



CASTLE COMBE FF1600 CHAMPIONSHIP

Round 2, Monday 3rd May.



Marcus Allen heads to victory after problems befall the Wiltshire College cars.
(Image: Oliver Read.)

All the form pointed to another afternoon of domination from Ben Norton in the Castle Combe FF1600 Championship, but the prospects of that were brought to a shuddering halt when he failed to get off the line on the green flag lap. Marcus Allen took full advantage, grabbing the win and the early lead of the championship, writes Ian Sowman.

Qualifying

Norton's qualifying performance was certainly very convincing – he was almost nine-tenths of a second faster than anybody else. In the opening minutes Andrew Jones (Coachstyle Ray GRS07), Norton (Checkpoint Tyres/Wiltshire College Spectrum 011B) and Steven Jensen (Jensen Racing/Kevin Mills Racing/A1 Tyres/tomandsteve.co.uk Spectrum 011C) all had brief stints on top, but the champion's third lap effort – a 1m11.5s – would have been more than good enough for pole position. Five minutes later, he improved that mark by more than half a second, sending a warning to the competition as he did so.

Just moments before, Allen (Swift SC92) had set his best time, a 1m11.800s – a standard Jones got to within 0.006s of matching shortly afterwards. Felix Fisher (Rochford Garden Machinery Van Diemen RF00) was next best in a very tightly

congested upper order – second to 11th positions were covered by less than one second.

Jensen was next up in fifth, set to start alongside David Vivian's Wiltshire College/Whidcombe College Swift SC92 (which intriguingly, according to the raceday programme, had an engine built by Wiltshire Dental Surgery). Robert Hall was next in the works Swift SC10, from Adam Higgins (RIADRO Racing Van Diemen RF90).

Motorsport journalist/second generation Combe FFord racer Josh Barnett (Saab City/Barnett Racing Van Diemen RF00) was ninth, one place ahead of this season's standout National FF1600 driver Jordan Skinner. The young Aussie had only completed a few laps pre-raceday before a broken gearbox curtailed the testing programme, meaning that he was out in the 'spare' Don Hardman Automotive Ray GRK10. Skinner's aim? To win the end of season triple crown of Carnival, Festival and Walter Hayes Trophy – this event was preparation for the first leg of his assault on that unprecedented treble.

The best of the Pre-1990 racers was round one winner Kyle Tilley (Souley Motorsport Van Diemen RF87), four places and 0.7s clear of Tom Margetson (Wayne Poole Racing/Glassimage Direct Reynard 89FF).

Race

The key moment of the race happened a good couple of minutes before the lights went out. As the green flag waved to signal the start of the warming up lap, Norton's car went nowhere. The rest of the field drove off the line and around the immobile Spectrum, apart from one car: Norton's Wiltshire College Motorsport team-mate Oliver White. His Spectrum 011B was similarly afflicted and was pushed to the pit lane; Norton – after a push – made it around the green flag lap before calling in for attention.



The two Wiltshire College entries fail to pull away, leaving their team scratching heads as the race starts. (Images: Oliver Read.)

The race went on without them, while the team worked frantically to work out what had happened to their cars – and resolve the problem. They couldn't fathom the former before the race was out, but did manage to "fiddle with some wires" to get Norton moving – and, after joining the race six laps late, he set the fastest lap of 1m10.744s, but was not classified.

White, sadly, did not get out at all – this was not what the reigning Saxmax champion deserved. After the high of being on the front row for his first race over Easter, it has been less happy since then – a first lap retirement in round one, an off in qualifying that left him starting from the back in round two, and then this. He will be a very determined young man at the next round...

Even without these two, the first lap was pretty heated. Allen led Jones and Fisher through Folly, but in their immediate aftermath there was a clash at Quarry corner. Vivian and Jensen made contact, sending the Spectrum spinning down the order (25th over the line at the end of the lap) and the Swift into the pit lane for attention to the left front wheel.

Hall gained most on the first lap, propelling himself into third place – ahead of Felix Fisher – as a gulf emerged between the top four and the rest. Allen edged away as Fisher pushed on, displacing Hall and Jones on successive laps mid-race. Fisher continued to narrow the gap as the conclusion drew near, but slower cars effectively ended his chances of victory. Allen added a win to the second place that he recorded in round one, to open up a seven-point lead in the championship.

Jones completed the podium for the second meeting in succession, some four seconds clear of the flying Skinner. The Ray driver had a steep learning curve in his first race at Combe, but demonstrated his potential on his climb from tenth on the grid to fourth position. Adam Higgins was only just behind.

Jensen produced a quite brilliant recovery to come home in sixth position after surviving a move from Hall – who had suffered a puncture and subsequently retired – on the final lap. He was, however, behind Jonathan Hoad (JPH Motorsport Van Diemen RF90) on the road – but the Warminster driver was not timed or included in the results, having not heeded the request to fit a working transponder after qualifying.

Seventh went to Josh Fisher (Van Diemen RF05), who was up from 13th on the grid after a second successive poor qualifying – this time due to brake troubles. Roger Orgee (Van DiemenRF00), Matt Horwood (Wayne Poole Racing/ST Works Mygale SJ01) and Nathan Ward (goldenbullracing.co.uk/RJW Engineering/Swift Cooper Swift SC95) completed the top ten.

For the second race in a row, Class C fell to Tilley, but only by the skin of his teeth: he lost most gears at the start of the last lap, and the remainder by the end of it.

Other notable retirements included Barnett, who went off with Oliver Bull (Wayne Poole Racing Swift SC92) at Tower on lap three, and Thomas Barrow (Saxon Motorsport Mygale SJ00), who joined them five laps later.



Oliver Bull and Josh Barnett on track.
(Image: Oliver Read.)

Allen, Jones and the Fisher brothers occupy the first four places in the championship after two rounds. Jones, Allen and Tilley lead classes A, B and C respectively.

Pos.	Cl.	Cl. Pos.	Driver	Car	Time	Qual.
1	B	1	Marcus Allen	Swift SC92F	14:37.143	2
2	A	1	Felix Fisher	Van Diemen RF00	+1.070	4
3	A	2	Andrew Jones	Ray GRS07	+4.710	3
4	A	3	Jordan Skinner	Ray GRK	+8.459	10
5	B	2	Adam Higgins	Van Diemen RF90	+8.652	8
6	A	4	Steven Jensen	Spectrum 011C	+16.735	5
7	A	5	Josh Fisher	Van Diemen RF05	+16.918	13
8	A	6	Roger Orgee	Van Diemen RF00	+23.689	15
9	A	7	Matt Horwood	Mygale SJ01	+24.343	18
10	B	3	Nathan Ward	Swift SC95	+24.575	19
11	A	8	Bob Higgins	Van Diemen RF99	+30.534	17
12	B	4	Luke Cooper	Swift SC92	+33.029	21
13	C	1	Kyle Tilley	Van Diemen RF87	+35.739	16
14	C	2	Tom Margetson	Reynard FF89	+52.937	20
15	B	5	Glen Finn	Swift SC92	+1:04.075	26
16	C	3	Iain Houston	Van Diemen RF89	+1:05.828	22
17	A	9	Steve Chapman	Van Diemen RF02	+1:07.089	24
18	C	4	John Hallam	Van Diemen RF89	+1 lap	27
19	B	6	Mike Madge	Vector	+1 lap	30
20	B	7	Paul James	Swift SC92	+1 lap	28
21	B	8	Shaun Macklin	Swift SC92	+1 lap	23
22	C	5	Martin Pickles	Van Diemen RF87	+1 lap	25
DNF	A		Robert Hall	Swift SC10	+1 lap	7
DNF	A		Thomas Barrow	Mygale SJ00	+4 laps	12
DNF	B		Richard Higgins	Van Diemen RF94	+6 laps	31
DNF	A		Ben Norton	Spectrum 011B	+6 laps	1
DNF	B		David Vivian	Swift SC92	+8 laps	6
DNF	B		Oliver Bull	Swift SC92F	+9 laps	11
DNF	A		Josh Barnett	Van Diemen RF00	+9 laps	9
DNF	C		Pete O'Shea	Swift FB89	+11 laps	29
DNF	A		Oliver White	Spectrum 011C	+12 laps	32

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