



Sports/Saloon Car Championship – Rounds 3 & 4 - Donington Park

WOOD & ARMIGER TAKE THE TOP STEP

There was a 30 plus grid for CNC Heads Sports Saloons second weekend of the season, but it was Championship sponsor Ric Wood and Luke Armiger sharing the victory spoils.

Only 0.239 secs separated the front row of the grid, with Paul Woolfitt's Lotus Exige heading Andrew Southcott's MG Midget. But Woolfitt found his diff seal leaking again on returning to the paddock. There was only 9/1000ths between Armiger's Vauxhall Tigra and Danny Bird's Spire GTR too on the second row and within 0.75 secs of the pole time. "It was all good for me," said Armiger. "I have upgraded to only two pedals, it just takes some getting used to though," Bird added.

Wood was next up with his Kia Optima. "It's a Nissan powered ex Swedish Touring Car and the first time I have raced it," he explained. Alongside was Garry Wardle with his ex Carrera Cup Porsche 911 GT3. "It's all in working order, but I might start from the pitlane as it's a standing start," he reckoned. Tony Ellis had no problems with his Gemini Elva, "I am nursing injuries from a bike accident though, so very painful," he said.

Completing the fourth row was Piers Grange with his Mk1 Escort, while in ninth was former multiple Champion and Cadwell Park winner Paul Dobson. "I only did five laps as I crashed into Jon Woolfitt at Redgate. I just slipped and understeered into him," said the Locost Mazda driver. Ben Griffiths' Civic Type R was the first of a number of Honda's, "first in class and 10th overall, so can't complain," he said.

Tim Foxlow was less happy with his Escort RSR, "I have just got to get used to the balance of the car," he explained. He should have had Jon Woolfitt's Spire alongside, "there was too much damage after Dobbo understeered into me. The rear corner, bodywork, upright and no starter motor, so I couldn't repair it," he said.

On the seventh row Andrew Smith's VW Beetle shared with Jamie Cryer's Ginetta G20, "My tyre pressures were wrong, too high so I was a bit off pace," said Cryer. Hyundai Coupe frontrunner Kevin Smiles was a welcome debutant, having travelled from Portsmouth to debut his Honda Civic. "I hadn't sat in it before this weekend," he said. Alongside Smiles was Connor Modro's Ford Focus, "it's the first time with the rebuilt engine after it blew on a test, so that was the new test," he explained.

Allan Davies' BMW M3 and Steve Matthias' Escort Cosworth were the ninth row. "My first time out for six years," said Matthias. Guy Carter's Honda CRX and Mark Burton's Nissan 370Z completed the top 20. "We are on a treaded tyre as the slicks didn't fit, so a bit of an experiment," said Burton in one the ex Nissan Playstation Academy car. Charlie Kennedy

was just behind his team mate in the second Nissan and he was on slicks, while alongside him Ian Bruce was making his first visit to Donington in his Honda Civic Type R. "Treaded tyres though, but quite good really," said Bruce.

There was a slight trip into the gravel at McLeans for Riccy Walker. "I spent most of the session keeping out of the way," he reckoned. Robert Wakelin debuted his Honda powered 205 and also had an off at McLeans. "I went off at McLeans and then spun at Coppice, horrendous," he said. After blowing his Mazda MX5's engine at Cadwell Graeme Smith was back. "I have got a close ration gearbox now too, so another step forward," he added.

Peter Koukoulas' MR2 was next up, and managed a spin at the chicane, while David Green declared his Honda Civic as "perfect." Handling problems caused David Jones to withdraw his new Honda S2000, "We didn't get chance to do the suspension so it's still a road car and very bouncy," he explained. Completing the grid were Bob Claxton's VW Golf Gti, Helen Allen's Fiesta Zetec, Richard Roundell's BMW 1 Series, Brian Allen's Puma and Ralph Underwood's TR7 V8.

RACE ONE

It was cloudy but dry as the 31 cars lined up for the start. Paul Woolfitt led from pole into Redgate, from Southcott, but roles were soon reversed as Bird, Armiger and Wood joined them in a first lap break.

There were two pit visitors though, Ellis was in to have the bonnet fastened, but Walker was in with a damaged radiator. Also out was Dobson, after fixing the damage from qualifying. "The belt came off the oil pump, seized the engine and I was off into the tyres at the Old Hairpin," he explained.

Southcott had increased his lead, but Wood and Armiger were duelling for second, while in fourth Foxlow had Grange and Cryer challenging. There were more pit callers though, Underwood had gone with engine cut out problems and Griffiths was in the gravel at Coppice, but both Bird and Woolfitt were back in the pits for the duration. "The clutch went exiting Redgate. I could get gears but no drive," said Bird. Woolfitt had lost drive too.

In the battle for fourth Grange managed to get through, which left Foxlow and Cryer duelling as Wardle began to close on them. Back at the front Wood had broken away from Armiger and reeled in the leader, going ahead through Redgate on lap five. Armiger was now a solitary third, while after an aborted challenge into the chicane, Wardle finally made it passed Grange into fourth.

Southcott had managed to retake the lead from Wood on lap six and pull away again, but with Wardle and Grange on their own in fourth and fifth, there was a four car train for sixth. "When I got the lead I slowed down and Ric had got me at Redgate, so I speeded up and got him back at Coppice after he went a bit wide," said Southcott.

Foxlow had Smith challenging, after both he and Davies had demoted Cryer. Smith got to the head of the quartet on lap seven, while Davies began to fall back and was retaken by

Cryer. "It had been hesitant in qualifying, no response to power. We fixed it and then it started missing again," Davies explained.

Lap 13 proved to be unlucky for Southcott when his engine let go, leaving Wood to defend his regained lead over Armiger for the remaining laps. "The engine overheated and maybe I should have come in," said Southcott. At the flag Wood had 0.529 secs to spare, while in third Wardle was the only other car on the lead lap. "Ric suggested I started from the grid still and then I stalled it. I enjoyed making up the lost places though, especially the duel with Piers," said Wardle.

"Best race for a while, loved it. Not bad for a car built in a shed, but it was the yellow flags that stopped me trying for the lead," said Armiger.

Foxlow and Cryer had a terrific duel for fifth until "something broke" and the Escort was off at Starkeys Bridge, leaving Davies to complete the top six after Smith had pitted with a couple of laps to go. "Over the moon, I got Tim a couple of times but he got me back. The tweaks after qualifying definitely worked," said Cryer.

Smiles had a fairly solitary run in seventh, after Matthias pitted with engine problems and a broken diff. Despite his stop Ellis clawed his way back to eighth, "very enjoyable coming back through," he reckoned. While in ninth Modro's duel with Wakelin ended prematurely when the Peugeot pitted after nine laps. "It took six laps for my tyres to warm up, then it went well," said Modro. "I snapped a cv joint," Wakelin replied.

Bruce completed the top 10, with Carter next up. Burton was the sole surviving Nissan 370 after Kennedy pitted. "I was on my own then made a mistake at the end," Bruce admitted. "I was on my own too, just fiddling around," Carter added. With Claxton also retiring, Green, Smith, Koukoulas, Helen Allen, Roundell and Brian Allen completed the finishers.

RESULT

1 Ric Wood (Kia Optima) 18 laps in 22m15.518s (95.92mph); 2 Luke Armiger (Vauxhall Tigra) +0.529s; 3 Garry Wardle (Porsche 911 GT3); 4 Piers Grange (Ford Escort RSR Mk1); 5 Jamie Cryer (Ginetta G20); 6 Allan Davies (BMW M3); 7 Kevin Smiles (Honda Civic); 8 Tony Ellis (Gemini Elva); 9 Connor Modro (Ford Focus); 10 Ian Bruce (Honda Civic Type R).

Class A: 1 Wood; 2 Grange; no other finishers.

Class B: 1 Armiger; 2 Ellis; no other finishers.

Class C: no finishers.

Class D: 1 Wardle; 2 Davies; 3 Mark Burton (Nissan 370Z); no other finishers.

Class E: 1 Cryer; 2 Smiles; 3 Modro; 4 Bruce; 5 Peter Koukoulas (Toyota MR2); 6 Brian Allen (Ford Puma).

Class F: 1 Guy Carter (Honda CRX); 2 David Green (Honda Civic); 3 Graeme Smith (Mazda MX5); 4 Helen Allen (Ford Fiesta Zetec S); 5 Richard Roundell (BMW 1 Series); no other starters.

Fastest lap: Southcott 1m12.007s (98.94mph).

RACE TWO

Five of the race one retirements made back onto the race two grid, but we also lost Grange with a leaky diff, Smith with a gearbox seal gone, Wood and both of the Nissan 370Z's, so 19 cars took the start.

From lights out it was Bird and Armiger sprinting clear, as Ellis and Wardle disputed third. Armiger was soon on the attack and shot ahead on the straight on lap two, with Wardle going clear in third too. Smith was fifth but there was a three car battle for sixth. Initially Griffiths led the way, but Davies managed to oust him and Cryer, as both demoted the Honda driver.

Bruce had lost a couple of early places down to eighth, while behind him there was another duel between Modro and Wakelin.

At the front it all, became spread out, as Armiger eased away to a three-second victory. "It was enjoyable. Danny was quicker in some places, but I managed to put a backmarker between us and then just stayed consistent and controlled the gap," he said. "I was on old tyres and they started going off, but he lost me in the traffic," Bird admitted.

Wardle was a distant third and once again the only other driver on the lead lap. "A bit lonely, but they were just too quick for me. At least I sorted out my start," he said. Ellis was fourth on the road, but received a jump start penalty, which dropped him behind Davies. "I rolled a bit at the start," Ellis admitted.

Davies demoted Smith on the last lap after the Beetle slowed again, he was also penalised, but it made no difference to his final position. Cryer was a racelong seventh, "tame but another good result," he reckoned. Behind him Griffiths was wishing he had been on slicks, "I might have had a chance of sticking with Jamie then," he said.

Wakelin and Modro had another entertaining duel with numerous exchanges. "I could see him out braking me, so sat back and learned," said Wakelin. "I could do him under brakes at first, but couldn't live with his power and he got away," Modro replied.

Cater was 11th and easily won class F again, Bruce was on his own in 12th, while Walker, Green, Roundell and the Allen's completed the finishers, after Koukoulas and Smiles had both pitted early.

RESULT

1 Armiger 18 laps in 22m12.145s (96.16mph); 2 Danny Bird (Spire GTR) +3.040s; 3 Wardle; 4 Davies; 5 Ellis; 6 Andrew Smith (VW Beetle); 7 Cryer; 8 Ben Griffiths (Honda Civic Type R); 9 Robert Wakelin (Peugeot 205); 10 Modro.

Class A: No starters.

Class B: 1 Armiger; 2 Ellis; 3 Wakelin; no other starters.

Class C: 1 Bird; no other starters.

Class D: 1 Wardle; 2 Davies; 3 Smith; 4 Riccy Walker (Mini R56 JCW); no other starters.

Class E: 1 Cryer; 2 Griffiths; 3 Modro; 4 Bruce; 5 B.Allen; no other finishers.

Class F: 1 Carter; 2 Green; 3 Roundell; 4 H.Allen; no other starters. Fastest lap: Armiger
1m12.397s (98.41mph).

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