

Funnell wins birthday bash



(Image: Ollie Read)

savesometax.co.uk

Save some: Income Tax • Capital Gains Tax • Inheritance tax

Castle Combe Special GT Championship

Round 7, August 27 2007

Ian Sowman reports

Duncan Cameron produced a remarkable drive from the back of the class to the front to clinch the Class D title as the Special GT Championship celebrated its 25th anniversary with split races. Cameron is also in prime position to secure the overall championship too, with closest rival Tony Michael unable to overcome Mark Funnell in the Sports and Saloon race. Howard Spooner blitzed the Sports Racing field for the second time during the month of August.

QUALIFYING

Although the entry level justified two races, there was enough capacity for all of the cars to qualify together. There was one notable absentee, and that was Cameron. He was flying in from the South of France for the event but didn't make it in time for the early morning session, and so he would start from the back of the grid.

Guy Woodward (Andrews and Partners Jade Trackstar) briefly appeared atop the

timing screens, but he was soon relegated by Spooner (Mark Bailey Racing Jade Trackstar), the only other representative of the dwindling Class A. Although conditions were excellent, Spooner could not reduce his time significantly after his first run, eventually setting a 1m04.5s.

Louis Davidson (Radical Prosport) was struggling in the midfield until the closing minutes of the session, but successive laps vaulted him up to fourth and then second, 1.3s adrift of pole. Shane Marshall (Mallock P21) also left it late to set his best time, and he bundled Woodward back to fourth position.

Edward Lovett debuted his Honda-powered Lovett Sporting Norma M20 GTO with fifth, to share row three with the MTC Racing Radical Clubsport of Rob Clarke.

Early in the session, the leading Sports and Saloon (Classes C and D) drivers were flirting with the top six overall with Michael (Bristol Motor Company Westfield SE) on top. Both he and Funnell (Lotus Exige) were shuffled back, however, with Nigel Mustill storming through to claim pole for the second race in the Ross and Bonnyman Opel Omega V8 Star.

The busiest driver in the session was Chaz Ryles, who opted to take advantage of the race format by competing in both his Class B DJ Racecars Firecat and his Class C Fisher Fury, both bike-engined. Having done three laps in the Firecat he pitted to

hop into the other car, setting a lap time less than 1s slower in the Fury!

Also out on track was the lovingly restored Ford Cologne Capri of West Country legend Vince Woodman – but sadly the car proved too noisy and slow to race, although it did head the lunchtime grid walkabout.

CLASSES A AND B – RACE

The pattern of the opening race was sadly predictable, although there could have been an upset at the start. Neither Spooner nor Davidson got away from the front row, and while Marshall was quick to react when the lights went out he couldn't find a path ahead of Spooner's Jade. Woodward, however, did make an early move and jumped up to second place behind Spooner, who led into Quarry and by more than 3s at the end of lap one.

Unfortunately, Robert Nash's Lola 594 was a pit visitor at the end of the warm up lap although he did manage to complete ten (not very rapid) laps after starting late. That was ten more than James Johnson's ADR Sports 2, which didn't even make it across the startline after failing on the grid.

Out front, Spooner was predictably charging away with Woodward's Chrysler-engined car not able to live with the Nissan-powered race leader. Indeed, Woodward came under threat from



Spooner rushes away from Woodward and the chasing pack. (Image: Ollie Read)

Davidson, who after a poor start was on terms with the white car by the end of lap three. Davidson wouldn't get through, however, because making a strong recovery after being balked at the start was Marshall. Ex-MINI racer Lovett was ahead of him by the close of lap one, but Marshall – who dented his title hopes by missing the previous round due to a holiday – took fourth back on the haul up to Quarry at the beginning of lap four. Soon afterwards, Davidson appeared to obligingly make an error, and Marshall was up to third.

When Woodward spun a reasonably solid second place away at Bobbies with four laps to go, Marshall moved up another position to take second overall, although it didn't affect his crucial class victory. Having shaken off Lovett, Davidson made a good first of challenging for that place though, almost taking to the grass in a fruitless final lap bid.

Lovett took a comfortable fourth position, making it an impressive four different types of chassis (and engine) in the first four places. Fifth went the way of Simon Tilling (Tilling Motorsport Radical Prosport), who had shaken off regular opponent Clarke by lap six. Woodward split the two at the end, with the Radical SR3s of Altay John Ali and Martin Schlaeppli and Jeremy Irwin's Rawlson – this weekend driven by Caterham CSR Masters race winner Oliver Bull – completing the top ten.

CLASSES C AND D – RACE

At the front, this race was everything that the Sports Racing encounter was not – close, exciting, and highly relevant to the championship battle.

Mustill made a slow start to the race, but

nevertheless took the lead into Quarry corner for the first time. That was the scene for a couple of cars to spin, including Ryles and Jon Dhillon (JHJ Racing Ferrari 360 Challenge). A few hundred yards further on, Funnell tried to nip inside early leader Michael at the Esses, although it was the Westfield that emerged ahead of the Lotus at the end of lap one. Cameron (JHJ Racing Ferrari 360 Challenge), meanwhile, was up to seventh from 17th.

The Opel Omega clone edged away on the next lap, but on lap three sauntered back to the pit lane, never to return. At around the same time, Funnell made the move that would shortly put him into the lead of the race – but Michael stayed close and certainly did not give up the challenge. He set his personal best lap of the race on lap five (matching Funnell's quickest to 0.001s!) as he closed in, but was never quite close enough to challenge.

By lap ten, the leaders found traffic. Funnell was able to really capitalise in this sector of the race – maybe his bright yellow car was easy for the tailenders to spot than Michael's more discrete machine – and he stretched his advantage to more than 3s by the end of lap 12. That left just three tours for Michael to close in – and crucially grab another point towards the championship if he could get past Funnell.

He took a second out of the lead on lap 13, but could only close in by another four tenths on the penultimate lap. His chances looked shot, but undeterred he recorded his fastest lap of the race (albeit 0.3s slower than Mustill's second lap mark) on the very last tour to close to within 0.4s of Funnell at the end.

"I don't know what happened to Tony – he has a quicker car than me," wondered

EVENT DATA
Results – round seven – Classes A and B: 1 Howard Spooner (Jade Trackstar) 15 laps in 16m13.206s (102.650mph); 2 Shane Marshall (Mallock P21) +22.273s; 3 Louis Davidson (Radical Prosport); 4 Edward Lovett (Norma M20); 5 Simon Tilling (Radical Prosport); 6 Guy Woodward (Jade Trackstar). Class A: 1 Spooner; 2 Woodward; no other starters. Class B: 1 Marshall; 2 Davidson; 3 Lovett. Pole position: Spooner 1m04.510s (103.240mph). Fastest lap: Spooner 1m03.436s (104.988mph). Starters: 17. Classes C and D: 1 Mark Funnell (Lotus Exige) 15 laps in 17m41.333s (94.127mph); 2 Tony Michael (Westfield SE) +0.400s; 3 Duncan Cameron (Ferrari 360 Challenge); 4 Nima Khandan-Nia (Ferrari 360 Challenge); 5 John Dhillon (Ferrari 360 Challenge); 6 Charlie White (Ferrari F355 Challenge). Class C: 1 Funnell; 2 Michael; no other finishers. Class D: 1 Cameron; 2 Khandan-Nia; 3 Dhillon. Pole position: Nigel Mustill (Opel Omega V8 Star) 1m09.064s (96.432mph). Fastest lap: Mustill 1m09.105s (96.375mph). Starters: 17.
Overall points after seven rounds: 1 Cameron 41; 2 Michael 35; 3 Marshall 34; 4 Rob Clarke 27; 5 Tilling 26; 6 Davidson 25; etc. Class A: 1 Woodward 21; 2 Spooner 16; 3 Marcus Pye 6; etc. Class B: 1 Marshall 34; 2 Clarke 27; 3 Tilling 26; etc. Class C: 1 Michael 35; 2 Funnell 22; 3= Derek Parker and Nick Williamson 5; etc. Class D: 1 Cameron 41 (champion); 2 Dhillon 24; 3 Keith Sprules 22; etc.
Next round: September 15.

Funnell, who hopes to step back to the Production-based class for 2008, if he is given dispensation for running the Honda engine in his car.

Cameron, meanwhile, grabbed maximum Class D points, but not as early in the race as he would have liked. He was soon in touch with team-mate Nima Khandan-Nia (JHJ Racing Ferrari 360 Challenge) for third overall and the lead in the class, but it took him until lap ten to find a way through between the Esses and Old Paddock. "There were no team orders," he confirmed. "Nima didn't make it easy for me."

Khandan-Nia was fourth and Dhillon a lap down in fifth. Charlie White's Ferrari F355 Challenge completed the top six.



Woodman's Capri attracted much interest. (Image: Ollie Read)

CHAMPIONSHIP

Three of the four classes are still wide open, with only Cameron having secured his trophy. He's also in the best position overall, with 41 points, six ahead of Michael – who has really suffered from taking part in a class that occasionally has had less than the four entries required for full points to be secured – and seven clear of Marshall, who has really lost out because of his holiday. Nobody else is close enough to win outright.