

# Humphrey brings up the ton



(Image: David Webster)

**National  
MOBILE  
WINDSCREENS**

**Castle Combe Saloon Car  
Championship**

**Round 2, May 7 2007**

***Matt Beer reports***

The National Mobile Windscreens Castle Combe Saloon Car Championship celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> race with an epic three-way fight for victory in which long-time series supporter and 1998 champion Russell Humphrey prevailed over relative newcomers Keith Murray and Mark Harrison, while championship veteran Tony Dolley defied physics to plant his front wheel drive Peugeot amongst the 4wd supercars in wet qualifying.

## QUALIFYING

Squally showers and a fiercely gusting wind made Combe a less than pleasant place to be during qualifying – especially for the two-wheel drive runners.

Sure enough it was a four wheel drive car on pole, as Mark Harrison got the power down in his Owen Developments Mitsubishi and set the fastest time by a full 1.446s.

But incredibly the rest of the total traction contingent was upstaged by an astonishing performance from the man who won the series' very first championship round in 1996: Tony Dolley. The little orange Peugeot 206 GTI skittered around the track two-tenths faster than ex-rallycross ace Barry Squibb's Lancer to secure an outside front row spot as well as the class B pole.

Squibb shared row two with opening round winner Keith Murray (Audi A4 Quattro), while Russell Humphrey (Interceptor Racing Mitsubishi Lancer) would start fifth alongside second class B qualifier Tim Maddocks (Spoon Sports B.T.C. Kirby Honda Civic Type R).

Simon Spearing (Peugeot 205) beat reigning champion Tony Hutchings (Team Turnpike MG ZR) to class C pole in a strong seventh overall, while Olly Lewis (Thermal Degree Limited Peugeot 106 XSi) was a class apart amongst the up to 1400cc field – beating nearest rival Russell Poynter-Brown (Interceptor Racing Vauxhall Corsa) to division pole by 11 places on the overall grid and 4.3s.

## RACE

A problem with the lights meant a switch to a flag as the signal to start the race – a change that some responded to better than others. Polesitter Mark Harrison's reaction was rather too quick, for

although he led over Avon Rise, the officials swiftly awarded him a 10 second false start penalty.

As outside front starter Tony Dolley was mobbed by the four wheel drive cars off the line, Keith Murray, Russell Humphrey and Barry Squibb shot onto Harrison's tail, forming a breakaway quartet that swiftly left the rest of the field behind.

But they remained absolutely tied together during the opening laps, with Humphrey the main agitator as he strove to get around Murray. The ex-champion grabbed second into Tower on the second lap, only for Murray to respond on the exit of Camp and almost edge ahead approaching Quarry. Humphrey was able to fend him off, though, and immediately set his sights on Harrison.

Any hopes that Squibb had of getting amongst this group quickly faded as smoke began pouring from the Mitsubishi on lap three. He pushed on for another lap before admitting defeat and pulling off on Dean Straight, continuing the mechanically-troubled start to his circuit racing programme.

By this time the officials had brandished the penalty board in Harrison's direction, but he had no intention of meekly acquiescing to his on-track combatants and continued to resist Humphrey's every effort.



Wyatt pulled away from Dolley, a struggler in the dry. (Image: David Webster)

Murray remained very much in contention too, until a wild off at Avon Rise as they dived through traffic on lap six. Despite the Audi swiping the barriers and getting alarmingly airborne, Murray was able to regain control and continue virtually intact, just a few seconds behind the leaders!

This incident, Squibb's exit and Harrison's penalty all but assured Humphrey of victory – and he made the result an absolute certainty by slipping past Harrison as they encountered backmarkers on lap seven. The polesitter did not give up without a fight; retaliating at the Esses only to take a trip across the grass, yet charging back onto Humphrey's tail within half a lap and taking a peek up the outside of the Interceptor car over Avon. But the race belonged to Humphrey, who gradually stretched away to win by 5.2s on the road, with Harrison classified third behind Murray's indestructible Audi thanks to his penalty.

Fourth overall and class B victory went to another series stalwart, as Mark Wyatt (Mark Richard Insurance Vauxhall Astra) surged from 11<sup>th</sup> to sixth on lap one and then snuck past Dolley a lap later. Dolley was eventually eased down to third in class and sixth overall after the charging Ian Craig (Ultimate Cars of Cirencester BMW M3) hunted him down. Craig was one of the stars of the race – making stunning progress from 18<sup>th</sup> on the grid.

With Terry Thorne (Ford Focus RS) and Simon Maddocks retiring, the huge battle between Alex Ferguson, Tony Hutchings, Angus Dawe (Red Mist Sportscars BMW M3), Nick Mizen (Rover 220) and David Kift (DK Cars & Bikes Peugeot 205 GTi) became a contest for seventh overall, with Ferguson winning both the dice and class C. Bill Brockback (Badger 5 SEAT Ibiza) was also briefly involved in the group as he flew through from

20<sup>th</sup> before hitting mechanical problems again.

Not to be outdone, the smallest class saw an equally outstanding lead fight, as Russell Poynter-Brown and William di Claudio (Turnpike Peugeot 106 XSi) quickly overcame Olly Lewis and went head to head for class victory, with Poynter-Brown's lap seven move eventually securing the honours.



The scrap between Ferguson and Hutchings was a highlight. (Image: David Webster)

## Combe Saloon 100

The youngest of Combe's three ultra-successful local championships took pride of place on the May Day Holiday programme as the Saloons celebrated their 100th race start with a grid walkabout during the lunch break.

As ever, the championship produced a superb entry for the milestone event, with 30 cars taking the start. Twelve years ago the inaugural series attracted 44 registered competitors, and interest has barely dipped in the intervening decade-and-a-bit.

It was particularly appropriate that two men who have played a big part in Combe Saloons' history starred on Monday, with 1998 champion and recent returnee Russell Humphrey taking a hard-fought victory, and Tony Dolley putting his class B car on the front row in wet qualifying. The Bridgwater man was the winner of the first ever points-scoring round back in 1996.

One favourite face from the championship's past was present only as a spectator, but he was still a very popular visitor. Keith Macaskill took the unofficial title in 1995 (the

inaugural series having non-championship status) – a just reward for his astounding 600-mile commute from his home in Aberdeen. He was injured in a crash the following August, but returned to action in the early 2000s and dropped by to honour the series on its anniversary.

Such loyalty, combined with the size of the grids, the quality of the racing and the enthusiasm of the local fans for the Saloon action, should mean that the series one day matches its FF1600 cousin and celebrates its 500th race...

## EVENT DATA

Result – 12 laps: 1 Russell Humphrey (Mitsubishi Evo) 15m46.574s (84.431mph); 2 Keith Murray (Audi A4 Quattro) +6.605s; 3 Mark Harrison (Mitsubishi Evo); 4 Mark Wyatt (Vauxhall Astra); 4 Ian Craig (BMW M3); 6 Tony Dolley (Peugeot 206GTI). Class A: 1 Humphrey; 2 Murray; 3 Harrison. Class B: 1 Wyatt; 2 Craig; 3 Dolley. Class C: 1 Alex Ferguson (Peugeot 205GTI); 2 Tony Hutchings (MG ZR); 3 John Avery (Honda Integra Type R). Class D: 1 Russell Poynter-Brown (Vauxhall Corsa); 2 William di Claudio (Peugeot 106XSi); 3 Olly Lewis (Peugeot 106XSi). Pole position: Harrison 1m31.550s (72.747mph). Fastest lap: Humphrey 1m17.211s (86.257mph). Starters: 35.

Standings after round two – Class A: 1 Murray 8; 2 Humphrey 6; 3 Harrison 5; etc. Class B: 1 Dolley 11; 2 Craig 10; 3 Wyatt 7; etc. Class C: 1 Hutchings 13; 2 Ferguson 10; 3= Carleton Williams & Avery 7; etc. Class D: 1 Poynter-Brown 13; 2 William di Claudio 11; 3 Peter Weston 7; etc.

Next round: May 28.