

Marshall's win can't stop Cameron



(Image: David Webster)

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**Castle Combe Special GT
Championship**

Round 8, September 15 2007

Ian Sowman reports

Three drivers went into the penultimate Special GT round of the season with a shot at the overall title, but it was Duncan Cameron that left the circuit having wrapped up the overall championship. He won his class and took fastest lap in the production-based Saloon and Sports category, meaning that the only possibility of the title remaining open until the final meeting in October was Tony Michael matching that feat in Class C. With a relatively strong entry for the modified class, that proved to be beyond him. Meanwhile, the other possible champion did all he could – Shane Marshall won the race outright by 15 seconds and scorched round in the fastest lap in the process.

QUALIFYING

With Guy Parr's Radical SR8 blowing

up in testing and its driver switching to a Mallock Mk34 in the race, there was not a single entry in Class A for the first time this season.

That left the way clear for the drivers in the up to two litre class to have unfettered access to the front of the grid. Rob Clarke (MTC Racing Radical Clubsport) was the first to take advantage, claiming provisional pole position until arch-rival Simon Tilling (Tilling Motorsport Radical Prosport) took over.

Marshall, already an outright winner this season, soon aced them both, moving to the top of the timing screens within the first five minutes and then edging further away, eventually going 1.3s faster than the Radicals.

The rest of the Class B challenge was behind the leading Class C cars, with Charles Harvey-Kelly the best of the rest in his Radical SR4 in sixth overall. Louis Davidson (Radical Prosport) would have expected to feature much more strongly, but he was dogged by problems all day and set a time only good enough to line up on row ten.

A fresh set of slicks was intended to

give Michael (Bristol Motor Company Westfield SE) his best chance of winning Class C, but he was pipped to fourth overall by Nigel Mustill's Wessex Motorsport Opel Omega V8 Star. Mark Funnell's Lotus Exige was restricted to just three laps.



Mustill was on form in the Opel Omega clone. (Image: David Webster)

Cameron was a fine ninth overall in the JHJ Racing Ferrari 360 Challenge and comfortably fastest in Class D.

RACE

The first attempt at running the race lasted only a matter of yards after an expensive tangle between the red cars when the red lights went out. Jon Dhillon (JHJ Racing Ferrari 360 Challenge) somehow got broadside across the track and was collected by



Chaos at the first start. (Image: David Webster)

team-mate Nima Khandan-Nia (whose crash at Brands Hatch a week earlier tore down barriers and caused the abandonment of an entire race meeting). Tommy Correia – this time in the JHJ Racing Ferrari F430 – had to take to the grass to avoid them both.

The red flags flew, and Funnell – who had sunk down the order at the start – came back into the pits and into retirement.

There was some creeping at the sharp end of the grid on the restart but no action was taken, and so Marshall was able to charge away from the very beginning. Clarke again got away very well and got ahead of Tilling for second place, and was almost able to challenge for the lead at Folly. Mustill held on to fourth position but Michael fell well down the order on the opening lap, effectively scuppering his hopes. In his stead, Norman Lackford (Radical Prosport) and Darcy Smith (Thatchway Motorsport Radical SR4) moved into the top six. Harvey-Kelly and Davidson were both out of the race by the end of the opening lap.

Marshall continued to pull away relentlessly, but the race was on for second position as the Radical fight intensified. Tilling spied an inside line at Quarry on lap two but couldn't make the most of it, then went up the inside at the Esses a lap later only to spin on his way out of the corner. Clarke had to take an unorthodox line in avoidance, but his second position was secure.

There's been plenty of problems with traffic this season, and with in excess of 20 seconds per lap between the fastest cars and the slowest blue flags and backmarkers are almost guaranteed to be a feature. Tilling and Clarke have often been on the wrong end of things, and Clarke didn't escape on this occasion as he narrowly avoided being collected by George Michael's Toyota MR2 as they both rounded Camp. That cost him some time, and allowed Tilling – who had passed Mustill for third position at Old Paddock to close the gap a little.

Mustill settled back into fourth position and Class C victory, and by claiming fastest lap as well (some 2s faster than Michael) the Westfield driver was denied a shot at the overall championship title. Mustill had to fend off Darcy Smith towards the end, Lackford having retired with three laps to go. Michael defeated Jan Freeman (Freeman Elevators Radical Clubsport) on his way to sixth position.

Chaz Ryles (DJ Racecars Firecat), David Smith (Mallock Mk34) and Stuart Dixon (Dixon Construction Caterham R400) completed the top ten, each of them a lap down.

Meanwhile, despite driving a slightly sick Ferrari 360, Cameron (who was 4s off his own qualifying pace) was able to win and claim fastest lap, narrowly defeating the patched-up car of Khandan-Nia and first time podium visitor Dylan Popovic (Marlin T5-EXi).

Cameron therefore hauled a maximum

EVENT DATA
Results – round eight: 1 Shane Marshall (Mallock P21) 10 laps in 1m13.943s (98.821mph); 2 Rob Clarke (Radical Clubsport) +15.635s; 3 Simon Tilling (Radical Prosport); 4 Nigel Mustill (Opel Omega); 5 Darcy Smith (Radical SR4); 6 Tony Michael (Westfield SE). Class A: No starters. Class B: 1 Marshall; 2 Clarke; 3 Tilling. Class C: 1 Mustill; 2 Michael; 3 Stuart Dixon (Caterham R400). Class D: 1 Duncan Cameron (Ferrari 360); 2 Nima Khandan-Nia (Ferrari 360); 3 Dylan Popovic (Marlin T5-EXi). Pole position: Marshall 1m05.741s (101.307mph). Fastest lap: Marshall 1m05.113s (102.284mph). Starters: 26.
Overall points after eight rounds: 1 Cameron 48 (champion); 2 Marshall 41; 3 Michael 40; 4 Clarke 32; 5 Tilling 30; 6= Louis Davidson and Khandan-Nia 25; etc. Class A: 1 Guy Woodward 21; 2 Howard Spooner 16; 3 Marcus Pye 6; etc. Class B: 1 Marshall 41 (champion); 2 Clarke 32; 3 Tilling 30; etc. Class C: 1 Michael 40 (champion); 2 Mark Funnell 22; 3 Mustill 8; etc. Class D: 1 Cameron 48 (champion); 2 Khandan-Nia 25; 3 Jon Dhillon 24; etc.
Next round: Saturday, October 6.

seven points, which put him precisely seven clear of Marshall. Although he needed to be persuaded of the fact, that was enough to claim the title even though Marshall can level the score at the Carnival round, because the verdict will go to Cameron on the count-back rule.



Cameron took the Special GT title in his first season of racing. (Images: David Webster)

- Spare a thought for Simon Tilling, who made a 10,000-mile plus round trip to compete in the Special GTs at Combe. Work commitments meant that he was forced to leave Hyderabad in India at 1am on Friday, returning to Combe on Saturday morning by way of Mumbai and London. And then on Sunday morning, it was back to Hyderabad, this time via Delhi. There's dedication for you...

