

CNC HEADS SPORTS/SALOON CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

– Oulton Park Rounds 6 & 7 Report

ANOTHER DOUBLE FOR ALLAWAY

Simon Allaway's Lotus Esprit V8 made it six wins from seven races after another dominant winning double at Oulton Park.

Qualifying

Despite qualifying fourth, Allaway eventually lined up on pole for the opening race, after the top three were all casualties of the early morning session.

Alek Modro's Westfield Aero had taken provisional pole by 0.724 secs from Ben Roberts' Locost 7 RR. "It had been perfectly OK, but then a driveshaft went on the in lap after the flag, so we had to send someone to Crewe to get a replacement," he explained. Roberts blew his engine too, while brother Chris was third quickest in his BMW M4, before joined the casualty list. "Mine was a proper job, a big hole in the engine," said Ben. "The timing had slipped on my car I think, we are still learning with it, but the basic set up seems good," Chris added.

"I was cautious and nearly lost it at Cascades, it seemed very greasy," said Allaway, as he tried to find grip with oil down added to the dampness of overnight rain. On the revised grid Anthony Sullivan's Mini JCW shared the front row. "I had some room early on before it got busy, but didn't feel I made the most of it, no drama's though," he confirmed.

The Ginetta's of Ryan Nelson and Jamie Cryer were next up. Nelson found it too busy to make the most of his G56 GTA. "A bit like Wacky races," he reckoned. But Cryer was very happy with his G20, "really good and I feel there's more to come," he said. Garry Wardle's Audi A3 TCR was next up, "I had to be a bit patient with the oil down and we had changed discs and felt them vibrating," he explained. He had Marshall Groves' Vauxhall Vectra alongside. Initially a reserve his start was confirmed with the number of qualifying casualties. "I just went for it and it really went well, so all good," he added.

With Oliver Thomas' Subaru Impreza another casualty, Ash Hicklin's Bentley was next quickest. "It seemed OK and then when I returned to the paddock the starter motor wouldn't turn over," he said. Although Mark Primett's Banks Lotus Europa headed row five, he had issues too. "It was clutch to the floor and some oil smoke. It felt OK for grip and I managed to sort my Anglesey problems, but now I have two more," he reckoned.

Bod Buckby's Caterham was alongside and had his own issues. "I only had fifth and sixth gears after we have fitted a new throttle cable, so Island Harpin was interesting," he said. Steven Parker's Ford Fiesta ST and Carl Bennett's BMW M3 E46 shared row six. "I managed to avoid the oil and had no issues," said Parker. "I just need to be quicker after making some set up changes. The front was mint, but the rear wasn't following," Bennett reckoned.

David Blockley's Ginetta G56A and Jon Price's Vauxhall Tigra both had relatively troublefree runs, but Phil White was disappointed to be so far down in his BMW 325. "I didn't get a clear lap and the car cut out on me at the Hairpin, plus I am not an early morning person either," he admitted. Baz Johnson's Pontiac was alongside White, while Championship leader Paul Rotheroe headed the next row in his Citroen Xsara VTS. "No space to get a clear lap and was so slippery. My oil light was flickering too," said Rotheroe.

The Citroen had Clive Dix's Mazda RX7 alongside, "no real drama, just a breather hose, so we can get back to work in progress," he confirmed. Matthew Jones was out in Father David's Ford Focus rather than his own, "having fun and I've not broken anything, it's completely different to my car though," he said. Alongside was Jason Hennefer's Fiesta ST180, "had a bit of vibration, but found it was just rubber on the tyres," he added.

Another reserve who got in was Steve Rowles, debuting his Audi TT. "First time in the car and it was mega," he confirmed. He had Simon Graveley's VW Golf Gti next to him, "we had new dampers so it sat higher and I am having to get used to it, too tentative though," he reckoned. 26th quickest but only two laps completed saw Connor Modro's Westfield Aero out of action with a blown engine, so the amended grid had Simon Hutt's BMW Z4 and Ric Wood's Nissan Skyline sharing. "We had the engine out and we have got some electrical gremlins," Wood explained.

It was a troublefree session for Louie Dobson's Fiesta ST150, "just tyres and fuel," he said and similar for Richard Hibbert in his shared Honda Civic Type R. Robert Wakelin's Honda Civic was one of a group of drivers delayed in the assembly area, "some drivers had done three laps before we got out, so I knew I was in the way trying to warm tyres," he said.

John Edwards-Parton's Fiesta XR2 was next to Wakelin, while Julian Wood's BMW Compact and Jonjo Lee's Mini Cooper shared row 15. "We had a throttle sensor issue so going back to original settings," said Wood. "Feeling strong but a bit nervy with the new engine," Lee added. Cavan Taylor made his seasonal debut in his Renault Clio. "First time on slicks to getting used to it. It felt good but I'm not sure about my pace," he reckoned.

Helen Allen had no issues with her Fiesta Zetec, nor William Bartlett with his shared Renault Clio. Bob Claxton's Golf, Errol Taylor Toyota Yaris and Ralph Underwood's TR7V8 completed the qualifiers, "I just need more pace but I've been saying that for 50 years," Claxton admitted. "I had to pit when I got covered in oil behind Connor," Underwood concluded.

Race One

From lights out Allaway led the field down the Avenue from Cryer, Nelson, Sullivan and Buckby, but as they arrived at Knickerbrook Sullivan spun out and rejoined well down the order. "Cold rear tyres, so not my best move, maybe I should have eased up more," he said. Buckby had already taken Sullivan for fourth before his spin, but the lead trio soon began to escape.

While Allaway extended his lead Nelson started to challenge Cryer. They went into Cascades side by side on lap three, and Nelson nosed ahead on the exit. Buckby was still fourth, but having charged through from well down, Ric Wood was closing in, having made five places on the previous lap. Groves was in sixth, from Wardle, Bennett, Hicklin and Price, but any hopes Hutt had of further progress were

dashed when he spun at Knickerbrook. "I misjudged my entry into the chicane and spun. It was hard restarting too as the clutch had gone at the start," he explained.

While Wood successfully challenged Buckby for fourth on lap four, Groves had been heading a growing train of cars for sixth until Wardle got by exiting Cascades, with Bennett keen to follow. Bennett took seventh into Cascades on lap five, while Wood was into third a lap later. But Cryer couldn't relax as Buckby was closing on him too for fourth.

Allaway continued to extend his lead during the second half of the race and took his fifth win by over 14.3 seconds. "The only person who could have messed it up was me. It was OK but the handling wasn't perfect," he said. Wood's charge through the field saw him take Nelson for second into Knickerbrook on lap seven, "much better," he confirmed, after pulling a nine second gap over Nelson. "Perfect race," I really enjoyed that," Nelson replied.

Cryer and Buckby's dual for third ended prematurely when Buckby got stuck in gear. "It was lovely at the front, all spot on and I got Bod back at Island," he said after winning Class B. "I had just got Jamie and then it was stuck in fifth gear, taking the hairpin was ridiculous," said Buckby after dropping down the order. Wardle had taken Buckby for fifth on lap seven at Knickerbrook and had closed on Cryer towards the end. Bennett had followed a couple of laps later, but spent much of the race solo after shaking off Groves. "Much better and I kept my nose clean, but I need a better start," said Bennett.

Groves made it passed Buckby too to seal seventh a lap from home, "I was just gong for it as fast as I could. It was really good and I kept Wardle's Audi back for a while and then Bennett's BMW followed," he explained. So Buckby managed to hold onto eighth, while behind him Price threatened Hicklin for ninth, until the gap opened during late lappery. "He caught me a few times and went passed once as if I wasn't moving," said Hicklin. "I got held up and lost the tow, but I had him in the corners and then he just drove away," Price replied.

Price rounded off the top 10 but had White closing at the end. "I was catching them, but they both had the advantage on the straights," he said. Sullivan's recovery took him past Class E winner Rotheroe on the last lap for 12th. "Cracking first few laps, so not too bad," said Rotheroe, having been in the top 10 early on.

Blockley just kept Hennefer at bay for 14th, "made a few places places and lost a few, but the tyres went off at the end," said Hennefer. "Really pleased as the car is in one piece and I had a god race," Blockley replied. Dix was the final unlapped runner but lost out the Blockley v Hennefer dual on the last lap. "I just loss power with a misfire, doing well until then," he admitted.

Parker was next home from Graveley, the later having had a great battle with Rowles for much of the race. "I had to try the outside at Island and touched the Audi. I got him and he got me back, so I had to do it all again," Graveley explained. "I was having a great race with Simon, then zero brakes and decided to retire," Rowles added.

"It was going well until lap four, just outside the top 10 until I got spun out after contact with Baz," said Parker. Hibbert the recovering Hutt and Edwards-Paton finished in close formation, with Dobson and Cavan Taylor following. Bartlett was next, two laps down, from Claxton, with Lee taking Class F after escaping from an early dual behind Errol Taylor. "I was pushing hard and then got more speed into Druids and got him," Lee explained.

Taylor kept class rival Allen at bay, with Underwood the final classified finisher, with his TR7 V8 reluctant to rev. Wakelin had pulled out of the Class F lead after four laps, "I think the engine's gone as it suddenly lost power up Clay Hill," he said. Primett had pitted at the start with clutch and gearbox issues and both Jones and Julian Wood went missing after seven laps, "the diff locked gong into Druids and threw me into the gravel," he said after vacating 17th place.

Race Two

With Alek Modro's driveshaft repaired, he was able to take up pole for the second race, but starters were down to 26. Allaway still hit the front from the start, with Modro manging to regain second into Old Hall, from Cryer. But the safety car was soon action with Dobson off, "a rear caliper had stopped working and it locked up into Druids and put me off," he said. After two laps under caution the green flags were out, but race time was already down to 12 minutes.

Allaway charged clear again from Modro, but Buckby was holding onto third placed Cryer and was poised to make a challenge, while behind them it was Sullivan and Groves, with Wardle challenging Bennett for seventh, followed by Nelson and Hicklin. A lap later the five-car train for fifth was beginning to split with Wardle to the fore, having demoted both Sullivan and Groves.

Back at the front Buckby snatched third into Old Hall, but Sullivan was falling back. "I lost it at Druids, looking in my mirror I just touched the barrier after being distracted," he admitted. Sullivan had slipped to 11th, but the top five had started to look fairly settled with Wardle having gone clear in fifth. Bennett was up to sixth, after taking Groves but Nelson was pushing too, nose to tail with the Vectra driver cresting Deer Leap.

Allaway briefly saw his lead reduced, but soon responded and was two seconds clear at the flag for his second win of the day. "I think that was my best start. Alek gave me a hard time for a while and I was surprised when my pitboard said plus three seconds," he said.

Modro had a mixture of pleasure and disappointment after his second-place finish. "Not so good at the start, that's my inexperience as I revved too hard. I got second back by the first corner though and closed for a while, then the shaft went again on the in lap," he added. Buckby was third on the road but dropped two places after a post-race penalty. "I had all my gears, didn't push too hard but was in the wrong place at the start, my fault," he admitted.

So Cryer was handed back third and the class B win, "I hung on to Bod after he got me and could stay with him in the corners, a great battle," said Cryer. Wardle had managed to consolidate fifth, which then become fourth after Buckby's penalty. But Bennett came under late pressure to retain sixth. "My car won't do standing starts, but I was getting closer to Jamie at the end," said Wardle. "I had planned to gap the battle behind and try and catch Garry, but then I was losing power at the end and Ryan nearly caught me," Bennett explained.

Nelson had spent a number of laps trying to breach Groves' defence and finally made it into seventh on the inside of Old Hall on the last lap, before missing out on sixth by just 0.110 secs at the flag. "I was getting annoyed that I hadn't got Marshall as the last lap approached, so I set him up before Lodge and cut down the inside and was finally through," he said. "I got hit early on and then Ryan caught me, he got me with a great move, but my tyres went off early, so I just tried to hold on," Groves replied.

White and Sullivan completed the top 10. "I couldn't hold onto them, I had a good start, eighth on the first lap but knew they would come by," White admitted. Price, Hennefer and Parker remained on the lead lap, "I kept Price in range, but couldn't close and my car wasn't good off the line when we started," said Hennefer.

Blockley was next home, "brilliant fun again," he said. Graveley and Matt Hibbert followed, from Edwards-Parton and Cavan Taylor, "just driving around on my own though," said Taylor. Claxton was next from Class F winner Lee, while Georgina Bartlett, Allen and Errol Taylor completed the finishers.

Hicklin was a late retirement, vacating 17th after eight laps, "it was a misfire, either the coil pack or plug and lost too much power to carry on," he said. Championship leader Rotheroe also went out after nine lap, "an ecu problem, I lost all power so switched on and off again but no display. I think it's an alternator problem as we had problems before the start," he said.

The next round is at Donington Park on August 9/10th.

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