

Sports/Saloon Car Championship – Rounds 1 & 2 - Cadwell Park

FORMER CHAMPIONS ROSE & DOBSON SHARE THE SPOILS

The 2020 CNC Heads Sports Saloons season finally got under way at Cadwell Park last weekend, with Paul Rose's Saker and Paul Dobson's Mazda engined Locost sharing the victories.

22 cars set out in qualifying with Rose claiming pole by 1.483 secs over Dobson. "I was on wets but it was a lot drier than I expected, but the car was perfect," said Rose. "I had a slight oil leak, but otherwise everything felt fairly good," Dobson added. Steve Harris headed the second row in the second of the three Sakers. "Definitely should have been slicks and I was on full wets, wrong choice and usual problem, the driver," he reckoned. Alongside was Danny Bird's Spire, "I was on wets too and it was too dry. I could do a couple of quick laps, then the tyres overheated and I had to slow up," he explained.



Jon Woolfitt was out in his Spire for the first time too, "I lost gears, maybe a fuse had gone for the paddleshift. But the handling was OK," he said. Alongside Woolfitt was race debutant Jonathan Beeson in the Paul Sheard run Seat TCR, destined for Britcar next time out. Tom Gresinger should have been heading row four, but he injured his wrist in an excursion and was a non-starter.

Olly Allen was another making his Championship debut in his well sorted Fiesta, "I was on slicks it was fine and I am hoping to do the whole season," he said. Heading row five was Luke Armiger's Vauxhall Tigra, with Jamie Cryer's Ginetta G20 alongside, "it was drier than I expected too. Felt good though even on wets," said Cryer.

Next up was Ric Wood's immaculate Nissan Skyline, "I just want to check everything works before my bigger historic meetings. I went out on slicks too," he confirmed. There was another debutant lining up next to Wood, with Fun Cup race winner Andy Bicknell in his Ginetta G50. "It was my first time here and I had never even seen the place before. It was interesting though on slicks, but it all seemed fine, he said.

There had been a few modifications to Oliver Thomas' Subaru Impreza over the extended closed season. "I had to sort out my whole new brake system," he said after setting 13th

best time. Garry Wardle's Mini Cooper S had a few issues. "Well two years ago it wouldn't start, last year the wheel fell off, so a loss of power when it got warm was a minor problem," he reckoned.

The eighth row had Guy Carter's Honda CRX and Championship debutant David Clark's Saker sharing. "All OK, it's a reliable Honda of course," said Carter. Clark was being a little more cautious after damaging the front of the car with an off in testing the day before though.

After 21 years racing his Caterham, Graeme Smith was out in the ex Samantha Laslett Mazda MX5 and had another debutant alongside, Richard Walker's JCW Mini. "It's a Lawrence Davey built ex Challenge car. I had done Mini Stox years ago and some trackdays, but just wanted to race," said Walker.

Peter Koukoulas' Toyota MR2 and Chris Maries' Honda Civic Type R shared the penultimate row, "it's got the wrong camshaft so it's 40hp light, slipping out of second gear and I am having to hold it in third. I tried some new slicks too and had five spins," Maries admitted.

The BMW's of Stephen Parker and Richard Roundell brought up the rear. Parker had problems with his Compact, "it kept going into limp mode as I think the ecu is set for the wrong temperature," he explained. Roundell was back after a year out, having swapped his Vectra for a BMW 1 Series, "It was the first time on track with the car, so bedding in tyres and brakes and just getting used to the car. It's 116 Trophy spec built from a £500 road car," he said.

RACE ONE



It was dry but still cloudy for the first race on Saturday afternoon, so it was slicks as the 21 car field came to the grid.

Dobson's flying start gave him the lead through Coppice, with Rose, Harris, Woolfitt and Bird in pursuit. But as they arrived at the Mountain the lead duo

had already started to break, leaving Harris under pressure from Woolfitt and Bird. As the leaders completed the opening lap, Beeson was just getting up to pace. "It was my first race and I couldn't get it in gear for the start," he explained. Rose had briefly nosed ahead of Dobson on Park Straight on the opening lap, only to lose out under braking at Park Corner, but after a repeat move on lap two he made it stick.

With the top five all clear, Wood and Armiger made it passed Allen in the battle for sixth, with Cryer and Thomas completed the early top 10. As Woolfitt and Bird's third placed duel

intensified, Harris began to make inroads on Dobson. But Wood headed back to the paddock," it was an oil temperature problem, so safety first," he said. Armiger moved up to sixth, from Allen and Cryer, with Bicknell and Wardle into the top 10 as Thomas had slowed too. "It was an oil pressure problem and it had cut out on me," Thomas explained.

Although Rose was well clear, on lap four second to fifth suddenly closed up, leaving Armiger a solitary sixth and seventh placed Allen shadowed by Cryer. A lap later Harris had powered into second on Park Straight, but as he led his battling quartet towards the Mountain, Koukoulas spun across their bows. "I wasn't sure where he going to go," said Harris." It was scary as I didn't know either," Koukoulas replied.

Dobson fought back and had a couple of exchanges with Harris, which allowed Woolfitt to close again too. But Bird had lost ground, "I got run off the road as I don't think Jon saw me, then I tried the outside of Steve Harris at Park and off again and spun at the Mountain later on my own, so didn't enjoy that much," said Bird. But on lap 10 Harris was missing, "I was lapping Richard Roundell, he waved me through but I put two wheels on the grass at Charlies and it filled the radiator and overheated," he explained. Following Bird's spins, Woolfitt was clear to challenge Dobson for second.

It was Rose's victory though by over 30 secs. "Dobbo was on it at the start though. It was really good and close until I got away at the second attempt. I had severe pad knock off though and had to pump the brakes on the straights," he explained.

Dobson managed to retain second over the final laps, "good start but the Saker's are so fast on the straights. He just got me on power and then Steve Harris got me in the same place, but I got him back at the Hairpin before he went by again," he said. Bird was still a comfortable fourth, and Armiger the only other unlapped runner fifth. Allen had pulled out with a plug lead off seven laps in, which left Cryer clear in sixth." It had been a good clean race with Olly, but I think I would have got him eventually," said Cryer.

Both Bicknell and Wardle had fairly lonely races in seventh and eighth. "I was still on road tyres, maybe would have been better on slicks," said Wardle. "I was just so hot in the car, enjoyed it though," Bicknell added. Carter saw off Clark's Saker as the rounded off the top 10. "He was so quick on the straights, it made it hard, then he held me up in the corners until he came off at Mansfield," Carter explained. "Loved it but just wish I was quicker," Clark replied.

Walker and Koukoulas were next home, "I had a little battle with a couple of cars but they got away," Walker admitted. With Smith out with a blown engine and Parker out in limp mode, Maries, Beeson and Roundell completed the finishers. "It was like a scalded cat for half a lap before it died again," said Parker.

RESULT

1 Paul Rose (Saker RAPX S1-400) 14 laps in 21m54.312s (83.86mph); 2 Paul Dobson (Locost Mazda) +33.569s; 3 Jon Woolfitt (Spire GTR); 4 Danny Bird(Spire GTR); 5 Luke Armiger (Vauxhall Tigra); 6 Jamie Cryer (Ginetta G20); 7 Andy Bicknell (Ginetta G50); 8 Garry Wardle (Mini Cooper S); 9 Guy Carter (Honda CRX); 10 David Clark (Saker RAPX S1-400).

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

Class B: 1 Dobson; 2 Woolfitt; 3 Armiger; no other starters.

Class C: 1 Bird; no other starters.

Class D: 1 Wardle; 2 Walker; 3 Jonathan Beeson (Seat TCR); no other finishers.

Class E: 1 Cryer; 2 Peter Koukoulas (Toyota MR2); 3 Maries (Honda Civic Type R); no other finishers.

Class F: 1 Guy Carter (Honda CRX); 2 Richard Roundell (BMW 1 Series); no other finishers.

Fastest lap: Rose 1m31.366s (86.17mph).

RACE TWO

Rose was away and clear from lights out, despite Dobson's best efforts, while the sort out behind left Bird in third, from Woolfitt, Armiger, Beeson, Wood, Bicknell, Cryer and Wardle. But there had been contact between Armiger and Allen, which left the Fiesta backwards against the Armco.

The safety car was out for one lap, but from the green flag the top five remained unchanged, but Wood ousted Beeson from sixth, as eighth placed Bicknell had his mirrors full of Cryer's G20.

With the lead duo in the clear again, Woolfitt was starting to challenge Bird for third and while Armiger was solo again, Beeson was just holding onto Wood's Skyline, while pitlane starter Harris closed in, after he had charged passed the Bicknell/Cryer duel. Further down the order there were more duels as Wardle and Thomas swapped for 11th, with Clark catching after escaping from Carter and in 14th Maries had Walker threatening.

Woolfitt finally got passed Bird on lap six and quickly closed in on Dobson, but with Rose pulling out a lap later, their duel became the duel for the lead. "We had a problem going to assembly when the compressor for the paddleshift kept running. I was concerned when we started, but then as I changed to second gear it was stuck," Rose explained.



Although Woolfitt was closing enough to mount a lead challenge, each time he got close he soon backed off again. "I was struggling to see with the oil coming from Paul's car," he explained. "I had fixed the oil seal but it must have blown out again," Dobson replied. Bird had closed too in the second half but had to

settle for third. “Jon had the power on the straight, but I could catch in the corners, then I lost ground when I couldn’t get a gear at the Hairpin,” he said,

Harris was forced to retire again with overheating after 11 laps and Armiger had pulled out of an early fifth with a broken half shaft. Wood shook off Beeson to claim fourth, while Bicknell finally escaped from Cryer as they came in sixth and seventh. “We swapped a few times, but I couldn’t match that power on the straights,” said Beeson. “I finally lost Jamie in the end, but I think he saved fuel with me towing him around,” Bicknell added. “I just didn’t have enough top end to get him,” Cryer replied.

Wardle, Clark, Thomas and Carter rounded off the top 10, from Parker, Walker, Maries, Koukoulas and Roundell. “I am getting more confident, but need more time,” said Clark. “It cut out again but at least I have brakes now,” Thomas added. “Better, but it’s an electrical fault when the revs are high and had to reset the ecu again,” Parker concluded.

RESULT

1 Dobson 13 laps in 22m41.989s (75.14mph); 2 Woolfitt +1.051s; 3 Bird; 4 Ric Wood (Nissan Skyline); 5 Beeson; 6 Bicknell; 7 Cryer; 8 Wardle; 9 Clark; 10 Carter.

Class A: 1 Bicknell; 2 Clark; no other finishers.

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

Class C: 1 Bird; no other starters.

Class D: 1 Wood; 2 Beeson; 3 Wardle; 4 Oliver Thomas (Subaru Impreza); 5 Walker; no other starters.

Class E: 1 Cryer; 2 Steven Parker (BMW Compact); 3 Maries; 4 Koukoulas; no other finishers.

Class F: 1 Carter; 2 Roundell; no other starters.

Fastest lap: Rose 1m32.991s (84.66mph).

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Photographs courtesy of Graham Holbon.