




(Image: David Webster)



MELTON

CONCRETE PRODUCTS

Castle Combe FF1600  
Championship

Round 2, May 7 2007

Matt Beer reports

Ed Moore stormed to yet another flawless victory in the second round of the Melton Concrete Products Castle Combe FF1600 Championship, but behind him the racing was as frenetic as Moore's progress was serene, with Steven Jensen narrowly winning a classic Formula Ford dogfight for second with Robert Hall. Earlier in the day, double Pre 90 champion Hugh Elliott had announced his return to Combe by brilliantly winning the soggy qualification race.

#### QUALIFYING

The miserably wet qualifying conditions were always likely to shake up the order, but all the surprises were from second place backwards as long-time Combe FF1600 benchmark Ed Moore (Hullmatic/Motorsport-Events.com Van Diemen RF00) dominated the session.

A sublime early lap put him 2.6s clear of the competition and no-one looked capable of reducing that margin until a late surge from Matt McKillop – always a man to watch on a slippery track in his Swift SC95 – saw him get within six-tenths of the polesitter and sew up his first front row start.

Renowned wet weather star Andrew Jones showed his car control again by taking third for his first outing with his new Coachstyle Ray GRS07, ahead of Steve Jensen (A1 Tyres/Jensen Racing Swift SC92) and Nick Jones (S&D Sealants/Kevin Mills Racing Van Diemen RF01).

Moore's team-mate Stephen Gibbins planted the second Motorsport-Events.com Van Diemen on the outside of row three, with Robert Hall (Swift Cooper Swift SC92), Gary Marsh (this time in a Reynard 89FF rather than the new Swift), the impressive Glen Finn (simplykitchens.co.uk Swift SC92) and Andrew Crapnell (Van Diemen RF89) completing the top ten.

With 39 cars in the field, everyone else would have to secure their place in the main event by taking part in the qualification race, which would see former Pre 90 class rivals Hugh Elliott (Kevin Mills Racing Swift SC92) and Alan Slater (Swift Cooper FB89) on the front row ahead of Adam Higgins (RIADRO Racing Van Diemen RF89)

and Ben Norton (Checkpoint Tyres/Wiltshire College Spectrum 011), who was characteristically uncomfortable on the damp track.

#### HEAT

Conditions were scarcely any better for the race, but Elliott ensured that it would be up to the rest to peep through his spray as he slithered off the grid and into a clear lead at the start, while Slater slipped behind Alan Hamilton (Swift SC92), Higgins, Jonathan Hoad (Van Diemen RF92) and Tom Margetson (Wayne Poole Racing Reynard 89FF) by Avon Rise.

Elliott never looked back, edging inexorably away from his squabbling rivals and eventually winning by 3.5s – a superb achievement on his first Combe racing appearance since the end of 2003. It was a fitting result given that Hugh's wife Mary was making her debut as Combe's post-race interviewer, meaning that her first task in the role would be to quiz her husband!

Slater would eventually regain his second place, passing Hoad on lap two, then benefiting when Margetson spun exiting the Esses. It looked like that would be the limit of his progress, but he came on stronger later in the race - hunting down and overtaking



*Elliott made his Combe return and shone in the qualifier. (Image: David Webster)*

#### EVENT DATA

Result – 9 laps: 1 Ed Moore (Van Diemen RF00) 11m13.010s (89.063mph); 2 Steven Jensen (Swift SC92) +4.972s; 3 Robert Hall (Swift SC92); 4 Nick Jones (Van Diemen RF01); 5 Ben Norton (Spectrum 011); 6 Andrew Jones (Ray GRS07). Class A: 1 Moore; 2 N Jones; 3 Norton. Team Schemes Class B: 1 Jensen; 2 Hall; 3 Matt McKillop (Swift SC95). Sarik Vacform Class C: 1 Alan Slater (Swift FB89); 2 Jim Hamilton (Van Diemen RF89); 3 Steve Hawkins (Van Diemen RF88). Pole position: Moore 1m31.775s (72.569mph). Fastest lap: Hall 1m13.493s (90.621mph). Starters: 34. Heat – 10 laps: 1 Hugh Elliott (Swift SC92) 16m16.836s (68.179mph); 2 Slater +3.583s; 3 Alan Hamilton (Swift SC92). Class winners: Elliott; Slater; Norton. Fastest lap: Norton 1m34.082s (70.789mph). Starters: 29.

Overall standings after round two: 1 Moore 61; 2 Jensen 54; 3 Norton 46; 4 McKillop 42; 5 Slater 35; 6 Jim Hamilton 34; etc. Class A: 1 Moore 32; 2 Norton 22; 3 Michael Bradley 15; etc. Class B: 1 Jensen 31; 2 McKillop 22; 3= Hall & Hoad 13; etc. Class C: 1= Jim Hamilton & Slater 28; 3= Matt Devenish & Adam Higgins 14; etc.

Next round: May 28.

Hamilton before attacking Higgins, who had a quick 'off' at the Esses while trying to resist Slater. Higgins recovered his momentum in time to fend off Hamilton – but only until the last lap when last year's qualification race winner snatched the final podium place, despite a misfire.

Fifth place went to the heroic Norton, who stalled on the grid and was last by some distance at the first corner. Careful yet decisive progress through the field saw him come from a remote 29<sup>th</sup> to eighth within six laps, before picking off Jim Hamilton, Steve Hawkins and finally Hoad to grab an unlikely top five.

Behind Hoad and Hawkins, Hamilton survived a last lap spin to secure eighth, while Motorsport Events' Michael Bradley resisted Andrew Harris (Powerclean Van Diemen RF00) and Rich Wadner (Swift SC92) for ninth.

#### FINAL

Warm sunshine had replaced the rain by the time the main race started, although given Moore's current form he would have been favourite for victory even if a blizzard had struck. The 2004 champion rebuffed McKillop's initial challenge off the line and then simply eased away from his rivals, who quickly faded in Moore's mirrors.

It wasn't so much a race as an exercise in perfectionism, as Moore cruised to the flag with a 5s advantage. "That's the way I like

them," he said on the podium, "it always look more stressful behind..." With sponsors Hullmatic in attendance, it was a particularly satisfying result.

Meanwhile, the spectators were glued to the battle for second place. McKillop held on until Tower on lap two, where Jensen surged down the inside, followed immediately by Nick Jones. Robert Hall and the slow-starting Andy Jones then demoted McKillop at Quarry on consecutive laps, before Norton – already up from 15<sup>th</sup> on the grid to seventh – went right around the outside of the Swift with a breathtaking move at Camp.

McKillop would repass Norton next time around as the Spectrum took to the grass in a vain attempt to pass Jones' Ray, but a spectacular sort-out exiting the Esses on lap six saw Norton overtake both and grab fifth on lap five.

That would be the limit of his incredible charge, for the battle for the runner-up spot had disappeared into the distance. Nick Jones clung on behind Jensen for the first half of the race, but then Hall stormed down his inside at the Esses and took the place.

Hall quickly closed in on Jensen, commencing an amazing side-by-side joust that would last until the end of the 10 lap race (shortened by delays elsewhere in the programme, then reduced by a further lap when the flag was inadvertently shown early). Jensen resisted Hall's every attempt

until the final lap, when the series newcomer got through on the inside at the Esses. But it wasn't over, for Jensen dived back past at Tower and retook second. They stayed wheel to wheel into Bobbies, where Hall had to take to the mud – which somehow only cost him 0.2s to Jensen as they stormed to the flag before congratulating each other on a hard but fair battle.

Behind N Jones, Norton, A Jones and McKillop, Gibbins drove a quietly impressive race to eighth, coolly resisting pressure from Alan Hamilton all the way. Finn eventually passed dominant Pre 90 winner Slater to take 10<sup>th</sup> overall.

For the second time in the day, Midge Bradley spent 10 laps fending off a group of cars, as Jim Hamilton, Harris and Elliott's best efforts failed to separate Moore's team-mate from 12<sup>th</sup> place. Crapnell was on course to beat this group to the flag until pulling off with a smoking Van Diemen on the penultimate lap.



*A fine drive from Jensen as he fended off Hall. (Image: David Webster)*