

## CNC HEADS SPORTS/SALOON CHAMPIONSHIP 2024

ROUNDS 5 & 6 – OULTON PARK – 6<sup>TH</sup> JULY

### TWO NEW WINNERS AT OULTON

#### QUALIFYING

30 cars on the grid, returning drivers, heavy rain, safety cars, red flags and new winners, that was last Saturday at Oulton Park.

It was returnee Stuart Pearson that took pole in a wet and very early qualifying session. His AB Sabre was 0.971s secs up on Ben Roberts, debuting his ex Paul Dobson Locost, now sporting a Honda engine. Former Championship runner-up back in 2015, it was Pearson's first race since 2019. "It was a bit of an eye opener and very different for me," said the ex Stock Hatch and XR racer. Roberts was also getting used to his change of car, "I was on the edge at times, a bit twitchy and a few moments, but fairly happy though," he added.

Third quickest was Oliver Thomas' Subaru Impreza. "It was a bit skittish, but felt great as it was the first time I have completed a qualifying session this season," he explained. Garry Wardle's Audi RS3 TCR completed the second row, and made a spectacular sight after the exhaust broke, with flames under the car reflecting into the wet track. "I was just getting into it when the exhaust broke and I lost power," he said.



Connor Modro was just fractionally behind with his Westfield Aero, "I took it easy in the conditions, but everything seemed to be going fine," he said. There was a welcome back for Arron Armiger in his Vauxhall Tigra, making his seasonal debut after recovering from his serious road accident. "We had launch control, but it didn't work, just good to be back though," he added.

Riccy Walker was somewhat surprised to be up in seventh with his Mini F56. "I knew it would be good in the wet, but I had an off near the end at Island. I had the right tyres on though and it was great," he said. Robert Wakelin was another making his seasonal return in his Peugeot 205, "no problems, it all went Ok," he was delighted to say.

After his problems at Donington caused him to miss Croft, Marshall Groves was back too in his Vauxhall Vectra. "I had a few lock-ups and we had reset the dampers, so the handling was not at its best and we misted up," he explained. Completing the top 10 was Paul Rotheroe, back after a couple of years out with his Citroen Xsara. "The new alternator failed," he confirmed.

Jamie Cryer had a "big spin" at Island on the last lap in his Ginetta G20. "I was pushing on a bit, but it all felt OK," he said. Next up was a delighted Clive Dix, "we had a new engine and this was it's first real run, so I am happy and smiling again," said the Mazda RX7 driver. Mark Primett had made a number of changes to his Banks Europa too, we had new brake pads in and had changed the wheels. So I was bedding things in and just surviving," he said after qualifying 13<sup>th</sup>. Alongside Primett was Wayne Spiler's Mazda RX8, back after giving Croft a miss, while row eight was an all Jones affair, with David's Focus just 0.205 secs quicker than Matthew's similar car. "It was alright but went into limp mode twice and then cleared," said David. "Mine was running a bit rich, but otherwise fine," Matthew added. Croft's double winner Bod Buckby's Caterham was struggling in the wet. "It was my first time out in the wet with it. I went off twice on consecutive laps too, at Knickerbrook and Brittens," he explained.

Richard Hall's Caterham was a little off the pace too, "the car was good but I was rubbish, I'm just not confident in the wet," he said. Steven Parker had concerns over a rattle on his Ford Fiesta ST, "there was something loose, I was just hoping it wasn't a driveshaft as I hadn't got a spare," he added.

Julie Butler's Holden Commodore and Tim Moll's VW Golf were next up, before CNC debutant John Allen's Honda Civic Type R. Cavan Taylor enjoyed the wet though, "it was a good challenge, I did have a few twitches though," said the Clio driver. Visibility was a problem for Gary Warburton's Mini though, "I needed to be following someone really with good brake lights," he reckoned.

Lee Bull found his Clio a bit of a handful in the conditions, "it didn't quite go to plan. My wets were old worn out road tyres, so it wasn't good and I had an overshoot at Knickerbrook," he said. Alongside Bull was former Champion Iain Gorrie, making a comeback after eight years with a supercharged Lotus Elise. "It's result of an 18 month project," he said.

Phil White was out with CNC's for the first time to in his BMW 325 too, normally a marshal at Oulton and Anglesey, he found the conditions challenging. "I was on the wrong tyres and sliding all over," he said. Helen Allen's Fiesta was running solo again in Class F, but survived a couple of moments unscathed, while completing the grid were Bob Claxton's VW Golf GTi, Donald Dewar's Golf and Den Davies' Darrian, with Chris Roberts' Ginetta G40 failing to record a time, due to transponder issues.



## RACE 1

Rotheroe was the only casualty from qualifying, so it was 31 cars taking the start, but both Parker and David Jones pulled off on the green flag lap, with continuing issues.

From lights out it was Roberts heading the charge down the Avenue, with Pearson challenging into Knickerbrook, while behind them Modro was attacking Thomas for third. By the end of the opening lap Modro was through, but Thomas' promising start had to come to nought. "The gear linkage broke," he explained, leaving him stranded and calling the safety car into action.



The lead pair had started to break clear, but with two laps under caution it was Roberts, from Pearson, Modro, Wardle, Wakelin and Armiger the top six, while Groves, Cryer, Buckby and Primett rounded off the initial top 10. From the green flag Modro managed to jump Pearson for second, going side by side down the Avenue, before Pearson retook the place exiting Cascades and set about chasing down Roberts' lead.

"I had been quite happy to follow until the safety car, then I got mugged. He was smarter than me and found the right moment, but I had to be a bit aggressive and get the place back," Pearson explained. Armiger had managed to take Wakelin too for fifth, "I went for it from the green flag and got him down the Avenue," he said, as he tried to close on Wardle.

While Groves held station in seventh, Buckby was on the move too, taking Cryer with Primett looking to challenge too. Behind them Chris Roberts had charged from the back of the grid, made four places at the restart and was looking to advance further.

There was moisture in the air, which soon got heavier and heavier. Roberts was under pressure from Pearson cresting Hilltop for the sixth time and he couldn't make it through the chicane at Knickerbrook. His overshoot proved decisive as Pearson eased himself clear to victory by 11.974 secs. Roberts managed to retain second, but had his own last drama. "I had a great start and loved leading, so I can't fault the car. Without the mistake at the chicane I may have held Stuart off, but then I caught

cars into Knickerbrook on the last lap, got sideways at Knickerbrook and hit the wall. I managed to keep going to the finish with broken steering, but knew Connor was closing in,” he explained.

Modro was still 1.512 secs down in third place, “I was just concentrating on staying on, as it was my first time in the wet with this car,” he said. Wardle was a fairly solitary fourth, with Armiger having consolidated fifth too, after taking the flag in spectacular fashion. “As I came out of Deer Leap to the flag it aquaplaned and went one way and then the other before spinning after the flag,” said the Tigra driver.



Wakelin had been set for a top six finish, but became a last lap casualty. “Going into Lodge, it just snapped away from me and went rear end into the barrier and Chris Roberts followed. It had been great until then,” he explained. So Groves completed the top six and won Class D, despite collecting a 10 second penalty for a false start. “It was an exciting race, but I couldn’t see once it started raining. It seemed more like 19 laps than nine and I had an early exchange with Arron too,” he said.

Despite his off Chris Roberts recovered to finish seventh. “It was great coming through the field from the back until that spin,” he said. With Cryer retiring after eight laps, Primett moved up to take eighth. “I had just lost a place to Wayne, then the car just broke away from me at Lodge and I was left in the middle of the track after spinning,” Cryer explained. “I spun twice too but couldn’t see where I was going and there were so many flags everywhere, so I just kept going and hoped for the best,” Primett replied.

Dix managed to oust Buckby too on the last lap, having eased himself clear of Spiller early on. “It was a good dice with Wayne, but there was contact near the end. Mark spun at Brittens, Ricky braked and Tim hit me,” Dix explained. Walker had got ahead of the group into 10<sup>th</sup> until he slid off two laps from home. “I just pirouetted off on the straight,” he said.

So Dix and Buckby completed the top 10, “I was slow, had no grip, slid around and spun at Cascades, but had some god dices, Buckby added. Moll made it home too despite considerable frontal damage. In 12<sup>th</sup> Spiller led home close E rivals, Matt Jones and Allen. It was good fighting with Clive until he got away after the safety car,” said Spiller. “I just wasn’t quick enough,” Jones replied.



Butler and White were the final unlapped

runners, with White having gone through the Knickerbrook Chicane more times than around it. "I was playing with the brakes and finally got it right on the last lap, I was too quick over hilltop," he reckoned. Bull and Taylor had a mid-race duel, before the former pulled away. "I stayed out but that wasn't enjoyable," said Bull.

Davies, Taylor and Warburton rounded off the top 20, "I went off at Island and spun onto the grass," Warburton admitted, while Gorrie, Claxton and Allen completed the finishers.

## RACE 2

It was 27 cars on the grid for the second race and it was dry. Rotheroe was back out after a three hour round trip for a new alternator from the workshop, but there were a number of absentees,

It was another terrific start by the top three, but once again Roberts had the edge into Cascades, with Pearson trying to fend off Modro for second. Into Knickerbrook Modro was into second, and had the lead out of Lodge, but the safety car was out with Spiller's Mazda off at Shell.

So it was Modro, Roberts, Pearson, Wardle, Armiger, Groves, Primett, Cryer, Rotheroe and Walker following the safety car for two laps, before the race was red flagged.

The restart had barely got under way when the chequered flag came out, after just three laps. Roberts had led again from Modro and Pearson, but Groves had made a phenomenal start, until he ran wide at Cascades. "The power steering went at the restart and I couldn't turn in. There was fluid on my rear



tyres too, so I parked it at Island," he explained. But there had been contact at the start too, "I got clipped and then became sandwiched between two cars and had nowhere to go. As the steering didn't feel right I came in," said Primett, while Davies' Darrian also involved,

pulled off at Lakeside.

Modro got the lead up Clay Hill in lap two and held on to take his maiden victory by 1.8 seconds over Roberts. "My steering was still out a bit and the car pushed on into corners, making the exits interesting," said Roberts. Pearson was disappointed to see the flag so early, "Ben was starting to come back to me, but we ran out of time," he added.

Armiger had managed to take Wardle for fourth from the restart, while Cryer completed the top six. "Much better in the dry and I was trying to hang onto Garry as long as I could," said Cryer. Despite only being three laps, Chris Roberts still made up four places to finish seventh., while in seventh Parker considered himself lucky to make the finish. "I had a chunk out of the wheel after the contact with Mark at the start, so surprised the tyre stayed up," he said.

Rotheroe was ninth, with Buckby completing the top10, after taking White on the last lap. "I had spun at Shell in the first start, pitted and took the restart from the back, then tried too hard," Buckby admitted. Bull had been poised to challenge Rotheroe for a top 10 place. "I was on slicks so much better, but when Bod challenged me Phil's BMW lunged me at Shell too and suddenly I had lost two places," he explained.

So White was 11<sup>th</sup>, just ahead of Bull, while behind them Allen had Hall, Jones and Warburton in fairly close succession. "I could have had Matt after another lap," Warburton reckoned. Dix continued at reduced pace, "I had lost boost when the screws came loose on the turbo," he said after coming home 17<sup>th</sup>, while Taylor, Claxton and Butler completed the top 20, followed by Allen and Walker. "Four into one at the start didn't go at the first corner, but finally got going again," Walker concluded.

The Championship will back on track at Cadwell Park on the weekend of August 10/11<sup>th</sup>.

<https://www.tsl-timing.com/file/?f=EERC/2024/242763nws.pdf>

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