



(Image: John Gaisford)



**Castle Combe FF1600 Championship**  
**Rounds 5 & 6, July 14/15 2007**  
*Ian Sowman reports*

Ed Moore won each part of the only Melton Concrete Products Castle Combe FF1600 Championship double-header of the year to strengthen his grip on a second local title with a third of the season remaining. Providing he turns at the remaining races he ought to triumph, although some bad luck on his part or exceptional results from others (or both) could alter that. His nearest rival Steven Jensen is doing his best to stay in contention, and the fact that he raced to fifth and third positions at the weekend driving with a broken shoulder underlined his unwavering commitment to the cause.

#### QUALIFYING

To provide a meaningful qualifying report, access to a fully-functional timing screen is almost essential. Sadly, until the last knockings of the session MST were keeping the times of Moore (motorsport-events.com & hullmatic.com Van Diemen RF00) and Josh Fisher (Wayne Poole Racing Mygale SJ01)

very close to their chest, and given that they finally claimed two of the first three places on the grid their efforts were kind of important.

So until you worked out that Ed and Josh weren't driving so slowly that they didn't appear in the top 20, it appeared that Ben Norton (Checkpoint Tyres Devizes/Wiltshire College Spectrum 011) was on pole position. This wasn't entirely unfeasible, as Ben seared around on the first lap out of the pits in order to find some space to set a quick lap. Robert Hall (Swift Cooper Swift SC92) appeared snatch pole just before red flags came out, Shaun Macklin having crunched his Swift SC92.

Three minutes of the session were lost and ten remained when the session restarted, and a few minutes in the times of Moore and Fisher's times appeared, shattering the illusion of a Norton/Hall front row. Norton did get back onto the front row towards the end, splitting Moore and Fisher.

Jensen (A1 Tyres Bath/Jensen Racing Swift SC92) was fifth with Andrew Jones (Coachstyle/NFP Property Developments/Wired Developments Ray GRS07) completing the top six. A little further back, Adam Higgins (Riadro Racing Van Diemen RF89) and Jim Hamilton (RF89) made it an all Class C row five, several places clear of class points leader Alan Slater's Swift Cooper Swift FB89. Matt McKillop – the only 2007 winner not called Moore – was only 12<sup>th</sup> in his Swift SC95, which he reported as being down on power and slightly ill-handling after

its shunt at the previous meeting.

#### SATURDAY RACE

Rich Wadner's Swift SC92 was confined to its awning by gearbox issues so 33 cars, one short of the maximum, took the start of the season's half-way race.

Norton got the rather prominent nose of his Spectrum ahead on the sprint off the line, but as he went up through the gears Moore reclaimed the lead so that by the time he arrived at Quarry it appeared foolish to suggest that his advantage had ever been in doubt. Fisher made a really ropy getaway and plunged to eighth by the end of lap one, while Jensen moved up to third, Mark Davies (PA Motorsport Jamun M96) to an excellent fourth from row four of the grid, and Hall down to fifth.

A melee at Tower on lap one claimed just one victim, with Gary Marsh (Excel Solutions Spectrum 011) bending wishbones on contact with another car. Although he continued, Higgins lost a lot of ground and completed the first tour right at the back of the field, handing Hamilton the Class C advantage.

Moore and Norton quickly broke away from the rest with Jensen having to fend off Hall, who had made short work of passing Davies, for third. Given that he was driving through the pain barrier Jensen wasn't at his racy best and left Hall plenty of room approaching Tower on lap three, the invitation to pass being duly accepted.



Jim Hamilton, Hall, Norton and Moore prepare to be paraded in front of their fans. (Image: John Gaisford)

#### EVENT DATA

Round 5 – 12 laps: 1 Ed Moore (Van Diemen RF00) 14m45.095s (90.29mph); 2 Ben Norton (Spectrum 011) +0.700s; 3 Robert Hall (Swift SC92); 4 Josh Fisher (Mygale SJ01); 5 Steven Jensen (Swift SC92); 6 Andrew Jones (Ray GRS07). Class A: 1 Moore; 2 Norton; 3 Fisger. Team Schemes Class B: 1 Hall; 2 Jensen; 3 Matt McKillop (Swift SC95). Sarik Vacform Class C: 1 Jim Hamilton (Van Diemen RF89); 2 Andrew Crapnell (Van Diemen RF89); 3 Adam Higgins (Van Diemen RF89). Pole position: Moore 1m12.324s (92.08mph). Fastest lap: Hall 1m12.733s (91.56mph). Starters: 33. Round 6 – 7 laps: 1 Moore 8m38.300s (89.94mph); 2 Fisher +1.477s; 3 Jensen; 4 Norton; 5 Hall; 6 Jones. Class A: 1 Moore; 2 Fisher; 3 Norton. Class B: 1 Jensen; 2 Hall; 3 Shaun Macklin (Swift SC92). Class C: 1 Wayne Poole (Van Diemen RF89); 2 Higgins; 3 Hamilton. Pole position: Moore. Fastest lap: Fisher 1m12.482s (91.88mph). Starters: 34.

Overall standings after round six (one score dropped): 1 Moore 152; 2 Jensen 127; 3 Hall 117; 4 Jones 106; 5 Norton 96; 6 McKillop 89; etc. Class A: 1 Moore 78; 2 Jones 51; 3 Norton 44; etc. Class B: 1 Jensen 70; 2 Hall 60; 3 McKillop 47; etc. Class C: 1 Hamilton 66; 2 Alan Slater 62; 3 Higgins 58; etc.

Next round: August 4.

Up at the front, Moore appeared thoroughly unable to shake off Norton, the Spectrum now handling much better after advice on the suspension configuration from Borland Racing in Australia helped to eliminate the bagfuls of understeer that Norton had had to cope with to date. The gap was rarely more than a couple of lengths and Norton was able to launch a couple of mild attacks on the lead, but nothing that looked as if it would ever rattle the 2004 champion. The gap at the end was just 0.7s, with Hall a further 2s back having claimed fastest lap as he tried to close in.

"All credit to Ben, he drove very well indeed," admitted Moore. "I had to concentrate quite hard."

"I tried my hardest and it was a good race, but Ed was flawless so it didn't make my life easy," countered Norton.

After his pedestrian start, Fisher came through to fourth position. He went inside Davies at Camp on lap four, then – like Hall – found that Jensen offered relatively little resistance in the Tower/Bobbies part of the track on lap six. Fisher, Jensen and Jones became relatively spread out in the second half of the top six.

Davies repelled a frantic Stephen Gibbins (Rygor Commericals Van Diemen RF01) for seventh, while McKillop – who ran in the position on the opening lap, up five places off the start – had to settle for ninth.

The battle for the final place in the top ten was one of the most colourful of the race, with Hamilton overcoming Andrew Harris (Powerclean (Gwent) Van Diemen RF00) with two laps to go only to lose out again right at the end. He did have the consolation of a Class C victory, however. Slater and Matt Devenish (Wayne Poole Racing Van Diemen RF89) ought to have been on the podium but they tangled at Quarry with two laps to go, so Andrew Crapnell (Van Diemen RF89) and

the recovering Higgins were duly promoted.

#### SUNDAY RACE

The grid was back up to capacity for race two, with Wadner ready to race, Alan Slater having been given the all clear after a trip to hospital (the second of two impacts with Devenish's car had battered his shins), and Wayne Poole having taken over the repaired Devenish machine to start at the back of the grid for a one-off comeback.

Red flags are avoided wherever possible at Combe, so there was understandable concern when the race was halted moments after the safety car had been scrambled at the start of lap four. In separate incidents at the Esses and Tower McKillop and Michael Bradley (motorsport-events.com Van Diemen RF00) had major offs into the barrier, and each was brought back to the medical centre in the back of a rescue unit. Fortunately they were swiftly discharged having been found to be in reasonably good order.

The original grid had been determined by Saturday's result, and Norton again was second to Moore in the few moments of action before the halt, although this time he was more focused on defending from Fisher, who had made it into third at Quarry. The grid for the seven-lap restart was based on the order at the end of lap two, so it was Moore from Norton, Fisher, Jensen, Hall and Jones.

Jensen made a tremendous fist of the second attempt, trying to go around the outside of Norton through Folly and sealing the place on the run from Quarry to Old Paddock. The top four quickly pulled away from Davies, Jones and the slow-starting Hall.

Fisher gave Norton a hard time on lap two, with Ben able to soak up the pressure until Tower on lap three when the ex-F3 man got through. Fisher chased down Jensen – who hadn't stayed quite as close to Moore as

Norton had manged 24 hours earlier – and on the last lap the pair ran side by side through Folly before Fisher completed the move at Tower. Jensen bravely held onto the win in Team Schemes Class B, and he denied Norton, who harried him through Camp, a place on the podium by only a tenth of a second.

Hall recovered to fifth, ahead of Jones and in seventh was... Wayne Poole. From 34<sup>th</sup> on the grid the team boss had climbed to 18<sup>th</sup> by the end of lap two (and actually gained a few more places, which were subsequently 'lost', before the red flag). On the restart, his progress was again stunning and in the final three laps he passed first Hamilton and then erstwhile Sarik Vacform Class C leader Higgins. "I decided to go out for a but of fun and ended up here," said the driver of the race.

There were a few retirements, the most significant of which was Davies, who harvested a reasonable crop after clipping the tyres at Bobbies. Alan Hamilton (Hamilton Motorsport Swift SC92) pulled out when a plug lead came off.

#### Extremely briefly...

\* Jensen broke his shoulder in an accident on his Vespa on Wednesday evening, and contemplated pulling out on the eve of the race. "It was just a question of getting through each session and seeing whether the pain was getting worse or not. The Esses, Tower and Camp corner were particularly difficult," he said. His Swift SC92 is up for sale, meanwhile, and he's looking to get some Class A experience before the year is out.

\* Marsh made his first Spectrum appearance at the weekend, the car – bought via UK agent Mark Bailey Racing – arriving only on the Monday before. "We had a couple of allnighters," he admitted. "It takes a while, but give it a couple of races and we will have it set up the way I like it," he added.