



**Russell
up a
win**

(Image: Ollie Read)

**National
mobile
WINDSCREENS**

**Castle Combe Saloon Car
Championship**

Round 7, August 27 2007

Josh Barnett reports

It was another attritional round of the championship, with several leading lights coming unstuck due to reliability issues. Even championship leader Tony Hutchings had problems, but he did at least salvage some points from the weekend.

QUALIFYING

Keith Murray's last gasp effort earned the Audi A4 Quattro driver pole position for round seven, the Nailsworth man emerging at the very end of the session to spoil a potential upset by the two wheel drive brigade.

Murray's lap of 1m15.813s knocked long time leader Mark Wyatt (Mark Richard Insurance Vauxhall Astra) into second place after the sometime Hot Hatch racer had headed the times from the word go.

It was session for the 2WD cars to shine as Adam Beachgood (Becket Electrical Ford Focus) was up in second with a lap of 1m18.180,

although he was unable to improve further and eventually lined up sixth.

It looked as if it would be Barry Squibb (Mitsubishi Evo 6 RS) and Russell Humphrey, (Interceptor Racing Mitsubishi Evo) who might dip under Wyatt's mark to battle it out for pole as they continually swapped second and third. They gradually lowered their times as Humphrey dropped below the 1m17s mark only for Murray to join the fray with a 1m16.955s.

Murray improved to 1m16.812s only for Wyatt to respond with a 1m16.149s. However on his last lap Murray knocked a whole second off his previous best to snatch pole.

Squibb had to concede third to Humphrey with Bill Brockbank (Badger 5 Seat Ibiza Cupra). just behind them both.

The performance of the session came from Class C runner Carleton Williams who mixed it with the big boys, planting the ex-Charles Atherton Carbits UK/AEX Motorsport Vauxhall Corsa GSi eighth after flying round the 1.85 miles in 1m18.541s – 1.5s and seven places ahead of his nearest rival Hutchings (Turnpike Racing MG ZR).

After a recent run of dominant qualifying performances Will di Claudio (Turnpike Racing Peugeot 106 XSi) had to give second best to Russell

Poynter-Brown (Interceptor Racing Vauxhall Corsa) in Class D. It was no surprise really, because after double engine trouble at the last meeting di Claudio's car was running with a standard engine.

RACE

With all of his major Class A rivals falling by the wayside Russell Humphrey extended his class championship advantage after taking outright victory by almost a quarter of a minute.

Humphrey took the lead as the lights went out after front row starter Wyatt's transmission failed, leaving him to limp onto the grass before Folly. It was Murray though who took the lead at Quarry after things got a little physical, Humphrey's car showing the scars of contact. Squibb settled into third position, the top three 4WD cars pulling away from Brockbank and Angus Dawe (Red Mist Sportscars BMW M3), who was up from the outside of row five.

Humphrey threw his Evo up the inside of the Audi at Camp at the end of lap two to take the lead, but that was the beginning of the end for Murray, who cruised around lap three and drove back into the paddock. Already on the retirement list by that point were frontrunners Wyatt, Beachgood (at Bobbies), Williams (at Quarry) and Tony Dolley (Peugeot 206 GTi).



A bulging assembly area – a sign of a healthy championship. (Image: Ollie Read)

The race therefore looked set for an all Evo battle up front, but on lap four Squibb suddenly slowed allowing Humphrey to assume the lead from a hard-charging Brockbank. Squibb's reliability woes, which have seen him fail to finish five of the seven races this season, struck again.

Humphrey never looked back and comfortably extended his advantage at a rate of more than a second a lap. Brockbank came home second, winning Class B and equally unchallenged.

The real fight was the battle for third position. Dawe and Terry Thorne (Ford Focus RS) were the main protagonists, with Thorne having the advantage of starting one place ahead of Dawe on the grid but he bogged down off the grid and his race only really got started after he passed the struggling Murray into Camp on lap three.

From then on the pair ran nose to tail until on lap six Thorne found a way through as they approached backmarkers. Dawe however resisted Thorne's attempts to establish daylight between them but he just could not find a way through, finishing 0.7s in arrears. The second BMW M3, the Ultimate Cars of Cirencester-backed car of Ian Craig, was beginning to threaten but finished fifth when the chequered flags flew after ten laps, the race having been shortened due to earlier delays.

Kevin Bird made it two Seats in the top six, the Leon Cupra R enjoying another impressive finish.

Having narrowly missed out to Williams in round three John Avery (Titcombes Garages/Savesometax Limited Honda Integra Type R) took his first Class C win after driving through from 19th on the grid. Hutchings assumed the class lead when Williams retired, but having been trying to sort engine woes most of the day the championship leader wasn't going to keep his advantage. Hutchings' MGZR started smoking after just four laps, and did so periodically for the end of the race, his lap times increasing sharply. This helped to elevate Avery into lead that he held onto, to win by 16s from Paul Gardner (Citroen Saxo)

Hutchings managed to limp round the remaining laps, but crucially he last three places to fellow Class C competitors, leaving him to finish fifth in class with just two points out of a possible seven from the day.

All of this was good news for Hutchings' team-mate di Claudio who went level on points with the 1800cc class driver after taking another dominant victory in Class D. Both drivers are three adrift of Poynter-Brown, however, who leads the championship overall despite having had a spin that dropped him well down the order and with WdC with a clear run.

EVENT DATA

Results – round seven: 1 Russell Humphrey (Mitsubishi Evo) 10 laps in 13m03.732s (84.978mph); 2 Bill Brockbank (Seat Ibiza) +14.742s; 3 Terry Thorne (Ford Focus); 4 Angus Dawe (BMW M3); 5 Ian Craig (BMW M3); 6 Kevin Bird (Seat Leon). Class A: 1 Humphrey; 2 Rob Ballard (Mitsubishi Evo); no other finishers. Class B: 1 Brockbank; 2 Thorne; 3 Dawe. Class C: 1 John Avery (Honda Integra Type R); 2 Paul Gardner (Citroen Saxo); 3 Anne King (MG ZR). Class D: 1 Will di Claudio (Peugeot 106); 2 Russell Poynter-Brown (Vauxhall Corsa); 3 Peter Weston (MG ZR). Pole position: Keith Murray (Audi A4 Quattro) 1m15.813s (87.848mph). Fastest lap: Humphrey 1m16.788s (86.732mph). Starters: 38.

Overall points after seven rounds: 1 Poynter-Brown 41; 2= Tony Hutchings and di Claudio 38; 4= Humphrey; Mark Wyatt; Avery 27; etc. Class A: 1 Humphrey 27; 2 Murray 18; 3 Mark Harrison 12; etc. Class B: 1 Wyatt 27; 2 Brockbank 25; 3= Craig and Tony Dolley 20; etc. Class C: 1 Hutchings 38; 2 Avery 27; 3= Alex Ferguson and Carleton Williams 23; etc. Class D: 1 Poynter-Brown 41; 2 di Claudio 38; 3 Weston 25; etc.

Next round: September 15.

"I didn't think we were going to make this weekend because the engine blew at the last meeting. We were up until Sunday night still working on it," explained a mightily relieved di Claudio.

CHAMPIONSHIP

This championship is really finely poised. Sadly, the cars in the top two classes have proved either too unreliable – or not plentiful enough – to allow those drivers a crack at the championship. Humphrey and Wyatt still have some hopes, but purely mathematical ones.

Turnpike Racing awning-sharers Hutchings and di Claudio have both had four class wins and have set four fastest laps, and they are level on points with two rounds to go. Poynter-Brown has only won Class D three times, but has never been lower than second and so would appear to be a strong bet to regain the title. On the other hand, he is due some misfortune...



Elsewhere, CCRC competitions boss Steve Burns was in Intermarque action. (Image: Ollie Read)