



Prebble back to winning ways

(Image: David Webster)

National
MOBILE
WINDSCREENS

**Castle Combe Saloon Car
Championship**

Round 8, September 15 2007

Ian Sowman reports

Gary Prebble took the wheel of a Class A car for the first time and promptly took a stunning victory from newcomer Simon Norris in round eight. Meanwhile, class results did little to clarify the destination of the championship title, which could still go one of three ways when the final round takes place on the first weekend in October, although Russell Poynter-Brown is in the box seat.

QUALIFYING

The cool, cloudless and still conditions were perfect for setting truly exceptional lap times. Bearing in mind his own lap record stood at 1m16.005s, it was remarkable that Barry Squibb's second flying lap in his Mitsubishi Evo was virtually 1.5s

faster.

But even that was not enough. Moments later Prebble, driving the ex-Rob Ballard Mitsubishi Evo, recorded a time of 1m14.013s – some two seconds inside the lap record – and a time that would not be bettered throughout the session, even though Prebble was back in the pits with five minutes to go.

Other drivers joined the lap record-breaking party. Russell Humphrey (Interceptor Racing Mitsubishi Evo) went third quickest, and in his first ever qualifying session (having completed his ARDS test only a few days before) Simon Norris – of Norris Designs, who provide engines for several of the Evos on the grid – was fourth.

Mark Wyatt (Mark Richard Insurance Vauxhall Astra) was under the 2WD and outright records as he claimed fifth overall, the best part of a second quicker than Bill Brockbank (Badger 5 Seat Ibiza). Both of these pushed Tim Hanlon down the order (Hanlon Racing Seat Ibiza), who was the early Class B pace-setter.

Interestingly, the pace was not as hot in the smaller classes. In the 1800cc class the lap record belongs to Hanlon on a 1m16.9s but the quickest driver on this occasion was Tony Hutchings (Team Turnpike MG ZR), some 2.5s adrift of that mark. Paul Gardner (Citroen Saxo) and John Avery (Titcombes Garages/Savesometax Honda Integra Type R) were his nearest challengers, but Hutchings was at least in pole position to score maximum points and prolong the championship battle.

Russell Poynter-Brown (Interceptor Racing Vauxhall Corsa) went into the meeting with the points lead, but he was slightly hamstrung by a lower than normal entry in Class D, which would mean he couldn't score maximum points. Nevertheless he took pole position on a 1m22.5s (Charles Atherton's lap record being a 1m20.1s), seeing off fellow contender Will di Claudio (Turnpike Racing Peugeot 106).

RACE

The start was a splendid sight, as each of the first four Evos made great getaways and charged down to Folly



Hutchings took an important class win. (Image: David Webster)

With Squibb grabbing the lead and Prebble (perhaps showing his inexperience in these cars) dropping to third over the line. However, he retrieved second position from Humphrey on the way into the Esses, and he mounted an attack on Squibb's lead into Tower only for the rallycross legend to firmly close the door.

Squibb's recurring reliability issues set in on the second lap, with Prebble going to the outside of him at Old Paddock and taking some of the grass to get through and Humphrey following him. Shortly afterwards, Squibb joined the retirements list for the sixth time in eight races.

Ex-Rover 220 racer Prebble and Humphrey weren't about to have this race their own way, as rookie Norris went away with them at the head of the field. Indeed, Norris narrowed the gap to Humphrey and by the eighth lap he had forced his way into second place.

He then proceeded to eat into Prebble's advantage, slashing it from nearly 2s to 0.3s within two laps. He clung onto Prebble's tail as best he could, although the intervention of slower cars opened the gap again on the penultimate lap. On the final lap he put the pressure back on Prebble who proceeded to run briefly off the circuit at Camp (and look like he might lose it completely) and allow Norris to within a sixth of a second at the flag.

"It's been a long time, and we've had

lots of reliability problems with the Rover," said Prebble. "Unfortunately Rob Ballard is suffering from kidney problems and I persuaded him to sell the car to me, so this win is dedicated to him."

In fifth overall, newcomer Laurence Kilby (AJEC Racing Mitsubishi Evo) completed the Class A finishers, Keith Murray's Audi A4 having been trailered after qualifying.



Hanlon triumphed in Class B. (Image: David Webster)

With Wyatt sinking on the opening lap, Hanlon – who arrived on the grid in the nick of time after mending his gearbox - took over the lead of the 2WD cars, initially holding it from Brockbank and Wyatt in fairly close formation. Just before half distance Hanlon put the Kilby Evo between himself and his rivals, with Wyatt getting ahead of the well handling Brockbank Ibiza at around the same point. Sadly, Brockbank would retire, elevating a slightly lonely Tony Dolley (Peugeot 206) to third in class.

The battle for the championship went on outside the top ten, with Hutchings doing an efficient job of wrapping up the Class C win. The twin 205s of

EVENT DATA

Results – round eight: 1 Gary Prebble (Mitsubishi Evo) 12 laps in 15m20.860s (86.783mph); 2 Simon Norris (Mitsubishi Evo) +0.168s; 3 Russell Humphrey (Mitsubishi Evo); 4 Tim Hanlon (Seat Ibiza); 5 Laurence Kilby (Mitsubishi Evo); 6 Mark Wyatt (Vauxhall Astra). Class A: 1 Prebble; 2 Norris; 3 Humphrey. Class B: 1 Hanlon; 2 Wyatt; 3 Tony Dolley (Peugeot 206). Class C: 1 Tony Hutchings (MG ZR); 2 Simon Spearing (Peugeot 205); 3 David Mears (Peugeot 205). Class D: 1 Russell Poynter-Brown (Vauxhall Corsa); 2 Will di Claudio (Peugeot 106); 3 Peter Weston (MG ZR). Pole position: Prebble 1m14.013s (89.984mph). Fastest lap: Prebble 1m15.380s (88.352mph) record. Starters: 35.

Overall points after eight rounds: 1 Poynter-Brown 47; 2 Hutchings 45; 3 di Claudio 42; 4 Wyatt 33; 5 Humphrey 30; 6 John Avery 29; etc. Class A: 1 Humphrey 30 (champion); 2 Keith Murray 18; 3 Mark Harrison 12; etc. Class B: 1 Wyatt 33 (champion); 2 Bill Brockbank 25; 3 Dolley 24; etc. Class C: 1 Hutchings 45 (champion); 2 Avery 29; 3 Spearing 26; etc. Class D: 1 Poynter-Brown 47; 2 di Claudio 42; 3 Weston 28; etc.

Next round: Saturday October 6.

Simon Spearing and the Hodges Electrical-backed David Mears came good in the race to complete the podium, although they ended the race on different laps after running fairly tightly.



Poynter-Brown battled with Ventos. (Image: David Webster)

Likewise, Poynter-Brown was largely unchallenged in Class D so he had to find entertainment dicing with cars from further up the capacity classes. Di Claudio was unable to recapture his form of earlier in the season but nevertheless took second, a couple of seconds behind the winner. It was just enough to keep his feint hopes of the title alive.

With just one round remaining, the overall title remains open although all but one of the classes have been resolved (in favour of Humphrey, Wyatt and Hutchings respectively).

Poynter-Brown's advantage over Hutchings is now two points, with di Claudio a further three back. Although Poynter-Brown is the likely champion, he could do with a six car class entry at the finale to give him the opportunity to pick up seven points and make sure of it.