

## CNC Heads Sports/Saloon Car Championship – Round 1 - Oulton Park

### ROSE RETURNS TO WINNING WAYS

2019 Champion Paul Rose was back on the top step of the podium, after his Saker dominated the opening round of this year's championship.

33 cars made it out for qualifying, which was split into two halves, after Patrick Smyth's Lotus Elan blew an oil pipe at Lodge corner and brought out the red flags. Rose set the pole time with 4.772 secs to spare, only completing the minimum three laps. "It felt good so I pitted," he said.

Andrew Southcott's MG Midget had been second, but was pipped near the end by Jon Woolfitt's Spire GTR. "I had no dramas and everything was working," Woolfitt added. Paul Dobson Locost qualified fourth to share the second row with Southcott. "It was a short session, but everything stayed together for once," he said.



Steve Harris' Saker slipped back too, after staying in the pits with team mate Rose when qualifying restarted. "It was just the traffic," he explained. Ric Wood's Nissan Skyline headed the third row, with Oliver Thomas' Subaru Impreza alongside. "A bit of understeer, otherwise it's all positive," said Thomas.

Next should have been David Clark's Saker, "I ran over something coming into the pits on the red flag and it holed the rocker cover. I'll be back," he promised. Next up Tim Foxlow was happy with his Ford Escort RSR. "We tested and found more time, settled in the new gearbox and was building up nicely

until the session stopped," he explained. Rounding off the top 10 qualifiers was defending Champion Jamie Cryer with his Ginetta G20. "Spot on, we moved the fuel tank over the winter and it's improved the balance, so feeling good," he said.

Andy Bicknell was back too in his Ginetta G50, qualifying just ahead of Garry Wardle, debuting his recently acquired Seat Leon Cupra TCR. 13<sup>th</sup> best proved to be unlucky for Paul

Woolfitt though, as his Lotus Exige was sidelined for the rest of the day. “It blew part of the exhaust and I had no power,” he confirmed. Allan Davies’ also had problems with his BMW M3. “It’s a slipping clutch. I hadn’t tested and found it qualifying for another session, so we will start from the pitlane,” he said.

Next up was Ian Bruce’s Honda Civic Type R. “It felt good for saying I hadn’t been in the car since last October, just looking to get faster,” he added. Only 0.032 secs slower than Bruce was Rob Phillips with his Honda Civic, ahead of Steven Parker’s BMW Compact and Paul Rotheroe’s Citroen Xsara. “I split a breather hose, but no real problem,” said Parker. But for Rotheroe it was his first time out since 2019. “Not bad, a bit rusty and braking in the wrong places,” he reckoned.

Mike Anderson debuted his VW Scirocco R, “brake problems,” he added, while completing the top 20 was Gary Warburton’s Mini Miglia, followed by Chris Maries’ Honda Civic Type R and Bruce Carter’s MG Midget. “I did a full practice and I aim to finish as it’s behaving,” said Maries. Peter Koukoulas was having fun in his Toyota MR2, “until I found the oil,” he said.

As the only starter in class F Graeme Smith’s Mazda MX5 came through unscathed. “No one to race with though,” he added. Ric Walker’s Mini R56 JCW was next with Clive Dix, debuting his Mazda RX7, while Guy Carter was back out in his TVR Tuscan. “I only did two laps before the throttle cable snapped.” Carter explained.

Bob Claxton’s VW Golf GTi was next best, followed by debutant Jake Johnson’s Ford Fiesta. “My first race and I only did my ARDS last Monday, then I burst a wheel cylinder on the last lap of qualifying,” he said. Jake is the Grandson of Chris Maries. Finally Andrew Smith was forced to sit out the race after his VW Beetle developed a gearbox leak, while Conor Modro’s Ford Focus had a driveshaft go after one lap. Smyth managed one lap before his problem. But Ralph Underwood’s TR7 V8 failed to record a time.

## The Race

So it was 29 cars that finally lined up for the race and its usual distance of 20 minutes plus one lap. As the lights went out Woolfitt headed Dobson, Southcott and Rose as they plunged down the Avenue.



Rose was already in third as they crested Hilltop and pressing Dobson for second as they arrived at Knickerbrook (see photo left). With the top four breaking clear on the second lap, Harris was on his own in fifth. But although Woolfitt still had the lead, Rose powered into second along Lakeside and led into Island a lap later. Wood was up to sixth, after

he edged out Thomas, while behind them, Bicknell had managed to escape the duelling Foxlow and Wardle, who had Cryer edging closer too.

Harris was the first retirement, "It was going well and then went into limp mode as it overheated. I think it's the head gasket," he explained. So Wood was up to fifth, still shadowed by Thomas, with Bicknell, Foxlow, Wardle and Cryer the rest of the early top 10.

Rose's lead continued to grow, as the lead quartet became spread out, but Phillips had already joined the retirements and Parker was next, after his duel with Rotheroe for second in class ended on lap four. "The power steering went at Old Hall, so I had to pull off at Cascades. It had been a good fight, as I had the straightline speed and Paul had it in the corners," said Parker.

Rotheroe was left on his own in 11<sup>th</sup>, while behind him there was a seven car train for 12<sup>th</sup>, with Guy Carter, Maries, Davies, Smyth, Bruce, Warburton and Anderson. But only a lap later Anderson was out and Thomas joined him too, leaving Wood a solitary fifth. "It was Ric's fault, "I kept it on full boost trying to stay with him. It went up to 130 degrees and overheated, probably the headgasket," Thomas explained.

Back at the front, Rose and Woolfitt were way clear, but Dobson's hold on third began to reduce, with Southcott going ahead on lap seven. Wardle had started to close on Bicknell's fifth place too, "then the front suspension collapsed at Lodge," he said after joining the casualties.

So Foxlow was up to seventh, as Cryer, Rotheroe and Carter were now in the top10, with Davies and Smyth closing in. Davies was into 10<sup>th</sup> through Shell on lap eight, before they all moved again when Foxlow went out with a puncture.



So Rose finally took the flag over 29 seconds clear of Woolfitt, but on the last lap Southcott was

missing, "out of fuel," he added, as Dobson reclaimed third. "I saw Woolfitt close a bit when I eased up, but a good race," said Rose. "Southcott kept slowing and I re-caught him and he slowed more, I guessed he was out of fuel," Dobson added.

Wood was a solitary fourth, with Bicknell and Cryer completing the top six. "I got away Ok but knew I wouldn't catch Wood," said Bicknell. "It was a bit dull after Oli had gone," Wood added. "I enjoyed catching Foxlow until his puncture, a perfect race for me," said Cryer.

Smyth snatched seventh from Davies on the last lap, "it was Ok, but if I slowed the clutch problem came back," Davies explained. Guy Carter made it home in ninth, "I made sure I was gentle on the throttle," he said. Rotheroe was forced to back off though but was still 10. "The oil temperature went a bit high," he said.

Maries was 11<sup>th</sup>, but later excluded on a technicality. Bruce and Warburton were locked together for most of the race in 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, with Bruce just holding on. "I need to be on it more at the start," Bruce reckoned. Walker, Bruce Carter from a pitlane start, Smith and Dix were next home, before Koukoulas, who managed a spin in the middle of Island. Claxton, Johnson and David Jones' Focus completed the finishers.

## RESULTS

1 Paul Rose (Saker RAPX – 500) 13 laps in 22m39.268s (92.68mph). 2 Jon Woolfitt (Spire GTR) +29.643s; 3 Paul Dobson (Locost 7 Mazda); 4 Ric Wood (Nissan Skyline); 5 Andy Bicknell (Ginetta G50); 6 Jamie Cryer (Ginetta G20); 7 Patrick Smith (Lotus Elan); 8 Allan Davies (BMW M3); 9 Guy Carter (TVR Tuscan); 10 Paul Rotheroe (Citroen Xsara VTS).

Class A: 1 Rose; 2 Bicknell; 3 Carter; no other finishers.

Class B: 1 Woolfitt; 2 Dobson; 3 Smyth; no other finishers.

Class C: 1 Gary Warburton (Mini Miglia) 2 Bruce Carter (MG Midget); no other starters.

Class D: 1 Wood; 2 Davies; 3 Riccy Walker (Mini R56 JCW); 4 Clive Dix (Mazda RX7); 5 Bob Claxton (VW Golf GTi); 6 David Jones (Ford Focus).

Class E: 1 Cryer; 2 Rotheroe; 3 Ian Bruce (Honda Civic Type R); 4 Peter Koukoulas (Toyota MR2); 5 Jake Johnson (Ford Fiesta); No other finishers,

Class F: 1 Graeme Smith (Mazda MX5); no other starters.

Fastest lap: Rose 1m41.974s (95.03mph).



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Photographs by Danny Walton

