



CASTLE COMBE FF1600 CHAMPIONSHIP

Round 3, Monday 31st May.



Felix Fisher under sustained pressure from Ben Norton with Marcus Allen chasing hard behind.
(Image: Paul Punch/Perspective-i)

It didn't take Felix Fisher long to get up to speed in the Rochford Garden Van Diemen RF00 - in only his third race with the car he defeated reigning champion Ben Norton in a straight fight and became the third winner in as many Castle Combe FF1600 Championship races this year.

Qualifying

There was no sign of Norton's superiority in qualifying coming under threat, as an early 1m11.136s kept the Checkpoint Tyres/Wiltshire College Spectrum's unbeaten 2010 qualifying run intact.

Fisher closed to within 0.236 seconds, with Andrew Jones continuing his recent strong form to put the Coachstyle Ray third. Fourth-placed Marcus Allen was comfortably the top class B man in the Kevin Mills Swift, while Iain Houston narrowly beat Souley Motorsport's Kyle Tilley in the Pre 90 battle.

Race

Norton's pole advantage was short-lived, for Fisher and Jones made the best getaways and shuffled the champion back to third during the initial sprint off the grid, while Kevin Mills Racing team-mates Allen and Steven Jensen (A1 Tyres/tomandsteve.co.uk Spectrum) slotted in behind.

Fisher managed to make a slight early break as Norton worked on Jones, but it took the Spectrum just one lap to get past the Ray and set off after the race-leading Van Diemen.

By lap two, Norton was all over the back of Fisher, although their battle was then paused as the safety car put in a two-lap appearance. Having overtaken Allen for fourth, Jensen set about Jones, but a tangle between the two left Jones' Ray stranded across the track at Quarry and also ended Jensen's race.



Jensen and Jones' races ended by this collision.
(Image: Paul Bunch/Perspective-i)

When the pace car unleashed the field again, Norton immediately attacked Fisher. Over the last few years, so many have fallen to Norton's speed through the Camp to Avon Rise section, but though he continually drew alongside his rival here - and pretty much everywhere else - Fisher always managed to hug every apex, to brake late enough to stay ahead into the corners, and to match Norton's momentum through the corners onto the crucial straights.

"He always had the bit of tarmac that I wanted," said Norton. "Fair play to Felix, he was driving a brilliant race."

Allen tucked in right behind their tussle, hoping to pick up the pieces - and in the meantime finding it all rather entertaining.

"I was just watching the racing," he said. "The race between Felix and Ben was so good I was sometimes missing my line while I was watching it..."

Whatever Norton tried though, it wasn't enough. Side by side again and again, rarely more than 0.1s apart across the line, but always still Fisher a few inches ahead. When his final effort into Tower and Bobbies on the last lap failed to pay off, Norton suddenly had to keep a closer eye on resisting Allen than on chasing Fisher, who escaped to win by half a second - which seemed a monumental margin compared to the inches he had led by for most of the 12 laps.

"That was a fantastic race, especially after the safety car came out," Fisher enthused. "It was a really, really hard tussle - but a good clean fight."

The top three crossed the line only 0.6s apart, with Allen wrapping up another class B triumph and also moving slightly further clear in the overall points battle.

The leaders were far from the only entertaining thing in the event. Only a couple of seconds behind, Nathan Ward produced an outstanding performance to take the Golden Bull Racing/RJW Engineering/Swift Cooper SC95 to fourth after a thrilling tussle with his team-mate Robert Hall in Swift's latest creation. It took several passing moves to and fro before Ward finally secured his richly-deserved fourth position.

Saxon Motorsport Mygale driver Thomas Barrow was fairly lonely for most of the race on the way to sixth, though in the final moments he was nearly caught by Roger Orgee (Van Diemen RF00), Oliver White (Wiltshire College Spectrum), Josh Barnett (Wessex Group Van Diemen RF00) and returnee Chris Acton (Souley Motorsport Ray GRS08) as they spurred each other on.



Barnett had done well to claw his way up from a frustrating 14th on the grid to ninth, while White achieved the milestone of completing a racing lap in Combe FF1600 for the first time as he put his early-season disappointments behind him.

Oliver White survived the race distance in 8th.
(Image: Paul Bunch/Perspective-i)

Wayne Poole Racing's Ashley Clifford (C Clifford Builders Mygale) chased them home in 11th, ahead of Wiltshire College's David Vivian, whose Swift fell off the pace late on, and Lloyd Hopes.

Tilley racked up another class C win for Souley Motorsport, coming from behind to take the class lead from Houston and then pull away, leaving his rival to dice with the newer cars of Steve Chapman and Shaun Macklin.

| Pos. | Cl. | Cl. Pos. | Driver | Car | Time | Qual. |
|------|-----|----------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------|-------|
| 1 | A | 1 | Felix Fisher | Van Diemen RF00 | 17:30.888 | 2 |
| 2 | A | 2 | Ben Norton | Spectrum 011B | +0.531 | 1 |
| 3 | B | 1 | Marcus Allen | Swift SC92F | +0.656 | 4 |
| 4 | B | 2 | Nathan Ward | Swift SC95 | +2.915 | 8 |
| 5 | A | 3 | Robert Hall | Swift SC10 | +3.678 | 6 |
| 6 | A | 4 | Thomas Barrow | Mygale SJ00 | +10.529 | 10 |
| 7 | A | 5 | Roger Orgee | Van Diemen RF00 | +10.728 | 11 |
| 8 | A | 6 | Oliver White | Spectrum 011B | +11.298 | 9 |
| 9 | A | 7 | Josh Barnett | Van Diemen RF00 | +11.975 | 14 |
| 10 | A | 8 | Chris Acton | Ray GRS08 | +14.828 | 12 |
| 11 | A | 9 | Ashley Clifford | Mygale SJ01/03 | +17.335 | 15 |
| 12 | B | 3 | David Vivian | Swift SC92 | +20.181 | 7 |
| 13 | B | 4 | Lloyd Hopes | Swift SC92 | +23.717 | 17 |
| 14 | C | 1 | Kyle Tilley | Van Diemen RF87 | +24.243 | 19 |
| 15 | A | 10 | Steve Chapman | Van Diemen RF02 | +32.339 | 21 |
| 16 | C | 2 | Iain Houston | Van Diemen RF89 | +35.002 | 18 |
| 17 | B | 5 | Shaun Macklin | Swift SC92 | +35.581 | 24 |
| 18 | B | 6 | Simon Davey | Swift SC92 | +36.941 | 23 |
| 19 | A | 11 | Richard Higgins | Van Diemen 2001 | +39.610 | 22 |
| 20 | C | 3 | Martin Pickles | Van Diemen RF87 | +40.585 | 20 |
| 21 | C | 4 | John Hallam | Van Diemen RF89 | +50.197 | 25 |
| 22 | B | 7 | Kelvin Foy | Swift SC93F | +50.899 | 30 |
| 23 | C | 5 | Pete O'Shea | Swift FB89 | +56.545 | 26 |
| 24 | C | 6 | Pete Diccox | Van Diemen RF89 | +58.485 | 33 |
| 25 | C | 7 | Darren Houldcroft | Van Diemen RF88 | +1 lap | 31 |
| 26 | A | 12 | Claudio Viveiros | Van Diemen RF99 | +1 lap | 35 |
| DNF | B | N/A | Mike Madge | Vector | +3 laps | 27 |
| DNF | C | N/A | Michael Phillips | Swift FB87 | +3 laps | 32 |
| DNF | C | N/A | Stephen Bracegirdle | Van Diemen RF88 | +6 laps | 34 |
| DNF | A | N/A | Andrew Jones | Ray GRS07 | +9 laps | 3 |
| DNF | A | N/A | Steven Jensen | Spectrum 011C | +9 laps | 5 |
| DNF | B | N/A | Luke Cooper | Swift SC92 | +11 laps | 16 |
| DNF | B | N/A | Paul James | Swift SC92 | +11 laps | 28 |
| DNF | A | N/A | Pedro Ferreira | Swift SC99 | +11 laps | 29 |
| DNF | B | N/A | Adam Higgins | Van Diemen RF90 | +12 laps | 13 |

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