

Sports/Saloon Car Championship – Round 7 - Oulton Park

Paul Rose consolidated his Championship lead as the CNC Heads Sports Saloons returned to their spiritual Oulton Park home, for the Dave Simpson Memorial Trophy race.



The Saker's of Rose and Steve Harris once again took the front row of the grid after qualifying. "Everything felt good, except for having Paul in front again," said Harris.

In third Paul Woolfitt had been able to show his Lotus Exige's potential after recent minor problems, "All good, but we did have to replace the starters motor after the session, when it wouldn't restart in parc ferme though," he explained. Andrew Southcott's MG Modsport should have been alongside, only 0.370 secs slower, but he was one of a number that became pre-race casualties.

Heading the third row Luke Armiger had been late to join the session in his Vauxhall Tigra. "There was a lead off the alternator," he said. He had Danny Bird's Spire GTR alongside. "I was a bit disappointed really, I just wasn't on it. There was lots of traffic out there and had a few brake and gear problems too," he explained.

Jon Woolfitt's Mk Indy was next quickest but had to end his session early. "There was a crack in the box section where the front suspension was attached, so I had to re-weld it in the lunch break," he said.

Piers Grange brought his 2 litre Mk1 Escort out for the first time in the CNC Championship and completed the fourth row, while next up Peter Davies was striving with some success and reliability with his Spire GTR. "I had a pirouette at Old Hall, it's working, so now it's down to the driver," he reckoned.

Tim Foxlow's Mk1 Escort completed the top 10. "I feel that we are moving forward, both driver and car and aiming for a good start," he said.

Although he couldn't pinpoint a specific problem, Oliver Thomas wasn't entirely happy with his Subaru Impreza in 11th. "It just seemed messy, possibly a bit of me and the car," he reckoned. He had Guy Carter's TVR Tuscan alongside, "we have gone to original carbs and exhaust now, so hope to be back on top form," he said.

Dave Harvey's Stuart Taylor Locosaki only managed one lap before joining the casualties, but had still been 13th best. But all was well with Paul Rotheroe's Citroen Xsara, topping class E. "No problems, but a different suspension set up and did my personal best," explained.

Only 15th best Darren Smith was fairly disappointed with his TVR Tuscan. "Disappointed with my performance really, although I didn't get a clear lap," he said. Richard Roundell's Vauxhall Vectra was only fractionally behind him, "surprising really, that everything was OK," he reckoned.

Tony Ellis' Gemini Elva was also on the absentee list when the grid formed, but Steve Rowles was there despite tyre problems with his Honda Civic Type R. "It blistered the slick tyres, so we have had to change back to treaded for the race," he said.

Although Mike Hurst's Seat Leon Cupra, has made some progress of late, it's still not where it should be. "I didn't feel particularly quick, but we're running out of options," he reckoned. Garry Wardle was in trouble too, his Porsche 997 had radiator problems and was also sidelined.

Behind Wardle, Thomas Carey brought his Honda CRX for its Championship debut, the car normally seen in the CSCC Special Saloons. David Jones' had a good session to share row 11, with Chris Maries' Honda Integra R, with Nick Bartlett's BMW M3 behind them.

Karl Mason's Ginetta G20 was towed in when the session was red flagged, but rejoined for a comfortable 25th, ahead of class F poleman Robert Wakelin's Honda Civic.

Mike Storey's Renault shared the next row with Bob Claxton's VW Golf GTi, with Clive Dix's Ford Puma, Peter Koukoulas' Toyota MR2, David Green's Honda Civic, Colin Flynn's Mini Cooper, Brian Allen's Ford Puma and Alex Modro's Ford Focus, the others to set times.

Neither Jamie Cryer's Ginetta G20 nor Paul Dobson's Locost Mazda completed a timed a lap. Dobson had lost third gear and was out, but Cryer was able to fix a broken clutch cable to start from the back.

Eventually 29 of the original 37 starters lined up for the afternoon's race.

RACE

The Saker duo made probably their best ever starts, with Rose leading Harris into Old Hall, from Paul Woolfitt, Bird, Jon Woolfitt and Armiger. "We had a new clutch system and it got us off the line so much better," Rose admitted. "It was a bit all over the place at the start, while I tried to find the balance," said Bird.



The top four quickly began to go clear, leaving Armiger in a duel for fifth with Jon Woolfitt, which went in Armiger's favour on lap three. Behind them Grange had taken Davies for seventh, and after holding

ninth on the opening lap, Thomas had lost out to Foxlow, Smith and Carey by the end of the second lap.

Rose's lead was over seven seconds by the end of the third lap, with not even Harris able to stay with him. Storey had gone out after one lap and Flynn crashed out after contact while being lapped by Armiger. Carter joined them pitting after five laps, before Harris headed pitwards too, vacating second place with engine problems. "As I changed up the engine note changed and I headed for the pits," said Harris.

Bird had taken Woolfitt's Exige into Lodge on the same lap as Harris pitted, so became the new second placed man, while Armiger, a solo Jon Woolfitt and Grange held the rest of the top six places with seven laps done.

Davies was back up to seventh and closing on Grange, while Carey, was ninth and Foxlow was having to fend off Smith's Tuscan.

The lead kept growing and growing and by the flag the gap was 55.348 secs over Bird. "I had kept my head down and just tried to keep the gap down as much as I could, but got some vibration towards the end," said Bird.

From a comfortable third, Woolfitt was forced to pull off four laps from home. "Devastating, the fuel pump fuse had gone," he explained. Armiger therefore completed the overall podium from Jon Woolfitt, "we had a good race together, trying to chase Danny. The car was lovely and apart from being run off by a backmarker it was great," said Armiger.

Grange had Davies pursuing him again into the final laps for fifth, but the Spire driver went missing on the last lap, settling the place in Grange's favour, with Carey completing the top six. "I had got Peter on the pits straight early on, but he was always there. He got particularly close out of the Hairpin and the chicane's," said Grange.



Foxlow had managed to fend off Smith for much of the race, but finally gave best for seventh with three laps to go. "He just outdragged me over Hilltop," he admitted.

Thomas and Hurst both had fairly solitary races into ninth and tenth, "I started well and had a few laps with Tim. But I missed a gearchange at Cascades, he got away and then

I lost the brakes 2/3's in," Thomas explained after winning class D.

Having passed Rowles on the second lap, Rotheroe took charge of class E and was well clear of challengers in 12th overall, until Cryer's charge from the back of the grid and wiped out his

advantage. "I started to get a misfire ¾'s into the race, but when I saw Jamie closing I pushed on again, so really happy to win the class," said Rotheroe.

Cryer had been poised to challenge, only to fall back on the last lap, "it started sticking in fourth gear, so I did the last lap in third, but had enjoyed taking Maries and Rowles through Druids," he said.

Maries and Rowles had their own duel. "A cracking race, but got him and ran wide at Old Hall again, running out of fuel," said Rowles. "I knew I could keep him back, then he shot down my inside and got by," Maries replied after reclaiming his lost place.

Roundell was not far behind too, but found himself almost caught by Bartlett on the line. "Jamie came at me from nowhere and then Nick at the end. I had locked up on the penultimate lap and he got alongside me then," Roundell explained. "Another 10 yards and I would have had him," Bartlett replied.

The Focus' of Jones and Modro were duelling early on, but when Jones retired near the end, Modro was left solo in 17th, from Mason and dominant class F winner Wakelin.

Dix, Koukoulas, Claxton, Green and Allen completed the finishers.

RESULT

1 Paul Rose (Saker RAPX S1-400) 13 laps in 22m21.382s (93.92mph); 2 Danny Bird (Spire GTR) +55.348s; 3 Luke Armiger (Vauxhall Tigra); 4 Jon Woolfitt (MK Indy); 5 Piers Grange (Ford Escort Mk1); 6 Thomas Carey (Honda CRX); 7 Darren Smith (TVR Tuscan); 8 Tim Foxlow (Ford Escort RSR); 9 Oliver Thomas (Subaru Impreza); 10 Mike Hurst (Seat Leon Cupra).

Class A: 1 Rose; 2 Grange; 3 Smith; no other finishers.

Class B: 1 Armiger; 2 J.Woolfitt; 3 Carey; 4 Foxlow; 5 Karl Mason (Ginetta G20); no other finishers.

Class C: 1 Bird; no other finishers.

Class D: 1 Thomas; 2 Hurst; 3 Bob Claxton (VW Golf GTi); no other starters.

Class E: 1 Paul Rotheroe (Citroen Xsara); 2 Jamie Cryer (Ginetta G20); 3 Chris Maries (Honda Integra R); 4 Steve Rowles (Honda Civic Type R); 5 Richard Roundell (Vauxhall Vectra); 6 Nicholas Bartlett (BMW M3); 7 Alex Modro (Ford Focus); 8 Peter Koukoulas (Toyota MR2); 9 Brian Allen (Ford Puma).

Class F: 1 Robert Wakelin (Honda Civic); 2 Clive Dix (Ford Puma); 3 David Green (Honda Civic); no other finishers.

Fastest lap: Rose 1m40.791s (96.15mph).

Photographs by Peter Scherer.

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