

## **Sports/Saloon Car Championship – Rounds 8 & 9 - Donington Park**

### **ROSE AT THE DOUBLE**

Defending CNC Heads Sports /Saloons Champion Paul Rose was a fairly comfortable double winner in his Saker at Donington Park.

It had been fairly close in qualifying but Garry Watson just held onto pole in his Westfield SEW, with Rose only 0.245s down. "Apart from being busy out there, no real problem," said Watson. "My engine was running a little cool, so not my best," Rose replied.

Heading the second row was Joe Spencer in his Stuart Taylor Locosaki, with Steve Harris' Saker alongside. Paul Woolfitt's Radical SR3 based Lotus Exige was fifth best, but Danny Bird was due to join him but his Spire was sidelined with a clutch failure.

Next was Ric Wood with his Nissan engined BMW M3 GTR, closely followed by David Harvey's Locosaki. Luke Armiger's Vauxhall Tigra and Garry Wardle's Porsche 997 completed the top 10. "We are making progress with the car now, getting there for sure," said Wood.

Ilsa Cox's Seat Leon Cupra was just behind class D rival Wardle on the grid, but on time it was a 1.5 secs gap. Jon Woolfitt's MK was only a fraction back in 12<sup>th</sup> too.

On row seven it was Oliver Thomas' Subaru Impreza and Alistair Stenhouse's BMW E36 M3, while behind them Philip Morris' VW Golf Gti headed class E leader Piers Grange in his Escort.

Scott Matthias' Escort Cosworth, Steven Parker's BMW Compact, Richard Roundell's Vauxhall Vectra and Graeme Laslett's Lotus Elise rounded off the top 20, with Iain Gorrie's RAW Striker heading Simon Sheridan's Honda Civic for class F by 0.332s in 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>.

#### **RACE 1**

Although Danny Bird's Spire was sidelined, it was still a capacity 40 car grid for Saturday's race as Peter Davies was able to get on the grid as he was first reserve after issues in practice.

From the start Watson quickly converted his pole into the lead, but his glory was short-lived. "The rear end began to slide into Coppice. I couldn't hold it and wasn't even on the power. So don't know if it was tyre temperature or what," he said after his visit to the gravel left him rejoining last.

Pail Woolfitt was the new leader, "I had been third behind Watson and Spencer, but when Garry spun I got Joe," he explained. Rose was a close third, before Harvey, Wardle and Wood had already started to lose ground, before another duel for seventh between Armiger and Harris.

Spencer was soon back to challenge Woolfitt but neither could hold off Rose's charge. The Saker had been sixth into the first corner, but led by the end of lap two. "I had them down the Craner Curves," he said.

Spencer had just got into second again when the safety car was brought into action. Thomas' Impreza had collided with Dave Chilton's MK. "There was a gap I thought, but it suddenly disappeared," Thomas admitted.

While Harvey had still been solo in fourth, both Wood and Harris had managed to oust Wardle from fifth, while Armiger, Jon Woolfitt and Cox completed the top ten as they closed up during five laps behind the safety car.

Rose made a clean escape from the green flag, but behind him Woolfitt was caught napping. "I just didn't react enough or saw the green flag late," he admitted. Wood became a casualty from fourth though. "I was helped by a Saker though at Coppice," he reckoned. Harris was into fourth, "I didn't touch Ric, I had a bad start as usual, but worried him into going off as every time I got a run on him there was a slower car in the way, so my plan worked," Harris replied.



*Jon Woolfitt in his MK Indy*

Harvey also lost out from the green flag as both Wardle and Armiger got by, but there were more dramas to come. While Rose was in the clear to take his win by over eight seconds, the duel for second had continued. "I had got Joe back into Redgate," said Woolfitt, after reclaiming the place on lap 10.

For Spencer though it was race over, "Paul got alongside me, went by and my engine went," he explained. Harris therefore completed the overall podium, with Armiger snatching fourth three laps from home at Wardle's expense. "I had to put Steve Harris on the grass at Coppice on the first lap, he was in my way. Then was stuck behind Ric at the restart, just not quick enough," said Armiger.

Back into fifth on the penultimate lap had come Watson, recovering from his first lap excursion. Harvey recovered his momentum having lost out earlier to come out on top of a duel with Wardle to complete the top six, while behind him Jon Woolfitt had Cox reeling him in at the finish. "I could see her coming up, so I blocked her all the way. I had sat behind the Harvey and Wardle duel, to see if they crashed," Woolfitt J admitted.

Cox was therefore ninth, "not a great start as usual but I was quickest at the end. But Garry is getting further away from me in the class now," she reckoned. In 10th was a delighted Peter Davies in his Spire GTR. "We hadn't really done a lap in qualifying with another horrendous misfire. We were going home but found a faulty cam sensor and had a blinding race from last place," he said.

There wasn't a lot to choose between Stenhouse, Tim Foxlow and Morris in the fight for 11<sup>th</sup>. The BMW driver held it, but Foxlow's Escort demoted Morris on the last lap. Les Kirk's Fisher Fury and Graeme Laslett's Elise also took their duel to the flag for 14<sup>th</sup>. "He tried to get me at the chicane on the last lap but I decided he wasn't coming through," said Kirk. Laslett still took the class E win though.

Grange had led class E prior to the safety car intervention, but had to settle for second behind Laslett, having kept Richard Roundell's Vectra safely at bay.

Chris Maries ran his Honda Integra R on slicks for the first time. "I managed to hold off Jamie Cryer though," so pleased with that," he said. "We were near the class lead pace and it was a good scrap," Cryer admitted after taking 19<sup>th</sup> overall in his Ginetta G20. Russell Hunter's MGB rounded off the top 20, the first of the walking wounded. "We had been bleeding the brakes but we had a leaking master cylinder, so was happy to stay near to Chris and Jamie's duel," he said.

In class F Gorrie took another comfortable win and had Nick Bartlett's BMW M3 between him and second in class Simon Sheridan's Honda Civic. David Jones' Focus was next home, from Karl Mason's Ginetta G20. Geoff Morton's Civic, Tony Harman's Ginetta G20, David Bird's Civic, Helen Allen's Fiesta and Eric Bamber's G20 completed the 30 finishers.

Apart from Spencer, Wood and the clashing Thomas and Chilton, there had been five other casualties. Ralph Underwood's TR7 V8 cut out on the green flag lap, Steven Parker's BMW Compact blew its engine on the second lap and the Seat's of Stephen Doran and Mike Hurst had a fuel issue and unexplained limp mode respectively. Scott Matthias' Escort Cosworth left the fray on lap two and Ali Chilton's MK went out after 10 laps.

## RESULT

1 Paul Rose (Saker RAPX) 13 laps in 21m17.911s; 2 Paul Woolfitt (Lotus Exige) +8.414s; 3 Steve Harris (Saker RAPX); 4 Luke Armiger (Vauxhall Tigra); 5 Garry Watson (Westfield SEW); 6 Dave Harvey (Stuart Taylor Locosaki) +18.330s; 7 Garry Wardle (Porsche 997); 8 Jon Woolfitt (Mk Indy); 9 Ilsa Cox (Seat Leon Cupra); 10 Peter Davies (Spire GTR).

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

Class B: 1 P.Woolfitt; 2 Armiger; 3 Watson; 4 J. Woolfitt; 5 Tim Foxlow (Ford Escort RSR); 6 Karl Mason (Ginetta G20); 7 Eric Bamber (Ginetta G20).

Class C: 1 Harvey; 2 Davies; 3 Les Kirk (Fisher Fury); no other finishers.

Class D: 1 Wardle; 2 Cox; 3 Alistair Stenhouse (BMW M3 E36); 4 Philip Morris (VW Golf Gti); 5 Russell Hunter (MGB); no other finishers.

Class E: 1 Graeme Laslett (Lotus Elise); 2 Piers Grange (Ford Escort Mk2); 3 Richard Roundell (Vauxhall Vectra); 4 Chris Maries (Honda Integra R); 5 Jamie Cryer (Ginetta G20); 6 Nicholas Bartlett (BMW E30 M3); 7 David Jones (Ford Focus); 8 Tony Harman (Ginetta G20).

Class F: 1 Iain Gorrie (Raw Striker); 2 Simon Sheridan (Honda Civic); 3 Geoff Morton (Honda Civic); 4 David Bird (Honda Civic); 5 Helen Allen (Ford Fiesta Zetec; no other starters.

Fastest lap: Rose 1m08.869s (103.45mph).

## RACE 2

The grid was down to 38 for Sunday's race, with Parker, Matthias and Dave Chilton all missing, but Danny Bird was back after a clutch change on his Spire GTR.

The grid was based on the second fastest qualifying times, so Watson and Harris shared the front row, from Paul Woolfitt and Spencer, while Rose was down in fifth with Bird alongside. Wood, Harvey, Wardle and Cox completed the top 10, with Grange and Gorrie taking their respective class E & F pole positions.

Watson made another tremendous start to lead Woolfitt and Spencer through Redgate. While they held station over the first lap, Harvey led the chase with Bird and Rose both closing in. Jon Woolfitt was in seventh, from Armiger, while Harris was ninth after a dreadful start and Wardle tenth.

Into Redgate for the second time Woolfitt P had a lunge for Watson's lead, "It was never on and I spun, in front of the family again," he said. "I could see him having a look down my inside, then I couldn't see him at all," Watson replied.

Rose had already shot passed Bird and Harvey as they exchanged places too and was ahead of Spencer for second into the chicane at the end of the second lap. Jon Woolfitt was up to sixth and had Armiger between him and his recovering brother, while Harris and Wardle remained in ninth and tenth.

As Rose began to hunt down Watson's lead, Spencer and Bird started a race long duel for third. They shared a couple of exchanges, while down in sixth Woolfitt was back in contention and closing on Harvey, until his supercharger belt came off.

It was about to change at the front though. "I had closed on Garry and was right behind him into McLeans. So I got the best run out and was ahead before we reached Coppice," said Rose after taking the lead on lap five. Spencer was back into third as Bird lost out among backmarkers and Harris started to make an impression too, sizing up Harvey for fifth. Armiger had seen off Woolfitt J on lap four, "my brakes went really spongy, I had already started to lose places," said Woolfitt.

It was another clear run for Rose though, taking a 23 second victory, with Watson an equally dominant second. "I think he was playing with me a little, just waiting for the moment and then went clear," said Watson.

Spencer retained the upper hand in third, despite Bird coming back with a last lap charge. "It was a great race with Danny, we kept it clean, but I could still see Garry at the end," he said.

Bird was equally delighted with his fourth place, "I had lost the dash read out at the start. But a great race and Joe was very fair, but much better in traffic than I was. I did have a last run on him at the end, just in case," he added. Harris took Harvey for fifth on lap seven and was starting to close on the third placed duel. "Made yet another bad start, but had a race coming through and was getting closer," he said. Harvey was the last unlapped runner in sixth, "I always seem to be on my own. I had hoped to chase Danny but lost him on the second lap," Harvey admitted,

Armiger had a fairly solo run to seventh too, while behind him it came down to a sprint to the line between Woolfitt J and Wardle, the Porsche winning out. "I knew he would get me as we came out of the chicane," Woolfitt admitted.



*Garry Wardle in his Class D Porsche*

Cox had also started to close on her way to tenth, but it was somewhat closer behind, even too close. Once Davies' charge from the back to 11<sup>th</sup> in only five laps ended with the re-appearance of his misfire, Foxlow held onto the place, but had to up it when Stenhouse began to close. "The car had been great all weekend but I knew I needed to quicken up to hold my place," he said.

Stenhouse had a massive scrap with Morris too, which resulted in a little contact. "I had caught Philip when he was slow on the apex, I was ahead too when he came back into the side of me," he said.

"We had three touches I think, one was when he tried to go around the outside at the chicane," Morris explained. Resultant damage put Morris out three laps from home a broken radiator. Kirk therefore claimed a late 13<sup>th</sup>, with little to spare over Grange. "I could see it all happening, mega race but didn't have enough to catch them and was busy keeping Piers behind me," he said.

Chilton pipped Roundell in the closing laps, with Cryer just out of the action on this occasion. Mason was next home from double class F winner Gorrie, while Bartlett

completed the top 20. Hunter carried on with his brake issues to finish 21<sup>st</sup>, from Jones, Underwood and Harman. Morton moved to second in class F after Sheridan punctured, while David Bird completed the class podium.

Thomas had been up to 13<sup>th</sup> before he pitted on lap 12. He rejoined but came in 27<sup>th</sup>. Sheridan, Bamber and Allen were the last classified finishers, but Sheridan was later excluded from this race and the meeting.

Maries had been a first lap casualty, Hurst was limp mode yet again and pitted after one lap. Wood and Laslett also retired to the pits, while Doran persevered for seven laps before he joined them too.

## RESULT

1 Rose 18 laps in 21m29.283s (99.36mph); 2 Watson +23.137s; 3 Joe Spencer (Stuart Taylor Locosaki); 4 Danny Bird (Spire GTR); 5 Harris; 6 Harvey; 7 Armiger; 8 Wardle; 9 J.Woolfitt; 10 Cox.

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

Class B: 1 Watson; 2 Armiger; 3 J.Woolfitt; 4 Foxlow; 5 Mason; 6 Bamber.

Class C: 1 Spencer; 2 Danny Bird; 3 Harvey; 4 Kirk; 5 A.Chilton; no other finishers.

Class D: 1 Wardle; 2 Cox; 3 Stenhouse; 4 Hunter; 5 Ralph Underwood (Triumph TR7 V8); 6 Oliver Thomas (Subaru Impreza).

Class E: 1 Grange; 2 Roundell; 3 Cryer; 4 Bartlett; 5 Jones; 6 Harman.

Class F: 1 Gorrie; 2 Morton; 3 David Bird; 4 Allen; no other finishers.

Fastest lap: Rose 1m09.641s (102.30mph).

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