



(Image: David Webster)



**MELTON**  
CONCRETE PRODUCTS

**Castle Combe FF1600  
Championship**

**Round 3, May 28 2007**

***Matt Beer reports***

Matt McKillop thrived in dreadfully slippery conditions to take shock maiden victory over returnee Pat Blakeney in round four of the Melton Concrete Products Castle Combe FF1600 Championship – but only after guest star Josh Fisher retired from a dominant lead. Polesitter and points leader Ed Moore had to hobble home 11<sup>th</sup> after being collected by a backmarker.

#### QUALIFYING

Only three men were in contention for pole on the damp track – habitual pacesetter Moore (Motorsport Events Van Diemen RF00), established wet weather ace McKillop (Swift SC95), and surprise late entrant Fisher.

With no funding for a full-time drive in 2007, the sometime Formula BMW,

Formula Three and Formula Renault racer had been invited to step into Wayne Poole's Mygale SJ01 for what was ostensibly a one-off guest appearance. However, given the astonishing turn of speed Fisher showed on his first FF1600 outing since winning the 2003 Combe season-opener, he may be back for more later in the year... He was certainly enjoying himself as he swapped provisional pole with Moore and McKillop in the opening minutes of the session before championship leader Moore moved clearly ahead.

Fisher closed to within 0.109s, but Moore still had more speed in reserve, and completed the session on top by 0.719s, ahead of Fisher, McKillop (who was ultimately two seconds adrift), and Nick Jones. The S&D Sealants/Kevin Mills Racing driver ended qualifying in the Quarry barriers with a heavily damaged rear end on his Van Diemen RF01, but the Mills crew are well-practised in midday rebuilds, and the car would be back in shape for the race.

Further back, Jonathan Hoad (Van Diemen RF92) broke into the top ten and knocked Ben Norton (Checkpoint Tyres/Wiltshire College Spectrum 011) onto qualification race pole in the final minute of the session, while Matt

Devenish (Wayne Poole Racing Van Diemen RF89) took a superb Sarik Vacform Pre 1990 class pole, just ahead of Andrew Crapnell (Van Diemen RF89) and points leader Alan Slater (Swift FB89).

#### QUALIFICATION RACE

Outside front row start Alan Hamilton (Hamilton Motorsport Swift SC92) surged ahead of Norton off the line on the now dry track and led comfortably by Quarry – setting the scene for a race-long duel between the pair. Norton piled the pressure on Hamilton, who defended masterfully until lap six, when the Spectrum forced the Swift to take a very tight line through Quarry and then run wide onto Farm Straight. Hamilton braked late to try and hold the lead at the Esses, but skittered down the escape road, where he lost more time circumnavigating James Fugett's parked Ray.

That should have been the end of the contest as Norton disappeared off into the distance, but Hamilton was not ready to concede defeat, despite rejoining several seconds adrift. Frustrated with his error, he got his head down and set his fastest ever lap (a 1m12.061s) as he surged back onto (the



*Hamilton's blistering lap times weren't enough to take a heat win after an error cost him the lead. (Image: David Webster)*

#### EVENT DATA

Result – 12 laps: 1 Matt McKillop (Swift SC95) 19m11.399s (69.411mph); 2 Pat Blakeney (Vector MG95) +0.901s; 3 Andrew Jones (Ray GRS07); 4 Steven Jensen (Swift SC92); 5 Robert Hall (Swift SC92); 6 Adam Higgins (Van Diemen RF89). Class A: 1 A Jones; 2 Mark Davies (Jamun M96); 3 Nick Jones (Van Diemen RF01). Team Schemes Class B: 1 McKillop; 2 Blakeney; 3 Jensen. Sarik Vacform Class C: 1 Higgins; 2 Jim Hamilton (Van Diemen RF89); 3 Alan Slater (Swift FB89). Pole position: Ed Moore (Van Diemen RF00) 1m27.309s (76.281mph). Fastest lap: Blakeney 1m33.038s (71.584mph). Starters: 34. Heat – 10 laps: 1 Ben Norton (Spectrum 011) 12m22.470s (89.701mph); 2 Alan Hamilton (Swift SC92) +0.161s; 3 Andrew Harris (Van Diemen RF99/00). Class winners: Norton; Hamilton; Andrew Crapnell (Van Diemen RF89). Fastest lap: Alan Hamilton 1m12.061s (92.42mph). Starters: 28.

Overall standinga after round three: 1 Jensen 77; 2 Moore 76; 3 McKillop 72; 4 Hall 47; 5= Norton, Jim Hamilton & Slater 46; etc. Class A: 1 Moore 40; 2 A Jones 23; 3= Norton & N Jones 22; etc. Class B: 1 Jensen 41; 2 McKillop 37; 3 Hall 21; etc. Class C: 1 J Hamilton 40; 2 Slater 39; 3 Higgins 29; etc.

Next round: June 23.

admittedly cruising) Norton's tail to finish just 0.161s behind.

Andrew Harris (Powerclean Van Diemen RF99) quickly hacked through from seventh to take a comfortable third, leaving the huge battle for fourth in his wake. Hugh Elliott (Alchemede/Kevin Mills Racing Swift SC92), Mark Davies (PA Motorsport Jamun M96), Devenish, Crapnell and Slater fought mightily throughout the race, with Davies eventually prevailing, while a final lap incident ended Devenish's promising day. Further back, Adam Higgins fended off Jim Hamilton and Michael Bradley for eighth.

#### RACE

By the time the grid lined up for the main race, the track had not only been soaked by the day's hardest downpour, but it had been liberally covered with oil from an expiring BMW, plus an abundance of sawdust intended to cover the spillage.

Grip was unsurprisingly non-existent, with several experienced drivers suggesting they had never encountered such slippery conditions before. As they slithered off the line, Moore dropped down to fifth while Fisher moved into the lead, followed by McKillop, Nick Jones and Andrew Jones.

Fisher immediately edged away from the field, while Jones attacked McKillop for second. He moved ahead on lap two – but only after outbraking himself at the Esses, going straight on, and rejoining in front. Jones was given a stop-go penalty for the move (a punishment he

accepted), but seeing only a black flag, he slowed in the belief that he had been disqualified. He rejoined an angry 20<sup>th</sup> and recovered to finish ninth in a race he could well have won.

The recovering Moore and Pat Blakeney – already up from eighth on the grid in his first race of 2007 – then started hounding McKillop, until an incident in traffic saw Steve Burns spinning into the surprised Moore. The 2004 champion continued, but his damaged car was unwilling to turn or go straight, and he limped around 20s off the pace in a bid to collect at least a few points.

There was one more amazing twist to come on the penultimate lap, as Fisher's masterful drive came to an end when the Mygale cut out at Westway. He could only trundle into the pits and a sad retirement. "You just know it will be some 30p part that's gone," said gutted car owner Poole.

That elevated McKillop and Blakeney's battle to a dice for victory (and Team Schemes Class B honours), and despite Pat setting fastest lap on the final tour, McKillop did enough to take a fully deserved first race win by 0.9s, to his ex-FF1600 racer father Mac's justified delight.

Andrew Jones took a lonely third, despite a spin on the parade lap, ahead of the muted Steven Jensen and Robert Hall, the latter having spun at the Esses early on.

Higgins charged from 18<sup>th</sup> on the grid to sixth and an outstanding first Pre 90 victory that earned him the Abraham's

Jewellers Driver of the Day prize, almost catching Hall in the closing stages. He was followed by Elliott, Davies, Jones and Rich Wadner, who survived a tangle with Alan Hamilton at Bobbies on the last lap, the qualification race star having spun down the order at the same place on lap seven.

Moore dragged his battered machine home 11<sup>th</sup>, holding off Shaun Macklin (who had come through from the back of the qualification race grid) and Rob Manger, with Jim Hamilton taking second in Pre 90 after Slater's last corner bid to take the place end with his third spin of the afternoon.

Norton was also out of luck – the possibly waterlogged Spectrum grinding to a halt on lap three. And spare a thought for Stephen Gibbins, who was hacking through the field in one of finest drives yet until pushing too hard at Camp and spinning into the barriers and out of a fine fifth just as he had the McKillop, Moore and Blakeney dice in his sights.



*The moment the end of Moore's unbeaten Combe run was confirmed (Image: David Webster)*