




(Image: David Webster)



MELTON

CONCRETE PRODUCTS

Castle Combe FF1600
Championship

Round 7, August 4 2007

Ian Sowman reports

Ed Moore had his most troubled weekend of the season so far, retaining the lead of the championship only after dropped scores are taken into account. Steven Jensen's Class B victory means that he has amassed more points than Ed, but it was Josh Fisher who finally won a race outright having threatened to since he made his seasonal debut in May.

QUALIFYING

As lap times settled down, first it was Robert Hall (Swift Cooper Swift SC92) that headed the times, then Fisher (Wayne Poole Racing Mygale SJ01). Fisher extended his advantage on lap four, at which time Moore (motorsport-events.com/hullmatic.com Van Diemen RF00) was languishing in sixth position –

which to anyone who could hear the engine misfiring as he drove past was no surprise.

Eventually the championship leader pitted, but there was no time to make much headway in solving the problem and so when he returned to the track after a red flag to recover a stranded Andrew Stride (Frome Renovation & Building Ltd Van Diemen RF92) he was only able to improve one position – and then only briefly before he was shuffled back to sixth.

The second qualifying period lasted only five minutes (four were lost from the 20-minute session), and while plenty of drivers improved their times, there was little change in the order up front. Fisher's best mark from the first half stood – a 1m12.319s – while Ben Norton (Checkpoint Tyres Devizes/Wiltshire College Spectrum 011) got only a little closer.

Andrew Jones flew in his Coachstyle Lyd/NFP Property Developments/Wired Developments Ray GRS07, grabbing a place on the inside of row two, where he would be joined by the fastest of the Team Schemes Class B cars of Hall. With his broken shoulder gradually mending Steven Jensen (A1 Tyres Bath/Jensen

Racing Swift SC92) managed fifth, narrowly ahead of Moore.

A promising performance from Gary Marsh in his Excel Solutions Ltd Spectrum 011 put him seventh, ahead of the ever-improving Steve Gibbins (Rygor Commercials Ltd Van Diemen RF01), Mark Davies (PA Motorsport Jamun M96), and Matt McKillop, who suffered a variety of fuel-related problems before he finally climbed to tenth in his Swift SC95.

Alan Slater (Swift Cooper Swift FB89) came out on top among the Sarik Vacform Pre 1990 class in 11th overall, with a smoky Adam Higgins (Riadro Racing Van Diemen RF89) and Jim Hamilton (Van Diemen RF89) – as ever – completing the top three.

RACE

The big question to be resolved was just what Moore could achieve after his disappointing qualifying session. The answer to that hinged on how skilful (or indeed lucky) he and his team had been in identifying the cause of his persistent misfire, and then solving it. It is a notoriously difficult task, and one made no easier when there is no opportunity to run the car under load



Higgins chasing after one of the Hamiltons – Alan – on his way to his second ever class win. (Image: David Webster)

EVENT DATA

Round 7 – 12 laps: 1 Josh Fisher (Mygale SJ01) 14m44.502s (90.356mph); 2 Ben Norton (Spectrum 011) +0.582s; 3 Steven Jensen (Swift SC92); 4 Andrew Jones (Ray GRS07); 5 Mark Davies (Jamun M96); 6 Robert Hall (Swift SC92). Class A: 1 Fisher; 2 Norton; 3 Jones. Team Schemes Class B: 1 Jensen; 2 Hall; 3 Alan Hamilton (Swift SC92). Sarik Vacform Class C: 1 Adam Higgins (Van Diemen RF89); 2 Jim Hamilton (Van Diemen RF89); 3 Alan Slater (Swift FB89). Pole position: Fisher 1m12.319s (92.092mph). Fastest lap: Norton 1m12.471s (91.899mph). Starters: 33.

Overall standings after round seven (one score dropped): 1 Ed Moore 167; 2 Jensen 152; 3 Hall 137; 4 Jones 129; 5 Norton 124; 6 Higgins 98; etc. Class A: 1 Moore 86; 2 Jones 61; 3 Norton 57; etc. Class B: 1 Jensen 86; 2 Hall 72; 3 Matt McKillop 47; etc. Class C: 1 Jim Hamilton 78; 2 Higgins 74; 3 Slater 72; etc.

Next round: August 27.

other than the race itself.

Moore appeared to make a very good getaway from the line, and moved forward to challenge Fisher on the run towards Quarry. But Fisher held on, with the rapid-starting Jensen moving into second place and even challenging for the lead at Tower with Moore having tumbled back down the order. Norton's start was not particularly great and he slipped behind Jones, taking until the beginning of the third lap to recover third position – by which time Fisher and Jensen had constructed something of an advantage.



By the time Norton was ahead of Jones, Fisher and Jensen had pulled away. (Image: David Webster)

Meanwhile, Moore was losing further positions and at the end of lap four he

returned to the pits. The engine cover came off but Moore remained in the car, and after a few moment of poking around he went back out again on a mission to grab as many points as possible. His lap times were respectable rather than revelatory, and he picked up four points for finishing seventh in Class A, but at two laps down he was not to score anything for his 29th position in the overall standings: only four cars retired.

With rainmeister McKillop also struggling – he eventually retired after a dislodged corner marker smashed off his radiator as he drove over it – a new winner in 2007 was assured. Fisher continued to be in the ascendency, continually run close by Jensen although genuine passing opportunities were limited.

It was around half distance that Jensen's attention suddenly turned to defence, with Norton – who raced onto the tail of the lead pair with fastest lap on lap five – bringing himself into contention. Norton's probing and Jensen's retaliation allowed Fisher a few lengths of breathing space and he would eventually win by a shade over half a second – from Norton. It was at the beginning of the last lap that Norton went into Quarry side by side with Jensen, turning into

the corner ahead. Any hopes Jensen had of coming back at Camp were stymied by slower cars.

Jones was some way back in fourth position, and he in turn edged away from the scrap for fifth – the situation turning on the involvement of backmarkers. Davies briefly lost fifth position to Hall on lap nine but he overturned that a lap later and clung on keenly to record his best ever Combe (final) finishing position.

The incredible battle for Class C ran as high as seventh overall in the end, promoted after the retirements of McKillop and Gibbins. Slater was shuffled back to third in line in the opening few laps as Higgins and Hamilton went wheel-to-wheel with Jim's unrelated namesake Alan (Hamilton Motorsport Swift SC92). Higgins hit the front on lap nine, but Jim came back on the inside of Camp at lap nine with Higgins almost forced onto the grass. Higgins responded on the penultimate lap, and somehow maintained the class lead until the very end. "Brilliant! That's the best race I've ever had," he beamed, very much in the manner of his illustrious father.

Beckett's Combe debut



It had been nearly eight years since James Beckett – best known as Walter Hayes Trophy supremo – had driven a single seater, and he had never been around Castle Combe (other than in an anticlockwise direction on his Chopper in the Tour de Combe), but on Saturday he made his FF1600 debut at the circuit.

He has previously raced his Van Diemen RF78 (pedalled these days by Neil Cunningham) in the Midlands, but for Combe he was in Wayne Poole's Mygale

SJ01. "We were sitting in a snowy field on the Wydean Rally when Wayne, who was driving the chase car for us, suggested it," said Beckett. "I hadn't really thought about it again until about Two weeks ago."

Having had no testing, James was in at the deep end and his quest for track time were hit by electrical problems in qualifying. But he was back out for the race, and finished a respectable 27th.