



North Western
Centre

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

DOUBLE FOR PATERSON, BUT IT'S BAMBER'S TITLE

The CNC Heads Sports Saloon Car Championship completed its 40th season with a double victory for Roddie Paterson's Caterham. Both races were prematurely ended due to red flag incidents, but Ian Bamber did enough to be crowned 2023 Champion in his Ginetta G20.

QUALIFYING

It was a combination of wet then greasy in the morning's qualifying session. Andrew Southcott's MG Midget Lenham took pole by over 2 ½ seconds from Paterson. "I had a slight locking brake, but there was a lot of traffic, with 40 cars out there," said Paterson. Garry Wardle's Seat Cupra TCR headed the second row, with Arron Armiger's Vauxhall Tigra alongside. "I came in for a quick stop and in that time it went from wet to greasy," he explained.

CNC debutant Thom Evans was next up, a regular in the Northern Saloons & Sports, he was out to see how competitive his Caterham Duratec was. "A bit hairy, I was on full wets but stayed on," he said. Oliver Thomas was fairly satisfied with his sixth place, quickest in Class D. "I took it easy and just got in the groove. I would have liked to have been higher," he said.

Outgoing Champion Jon Woolfitt had dramas before the session with his Spire GTR. "The starter motor was stuck on after scrutineering, so I had to go out on dry settings," he explained. How did he fix the starter motor problem? "With a hammer of course," before qualifying seventh. Riccy Walker was a little surprised to have qualified his JCW Mini alongside Woolfitt. "Full wets and I had good grip for the whole session for my best qualifying of the season," he confirmed. Marshall Groves admitted to having "a bit of a moment at Knickerbrook," in his Vauxhall Vectra, but overall had a better set up and a good balance to his car.



Stephen Parker's BMW Compact rounded off the top10 and pipped Class E leader and Champion elect Ian Bamber's Ginetta by just 0.161 secs. "I spun at Lodge, definitely not perfect but the car was faultless," said Bamber. Dave Green's Honda Civic had a few concerns, "the clutch is about an inch from the floor, but I will have to manage," he added. Jamie Cryer had a slight off too in his Ginetta G20, "a lock up at Cascades and I spun around," he admitted.

Tom Macfarlane's VW Scirocco completed row seven, just ahead of Clive Dix's Mazda RX7. "I'm still learning these conditions, but managed a quick lap," said the VW driver. "All good," Dix reckoned, as he had Simon Allaway's Lotus Esprit V8 alongside. "I only got three laps in, then a rear puncture with my wets on," said Allaway.

Richard Hall was surprised to be in the top half too, "better than expected but not scintillating," the Caterham driver reckoned. He was just ahead of Connor Modro's Ginetta G40, "I got fogged up and struggled for visibility, so didn't enjoy it and ended up in the gravel at Cascades," Connor explained.

Paul Goodlad's Scirocco and David Jones' Ford Focus rounded off the top 20. "It was busy, the car was OK, but the problem is the driver," said Goodlad. "It ran well now we have solved the electrical problem," Jones added. Jon Curry's Caterham and Tim Foxlow's Escort RSR shared row 11. "I spun at Old Hall diving down the inside of Marshall Groves, cold tyres and playing with my brake balance," Foxlow admitted.

Matt Jones was "happy" with his Focus and Bod Buckby's Caterham was "OK" too. Cliff Butler's Vauxhall Carlton was next quickest, but had to wait in the wings as a reserve, which gave Darren Scholes' VW Golf 25th on the grid. Thomas Frankland was disappointed to be so far down though in his Renault 5GT Turbo, "My inter's just didn't work, but I stayed on," he said.



Cavan Taylor in only his second race weekend, felt he lacked "consistency" in his Renault Clio. It was a seasonal debut for Alex Modro too in his Fiesta ST150, "I pitted early as my shoulder hurt and I was hungry too as I hadn't had breakfast," he said.

It was supposed to be James Aukland's seasonal debut too, but his Ford Capri became a casualty, "the front of the chassis broke," he confirmed. He had been quicker than Connor Harvey's Caterham, another to make the wrong tyre choice. "I was on Inter's and sliding all over the place," he said. Gary Warburton felt he was lacking power in his Mini Miglia, while Ric Wood's fabulous Ford Capri came to a halt at Druids after two laps, "It just cut out," he said.

Helen Allen's Fiesta completed row 16, just ahead of Bob Claxton's VW Golf GTi, while down in 36th was Rob Wakelin's Peugeot 205. "The bottom engine mount snapped," he confirmed. Brian Allen's Ford Puma, Andrew Smith's, VW Beetle were next, while Ralph Underwood's TR7 V8 and Julie Butler's Holden Commodore only managed a lap or two between them.

RACE ONE

Apart from Aukland, everyone made it to the grid for the first race, 39 cars in total with rain looking imminent. Unfortunately Ralph Underwood failed to complete the formation lap so the reserve, Julie Butler was permitted to start from the Pit Lane.

As the lights went out Paterson just held off Southcott to lead out of Old Hall, with Wardle, Thomas and Evans fighting for third. But as Southcott made his challenge into Cascades he was off. "I just touched the tyre wall, so a bit of damage," he said after heading pitwards to retire.



Paterson was already over five seconds clear by the end of the opening lap, but rain was starting to fall, as Woolfitt and Wardle settled in second and third, with the top three well clear of Thomas and Evans in the duel for fourth. Armiger was in sixth, from Groves, Cryer, Bamber and Green, but Groves managed to oust Armiger on lap two, as Bamber slipped back 12th having lost out to Foxlow and Macfarlane.

Although Paterson continued to ease clear, Wardle was pressing Woolfitt hard for second.

Evans had managed to take fourth from Thomas, who then lost out to Groves too, as Armiger closed in on them. Into Old Hall for the fourth time Armiger attacked Groves, there was contact and the Vectra spun. "I went into the corner a bit quick and expected Marshall to challenge Ollie, so I went for a space I expected and it wasn't there. It was a fair touch, enough to spin him," Armiger explained.

"I didn't see Arron coming, but I was defending after missing a gear out of Deer Leap. I was flying though after taking Ollie around the outside at Druids," Groves replied. "I just waited to see which way Marshall went, but my grip was a bit Sketchy on slicks," Thomas added. So Armiger was up to fifth, from Thomas and Groves, while Foxlow had got ahead of Cryer for eighth too, as Macfarlane retained 10th from the closing Allaway.

But only one more lap counted as the red flags were out as Cryer was off at Shell. "The front locked up and I couldn't stop it, but it was going well until then," he said. Paterson was declared the winner by 6.7 seconds, from Woolfitt and Wardle. "A good start, I could see Jon and Garry closing behind, so I had to push on a little. Garry got Jon and then past me when I put a wheel on the kerb at Druids, but it didn't count," said Paterson.

"It started Ok then I lost any grip after four laps. The temperature went and it was like ice," Woolfitt added. "I had been catching Jon and then Roddie and thought maybe a win. I was on road tyres after a last minute change and they were great, but the red flags came out just as I got the lead," Wardle explained. Evans, Armiger and Thomas held station to complete the top six, "I just focussed on staying on once it started raining, but went wheel to wheel with Arron for a while," said Evans.

Groves was seventh, but being caught by Foxlow until he spun just before the race was stopped. "I was going quickly and catching, until I spun exiting the Britten's chicane, "Foxlow added, as he was still classified eighth. Frankland and Green completed the top 10. "Great progress coming through the field on slicks and I had enough grip, even on the grass," said Frankland. "I was going well but got punted by Tom Macfarlane," Green added.

Buckby was next home and won Class C, "I had left the wets on after qualifying and it was an inspired decision," he reckoned. Bamber settled in 12th and topped Class E again, "it was a bit crowded out there, hectic so I just made sure I stayed on," he said. Wakelin also made good progress, "34th to 13th and then red flags as I was getting into my stride," he reckoned, but Parker had struggled for grip. "I did what I had to do and got Ian, but it was after the stoppage," he said.

“Very entertaining, Clive Dix spun in front of me, Tom Frankland tried to come by on the grass, so much happening,” said Goodlad in 15th. Matthew Jones followed him home, from Alek Modro, “I made the right decision to stay on wets, but was only as I was too lazy to change,” Alek admitted. Macfarlane had been just outside the top 10, but finally finished 18th, “Simon Allaway spun in front of me at Knickerbrook and then I had a 360 backwards into the barrier,” he explained.

Scholes and Cliff Butler completed the top 20, from Taylor, while Connor Modro finally came in 21st. “I was about 13th then had a 360 at Knickerbrook. Just no grip on slicks,” he said. “I did better than I thought, I just focussed on getting to the flag once I saw people going off,” Taylor admitted. Smith was next with Hall closing, after he had problems at the start. “The bonnet came off on the green flag lap, so I started at the back and tried to play catch up,” said the Caterham driver.



David Jones, Warburton, Claxton, Brian and Helen Allen all made it safely to the finish too, so what happened to the rest? Underwood's TR7 V8 expired on the formation lap, Wood started from the pitlane, but was back for good after two laps. Julie Butler was next to drop out after two laps, while Dix and Curry headed pitwards too to retire. “Wrong tyres and there was a problem with the camber,” said Dix. Allaway surrendered to the conditions after his spin at Knickerbrook, “I left the

barrier looking a bit brown and the marshals I think,” he said.

Walker and Harvey were the final retirements after they clashed at Shell too. “I was following Ian Bamber and being sensible, but saw Jamie go off, braked hard for the yellow flag, locked up and hit Connor,” he explained. “He punted me quite hard and it bent the rear axle,” Harvey added.

RACE TWO

It was down to 34 cars for race two as Harvey, Wood, Allaway, Southcott and Underwood were missing, while David Jones started from the pitlane,

Thomas made a scorching start to head Paterson, Wardle and Evans out of Old Hall, but Wardle spun at Knickerbrook, leaving Evans and Armiger to join the duelling Thomas and Paterson in a first lap break. Behind them Groves led the chasers, with Bamber chasing Parker for sixth, as Curry, Green and Cryer completed the initial top 10.

Paterson had just managed to get the lead on lap two before the safety car appeared, and after two laps under caution it was just under seven minutes to go. Thomas kept the pressure on Paterson for the lead, but after only two laps the race was red flagged after Matthew Jones went straight on at Old Hall in a duel with Aleks Modro.

Paterson took the win again by 0.526 secs from Thomas. “I just needed to keep it on the black stuff, but Ollie flew past me, I had to just bring it home but he was still all over me,” said Paterson. “There was no point in battling hard when he past me, at least I could see where he was, really good though,” Thomas

replied. Evans completed the overall podium, with Armiger in his wheeltracks, “I took it gently as the power I had and the grip didn’t match. I did have a few goes at him though,” Armiger admitted.



Groves was a solitary fifth, “I could see Steven Parker closing though, but my tyres were overheating,” he said. Sixth gave Parker a Class E win, while behind him Foxlow was closing on Cryer when the race was stopped. “It had been fairly comfortable, but I could see them coming for me when the red flags came out,” Cryer admitted. “They came out just as I

got him,” Foxlow added. Green and Wakelin completed the top 10, but 11th and second in class sealed the Championship for Bamber, “the hardest race I have ever done, just being careful and over thinking everything.,” he said.

Walker wasn’t far behind Bamber following the safety car, which also brought Connor Modro, Macfarlane and Goodlad into a line which remained to the red flag. Woolfitt then followed in 16th, from Curry, Dix, Buckby and David Jones to complete the top 20. “No wipers in the rain didn’t help,” said Dix. Hall, Smith, Aleks Modro, Frankland, Warburton, Scholes, Taylor, Clif Butler and Helen Allen completed the finishers, with Brian Allen and Julie Butler having retired.

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