

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

### **ROSE & HARRIS SHARE WINS, BUT SPENCER TAKES THE TITLE**

Both races at the CNC Heads Sports Saloons Oulton Park finale were Saker 1-2's, with Paul Rose and Steve Harris taking one win apiece. Two class wins however and a certain amount of caution in the wet and gloomy conditions, were enough for Joe Spencer's Stuart Taylor Locosaki to take the title.

Qualifying conditions were mixed but Rose and Harris dominated and secured the front row of the grid over eight seconds clear of Luke Armiger's Vauxhall Tigra in third. "I had a bit of understeer, so could be better and Steve had softer springs than me," said Rose. "I had a good wet set up but couldn't get a clear lap," Harris replied.

"Lovely, best conditions, wetter the better, nice and greasy," said Armiger, who had Danny Bird's Spire GTR alongside. "My front tyre pressures were a bit too high and I was bad on the brakes, but chuffed with fourth," Bird added.

Both Spencer and team mate Dave Harvey had tyre problems in their Locosaki's. "We tried new wets, they didn't suit the car at all and had no grip," Spencer explained after qualifying fifth. "I had the same as Joe and had to brake 100 yards early," Harvey added, having qualified eighth behind Paul Woolfitt's Lotus Exige and Oliver Thomas' Subaru Impreza.

"I was happy with my time," said Woolfitt. "I just did my laps and took it easy as it was so greasy," Thomas added. Alistair Stenhouse's BMW E36 M3 and Tim Foxlow's Ford Escort RSR completed the top 10. "I had proper tyres," said Stenhouse. Although Ric Wood qualified his BMW M3 GTR 11<sup>th</sup> after only a couple of laps, he withdrew from the race, which promoted Alastair Chilton's MK GTi.

Jon Woolfitt's MK Indy headed the next row, "took it easy as there wasn't much grip," he said. Alongside was Garry Wardle, having swapped to his Mini Cooper S, after clutch problems with his Porsche in the previous days test. Felt slow after the Porsche though," he reckoned.

Piers Grange's Escort had come through the session Ok but refused to start in the paddock. "I had been quick enough, but just wouldn't restart," he explained. Down in 16<sup>th</sup> Matt Spark had tyre problems with his Caterham. "I just couldn't get them to work," he said. Heading the next row James Aukland had been cautious too with Capri, "I didn't realise I had been as quick as I was though," he reckoned. James was awarded the Mintex Award for his efforts in practice. This is presented to the driver with the most spectacular performance in practice from the meeting.

Class E rivals Nicholas Bartlett (BMW M3 E30), Richard Roundell (Vauxhall Vectra), Graeme Laslett (Lotus Elise) and Jamie Cryer (Ginetta G20) were next. "It's a nice car in the wet but didn't give it's all," said Bartlett. "I went off at Knickerbrook under pressure from Steve

Harris though,” Roundell admitted. “It was my best wet qualifying,” Laslett added. Les Kirk’s Fisher Fury shared row 11 with Cryer, while returnee Peter Davies was next, despite going straight on at Lodge in his Honda Civic. “I had a brake issue and needed to brake earlier,” he admitted.

Iain Gorrie’s Raw Striker was late out after a reluctance to start, then pitted to adjust the wing mirror. Dave Chilton’s MK was on the next row, with Helen Allen’s Fiesta Zetec. Tony Harman’s Ginetta G20 and Chris Maries’ Honda Integra were on the next row. “I saved my wet tyres as I hadn’t had them long, but went through the chicane twice and had a spin,” said Maries.

The Honda Civic’s of David Bird and Richard Steele (a newcomer this round), had Karl Mason’s Ginetta G20, Bob Claxton’s Renault 21 Turbo, Russell Hunter’s MGB, David Jones’ Ford Focus and Ralph Underwood’s TR7 V8 behind them, completing the 34 car grid.

## RACE ONE

Despite the wet track Rose still made it into Old Hall first, with Armiger, Bird and Spencer following as Harris picked up pace.

By the end of the opening lap the field had already begun to spread out, with Harris having recovered to second and Spencer into fourth ahead of Bird, while Harvey, Thomas, Paul Woolfitt, Foxlow and Wardle completed the early top ten. Bird straight lined Knickerbrook chicane on his second lap and Armiger, although still second, had a misfire as the safety car appeared to recover Steele’s Honda from Shell Hairpin.

Harman had also pulled off with no drive, while Aukland pitted haven’t suffered clutch failure at Lodge and Jon Woolfitt joined them after bending his gear selector.

There were two laps behind the safety which also claimed Grange having snapped the camshaft, but from the green flag normal order was soon restored. Rose took the win by just over nine seconds. “I had been trying different gear changes before the safety car, suggested by my team mate Steven and it didn’t work,” said Rose.

Harris retained a comfortable second, “I was on a mission until the safety car, then lost momentum. It’s difficult to catch Paul anyway and then I spun at Lodge,” he explained. Armiger’s misfire had cleared and he was able to consolidate third again, “we thought I had dropped the fuel cap in the tank and ran over kerbs trying to clear the blockage, but later found I hadn’t,” he said.



Back on his old wets, Spencer was a safe third, “I just did what I had to as my brakes didn’t feel right,” he said. Behind him though it went down to the last lap for fifth, with Harvey snatching it from Bird. “I went through the chicane at Knickerbrook twice, but spent the whole race looking for Dave Harvey. I couldn’t see him then he jumped me at Knickerbrook on the last lap,” said Bird. “I had been right behind him for the

whole race, but didn’t know that was the last lap,” Harvey replied.

Paul Woolfitt had ousted Thomas for seventh into Old Hall straight from the green flag, “my tyres had it though as they were sprint wets,” said the Exige driver. “I decided to just let Paul go as he wasn’t in my class,” Thomas admitted.

Alastair Chilton also made it into ninth on the last lap at Foxlow’s expense. “I had a few hairy moments but like the wet and my tyres were good,” said Chilton. “I had closed on Oliver but my bonnet pin broke and it lifted coming over Hilltop and Alastair got me,” Foxlow added.



For most of the race there had been little to separate Spark and Wardle, but after battling throughout Spark finally sealed 11th. “Garry had so much corner speed,” said Spark. “I touched him, I got alongside but couldn’t get passed,” Wardle added.

Bartlett also made it passed Laslett to take class E on the eighth lap. “It was so good in the wet, braking later and then got the run on Graeme into Shell and I was starting to

close on the duel for 11<sup>th</sup>,” he said. Roundell followed Laslett to the flag, just holding off Stenhouse who had recovered from an off on the opening lap.

Maries, Kirk, Davies and Cryer completed the top 20, with Underwood 21<sup>st</sup> and Dave Chilton taking class F winner Gorrie for 22nd on the last lap. Jones, Hunter, Mason, David Bird, Allen and Claxton completed the finishers.

## Result

1 Paul Rose (Saker RAPX) 10 laps in 23m07.661s (69.83mph); 2 Steve Harris (Saker RAPX) +8.287s; 3 Luke Armiger (Vauxhall Tigra); 4 Joe Spencer (Stuart Taylor Locosaki); 5 David Harvey (Stuart Taylor Locosaki); 6 Danny Bird (Spire GTR); 7 Paul Woolfitt (Lotus Exige); 8 Oliver Thomas (Subaru Impreza); 9 Alastair Chilton (MK Gti); 10 Tim Foxlow (Ford Escort RSR).

Class A: 1 Rose; 2 Harris; no other finishers.

Class B: 1 Armiger; 2 P.Woolfitt; 3 Foxlow; 4 Matt Spark (Caterham C400); 5 Karl (Ginetta G20); no other finishers.

Class C: 1 Spencer; 2 Harvey; 3 Bird; 4 A.Chilton; 5 Les Kirk (Fisher Fury); 6 D.Chilton.

Class D: 1 Thomas; 2 Garry Wardle (Mini Cooper S); 3 Alistair Stenhouse (BMW E36 M3); 4 Ralph Underwood (Triumph TR7 V8); 5 Russell Hunter (MGB); 6 Bob Claxton (Renault 21 Turbo) no other starters.

Class E: 1 Nicholas Bartlett (BMW E30 M3); 2 Graeme Laslett (Lotus Elise); 3 Richard Roundell (Vauxhall Vectra); 4 Chris Maries (Honda Integra R); 5 Peter Davies (Honda Civic); 6 Jamie Cryer (Ginetta G20); 7 David Jones (Ford Focus).

Class F: 1 Iain Gorrie (Raw Striker); 2 David Bird (Honda Civic); 3 Helen Allen (Ford Fiesta Zetec); no other finishers.

Fastest lap: Rose 1m54.457s (84.67mph).

## RACE TWO

As Rose ducked into the pitlane after the green flag lap for race two, Spencer and Bird initially went either side of Harris to lead into Old Hall. Harris fought straight back and led by the end of the opening lap, from Spencer, Armiger, Bird, Spark and Harvey, with Rose already up to 12<sup>th</sup>.

But Armiger's race one misfire was back and Bird was challenging. Rose had completed the second lap in seventh, but then picked off Bird, Spark and Harvey, as Harris' lead grew to over 14 seconds. Having taken Spencer on lap four, Rose was into second and reeling in Saker team mate Harris. By lap five the lead was down to only seven seconds.



Rose however began to lose ground again and although he was safe in second, the gap to the lead had grown to over 27 seconds at the flag. "The alternator light came on, so I wasn't sure I would finish," said Rose. "A controlled drive after my usual poor start. I had seen Paul closing on me and

then he had gone, so wasn't really sure what had happened," Harris added.

Spencer eased himself home third with another class win that secured him the overall championship title for a second time. "I took it steady again, but wanted a podium so I could just thank everyone," he explained. Armiger had dropped to seventh with his misfire, but it suddenly cleared and he retook Spark, Harvey and Bird on consecutive laps to reclaim fourth on the last lap. "Once I realised it had cleared again I just went hell for leather," he said.



Bird just held off Harvey for fifth on this occasion, after the latter initially lost out to Spark. "I only went through the chicane once in that race, so it was Ok," said Bird. "I had sold my wets that had worked in race one to Matt and he scorched by on the first lap. So I had to retake him or look a right idiot," Harvey reckoned.

Spark was a solid seventh, with Foxlow retaining eighth, despite having Thomas close midrace. Alastair Chilton made in home behind Thomas for his second top 10 of the day. "I was catching Oliver too," said Chilton. "I dropped back from Tim a little so he led me through the backmarkers," Thomas admitted.

Stenhouse retained a race long 11<sup>th</sup>, "no sideways this time and when the rain came again I just drove for a finish," he admitted. Wardle and Kirk had an interesting midrace duel,

before the Mini driver consolidated his place, leaving Bartlett to split the pair from nine. "Les got me when it dried and I got him when it rained again," Wardle explained.

Roundell also closed on Kirk in the final laps, while Maries was next home after demoting Laslett from 16<sup>th</sup> on the sixth lap. Cryer, Davies and Underwood rounded off the top 20, with Hunter just missing out. Gorrie had another class F win, with Dave Chilton between him and second in class David Bird. Claxton, Allen, Jones and Steele completed the finishers, with only Mason on the retirement list.

### **Result**

1 Harris 12 laps in 23m26.518s (82.68mph); 2 Rose +27.728s; 3 Spencer; 4 Armiger; 5 Danny Bird; 6 Harvey; 7 Spark; 8 Foxlow; 9 Thomas; 10 A.Chilton.

Class A: 1 Harris; 2 Rose; no other starters.

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

Class C: 1 Spencer; 2 Bird; 3 Harvey; 4 A.Chilton; 5 Kirk 6 D.Chilton.

Class D: 1 Thomas; 2 Stenhouse; 3 Wardle; 4 Underwood; 5 Hunter; 6 Claxton no other starters.

Class E: 1 Bartlett; 2 Roundell; 3 Maries; 4 Laslett; 5 Cryer; 6 Davies; 7 Jones.

Class F: 1 Gorrie; 2 David Bird; 3 Allen; 4 Richard Steele (Honda Civic); no other starters.

Fastest lap: Rose 1m53.383s (85.47mph).

Published by Peter Scherer for BARC North West, October 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017

Photographs courtesy of Marvin Hall