



Sports/Saloon Car Championship – Round 8 Oulton Park

ROSE TO THE TOP OF THE PODIUM, AGAIN!

The Saker duo of Paul Rose and Steve Harris claimed a late 1-2 at Oulton Park in round eight of the CNC Heads North West Sports Saloons, but only after Garry Watson suffered last lap dramas.

Watson did however win the annually awarded Dave Simpson Trophy as the BARC North West Centre celebrated its 50th anniversary of running race meetings at Oulton Park.

39 cars set out in qualifying but four fell by the wayside. Piers Grange's Escort had a suspected dropped cylinder and he was joined on the sidelines by Vic Lord's Elise, Brian Allen's XR2i and Colin Flynn's MG Metro.

Watson's Westfield SEW secured pole on his last lap, but it hadn't been his best session of the year. "I wasn't at my best. It just didn't seem to click and I went off at Cascades on the second lap, just forgot to brake," he said.

Harris out qualified Saker team mate Rose to join Watson on the front row. "It was very difficult as there was so much traffic. The car was fine and the driver was in the usual condition," said Harris. Rose added that "I pitted to check my tyre pressures then couldn't get passed Steve. I had a bit of understeer but it was just traffic,".

Reigning Champion Joe Spencer struggled with his Stuart Taylor Locosaki. "It was Ok but we hadn't got the right set up and had understeer everywhere," he said.

Locosaki team mate Dave Harvey headed the next row, "spot on, a few gear problems to sort out, like neutrals," he explained. Current Championship leader Paul Dobson was alongside him, admitting to a spin. "It was a little spin at Deer Leap, cold tyres and bedding brakes in," he said.



Ric Wood was out for the second time in the Championship with his BMW M3 GTR, see photo left (Photo : Mike Lyne) "We are making progress, but still learning with it," he explained. Danny Bird's Pell Genesis was next to him but ended the session parked at Knickerbrook. "The front suspension broke again, I was just getting

sorted and it suddenly turned left," he explained.

Garry Wardle's Ginetta G50 and Patrick Smyth's Lotus Elan completed the top ten. "A bit of a misfire and it slowly got worse. I didn't really get a good lap but it was good when it went," said Wardle. "I hadn't been out for two years and had a coolant leak back in the paddock, couldn't believe how the pace has increased," Smyth admitted.

On row six Steven Parker had made improvements to his BMW Compact and was quickest in Class E. "I was on softer rubber and it turned in a lot better and I made a new airbox so the pipes didn't blow off, so it gave me more power," he said.

Alongside Parker was Les Kirk's Fisher Fury, "I just need to be quicker still," he admitted. Mike Hurst's Seat Leon Cupra had a troublefree run heading the next row from Steve Rowles' Honda Integra Type R.

Still striving for his first race finish, Jon Woolfitt was optimistic with his Mk Indy. "It was my first time here and seemed fine," he said.

Graeme Laslett's Lotus Elise and Richard Morris' Mini Clubman were next up, before race debutant Tim Foxlow's newly built Ford Escort Mk1. "It's a new car built by Sonny Howard with a 2.5 Toovey Duratec engine. I have never raced on circuits before but have 40 years experience in Hot Rods and Super Rods," he said.

Rounding off the top 20 Paul Rotheroe's Citroen Xsara had Chris Maries MK Indy alongside, "a coil wire came off and it was a bit noisy, but rebuilt the engine since Anglesey," said Maries.

With Grange absent Richard Roundell's Vectra was on his own on the next row, but had concerns with his brakes. Jamie Cryer's Ginetta G20 had a wheel bearing fail and necessitated a dash to Knutsford to get it repaired.

Lee Jones' ex Phil Hepworth championship winning Mini was next, with Neil Sampson back after a four year absence with his 7 litre TVR Tuscan. Nicholas Bartlett's BMW M3 and Alex Harris' Compact demoted Kevin Cryer, whose Ginetta G20 had a cooling fan vent pierce the bonnet and only did two laps.

Ralph Underwood's TR7V8 and Andrew Myercough's Caterham R400 preceded the class F leaders Clive Dix (Puma) and Helen Allen (Fiesta Zetec), while Bob Claxton's Renault 21 Turbo, Paul Woolfitt's newly built Z Cars Mini, Glenn Collier's Porsche 924 Turbo and Natalie Norman's Mini completed the qualifiers.

RACE

There were problems from the start again for Jamie Cryer and Maries, both retiring after one lap with a re-occurrence of their qualifying maladies.

But once again Watson, Spencer and Harvey made lightning starts to head the field into Old Hall, from Rose and Dobson while Harris was particularly bogged down as the lights went out. "I thought it could have been my day but I could see Paul laughing through his helmet

when he went by,” Harris reckoned. “Yes, I nearly crashed laughing so much at Steve’s start,” Rose replied.

Dobson was also in wars spinning at Cascades, “the front right just locked up, but I stayed out of the gravel,” he said. So Watson led Spencer as they completed the first lap with Rose closing in. Harvey was fourth but had Harris closing too, followed by Wood, Bird, Wardle, Woolfit J and Smyth.



Harris was into fourth as they went through Old Hall for the second time, from where Harvey had a fairly lonely race in fifth. Rose soon saw off Spencer and set his sights on Watson’s lead too.

Bird’s hopes of a good result ended after two laps, “I lost sixth gear and then fifth, so pitted,” he explained. Wardle therefore was up to

seventh from Woolfitt and Smyth and Hurst came into the top ten.

As Harris began to close on Spencer, the pursuers began to spread out, with Wood and Wardle solo while Smyth edged closer to Woolfitt for eighth.

Closing in though was a recovering Dobson taking Hurst, Smyth and Woolfitt on consecutive laps and back to eighth after six laps.

Harris was through into third after six laps, but Watson and Rose were long gone and getting closer to each other during lappery. After nine laps Rose made his move. “I set Garry up at Lodge but he had his elbows out a bit then got him into Old Hall,” he said.

Harris had looked set for third until Watson emerged from Lodge on the last lap and headed for the pitlane. “It just cut out and so I went for the pits, then it fired again and I saw the chequered flag,” he explained. It was too late to retain second as Harris was through, but still managed third well clear of Spencer. “My start had been good and went for fourth gear and it died on me. It picked up and I lost out to Harris, then saw Dobbo off and thought of the Championship again.” Spencer admitted.

Harvey, Wood and Wardle continued to hold station too for the remaining laps. “The car felt so good it was brilliant,” said Wardle.

Dobson’s hopes of further progress were dashed on lap nine however. “I clipped the chicane at Knickerbrook, nearly held it though,” he said after losing part of his front bodywork.

Smyth finally made it passed Woolfitt to hold eighth from lap nine. “Thoroughly enjoyed that and short shifted just to make sure near the end,” said the MK Indy driver.

Having looked set for a top 10 finish Hurst had to limp to the flag. "It started to miss and went onto three cylinders and then virtually lost all power," he said after dropping to 19th but still winning his class.

Kirk completed the top 10 after a great duel with Foxlow. "I overtook that Escort but he kept coming back at me and I thought not him again. Didn't know we were catching Woolfitt for overall places at the end too," Kirk admitted.

"Fantastic, a great duel with Les but maybe if we hadn't fought each other we might have caught Woolfitt," he added.

Parker shook off a persistent Laslett to top class E after Rowles had led the way early on. "I got him the lead into Cascades, I was just better than the rest today," Parker reckoned.

Laslett just managed to keep Rowles at bay after taking second in class four laps from home. "I only had fifth gear otherwise I would have got Steven," he added. "I had a spongy brake pedal and the tyres went off," Rowles added.



Morris, Rotheroe, Sampson, Jones, Hurst (see left) and Paul Woolfitt completed the top 20. I had got Laslett twice but couldn't close up again although the car felt good," said Rotheroe. Roundell had been up to third in class too but pulled out with more brake problems, while Kevin Cryer retired after a spin when he couldn't get gears.

Bartlett, Underwood, Myercough and Alex Harris were next home before Dix, a surprised Class F winner. "Helen is getting quicker and I thought she would win today as I had vibration right through the car with a damper problem," he said.

Helen Allen did lead and was pulling clear before she pulled off. "I was driving the wheels off it and thought I had a puncture. It felt like it as I was driving faster than I am used too," she said. The problem was later diagnosed as a wheel bearing. Claxton and Norman completed the 27 finishers.

RESULTS

1 Paul Rose (Saker RAPX) 13 laps in 22m53.293s (91.73mph); 2 Steve Harris (Saker RAPX) +10.927s; 3 Garry Watson (Wstfield SEW); 4 Joe Spencer (Stuart Taylor Locosaki); 5 Dave Harvey (Stuart Taylor Locosaki); 6 Ric Wood (BMW M3 GTR); 7 Garry Wardle (Ginetta G50); 8 Patrick Smyth (Lotus Elan); 9 Jon Woolfitt (Mk Indy); 10 Les Kirk (Fisher Fury).

Class A: 1 Rose; 2 Harris; 3 Wood; 4 Wradle; 5 Neil Sampson (TVR Tuscan); no other starters.

Class B: 1 Watson; 2 Smyth; 3 J.Woolfitt; 4 Tim Foxlow (Ford Escort RSR); 5 Richard Morris (Mini Clubman); 6 Paul Woolfitt (Z Cars Mini); 7 Andrew Myerscough (Caterham R400).

Class C: 1 Spencer; 2 Harvey; 3 Kirk; 4 Lee Jones (Mini Toyota); Bird; no other finishers.

Class D: 1 Mike Hurst (Seat Leon Cupra); 2 Ralph Underwood (Triumph TR7 V8); 3 Alex Harris (BMW E46 Compact); 4 Bob Claxton (Renault 21 Turbo); no other finishers.

Class E: 1 Steven Parker (BMW Compact); 2 Graeme Laslett (Lotus Elise); 3 Steve Rowles (Honda Integra Type R); 4 Paul Rotheroe (Citroen Xsara); 5 Nicholas Bartlett (BMW M3); no other finishers.

Class F: 1 Clive Dix (Ford Puma); 2 Natalie Norman (Mini Cooper); no other finishers. Fastest lap: Rose 1m44.321s (92.89mph).

Latest Points Positions :

1	Paul Rose	70	J
2	Joe Spencer	68	
3	Clive Dix	67	J
4	Paul Dobson	66	
5	Piers Grange	52	
	Dave Harvey	52	
7	Garry Watson	51	
	Steve Parker	51	
9	Paul Rotheroe	47	
10	Steve Harris	38	

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