



(Image: David Webster)

## National MOBILE WINDSCREENS

Castle Combe Saloon Car  
Championship

Round 6, August 4 2007

*Ian Sowman reports*

Reigning champion Tony Hutchings got back on course to secure back-to-back titles by winning a thrilling battle in Class C as erstwhile points leader Will di Claudio failed to reach the finish.

### QUALIFYING

Hutchings (Team Turnpike MG ZR) was well down the order after qualifying, problems restricting his run to just three laps. Carleton Williams (Carbits UK/AEX Motorsport Vauxhall Corsa GSi) initially held class pole, but he was superseded by Alex Ferguson's Peugeot 205 GTi in the closing minutes of the session. Hutchings could only watch from the pit lane as he was eventually shuffled back to 18<sup>th</sup>.

Meanwhile, team-mate di Claudio (Peugeot 106 XSi) wasn't having any better fortune, a broken rocker meaning that he didn't get any more running than Hutchings. In that time he was fortunate to set a mark less than a tenth of a second slower than Class D rival Russell Poynter-Brown (Vauxhall Corsa), and so gave away only one place on the grid as the opponents shared row twelve.

The sharp end of the grid was particularly acute, with Barry Squibb (Mitsubishi Evo 6) going half a second underneath the lap record on his way to pole position. Conditions were very much at their best early in the session, with each of the top four drivers setting their best mark on the first flying lap. Russell Humphrey (Interceptor Racing Mitsubishi Evolution) and Keith Murray (Audi A4 Quattro) completed the top three, while the first of the 2WD cars belonged to Bill Brockbank, who put his ever more potent Badger 5 Seat Ibiza Cupra onto the outside of row two.

Adam Beachgood (Becket Electrical Ford Focus) qualified well in fifth but suffered terminal problems, so Tony Dolley moved up a position in his Peugeot 206 GTi, with Angus Dawe's BMW M3 effectively sixth.

Elsewhere, Robert Ballard was back on the grid in his TMTI/Norris Designs Mitsubishi Evo 7, the car rebuilt after the heavy accident with Mark Harrison at the previous meeting. For a second meeting in a row returning star Gary Prebble suffered engine problems with his Rover 220 Turbo Coupe, his day over all too quickly after just a few minutes of qualifying.

### RACE

Unsurprisingly, it was the four-wheel drive behemoths to the fore at the beginning of the race. Squibb scorched away from the line, rapidly putting daylight between himself and his rivals

as Murray jumped up a place to split the Evos. Ballard moved up several places to take fourth on the opening lap, although he was bullied back into fifth by Brockbank on the way out of Camp Corner on the opening circuit.



*Brockbank grabbed fourth back from Ballard by the end of lap one. (Image: David Webster)*

Half a lap earlier Dolley had problems traversing the Esses and slipped back to eighth, while Olly Lewis (thermaldegree.com Mini Cooper) and Terry Thorne (Ford Focus) were casualties on that opening lap.

Dolley's race did not last much longer, the Peugeot lapsing onto three cylinders during lap two meaning that he failed to capitalise on the absence of points leader Mark Wyatt. The demise of the ex-BTCC driver left the certainty of a new Class B winner, with Brockbank still running strongly as he chased after the Class A pack.

While Dolley was pulling into the pits race leader Squibb set about giving smoke signals from his Mitsubishi. In return, startline officials signalled to him



*Not for the first time this year, Barry smoked for a bit and then went out in a disappointing fashion – rather like a damp Squibb. (Image: David Webster)*

first with the 'meatball' flag, and later with the black one – but it would take until the end of lap seven for him to finally call it a day, making it the ex-rallycross man's fourth DNF in six starts. How he must yearn for the days of three-and-a-half lap heats... By way of consolation, he did smash the lap record on lap two, bettering Ballard's ten-month old mark by all of 0.02s.

Murray therefore took the helm, and he wasn't overly troubled. Humphrey narrowed the gap to a smidgen over three second in the closing laps, but for Murray that was a comfortable margin.



*Murray turned in a dominant performance, bringing back memories of earlier seasons. (Image: David Webster)*

The podium was completed by

Brockbank, who had quite a race although he was nearly half a lap behind the leaders by flag fall. Ballard took fourth.

A Seat one-two in Class B was completed by Kevin Bird's Leon Cupra R. Like Brockbank, Bird was enjoying his best result and it came after an enthralling dice with the BMW M3s of Angus Dawe (Red Mist Sportscars) and Ian Craig (Ultimate Cars of Cirencester). The flashpoint came at the end of lap six when there was contact between Bird and Dawe, the Munich motor being forced onto the grass on the exit of Camp. Dawe remained behind Craig until the final lap when he reversed the finishing order between the two for the first time this season.

The championship contenders, however, come from the smaller capacity classes. In the 1400 class, di Claudio was immediately able to press ahead of Poynter-Brown, and was driving with great verve to hold him off when he stopped on the circuit on lap five, a broken rocker again thought to be the cause. That left RP-B to take his third win of the year – equalising with di

#### EVENT DATA

Round 6 – 12 laps: 1 Keith Murray (Audi A4 Quattro) 15m38.287s (86.742mph); 2 Russell Humphrey (Mitsubishi Evolution) +3.347s; 3 Bill Brockbank (Seat Ibiza Cupra); 4 Robert Ballard (Mitsubishi Evo 7); 5 Kevin Bird (Seat Leon Cupra R); 6 Angus Dawe (BMW M3). Class A: 1 Murray; 2 Humphrey; 3 Ballard. Class B: 1 Brockbank; 2 Bird; 3 Dawe. Class C: 1 Tony Hutchings (MG ZR); 2 Carleton Williams (Vauxhall Corsa GSi); 3 John Avery (Honda Integra Type R). Class D: 1 Russell Poynter-Brown (Vauxhall Corsa); 2 Peter Weston (MG ZR); 3 Steve Sutton (Peugeot 106 Xsi). Pole position: Barry Squibb (Mitsubishi Evo 6) 1m15.502s (88.210mph). Fastest lap: Squibb 1m16.005s (87.626mph) record. Starters: 35.

Overall standings after round six: 1 Hutchings 36; 2 Poynter-Brown 35; 3 Will di Claudio 32; 4 Mark Wyatt 27; 5= Alex Ferguson and Williams 23; etc. Class A: 1 Humphrey 22; 2 Murray 18; 3 Mark Harrison 12; etc. Class B: 1 Wyatt 27; 2 Tony Dolley 20; 3 Bill Brockbank 18; etc. Class C: 1 Hutchings 36; 2= Ferguson and Williams 23; etc. Class D: 1 Poynter-Brown 35; 2 di Claudio 32; 3 Peter Weston 21; etc.

Next round: August 27.

Claudio, who would appreciate the chance to drop a score.



*Bird and two Beemers. (Image: David Webster)*

But with Hutchings coming through the field the title was set to go to the 1800 class man. From 18<sup>th</sup> on the grid he finally made it into the top ten, but not before Ferguson had retired with a blown engine. Hutchings went into the final laps ahead in Class C but with Williams chasing him hard: at Quarry on the penultimate lap he tried and failed to go around the outside, and then at Tower both he and Hutchings fell over slower cars, the Nova coming off worse. Undeterred, Williams resumed the hunt but could only get the gap down to a quarter of a second as he drove across the line behind the yellow MG.

## Alfa woe-meo

\* The grid should have featured the ex-Dutch Touring Car Alfa Romeo 156 driven by rookie racer Angus Cunningham, but to the barely-concealed disappointment of visiting commentator (and Alfa fanatic) David Addison, it didn't. The Bath driver missed qualifying after a fuel-related problem (he didn't have any), and when he went out to do three laps with the Jaguar XKs the car sprung a terminal oil leak. Cunningham will be back for the balance of this year, and hopes to be a regular in 2008.

\* We're at the two-thirds mark in the season, and the championship is hotting up nicely. Numerous drivers have a mathematical chance of the title, but really it comes down to three men: Tony Hutchings, Russell Poynter-Brown and Will di Claudio. WdC was the first of that trio to have a non-finish this season, and the fact that he is in contention despite that is testament to his pace and consistency in the first five rounds. Nevertheless, there's a very good chance that one problem could rob him of the title, perhaps giving as convincing an argument as any that a dropped score rule should be brought in, as in the FF1600s.