



North Western  
Centre

## CNC Heads Sports/Saloon Car Championship – DONINGTON PARK

### ROUNDS 8 & 9 RACE REPORT

#### HARRIS & SOUTHCOTT SHARE THE SPOILS

##### QUALIFYING

There was no shortage of action as the CNC Heads Sports Saloons made their annual visit to Donington Park. The changeable weather conditions and a 37 car entry, brought action throughout the field, with Steve Harris and Andrew Southcott taking a win apiece.

The Saker's of Paul Rose and Steve Harris shared the front row of the grid, split by 0.299 secs. "I was having to brake early, as they weren't biting, but I only got one clear lap," said Rose. "It was a while since I had been to Donington, but I had to back out of a couple of quick laps when I caught traffic," Harris added.



Debutant Ray Harris was next up in his Ginetta G55. "I got my best lap at the end, it was just difficult getting clear," he said. Simon Allaway's Esprit V8 completed the second row, "although I didn't seem to get a clear lap, it was my fastest ever around here. That's still with my spare engine too, the five litre one, so overall pleased," he confirmed.

Although reigning Champion Jon Woolfitt was fifth best in his Spire GTR, he decided to withdraw from the meeting. "No brakes, we changed the master cylinder, but it continued to get worse," he explained. So Arron Armiger's Vauxhall Tigra was next up, "I went quicker than in testing and tried chasing a clear lap early on." He said, after edging out Roddie Paterson's Caterham C400 by just 0.021 secs.

Jas Sapra was another Championship debutant, driving one of Lucky Khera's BMW E36 M3's, eighth quickest, as David Clark's Saker and Chris Petch's Ginetta G50 completed the top 10. "That will do when I look at the cars in front of me," said Clark. "I need to change the front tyres, I had no grip," Petch added.

Garry Wardle was pleased with his Seat Cupra TCR after a gearbox rebuild. "The back end was a bit loose though, so I need to look at tyres," he said. He had Ric Wood's Nissan Skyline next to him. Connor Modro lost his best time due to track limits, but still headed row seven. "It was average, nothing went wrong apart losing that lap," he said. Darren Owen felt his Ford Escort RSR was "OK" too as he lined up alongside.

Julian Wood, brother of Ric had a bit of scare in his Kia Optima. “The rear locked up when I changed down and spun at the chicane,” he explained. He just had the edge over Guy Carter’s TVR Tuscan, running on treaded tyres. “I repaired the gearbox, there’s a new diff, so being sensible,” said Carter.

Championship leader Ian Bamber had few problems with his Ginetta G20 though. “I had no rear end grip and a problem with fuel starvation,” he explained. He had Rob Wakelin’s Peugeot 205 alongside with problems too. “It kept cutting out. We think it was the throttle pedal, so we are changing it,” he added. Steven Parker’s BMW Compact and Richard Hall’s Caterham 420R rounded the top 20 qualifiers. “I was flat out so it was the best I could do, then decided to back off at the end as I think there was oil down,” Parker explained. “Not quite there yet,” Hall added.

It was a first time at Donington for Bod Buckby, but his Caterham had the edge over class rival Connor Harvey. “It felt good and got quicker through the session,” said Buckby. Ric Walker “enjoyed” his session to. “I think I got pushed along a bit, it was quick out there,” said the JCW Mini driver.

23<sup>rd</sup> and seventh in Class Tim Foxlow felt a bit off the pace in his Escort RSR. “The car felt brilliant, but I just wasn’t pushing hard enough,” he reckoned. Dave Green had a problem too with his Honda Civic, “I ran out of fuel, or it wasn’t picking up, but was going well until then,” he said.

Thomas Frankland’s Renault 5GT Turbo should have had Oliver Thomas’ Subaru Impreza alongside him on the 13<sup>th</sup> row, but he was forced out with gearbox issues. Harvey lost two laps for track limits in his Caterham. “I had no idea on times, but think Bod was quicker in a straightline,” he reckoned. Matthew Jones’ Focus had a new engine, “and it’s great,” he confirmed. Tony Harman’s Ginetta G20 had a troublefree run too, but Peter Koukoulas’s MR2 had a slight excursion at the Old Hairpin.



Gary Warburton’s Mini had trouble with a “flange pushed into the gearbox,” but there were no problems too from Bob Claxton’s VW Golf Gti. “We have different driveshafts and better camber now,” said Claxton,

Brian Allen’s Puma edged out wife Helen’s Fiesta, but they had David Jones’ Focus between. “I will let him have that one,” said Helen. Jones was sidelined however with a driveshaft problem, while Peter Gillatt’s Honda Civic Type R completed the

qualifiers, after Ralph Underwood’s TR7 V8 “popped, banged and stopped after one lap.

Cadwell Park winner Southcott hadn’t made it out in the session though, as his MG refused to start.

## RACE ONE

There had been a heavy shower but while the cars were assembling the rain stopped and the track was drying. 34 cars were coming to the grid, with Southcott starting at the back, while Woolfitt, Thomas, David Jones and Underwood were all qualifying casualties. But Rose, Allaway and Matt Jones all headed for the pits and a change to slicks, leaving them with a pitlane start.

As the lights went out it was the Harris’ to the fore, with Steve heading Ray, but back on the grid Hall had stalled and was just avoided by the cars behind. Ric Wood was quickly into second and completed

the opening lap right on Harris' tail, while behind them Ray Harris and Armiger were disputing third, before a slight gap to Patterson and Sapra.

The lead began to grow, but Armiger and had Ray Harris had swapped again, while in eighth Southcott had charged from the back and set Petch as his next target.

With a mixture of tyre choices and the drying track, it became a very busy track and while Harris' Saker was continuing to ease clear, the Harris Ginetta was into second on lap five after ousting Wood. But Southcott was still making ground, taking third from Wood into Redgate on lap six, before pitting to retire. "I was on new wets and they were like jelly so I came in, but the car was brilliant," he said.

Wood was back into third, from Paterson and Petch, but Armiger was down to seventh. "I had skipped over the gravel at McLeans and then overshot at the chicane too," Armiger explained.

Sapra and Wardle were contesting eighth, with Modro and Clark the rest of the top 10, after the G40 driver had shaken off Bamber's G20. But Bamber was next up, with Foxlow charging after him, after he opted for slicks.

But the second-place man was in trouble, when he suddenly faltered exiting the chicane for the eighth time. "The clutch had gone at the start and it got worse, I just had now power on the exit and had to drive around it to get a finish," Harris R explained. Wood was therefore back into second, with Armiger following three laps later, but at the flag Harris's Saker was over 27 secs clear, for his first win since Knockhill a couple of seasons back. "It was fairly straight forward, the traffic was good and I hadn't seen Paul pit at the start, as I stayed on the wets," said Harris S.

Wood retained second after a last corner challenge from Armiger, "I had to have a go didn't I," said Armiger after exiting like a pendulum to clinch third and Class B. "I was down to canvas on tyres that Jake Hill had used at Goodwood, but after misfire in qualifying, I just went for it, but looked after it too," Wood added.

Despite his clutch problems, Ray Harris held onto fourth, but had Paterson closing in. "I was on wets, which was fine until they went off. I tried nursing them and focused on staying on," said the Caterham driver. Sapra just kept Wardle at bay to complete the top six, after they both ousted Petch on lap 10. "I went onto inters at the last minute, it was the right choice and the late charge was mega," Wardle added.

Petch was eighth but was almost caught by Modro at the end, "I just didn't have the power to challenge them," Petch explained. Rose completed the top 10, after demoting Bamber a couple of laps



from home. "I came in for slicks as soon as I saw the drying line on the first green flag lap, then I had to pit after seven laps as the airjacks hadn't retracted properly," he explained.

Bamber won his class again and was the last unlapped runner, "I got an early gap on Steve for the Class and then concentrated on conserving my tyres," he said. Clark was set to finish just outside the top 10, but retired to the pits three laps from

home having dropped a valve, so Foxlow was next home. "I went for slicks and from three laps in it was brilliant," he confirmed.

Allaway had started from the pitlane too but still found slicks a bit of a handful. "It was difficult for the first few laps on cold tyres, but my wets were so soft it was the right decision," he said after coming in 13<sup>th</sup>.

Frankland, Green and Buckby had a terrific midrace battle, and they were chasing Parker and Carter too. Frankland eventually topped the group, "it got very close but I had inters on and it worked brilliantly," he said. Carter ended his race with an off a lap from home, when set for 12<sup>th</sup>, "I got the wrong gear and lost the back end," he admitted. Parker had earlier problems too, "Rob Wakelin's car died in front of me I hit it, so a tyre was just rubbing and it was noisy in the car," he explained after holding onto 14<sup>th</sup>.

Buckby and Green were next home, "it was mega for six laps on wets and then all over the place," said Green. Harvey, Hall and Walker rounded off the top 20. "I lost out at the start and just played catch up," said Walker, "after stalling it went down hill, I just couldn't get going," Hall added.

Harman was next home, with Warburton following, two laps down. "Road tyres suited surprisingly well," said Harman. "I was having to hold it in gear," Warburton added. Matt Jones, Koukoulas, Julian Wood, Claxton, Helen Allen, Gillatt and Brian Allen, made it to the finish too. "I still won the Class even with a spin at Redgate," said Helen. Wakelin had retired after four laps. "It behaved at first, the temperature gauge then soared and it died into the Old Hairpin, where Steve had nowhere to go and hit me," he explained. Owen also retired after his battery went flat, with using lights and wipers.

## **RACE TWO**

Despite losing Ray Harris, Armiger, Clark, Ric Wood, Wakelin and Claxton from Saturday's grid, we had gained Underwood and it was still 30 cars lining up. "The cambelt had moved when I went through the gravel, so couldn't do the second race," Armiger explained. Harvey failed to make the grid too, as his Caterham refused to start and Rose headed straight for the pits, changing his old wets for slicks, so started at the back.

Allaway flew off to lead into Redgate, from Paterson, Harris, Sapra, Wardle and Modro, but Harris was second before the end of the opening lap, with Owen up to sixth. Harris led into the chicane on lap two, but Southcott was charging through from the back of the grid again, taking Wardle and Owen, and rapidly closing in on Sapra.

Both Paterson and Sapra were forced to give best too a lap later and suddenly Allaway's hold on second was looking far less secure. Onto the Craner Curves on lap five Southcott scythed ahead of Allaway and had also taken Harris before the end of the lap, but the race one winners race was soon over as he headed for the pits at the end of lap six.

"I had started on wets and it just wallowed about. I skirted over the gravel at McLeans, but couldn't do anything, so had to pit and retire," Harris explained. Although Allaway was back in second, Paterson was catching him, but Rose had also charged from the back of the grid, and took Sapra for fourth on lap eight.



Behind them Wardle had Owen still posing a threat, while Petch was solo in eighth, as Carter and Bamber both made it past Modro. "I had a 360 at McLeans, got going again, but not before they had got by," said Modro. "Once I had the lead I backed off, we had run a softer set up and slicks, but I didn't know Paul was closing until the end," said Southcott, after taking his third win of the season by 1.673 secs.

Rose was in second from lap nine, after ousting Allaway. "I was getting pit signals on the gap, so maybe one more lap and I might have got him," Rose reckoned.

Paterson had continued to close on Allaway too, taking the flag just 0.371 secs part. "Great start, but through Schwantz Curve the front pushed out a bit. Good fun though, and I didn't have to pass Steve as he went off," said Allaway. Paterson got a class win in third, "I thoroughly enjoyed that, but I had limited rear grip, but got close to Simon a few times," he said. Sapra had a duel with Paterson too early on, but settled for fourth and the last unlapped runner. "I was a bit low on fuel and had to back off on the Craner Curve, due to fuel surge, but it had been close," Sapra added. Wardle and Owen had spent much of the race in close proximity, but Wardle eased clear in the second half for a solid sixth. "The tyres were good for the first few laps, but went off quickly and Daz started closing on me again," Wardle explained. "Back on slicks, brilliant, I enjoyed it," Owen replied.

Petch was running eighth when he pitted and retired. "It just died on me at the chicane, I got to the pits and then after the race it restarted," he said. Petch's retirement briefly promoted Modro, who had managed to catch and retake Bamber and Carter who had been swapping themselves. "Then I caught a marker at the Old Hairpin and the engine just seemed to shut down," Modro explained.

Bamber then managed to shake-off Carter, to consolidate his Championship lead after playing his joker, "the best the car has ever run and my fastest yet, mega," he said. "Had a great battle, but Ian is just so fast," Carter replied. Parker completed the top 10, while behind him Foxlow and Green duelled for the majority of the race. "Good start but the car kept pushing on and I got boxed in a bit at the start, so just did what I could do," Foxlow explained. "I needed more speed on the Craners. I could get almost alongside Tim in the corners, then he pulled away," Green added.

Behind them it could have gone to any of four drivers for 13<sup>th</sup>. Frankland eventually claimed it, from Walker, Hall and Buckby in last lap sort out. "That was so good, my front tyres had gone off, and backmarkers came into play, but brilliant," said Frankland. "I was on inters but it should have been slicks, great fun though," Walker added.

"It would have been even better if I had caught them earlier," Hall admitted. But having led the group for a while it was Buckby that lost out. "I touched the grass at Hollywood and spun, just glad I didn't spin back into the track," he said.

Julian Wood was next home from David and Matt Jones, Harman, Warburton, Koukoulas and Gillatt, while Brian beat Helen in the Allen duel. Underwood's comeback had lasted as far as McLeans on the opening lap before expiring and Harvey managed to join in late, but wasn't classified.

RESULTS ARE AT <https://www.tsl-timing.com/file/?f=BARC/2023/233222nws.pdf>

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