G20); 9 Les Kirk (Fisher Fury); 10 Kevin Cryer (Ginetta G20). Class A: 1 Rose; 2 Harris; 3 Burton; 4 Paul Sampson (Volvo Grand National Coupe); no other finishers. Class B: 1 Cresswell; 2 Armiger; no other finishers. Class C: 1 Spencer; 2 Kirk; 3 Dave Harvey (Locost); 4 Dave Chilton (MK Indy); no other starters. Class D: 1 Garry Wardle (Mini Cooper S); 2 Ralph Underwood (Triumph TR7 V8); 3 Bob Claxton (Renault 21 Turbo); no other starters. Class E: 1 Hibbert; 2 Pearson; 3 K. Cryer; 4 Steve Parker (BMW Compact); 5 Graeme Laslett (Lotus Elise); 6 Paul Rotheroe (Citroen Xsara); 7 Mark Bratley (Toyota MR2). Class F: 1 John Marsden (Austin Mini Cooper S); 2 Helen Allen (Ford Fiesta Zetec); 3 Colin Flynn (Mini Cooper); no other finishers. Fastest lap Rose 1m43.776s (93.37mph).

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