



Runner-up Hutchings retains title

(Image: David Webster)

**National
mobile
WINDSCREENS**

**Castle Combe Saloon Car
Championship**

Round 9, October 6 2007

Ian Sowman reports

Tony Hutchings is the 2007 National Mobile Windscreens Castle Combe Saloon Car champion, taking the title on a tie break after finishing level on points with Russell-Poynter Brown. That was the most important fact to emerge from the finale, but the lasting image of the event will be of Simon Norris's Mitsubishi Evo cartwheeling into the pit wall debris fencing in another huge accident. Almost incidentally, Barry Squibb won the red flagged race.

QUALIFYING

Persistent problems with the timekeeping equipment meant that the qualifying session was impossible to follow, with the screens freezing and many cars not featuring on the list

at all. So getting the timesheets was something of an adventure.

When they were released they showed Squibb on pole position in his Mitsubishi Evo with a blistering lap of 1m14.189s, less than two-tenths of a second ahead of Norris. Both drivers set their best time on their first flying lap.

Gary Prebble and Russell Humphrey put their Evos on row two, the fifth such car – that of Laurence Kilby that was also competing in the Special GTs – missed the session and would start the race from the back.

Mark Wyatt was fifth overall and the best of the Class B cars in his Vauxhall Astra, 1.5s quicker than Ian Craig's BMW M3.

As far as the championship protagonists were concerned, both Hutchings and Poynter-Brown did as much as could be expected of them. Hutchings (MG ZR) was an excellent tenth overall, three places on the grid ahead of nearest Class C rival Paul Gardner (Citroen Saxo). Similarly in Class D Poynter-Brown (Vauxhall Corsa) was three positions in front of

Will di Claudio (Peugeot 106), with a position on the inside of row nine. Poynter-Brown's handicap, though, was that only four other cars entered in his Class, meaning he could only score a maximum of six points to the seven that Hutchings could net.

RACE

Squibb led the field away with Prebble moving up into second position on the way towards Quarry for the first time. Norris was third ahead of Humphrey, with the top four 4WD cars predictably zooming ahead of the rest of the pack.

Less predictable was the order of that pack: Terry Thorne was first through in his Focus (from 11th on the grid) – and then came Hutchings, the top Class C car in an incredible sixth overall. Wyatt was next, then the Honda Civic of Tim Maddocks. Poynter-Brown was only just ahead of di Claudio further down the field.

Up front, Humphrey got ahead of Norris at Tower corner and then he passed Prebble at Camp. When Squibb opened up a gap, Humphrey closed it down again as the top four circulated in close formation.



Squibb led Prebble from the off, and went on to win his second race of the year. (Image: David Webster)

It was thrilling to watch, but it was a little rough around the edges, too. The Evos were thrown into the corners and sometimes that entailed taking to the grass. On lap six Norris attempted to go through on the inside of Prebble for third at the Esses and door to door contact resulted. Prebble took to the grass as Norris rounded the corner proper.

Two laps later, Norris went to the outside at the same corner and ended up straightlining the chicane when he realised the move wasn't on. In doing so, he picked up third position and defied convention by not giving the place back to Prebble in the subsequent moments.

Norris was still in third position as the end of lap nine approached. All four leading cars were well stuck into the lappery by this point, and Christina Lewis's Peugeot 106 was keeping well out of the way on the outside of the circuit at Camp corner. At the apex, Norris's line meant that he crossed the grass, the path his car took putting him on a collision course with the wing of the 106.

After the contact, the Evo dug into the ground and was then launched into a violent, airborne roll at a speed reported to be in excess of 80mph. The car gained enough height to take out the starting lights and to clatter straight into the pit wall debris fencing, installed less than 12 months ago. Although mangled by the impact, the fence showed pleasing strength and the Mitsubishi stayed on the circuit side of

the pit wall. The race, of course, was immediately halted and with more than half of the distance completed (and a big clear up operation in prospect, which was as it turned carried out with commendable speed) the results declared.

Squibb had still been running at the end of eight laps, which by the standards of his season, which has been ridden by unreliability, this was a result in itself. This was only his third finish, and his second victory. Humphrey was second and Prebble third, with Norris (and Lewis) excluded from the results as they were not running at the time of the red flag.

In Class B, Thorne had kept the lead until the third lap when Wyatt's Astra got alongside the Focus on the outside line through Old Paddock and was sufficiently in front to pick his line into Tower. He pulled away from the rest but was 20 seconds behind the leading pack when the results were declared.



Wyatt won again in Class B (Image: David Webster)

Gradually, Ian Craig's BMW M3 closed in on Thorne and on lap seven both he and Tony Dolley (Peugeot 206) appeared ahead of a now smoky Focus.

EVENT DATA

Result – round nine: 1 Barry Squibb (Mitsubishi Evo) 8 laps in 10m11.376s (87.14mph); 2 Russell Humphrey (Mitsubishi Evo) +0.423s; 3 Gary Prebble (Mitsubishi Evo); 4 Mark Wyatt (Vauxhall Astra); 5 Ian Craig (BMW M3); 6 Tony Dolley (Peugeot 206). Class A: 1 Squibb; 2 Humphrey; 3 Prebble. Class B: 1 Wyatt; 2 Craig; 3 Dolley. Class C: 1 Paul Gardner (Citroen Saxo); 2 Tony Hutchings (MG ZR); 3 David Mears (Peugeot 205). Class D: 1 Will di Claudio (Peugeot 106); 2 Russell Poynter-Brown (Vauxhall Corsa); 3 Steve Sutton (Peugeot 106). Pole position: Squibb 1m14.189s. Fastest lap: Humphrey 1m14.631s (89.23mph). Starters: 35.

Final championship standings: 1 Hutchings 51*; 2 Poynter-Brown 51; 3 di Claudio 48; 4 Wyatt 40; 5 Humphrey 35; 6 John Avery 32; etc. Class A: 1 Humphrey; 2 Keith Murray 18; 3 Squibb 14; etc. Class B: 1 Wyatt 40; 2 Dolley 28; 3= Bill Brockbank and Craig 25; etc. Class C: 1 Hutchings 51; 2 Avery 32; 3 Simon Spearing 26; etc. Class D: 1 Poynter-Brown 51; 2 di Claudio 48; 3 Peter Weston 30; etc. * - champion due to superior number of wins.

Maddocks made an early exit into a tyre wall, while Bill Brockbank – a class winner this season – started at the back in his Seat Ibiza after missing qualifying but could complete only one lap.

Of course, Hutchings sixth position overall couldn't last but it was his class position that was of more relevance. Ideally needing a win, he actually slipped a long way down the order and behind Gardner, having to settle for second. David Mears (Peugeot 205) was third.

Meanwhile, Poynter-Brown was at the front of Class D until the seventh lap when he too crucially lost a position, in his case to di Claudio who went around the outside at Quarry. Like Hutchings, Poynter-Brown fought back at the Esses but he wasn't able to retrieve the position.



Poynter-Brown couldn't maintain this lead. (Image: David Webster)

Crucially, the class fastest laps were set by Hutchings and di Claudio, so the two point advantage held by Poynter-Brown had vanished. With Hutchings having won five rounds to Poynter-Brown's four, however, he sealed the championship on the tie-break rule and he can look forward to a move to Class B in 2008.