

CNC Heads Virtual Sports/Saloon Championship

As I write this we are entering the sixth or seventh week of lockdown and to be honest I am getting somewhat fed up and bored of the situation. Daily walks over the local golf course were great to start with but starting to get a bit repetitive - though I am getting fitter and fitter. Several weeks ago Graham Saul, regular competitor in the CNC Heads Championship, Driver's Representative and BARC (NW) Committee member suggested on Facebook that drivers may like to race him on Playstation over the internet. What started as an idea for one or two drivers has grown to two full blown virtual championships using the Xbox system as well as Playstation. The championships have generated considerable interest and provided lots of fun to those competing and watching on YouTube when some of the races have been uploaded. I asked Graham to pen a few words (well perhaps type would be a better word) about what has been done, this follows below -



VIRTUAL CHAMPIONSHIP



So, with lockdown in place and no motorsport to enjoy, we're all having to find other ways to occupy our time. Like all other race series, our own CNC Heads Championship has been disrupted and no racing is taking place as yet. Drivers are ready, cars are ready, officials are up to date with new regulations and the marshals have their orange probans ready.

Many people are now turning to technology to continue to keep in touch with work, family and friends. The technology is also providing us with

entertainment, from movies to box sets during the lockdown.

Here at BARC NW we've also turned to technology, and the use of games consoles, to start racing again. The initial idea was to set up some informal races for the drivers in the championship to have some fun. However the idea was quickly extended to include other race fans.

We're now running two Championships, one on Playstation and another on the Xbox. Both Championships have a great mix of competitors, some of them are drivers from our CNC

Heads Championship, sponsored by Ric Wood Motorsport. Drivers from other series are also registered, along with a number of marshals, one of the crew from the rescue unit and other supporters of the series, including our resident photographer Danny Walton.

The two Championships are racing at familiar circuits to our drivers, such as our home track, Oulton Park along with Donington and Cadwell Park. But we're also able to do some virtual racing at tracks we don't usually travel to, such as Knockhill, Brands Hatch and also Spa.

The real championship runs cars in multiple classes, and we have reflected this in the virtual Championship, with four different classes of car in each race. You can find more information on the social media group on Facebook - CNC Heads Virtual races - PS4 & Xbox. This has links to race video, dates and times of races and lots of great comments from the racers. Of course we also have regular updates to the Championship table, though the names are mainly unfamiliar, as they are gamer's tags.

Some however do cross over from the real championship. Ian Bruce, usually seen in real races in his Honda Civic shows at the top of the leader board in the Virtual Championship as BruceMotorsport, and Foxlow144 is George Foxlow, son of Tim Foxlow. Like a number of the other real drivers, Tim has issues with the controls of a games console, and the lack of real feedback. These sorts of differences between real and virtual racing have resulted in some younger regular users of games consoles emphatically beating the real drivers. Top of the table in the Xbox championship is currently racer Dave Green, but level on points is 15 year old cadet marshal Jamie Goode.

Whilst everyone is having fun, it's also strictly controlled with the rules, and one driver has already had points deducted following a last corner last lap incident that saw the leader end up in the barrier whilst trying to pass a back marker.

Graham Saul - Driver's Representative

In conversations I have had with Graham and other members of the Championship committee it soon has become apparent that there could be more to this than just running a virtual championship under lockdown! Several thoughts/ideas have come up, such as:

- Currently there is a 12 car grid maximum, would it be possible to increase this if we say ran it on some sort of cloud server rather than on a specific game console?
- What is the best architecture to use, perhaps we could utilise a PC version again running on some sort of central server?
- The virtual concept allows non drivers to compete on equal terms with drivers thus adding to the interest, we could generate additional interest and maybe increase club membership, something we are always looking at doing.
- Youngsters often get involved with the sport at an early stage and perhaps do some off-track marshalling until they are able to go trackside. However how often do we hear of these youngsters losing interest and moving to other leisure activities, this maybe some way to keep them interested until they can either race, marshal or at least attend meetings on their own.
- With the championship running alongside the real CNC Heads Championship we could offer incentives for the most successful gamers.
- In addition to gamers competing there may be other opportunities for youngsters to get involved, someone could register the competitors (budding new Secretary of the Meetings?) or perhaps do a voice over on the uploads to YouTube (budding new Commentators?) or even administer the championship covering rules and regulations (budding new Co-ordinators) and maybe even officiate in a Clerk or Steward role!
- If there was significant interest we could think about some sort of separate club membership for gamers and gaming officials.

Perhaps nothing more than food for thought at the moment but worth thinking about going forward and experimenting with in the future, there is nothing to lose in my view.

John Leck
BARC (NW Centre)

CNC Heads
www.cncheads.co.uk



NORTH
WESTERN
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CNC HEADS Sports/Saloon Car Championship

Online Championship



13 April - Oulton Park International
19 April - Brands Hatch Indy
26 April - Cadwell Park GP
8 May - Oulton Park Fosters
10 May - Donington Park National
17 May - Knockhill
24 May - Silverstone GP
31 May - Spa
7 June - Oulton International