



(Image: David Webster)

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**Castle Combe Special GT Championship**

**Round 6, August 4 2007**

**Ian Sowman reports**

Howard Spooner produced blitzed the field in the most dominant, scintillating drive of the season to win round six of the championship, but it isn't the Class A drivers that are championship contenders. Instead, it is the saloon and sports classes that yield the likely contenders, and with a fourth class win in six races it is Duncan Cameron that now heads the way by four clear points.

#### QUALIFYING

It didn't take long for Spooner to hit his stride, the three-litre Mark Bailey Racing Jade Trackstar-Nissan powering into provisional pole in the early minutes of a session shortened to 12 minutes by earlier delays. He eventually worked down to a time of 1m03.637s about two-thirds of the way through – impressive in that it was almost 3s faster than anyone else, but still a further 3s

away from Tony Sinclair's almost impossibly fast lap record.

The car in second place for much of the session was an unfamiliar one, with former British GT racer Ben McLoughlin at the wheel of the Suzuki turbo-powered Halsbury 07. Sadly, that car didn't make it out for the race, and in any case had been usurped by the Radical Prosport of Louis Davidson, the only driver to have been an outright winner on more than one occasion this year.



*The Halsbury 07 qualified well, but had problems that meant McLoughlin wouldn't get to race it.*

Guy Woodward (Motorvations Ltd Jade Trackstar-Chrysler) set the third fastest, ahead of the first of McLoughlin and a bevy of Radicals. Altay John Ali (West Coast RR Radical SR3) was the first of

these, with round five winner Rob Clarke (MTC Racing Radical Clubsport) next up. The Prosports of Simon Tilling, Tony Freeman and Norman Lackford were next.

In the saloon and sports classes, Tony Michael (Westfield SE) was quickest, just ahead (0.014s!) of Mark Funnell's Lotus Exige. Chaz Ryles, down in 22<sup>nd</sup>, was the only other class C competitor in his Fisher Fury – thereby limiting the number of points that the class winner could score.

Cameron (JHJ Racing Ferrari 360 Challenge) was a superb 12<sup>th</sup> overall in the top production class car, with reigning champion Keith Sprules in his similar (but yellow, rather than red) car his closest challenger.

#### RACE

Spooner didn't manage to go any faster in the race than he had in qualifying, but when viewed from the pit wall the noise and pace of the car was incredible. The experienced FPA and FIA GT racer made comfortably the best start of the race, charged around the circuit and ended the first lap more than five seconds ahead of anyone else.

His pace was relentless, effectively



*Cameron's Class D victory put him back into the championship lead on his own. (Image: David Webster)*

slowed only by the traffic (which he hit as early as lap five) as he reeled out an eventual winning margin of almost 47 seconds.

With the Halsbury withdrawn, Woodward represented Spooner's only class opposition. Although a vast distance adrift at the beginning of the race, Woodward was at least in second position after slicing inside Louis Davidson at Camp at the end of the first circuit. This promising start wasn't to last, though. Coming through Camp to complete lap three Davidson got back ahead – then Freeman, Tilling and Clarke. Woodward slowed dramatically, retiring part-way round the next lap. There was, therefore, just the one finisher in the showpiece class.

Radicals dominated the following positions, and while they might not be everybody's cup of tea they are only as ubiquitous as they are because they are quick and reasonably reliable. On this occasion, it was Davidson that was best of them. He put daylight between himself and the next three cars and was delighted just to bring the car home after misfortune in earlier rounds that has caused him to fail to score and win in alternate races.

Clarke followed up his July win with an August podium (doubtless a big relief

after major gearbox headaches since the last round), and again he showed good pace late in the race. He'd dropped to sixth on the opening lap – even behind Funnell's Exige – but soon joined in a fine scrap with Tilling (Tilling Motorsport) and Freeman (Pitbull Racing).



*Davidson, Freeman and Tilling – Clarke is playing catch up at this point. (Image: David Webster)*

Tilling was picked off on lap seven at the Esses, when Clarke made the right decision to move to the outside to avoid traffic, and then three laps later Freeman at Tower corner. Despite fighting with ever less effective tyres, Clarke continued to close the gap to Davidson, reducing the deficit to 3.5s by the end.

The traffic worked both for and against Tilling. Having lost out to Clarke at the Esses, on the penultimate lap he went through at Camp to take fourth position

EVENT DATA
Round 6 – 15 laps: 1 Howard Spooner (Jade Trackstar) 16m25.680s (101.351mph); 2 Louis Davidson (Radical Prosport) +46.844s; 3 Rob Clarke (Radical Clubsport); 4 Simon Tilling (Radical Prosport); 5 Tony Freeman (Radical Prosport); 6 Altay John Ali (Radical SR3). Class A: 1 Spooner; no other finishers. Class B: 1 Davidson; 2 Clarke; 3 Tilling. Class C: 1 Mark Funnell (Lotus Exige); Tony Michael (Westfield SE); no other finishers. Class D: 1 Duncan Cameron (Ferrari 360 Challenge); 2 Keith Sprules (Ferrari 360 Challenge); 3 John Dhillon (Ferrari F430). Pole position: Spooner 1m03.673s (104.597mph). Fastest lap: Spooner: 1m03.994s (104.072mph). Starters: 27.
Overall standings after round six: 1 Cameron 34; 2 Michael 30; 3 Shane Marshall 28; 4 Clarke 25; 5 Tilling 23; 6 Sprules 22; etc. Class A: 1 Guy Woodward 21; 2 Spooner 11; 3 Marcus Pye 6; etc. Class B: 1 Marshall 28; 2 Clarke 25; 3 Tilling 23; etc. Class C: 1 Michael 30; 2 Funnell 16; 3= Derek Parker and Nick Williamson 5; etc. Class D: 1 Cameron 34; 2 Sprules 22; 3 Dhillon 20; etc.
Next round: August 27.

when Freeman was waylaid by the slower Toyota MR2 of George Michael. Behind Freeman, Ali completed the top six.

The blistering start that put Funnell up to fifth position briefly also assured him of the class victory in his road car, with Tony Michael distracted (unnecessarily) by Lackford's Radical Prosport. With another potential point dropped, Michael falls further behind Cameron in the race for the championship.

It was Cameron that completed the top ten, albeit some 24s behind Michael although he was some 13s clear of Sprules, who had been a threat only in the early stages. The class win puts Cameron onto 34 points, with a clear cushion over Michael and Shane Marshall, who may well have effectively conceded the title by missing the race meeting.

There were fine dices further down the order, with the Ferraris very much in the thick of them. Jon Dhillon – who won the opening round back in April – took 12<sup>th</sup> in the Ferrari F430 that had been acquired for the Britcar race at the last meeting, but his was a relatively quiet run unlike those of 360 drivers Nima Khandan-Nia, Marc Haynes and Tommy Carrera.

## GT round-up

\* The Zetec-engine Kellforms Retoga was due to make its Castle Combe GT debut in the hands of Kevin Goater, but two troubled qualifying laps was all the prototype-styled Kit Car could manage.

\* The Ferrari contingent expanded to half a dozen in Class D, with the latest recruit being Marc Haynes, a director of Haynes Motor Museum. Marc, who has plenty of Porsche Classic experience under his belt, is Britain's first paraplegic racing driver and therefore has modifications to the car such that it is hand controlled.