

CNC Heads Sports/Saloon Car Championship – Rounds 8 & 9 - Donington

LUCKY SEVEN FOR DOMINANT WOOLFITT

QUALIFYING

CNC Heads Sports Saloon Championship leader Jon Woolfitt made it seven consecutive wins this season, after two dominant victories at Donington Park.

Only 0.265 secs split Woolfitt and Andrew Southcott's MG Midget Lenham after qualifying. "I've still got a brake problem, but the engine is great," said Southcott. "The actuator was unpredictable, so I had trouble with the gears," Woolfitt added. Ric Wood's Holden Commodore and Simon Allaway's Lotus Esprit V8 shared row two. "Everything OK," said Wood. "I could be a second or two quicker, I've got new gear ratios and changed the gears after the problems at Croft," Allaway added.

Stephen Riley's Caterham 420R and Richard Rudd's MK1 Escort turbo were next up. "My first time on slicks, so getting used to it and building confidence," said Riley who was out for the first time since Cadwell. "The same problem I had at Croft, worn tyres. I wasn't unimpressed, but need to do better," Rudd reckoned.

Seventh quickest and making his seasonal debut was Garry Wardle in his Seat Cupra TCR. "No dramas," he confirmed. Alongside was Darren Owen's Mk1 Escort, again a CNC seasonal debutant. "There's more to come," he insisted. Oliver Thomas was due to start ninth in his Subaru Impreza, but late pre-race problems forced him out.

Robert Wakelin, Jamie Cryer and Richard Hall were all fairly evenly matched. "I didn't really get a clear lap, but I had changed a few things after Croft and they worked," said Wakelin, whose Peugeot 205 headed the revised fifth row. Cryer was back after missing Croft, but the reigning champion had handling problems with his Ginetta G20. "Maybe it's the tyre pressures," he reckoned. "I think mine was OK," said Caterham driver Hall.

Ian Bamber was also having handling problems with his Ginetta G20. "The rear end almost felt like I was on wets, a real handful," he said. Ben Roberts was back with his Honda engine BMW M3, for his second CNC weekend, "I was giving it everything until the oil temperature light came on and I nursed it," he explained. Behind him was Connor Modro's Ginetta G40. "It ran a bit hot, but I was warming up the new tyres and brakes," he said.

David Green was much happier with his Honda Civic than he had been at Croft. "I was going very well, just the traffic out there, it was so busy," he reckoned. Back for the first time this season was Steven Parker with his BMW Compact. "Just a bit soft at the rear, but otherwise great to be back," he said.

James Aukland's Capri and Colin Robinson's Escort Mk1 were out for the first time this season too. "The car was Ok, but I just had to remember what I was doing, as it's been a long time," said Aukland. Graeme Smith's Mazda MX5 completed the top 20. "It was close to my target, so not bad," he reckoned.

Thomas Frankland's Renault 5GT Turbo was out for a second time too. "It went better than expected, but I still had a brake issue on slicks, so going back to treaded," he said. All was well with Ric Walker's Mini R56 JCW, while next to him was the ex-Nick Cresswell, Kingsley Ingram, Patrick Watts BTCC

Mazda 323F, now in the hands of Allan Scott. Peter Koukoulas' Toyota MR2 and Dave Beecroft's Citroen Saxo shared the next row, with David Bird's Toyota MR2, the Fiesta Zetec S of Helen Allen and Brian Allen's Ford Puma the rest of the 28 qualifiers. "I had a little water loss, otherwise Ok and it's the first to me on a circuit with it," Bird confirmed.

RACE 1

With Thomas the only casualty from qualifying other than Thomas, it was a 27-car grid that came under starters orders.

Woolfitt was straight into the lead, but Southcott was holding on, with 0.818 secs splitting them at the end of the opening lap. Wood was third, from Rudd, Allaway and Owen, with Riley, Cryer, Wardle and Bamber completing the initial top 10.

Southcott was even closer on the second lap and charged ahead into Redgate. "I just got him, then he tucked in close again on the exit," he said. Riley had got past Owen into sixth and Wardle had demoted Cryer too, but both Bamber and Wakelin were closing in on Cryer. While Allaway was starting to close on Rudd's fourth place, Woolfitt had regained the lead into Coppice on lap five. "My brakes were going again, and he got my back," Southcott added, only a couple of laps before retiring to the pits. "I used the backmarkers so he couldn't have a go back at me, but after that it was OK," Woolfitt replied.

Allaway had made it past Rudd, which became third after Southcott's retirement and Riley had managed to consolidate fifth over Owen, with Wardle a solitary seventh after 11 laps and the last runner on the lead lap. Woolfitt took victory by just over six seconds, with Wood a comfortable second. "A bit of a scary moment when a backmarker nearly put me in the gravel exiting the chicane," he admitted. Allaway retained a comfortable and fairly untroubled third, "I enjoyed the scrap with Richard, especially going side by side down the Craner Curves," he said.

Riley had gradually reeled in Rudd to hold fourth from the chicane on lap 13, "I was trying hard, but don't think I was brave enough with the late braking," Riley admitted. "I had to back off again as I was running out of fuel," said fifth placed Rudd, while in sixth Owen was the last to go full distance. "There was oil leaking from the diff though, so I backed off before the end," Owen added.

Wardle had a fairly solitary race in seventh, "after a bad start I got the places back that I'd lost, but a bit lonely," he admitted. After the Bamber and Wakelin duel had managed to catch Cryer, Bamber was able to get away to secure Class E and seventh overall. "I had to work hard to get a gap and I went and did a bit of grass cutting with Jamie at the Old Hairpin," Bamber admitted.

Cryer and Wakelin had continued their duel with a number of exchanges, until Cryer lost it at the Old Hairpin. "I had no rear end grip in the fast stuff, then spun and Rob hit me, my own fault," he said after limping back to the pits. Wakelin had then been caught by Modro, swapping places a lap from home. Although Modro led into the chicane, Wakelin took the place back on the line. "It had been a great battle with Jamie, but when he spun, I just couldn't avoid him," he said.

"I think I visited the gravel twice at the chicane, missing my braking point the first time and missing a spinner the second, so close with Rob at the end though," Modro explained after taking ninth. Roberts retired from 13th after 10 laps, when the engine went. It got a bit smoky in the cockpit, began overheating and then there was zero oil pressure," he confirmed. Hall therefore moved up to 11th, "I was having a good race with Ben until he broke it," he said.

Next home was Parker after an early duel with Green. "I was hitting the rev limiter though," he added. Green was still next in the order, despite having dropped back a little. "It was a great dice, then I missed a gear a lap from home and Steven got by," he said.

Auckland recovered from starting in third gear and a spin at the Old Hairpin and Robinson suffered from a loose rear end and a couple of rallycross moments to take 14th and 15th. Smith and Walker were next to the flag, with Beecroft escaping from a duel with Koukoulas for 16th, despite a spin at the chicane. Helen Allen finally shook off Brian, while Scott's Mazda completed the finishers, after Frankland had his alternator bracket break and Bird pulled off with oil leaking from his catch tank.

RACE 2

Despite losing four cars in the opening race, it was still a 20+ grid for the second.

With well over two second gap at the end of the opening lap, Woolfitt was under no pressure from the start. Allaway had slotted into second from Rudd but overshot into the chicane on lap four. "It spat me round, stalled and then I managed to get away again," he explained, after dropping to fifth behind Rudd, Riley and Owen.

It had been a good duel for third between Riley and Owen, before the Caterham driver escaped and set about closing in on second placed Rudd. "All Ok and fairly straightforward, apart from having to use the clutch for sixth gear," said Woolfitt, taking win number two of the day by nearly 19 seconds. Rudd's hold on second briefly came under threat, "I slowed down for a minute and then saw Stephen in my mirrors," he said. "I had managed to put in some good laps to close, but then he saw me and reacted," Riley replied.

Although Allaway had recovered fourth from Owen, he was forced to back off again. "It got a bit squirmy, so I played safe," he said. "I could get onto Simon's tail into the Old Hairpin and then he just pulled away again," Owen replied after settling in fifth.

It was another solitary run for Wardle in seventh, "another poor start," he confirmed.

Wakelin had been in eighth early on, as Bamber and Modro had another duel, but Bamber began to lose ground as Modro reeled in Wakelin. There was little to split them at the end again, "it was all or nothing as I didn't expect to catch Rob, then I got him," said Modro. "I think I cooked my tyres trying to chase Garry, then I saw Connor coming for me." Wakelin admitted.

Having fallen back from the battle with Modro, Bamber then became embroiled with Hall. "He was so good on the brakes," Bamber admitted. "That was great, but sometimes I didn't have enough pace out of Coppice," Hall replied after clinching ninth.

Green, Parker and Frankland were next home, a lap down on the leaders. "When it works it feels brilliant and it worked," said Green. "I couldn't stay with Dave but had a good battle with the Robinson Escort until he pulled off," added 12th placed Parker.

Frankland had returned home between races to get parts, but finished his race stuck in third gear, "At least I saw the flag though," he admitted. In 14th, Scott was first of the finishers two laps down, followed by Smith, who was almost caught by Walker at the end. "One more lap and I would have had him," Walker reckoned.

Beecroft broke away from another early duel with Koukoulas, while Bird, Helen and Brian Allen completed the finishers. Apart from Robinson, Auckland was the only other retirement pitted with a clutch plate failure after two laps.

<https://www.tsl-timing.com/file/?f=BARC/2022/223321nws.pdf>