



Brian Cox was again victorious but it was the 2wd battle unfolding behind that most enthralled.
(Image: Oliver Read.)

Brian Cox won the second round of the Castle Combe Saloon Car Championship in association with National Mobile Windscreens, but Mark Wyatt and Russell Poynter-Brown finished the Bank Holiday weekend with a share of the points lead. Not for the first time, though, it was Jason Cooper that produced the most crowd-pleasing performance. Ian Sowman reports.

Qualifying

Half way through the qualifying session, the timing screen was a remarkable sight. Cooper (Drive-Tech Ford Fiesta) was on provisional pole position, and two of his Class C rivals – Will di Claudio and round one winner Nick Charles, both in Peugeot 106s – joined him in the top five. In the wet this might have seemed reasonable; in the dry it bore testament to the quality of the driving and level of competition in the 1600cc division.

Eight minutes later the order had changed somewhat, but it wasn't until the final minute that the sole 4wd runner, Brian Cox, emerged in his expected pole position. Since the previous Combe round, Brian had been to Silverstone for the Euro Saloons double-header, but hadn't made it beyond qualifying due to an engine failure.

Kevin Bird (Interceptor Racing Seat Leon) was the best of the 2wd cars and joined Cox on the front row, the Ditchat man only 0.03s off a pole-winning time. Mark Wyatt (Mark Richard Insurance Vauxhall Astra) was third quickest, with Tony Hutchings (Audi TT) fourth after a lengthy mid-session pit visit.

Then came the first four Class C cars, in the order Cooper, di Claudio, Charles and David Kift (DK Cars and Bikes Peugeot 106).

The best of the 1400cc brigade was 19-year-old Will Burns in his Cases Ford Fiesta. Having enjoyed racing on the Playstation so much that he decided to get his hands on a real car – an uprated ex-Fiesta Zetec championship machine, with a Sandy Brown-built engine – the Weston-super-Mare lad was relishing his second ever race, having finished fifth in the season opener.

Race

Predictably, Cox made the best start to the race with Bird slow away and soon to go into retirement in his Turbo Leon. Hutchings chased Cox down towards the first corner – Wyatt had also been a little sluggish off the line – but it was Cooper's Fiesta that emerged out of Quarry in second place, having dived up the inside at the right-hander. Wyatt and di Claudio completed the top five at the end of the opening lap, while Adrian Slade's MG ZR returned to the paddock in a cloud of smoke.



Jason Cooper seizes second position on the opening lap. He maintained an impressive third.
(Image: Oliver Read.)

Cox edged away from Cooper (but only marginally), as Wyatt regained lost ground by passing Hutchings at Camp on lap two. The Audi's slide down the order continued, eventually finishing sixth (but runner up in Class B), Hutchings having recorded his best lap on the second circuit before problems materialised.

It was inevitable that Wyatt would get second position from Cooper, and he did so at Quarry on lap five – the Class C leader maintaining his focus on important class points after his round one non-finish. He did, however, finish third overall (matching the achievement of fellow Class C ambassador Nick Charles at the previous round), some eight seconds behind Cox – who was pursued to within 1.6s by the fastest lap-setting Wyatt. Cooper's ambition to get the 1600cc class lap record must wait for another day – his best effort was around a quarter of a second outside Tim Hanlon's astonishing 2002 mark.



Di Claudio (Turnpike Racing/Will's Auto Services 106) and Charles (Pulse Networking 106) kept Cooper in their sights, but swapped places on lap nine – a grassy moment for Will did not help his cause. Charles therefore finished fourth and di Claudio fifth.

The pair of battling Class C 106s.
(Image: Oliver Read.)

Having passed the ailing Hutchings on lap 11, Adam Prebble – younger brother of former champion Gary – looked set for a top six finish on debut in the family Tomcat. Alas, a last lap retirement beckoned – initially attributed to having run out of fuel, but on further investigation proving to be down to something more complicated.

Seventh place went to Julian Ellison (Swindon Volvo Racing Volvo S40), from Daryl Radford (Volkswagen Vento), Nick Mizen and Anne King (MG ZRs).

Will Burns spent much of the contest only just outside the top ten – an admirable achievement considering he suffered a wheel bearing failure in the early stages. Eventually he decided to call it a day rather than risk an accident – it was unfortunate that he did so on the last lap, while leading his class. He hadn't realised the race was so near the end – and if he had, he could have allowed himself to be lapped by Cox to preserve the car, and still took the class win.

As it was, Chard's Trevor Long (Peugeot 106 Rallye) came out on top of Class D, after a decent scrap with Russell Poynter-Brown (Interceptor Racing Vauxhall Corsa).

With Cox only picking up a handful of points as the sole top class entrant, the lead on the championship is held jointly by Wyatt and Poynter-Brown, on 13 apiece. Charles lies third, one adrift.

Pos.	Cl.	Cl. Pos.	Driver	Car	Time	Qual.
1	A	1	Brian Cox	Mitsubishi Evo	15:37.938	1
2	B	1	Mark Wyatt	Vauxhall Astra	+1.592	3
3	C	1	Jason Cooper	Ford Fiesta	+8.270	5
4	C	2	Nick Charles	Peugeot 106GTi	+10.603	7
5	C	3	Will Di Claudio	Peugeot 106GTi	+12.169	6
6	B	2	Tony Hutchings	Audi TT	+35.374	4
7	B	3	Julian Ellison	Volvo S40 T4	+45.995	9
8	B	4	Daryl Radford	Volkswagen Bora	+47.522	14
9	C	4	Nick Mizen	MG ZR	+49.711	10
10	C	5	Anne King	MG ZR 190	+1:15.526	13
11	C	6	Martin Chivers	MG ZR	+1:21.377	20
12	D	1	Trevor Long	Peugeot 106 Rallye	+1:21.612	23
13	D	2	R Poynter-Brown	Vauxhall Corsa	+1:22.776	16
14	C	7	James Keepin	MG ZR 160	+1 Lap	19
15	B	5	Rick Rowles	Honda Civic Type R	+1 Lap	18
16	C	8	Richard Marsh	Rover 200	+1 Lap	27
17	D	3	Geraldine Duff	Rover 25	+1 Lap	22
18	C	9	Matt Smith	Rover 200vi	+1 Lap	25
19	B	6	Kelly Williams	Ford Fiesta ST	+1 Lap	24
20	C	10	Dawn Boyd	Peugeot 106XSi	+1 Lap	29
21	B	7	Jamie Diccox	Alfa Romeo 156	+1 Lap	28
22	D	4	Eddie Benton	Citroen Saxo	+2 Laps	30
23	D	5	Jonathan Benton	Citroen Saxo	+2 Laps	31
DNF	B		Adam Prebble	Rover 220 Turbo	+1 Lap	12
DNF	D		Will Burns	Ford Fiesta	+1 Lap	15
DNF	C		Geoff Wade	Honda Integra Type R	+3 Laps	26
DNF	D		Steve Sutton	Peugeot 106	+4 Laps	21
DNF	D		C Hyde-Andrews-Bird	Ford Fiesta	+9 Laps	17
DNF	C		Adrian Slade	MG ZR	+12 Laps	11
DNF	B		Kevin Bird	SEAT Leon	+12 Laps	2

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