

Sports/Saloon Car Championship – Rounds 13 & 14 - Oulton Park

DOBSON DOMINATES BUT IT'S BURKINSHAW'S TITLE

As the weather at Oulton Park's CNC Heads Sports Saloons finale ranged between wet and very wet, former multiple champion Paul Dobson came away as a double winner, but another class win in the final race was enough to crown Rob Burkinshaw 2019 Champion.

Dobson's flame spitting Locost Mazda took pole by a massive 8.514 secs after the morning's qualifying session, but behind him it was somewhat closer. Having debuted at Anglesey, Allan Davies was also on the front row in his BMW M3, having edged out triple Anglesey winner Danny Bird's Spire GTR by 0.696 secs. "It really went well, but there were puddles all over track. I just pushed on when I could and really enjoyed it," Davies explained. "After about four laps the chain broke and left me parked at Knickerbrook," Bird added.

Steven Parker's BMW Compact was only 3/10th off Bird's best too, with Dave Harvey's Stuart Taylor Locosaki a similar gap to Parker. Harvey had ended his session early however, pitting after a spin at Clay Hill. Alongside Harvey to complete the third row was Burkinshaw's Honda Integra, the champion elect comfortably topping class E again. "I just tried to find some space and settle into the conditions," Burkinshaw explained.



Next up were Roddie Paterson's Caterham C400 with Richard Jessop's Mini Miglia alongside, before an all Honda Civic Type R fifth row, with Ben Griffiths and Ian Bruce 0.629 secs apart. Chris Maries' Integra was only fractionally slower than the Civic duo too, sharing row six with returnee Ian Burrows' Toyota Celica GT2.

Garry Wardle was next quickest, in the Mini Cooper JCW he debuted last time out, closely followed by Connor Modro's Ford Focus and Angus Eddowes' Renault Clio. Having made his seasonal debut at Anglesey, Tim Foxlow completed row eight in his Ford Escort RSR, while stalwart Bob Claxton's Renault 21 Turbo just had the edge over Jamie Cryer's Ginetta G20 on the next row. "I was almost unable to see," said Foxlow. "I managed to get to grips with it after about three or four laps, but traffic was difficult in the spray," Cryer added.

Graeme Smith's Caterham and Barry Long's Mini Cooper rounded off the top 20, with Long having edged out Guy Carter's Honda CRX for class F pole. Graeme Laslett's Lotus Elise was

alongside Carter, with Oliver Thomas' Subaru Impreza and Peter Koukoulas' Toyota MR2 sharing the 12th row.

Debutant Alan Easton was third best in class F, heading the 13th row from Mike Budd's Toyota MR2 Turbo, from Neal O'Leary's Ginetta G20, David Bird's Honda Civic, Brian Allen's Ford Fiesta XR2i and Tony Harman's Ginetta G20.

Don Hughes' Peugeot 306 XSi, Luke Armiger's Vauxhall Tigra and Graham Saul's Porsche 928 GTS completed the line-up but failed to record a time. "I had no power from the engine and just did my three laps in idle," said Armiger.

RACE ONE

Despite starting the race behind the safety car, there were still dramas as the race got underway. Davies had hit the barrier at Deer Leap and managed to limp to Old Hall to retire. "I had brand new wets on the rear, not scrubbed in and when I put the power on it turned left into the barrier," he explained.

But the race was underway and Dobson made a flying start, pulling out a 1.672 secs lead over Bird on the opening lap, with Harvey already on his own in third. "I got covered in debris at the start when Davies' BMW went off, but then I started to reel in Dobbo," said Bird. Parker had made a good start too, while Paterson ousted Burkinshaw from fifth on the second lap. "He came flying passed under yellow flags though," Burkinshaw explained.



The top six had begun to settle and but the lead gap continued to open and close. "I was struggling with the downshift, as it was sticking on, so I kept losing him," Bird added. There was no sign of the conditions improving and although Dobson reigned supreme to take victory by 4.887 secs over Bird, Harvey vacated third after a spin at Old

Hall on lap eight.

Although Paterson got ahead of Parker to hold third from eight, he was excluded for his yellow flag incident, which handed Parker not only a class E victory, but third overall. Burkinshaw had climbed to fifth but had Foxlow closing. "I could see him coming and knew he was quicker. But I managed defend for about half a lap, then decided to think about the class and not overall," he explained.

Harvey had managed to recover to take seventh on the road, while Thomas carved his way through the order, taking Griffiths for eighth with three laps remaining. Maries had held ninth for much of the race, but having lost out to Thomas and Griffiths on lap 10, he also gave best to both Armiger, Wardle and Armiger on the last lap. "I still had an electrical fault and was down on power, despite having changed everything we could. It was not a big drama though as half power was OK in the conditions," said Armiger.

After losing a place to Jessop's Mini, Bruce found himself duelling with Burrows in the closing laps. At the flag Bruce just held it, by 0.653 secs. Cryer had made a reasonable start and had managed to oust Eddowes on lap three. "It was going well, but the car isn't great in the wet. But then I spun going up Clay Hill and it knocked my confidence," he admitted.

Eddowes went back ahead with Claxton following, before Smith and Long joined them. But both Cryer and Laslett managed to retake Long in the closing laps, but this still left the Mini driver a clear class F winner over Carter, in 20th overall. Koukoulas was a solitary 22nd for much of the race. Hughes was next home and with Modro retiring after eight laps, the rest of the field were fairly spread, with David Bird heading home, Easton, Saul, Allen, O'Leary, Harman and Budd.

Result

1 Paul Dobson (Locost 7 Mazda) 12 laps in 22m15.200s (72.02mph); 2 Danny Bird (Spire GTR) +4.87s; 3 Steven Parker (BMW Compact); 4 Tim Foxlow (Ford Escort RSR); 5 Rob Burkinshaw (Honda Integra); 6 David Harvey (Stuart Taylor Locosaki); 7 Oliver Thomas (Subaru Impreza); 8 Ben Griffiths (Honda Civic Type R); 9 Garry Wardle (Mini Cooper S JCW); 10 Luke Armiger (Vauxhall Tigra).

Class A: 1 Graham Saul (Porsche 928 GTS); no other starters.

Class B: 1 Dobson; 2 Foxlow; 3 Armiger; no other finishers.

Class C: 1 Danny Bird; 2 Harvey; 3 Richard Jessop (Mini Miglia); 4 Graeme Smith (Caterham); no other starters.

Class D: 1 Thomas; 2 Wardle; 3 Ian Burrows (Toyota Celica GT2); 4 Bob Claxton (Renault 21 Turbo); 5 Mike Budd (Toyota MR2 Turbo); no other finishers.

Class E: 1 Parker; 2 Burkinshaw; 3 Griffiths; 4 Chris Maries (Honda Integra); 5 Ian Bruce (Honda Civic Type R); 6 Angus Eddowes (Renault Clio); 7 Jamie Cryer (Ginetta G20); 8 Graeme Laslett (Lotus Elise); 9 Peter Koukoulas (Toyota MR2); 10 Don Hughes (Peugeot 306 XSi); 11 Neal O'Leary (Ginetta G20); 12 Tony Harman (Ginetta G20).

Class F: 1 Barry Long (Mini Cooper R50); 2 Guy Carter (Honda CRX); 3 David Bird (Honda Civic); 4 Alan Easton (Peugeot 106); 5 Brian Allen (Ford Fiesta XR2i); no other starters.

Fastest lap: Danny Bird 1m47.645s (74.44mph).

RACE TWO

Dobson made another flying start in the second race too, but Bird had managed to stay much closer until lap three. "I was chasing him hard and lined up for a pass at Cascades. Then I just went straight on at Old Hall and expected a big impact, but I hit the big cushions and was able to rejoin," said Bird.

Paterson had completed the opening lap behind Parker, Davies and Burkinshaw. But having ousted Burkinshaw on the second lap, he was into second following Bird's demise. Davies

was up to third, with Parker and Burkinshaw following, before a growing gap to sixth placed Wardle, while Foxlow, Maries and Jessop completed the top 10.

Paterson had reduced Dobson's lead fairly rapidly, and by the end of lap seven they were only 0.424 secs apart, with Burkinshaw having moved up to, taking Parker's class lead a lap earlier.



Wardle had gradually slipped down the order, while Foxlow progressed fairly rapidly into sixth from lap five, but despite having started from the back of the grid again, Armiger had started to close on him.

Back at the front though Paterson was making his bid for victory. He finally made it by on lap 10 and had built a two seconds lead, before Dobson came

charging back to snatch a last lap victory.

Although Davies held onto third, he had Burkinshaw edging ever closer at the end. "I had repaired the steering and followed Parker initially. But the car felt fantastic back on the old tyres, so I got him at Knickerbrook after we came over Hilltop side by side," he explained.

For Burkinshaw though fourth overall and a class win confirmed him as the 2019 Champion. "I had spent a couple of laps trying to pass Steven's BMW then made it into Knickerbrook. It feels good to have won the Championship, the class wins had been by aim all along and I managed to finish in every race," he said. Parker had managed to retain fifth until the final laps, when having demoted Foxlow a lap earlier, Armiger made it by one lap from home, with Foxlow following, leaving Parker in seventh. "Tim had more straightline speed than me, but one way or another I was having him, and I did," said Armiger.



Bird recovered to take Thomas for eighth four laps from home, while Burrows completed the top 10. "A great result all round, third in class both races," Burrows added. Griffiths also finished strongly, after seeing off class rival Bruce in the early laps. "A mega weekend, really chuffed," he said after coming home 11th, demoting Wardle on the last lap. Maries had been eighth initially, but his gradual

slide settled in 12th and the final unlapped runner.

It had been an enjoyable race for Bruce as he held onto 14th, "sliding everywhere, a bit of a struggle but happy," he said. It had been less enjoyable for Cryer though. "I had progressed

Ok with the rest but when the oil had gone down I lost touch, but had started to catch Bruce again at the end," he explained, having taken Harvey on the last lap for 15th.

Jessop had been ninth on the opening lap, but fell to 17th by the end, while Hughes, Smith and Eddowes completed the top 20, after Laslett's Elise had expired and deposited oil liberally around the track. It was a close finish for class F, as race long leader Long had Carter closing in at the flag. They were 21st and 22nd overall but Long took the class by 0.121secs.

Koukoulas was next home, followed by Saul, who demoted both David Bird and Claxton on the last lap. Harman, Allen and O'Leary were the final finishers after Easton crashed out after five laps.

RESULT

1 Dobson 13 laps in 23m33.725s (73.68mph); 2 Roddie Paterson (Caterham C400) +0.046s; 3 Allan Davies (BMW M3); 2 Burkinshaw; 5 Armiger; 6 Foxlow; 7 Parker; 8 Danny Bird; 9 Thomas; 10 Burrows.

Class A: 1 Saul; no finishers;

Class B: 1Dobson; 2 Paterson 3 Armiger; 4 Foxlow; no other starters.

Class C: 1 Danny Bird; 2 Harvey; 3 Jessop; no other starters.

Class D: 1 Davies; 2 Thomas; 3 Burrows; 4 Wardle; 5 Claxton; no other starters;

Class E: 1 Burkinshaw; 2 Parker; 3 Griffiths; 4 Maries; 5 Bruce; 6 Cryer; 7 Hughes; 8 Eddowes; 9 Koukoulas; 10 Harman; 11 O'Leary.

Class F: 1 Long; 2 Carter; 3 David Bird; 4 Allen; no other finishers.

Fastest lap: Paterson 1m42.464s (78.20mph).

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Photographs courtesy of Danny Walton