

## CNC HEADS SPORTS/SALOON CHAMPIONSHIP

### SEASONAL REVIEW

Joe Spencer secured his second CNC Heads BARC NW Sports Saloon title, after another double class win in his Stuart Taylor Locosaki at the final round at Oulton Park.

The 2015 Champion only failed to win his class on two occasions, round seven at Oulton Park when his race ended in the gravel at Shell and round eight at Donington when his engine let go. But a quick overnight trip to collect his spare engine had him winning again the following day.



Spencer had three overall wins too, round two at Anglesey when Paul Rose's Saker triggered a startline shunt after breaking a driveshaft and a double win at Cadwell, after contact with Rose in the second race.

The story of the races tended to be how big a lead the fast starting

Spencer and Garry Watson's Westfield could build, before Rose hauled them in.

Apart from Rose, who took nine wins out of 14 and Spencer, only two other drivers took outright victories during the season, Watson at Oulton in round seven and Steve Harris' Saker in the final round at Oulton.

Big grids were a season long feature once more, which necessitated them being split at five rounds, including the second of the Anglesey triple headers. The average grid was over 40 this season, significantly upon 2016.

Iain Gorrie's class F Raw Striker was runner-up in final standings, taking class victories on eight occasions, but regretting the lack of a roof on more than one occasion.

Third overall and outgoing Champion Rose had to miss one round due to clashing Fun Cup commitments. His startline shunt at Anglesey and the clash with Spencer at Cadwell were

his only non finishers, but like team mate Harris, he had a few niggling problems along the way, including the Oulton final when Harris took the spoils.

For Oliver Thomas it was definitely a season of two halves. His Class D Subaru Impreza seemed to be thwarted with a misfire and overheating. He managed class wins at Anglesey in round two and round five at Cadwell, but took five in a row to complete his year, including three dominant overall class D-F victories at Anglesey, to take his class and fourth in the championship.

It was a similar story for Piers Grange, whose class E Ford Escort led the championship overall early on. He had six wins, but then the tide turned, ending his year at Oulton with a broken crank, having done enough to retain fifth overall and the class title.

Luke Armiger gave both single races at Oulton a miss due to the distance he has to travel, but his Vauxhall Tigra took class B with four wins and completed the top six overall.



Not suprisingley the Saker's of Rose and Harris were virtually unbeatable in class A, but mechanical woes left Harris sidelined in the opening round, before picking up three wins during the year.

James Aukland did most of the season in his Ford Capri and had a win at Cadwell with both

Saker's retiring. He missed out on the final round at Oulton though when his clutch let go in the earlier race.

Behind Aukland Ric Wood finished fourth in class in his ex Swedish Touring Car Championship BMW GTR. He made the overall podium in round seven at Oulton, which was his only class victory, but was second in class in all three of the first triple header at Anglesey.

Graham Saul also came out at the first Anglesey meeting with his Porsche 928 GTS, while the points Garry Wardle gained in his Ginetta G50 at Anglesey also scored in class A. Darren Smith made a fleeting appearance in one of his TVR Tuscan's and Robert Wakelin came out once at Anglesey in his Impreza, and finished eighth overall, with fuel and overheating problems.

It was returnee Roddie Paterson that set the early class B pace in his Caterham. He was third overall in the first four rounds, but a fuse to the fuel pump failed in the first Cadwell race and he was fourth in class in race two, but failed to appear again.



Armiger took the class title, but there was stiff competition from both Watson and Matt Spark's Caterham. Watson had to start some races from the back as a reserve, he had an off at Donington and a fuel pick up problem at Anglesey, but bowed out after doing a wet round 11 at Anglesey on slicks having secured second in class.

Tim Foxlow's Escort was third in class, but nearly had to miss the Oulton finale after a heavy crash at Anglesey. His first class podium of the year came at Cadwell and three more followed.

Spark had one win in round five at Cadwell where he was third overall in both races. After Oulton Park in round seven he failed to appear again until the final, where second in class secured fourth place in the class championship.

Debutant Karl Mason collected fifth in class with his Ginetta G20, despite a few excursions along the way. Paterson was sixth in class and Eric Bamber's Ginetta G20 was seventh, but a heavy crash in round 11 at Anglesey ended his year.

Paul and Jon Woolfitt were next up, both fast starters from their sprinting days. Paul's Radical SR3 based Exige had a class win in the first Donington race, while Jon's MK Indy showed the pace but not always the reliability. Colin Robinson's Ford Escort MK1 completed the class top 10.

While class C was all about Spencer, it tended to overshadow the progress made by team mate David Harvey. Whereas in 2016 Harvey tended to be running solo, he had numerous duels with Danny Bird, Matt Spark and more. He finished every race and was second overall in round seven at Oulton and third at Anglesey in round 12.

Danny Bird's Spire finished fourth in class, but had some early teething problems including a broken driveshaft at the start of round four at Anglesey. With the reliability came the pace and he became a regular top six finisher overall.

Sometimes his own harshest critic Les Kirk had difficulties with his starts in the Fisher Fury, he still took fourth in class ahead of Alastair Chilton's MK who had had made tremendous progress in his first full season.

Dave Chilton had a big repair job after his MK Indy tangled with Thomas' Impreza at Donington, but he came back to complete the season with fifth in class, while Peter Davies was sixth, as a recurring misfire in his Spire hampered his progress.



In class D once Oliver Thomas had found with his reliability, his confidence grew and he had an outstanding end to the year. Garry Wardle's Porsche 997 had taken the class and the overall D-F race win in round one, but his collision with Rose on the first visit to Anglesey and a clutch failure on the second, despite five class wins he was second in class, after an

outstanding end of season in his Mini.

Alistair Stenhouse's BMW and Mike Hurst's Seat Leon Supercopa both had class wins too at early Anglesey rounds. Stenhouse only missed the Cadwell rounds to secure third in class, with Championship stalwart Ralph Underwood fourth in his TR7 V8 and Hurst fifth.



Sixth placed Russell Hunter's MGB had a class podium at Anglesey in round two, but started to have brake problems later in the year, while outgoing class Champion Ilsa Cox didn't appear after Donington, but had taken her Seat to two second places.

Although Piers Grange's Escort dominated the early part of the season in Class E, it was probably the most competitive. Grange did enough to take the class title, but Richard Roundell's Vectra, Graeme Laslett's Elise, Steven Parker's BMW Compact and Jamie Cryer's Ginetta G20 all vied for the crown. Roundell had a much more consistent season, with relatively few incidents. He only had one class win but was on the podium nine times to take the runner-up spot.

Laslett was also consistent and managed a win at Donington and was always in contention for a podium finish.



The season finished on a high for Nick Bartlett, with his maiden class victories coming at Oulton Park in the finals, where he admitted to feeling more confident with his BMW M3.

Steven Parker was a winner too at Anglesey, but didn't always have the pace to shine, while completing the top six in the class standings was Jamie Cryer in his Ginetta G20, the nearly man.

Ex Champion Steven Hibbert's Lotus Elise also won the opening round, but didn't contest the full season, while Robert Burkinshaw's Honda came in at Anglesey for two wins, which could have been three if he'd had some wet tyres.



Although Iain Gorrie dominated class F, Stuart Dix's Ford Puma took four wins on his fleeting appearances.

David Bird had a few reliability problems and was look set for class wins a couple of times until his luck turned. He was still second in the class, from Helen Allen's Fiesta, with

Geoff Morton's Honda Civic fourth, despite ending the season with an accident at Anglesey in round 11. Dix was fifth and Simon Sheridan sixth.

Published by Peter Scherer for BARC (NW) 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017

Photographs by Peter Scherer.