

Sports/Saloon Car Championship – Round 1 - Oulton Park

WOOLFITT TAKES THE SPOILS IN INCIDENT PACKED OPENER

Jon Woolfitt's MK Indy took a first overall victory in the CNC Heads Sports Saloons opener, which had to be restarted after a multiple startline shunt, only to finish behind the safety car.

Although Andrew Southcott's MG Modsport had been quickest in qualifying by over a second, he was forced to pull out after his engine blew. Danny Bird's Spire GTR therefore took over pole and had Dave Harvey's Stuart Taylor Locosaki alongside.

Woolfitt headed row two, with Ric Wood next to him, debuting another Holden Commodore V8, new to his collection. Paul Woolfitt was due to start directly behind his brother, but a diff problem saw his Lotus Exige missing as the initial grid lined-up. So Paul Dobson's Locost 7 was left solo on row three, "I spent the session getting used to the changes we had made over winter," he explained.

Next up was Nigel Mustill who had brought his ex British GT Nissan GTR up from the South West, with 2017 class champion Ilsa Cox making a return in her Seat Leon Cupra. Piers Grange's Ford Escort headed Tony Ellis' Gemini Elva on row five, with Robert Burkinshaw's Honda Integra ad Mike Hurst's Seat Leon Cupra sharing row six.



Rob Burkinshaw's Honda Integra was quickest of the huge class E entry, he had Mike Hurst's Seat alongside him, while his class rivals Jamie Cryer and Steven Parker were directly behind him, in their respective Ginetta G20 and BMW Compact. Steve Rowles' Westfield and Ben Griffiths' Renault Clio were on the next row, followed by Nick Bartlett's BMW M3 and Ian

Bruce's Honda Civic Type R.

Garry Wardle headed the 10th row in his newly acquired VW Scirocco, with Stephen Keenan's MK next to him, before an all Ford row 11 featured Colin Robinson's Escort and Connor Modro's Focus. David Jones' Focus shared the next row with Graeme Smith, returning to the Championship with his Classic Caterham, followed by Rob Phillips' Renault Clio and Graham Saul's Honda Civic.

Les Kirk was back after a year out, now in a Honda Civic Type R and had Tony Harman's Ginetta G20 next to him. Chris Maries' Honda Integra, should have had Oliver Thomas' Subaru Impreza alongside, but an off at Cascades caused enough damage to withdraw from the race.

Also missing was Peter Koukoulas' Toyota MR2, which left Barry Long's BMW Rover, Bob Claxton's VW Golf Gti, David Bird's Honda Civic and Brian Allen's Ford Puma to complete the grid.

RACE

With Ric Wood's Holden missing from the second row it was 31 cars taking the start.

The first attempt lasted only yards, with Hurst's Seat and Rowles' Westfield the initial collision, which was then joined by Griffiths' Clio, Wardle's Scirocco, Keenan's MK, Kirk's Honda Civic and Long's Mini. "I had made a reasonable start, took two cars and was then hit from behind. It sent me sideways and I was hit again," said Wardle after sustaining substantial damage.

The race was red flagged before the leaders had exited Old Hall, but with Long's Mini having mounted Keenan's MK in the chaos, nine cars had to be recovered, while the walking wounded tended their scars. Out too was Ellis with a split oil cooler.

Woolfitt made his now customary flying start when the race did restart, with Harvey heading the pursuit from Dobson and Bird. "I made a terrible start and dropped from pole to fourth, but managed to get Dobbo back into Cascades," said Bird.



Jon Woolfitt leads a close battle with Dave Harvey, Paul Dobson and Danny Bird.

As they completed the opening lap the lead quartet had already started to break from Grange and Mustill who completed the top six, with Cox, Burkinshaw, Parker and Bartlett the initial top 10. Bird had started to close in on Harvey's second place by the end of lap two, but with Grange off at Lodge, Mustill was up to fifth, from Cox, with Burkinshaw still close, as Parker found himself under pressure from Cryer, after the Ginetta driver had ousted Bartlett.

But the safety car was readied as Grange's stricken Escort needed to be recovered, however the top four had already gone through when the safety car arrived. "I had been having a good battle with Jon and Dave and was just about to challenge into Lodge when I saw the yellow flags and had to back off," said Bird.

While the safety led all but the lead quartet for three laps, the leaders ended up on the back of the train and when the flag was shown, they were a lap clear. Woolfitt was therefore declared the winner, his maiden overall win, with Harvey and Bird completing the podium.

"I had got away as part of the top four and was having a good race until the safety car. At least I proved I could stay with the quicker cars now, but frustrating though," said Dobson, as he came in fourth and won class B. Mustill, Cox and Burkinshaw had all held station behind, but Cryer managed to get passed Parker before the safety car to secure eighth.



Newcomer Nigel Mustill (Nissan GTR) leads returnee Ilsa Cox (Seat Cupra)

Bartlett retained a race long 10th, from Bruce and Jones, while Harman managed to get ahead of Maries before the safety car intervention for 13th. Robinson was next to the flag after taking Smith, while Claxton, Modro, Phillips and Saul followed, before class F victor David Bird and Allen completed the finishers. Robinson was given a post-race penalty, which dropped him back behind Smith again.

RESULT

1 Jon Woolfitt (Mk Indy) 6 laps in 16m00.045s (57.00mph); 2 David Harvey (Stuart Taylor Locosaki) +1.645s; 3 Danny Bird (Spire GTR); 4 Paul Dobson (Locost 7); 5 Nigel Mustill (Nissan GTR); 6 Ilsa cox (Seat Leon Cupra); 7 Rob Burkinshaw (Honda Integra); 8 Jamie Cryer (Ginetta G20); 9 Steven Parker (BMW Compact); 10 Nick Bartlett (BMW M3).

Class A: 1 J. Woolfitt; no other finishers.

Class B: Dobson; 2 Colin Robinson (Ford Escort); no other starters.

Class C: 1 Harvey; 2 Bird; 3 Graeme Smith (Caterham Classic); no other starters.

Class D: 1 Mustill; 2 Cox; 3 Bob Claxton (VW Golf Gti); no other starters.

Class E: 1 Burkinshaw; 2 Cryer; 3 Parker; 4 Bartlett; 5 Ian Bruce (Honda Civic Type R); 6 David Jones (Ford Focus); 7 Tony Harman (Ginetta G20); 8 Chris Maries (Honda Integra Type R); 9 Connor Modro (Ford Focus); 10 Rob Phillips (Renault Clio); 11 Graham Saul (Honda Civic); 12 Brian Allen (Ford Puma).

Class F: David Bird (Honda Civic); no other starters.

Fastest lap: Harvey 1m46.816s (90.72mph).

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