

Graham Conquers His Bogey

As I arrived at Aintree it looked like a glorious day, the sun was shining but as I got out of the car an Arctic blast sent shivers down my spine. As in past years there was an excellent entry with 142 drivers anticipated to take to the track. However, with withdrawals, non-starters and mechanical mayhem in practice, this figure was eventually reduced to 133 for the competitive runs. Several drivers were in 'new' cars whilst there were a couple of brand new cars present, as well as the 55 Caterham Academy newbies none of whom had ever competed in 4 wheeled motorsport until today. It was also good to see some 'old-timers' back on track as well as two healthy Classic classes.

Kicking off the timed runs was the Standard 2 litre class. Once again it was the Gorge family, son and father, who dominated proceedings and class record holder Paul took the win ahead of father Doug with David Goodlad making it a Clio 1-2-3. In the Up to 2 litre Road-going class Ian Butcher took the win in his Integra despite hitting the rev limiter on Railway Straight on each run! Second went to Russell Thorpe in his faithful Doris (Renault 5GT Turbo) whilst Keith Minshull (Peugeot 306 Ralleye) took third despite depositing all his oil in the engine bay on his second run which was only 0.52 seconds slower than his first run PB. In Class 1C Keith Foster only took one run in the turbo diesel BMW 335D but it was good enough for the win ahead of Colin Smith in his 'standard' Ford Fiesta ST. In Class 1D for the Up to 2 litre sports cars it was a Honda S2000 1-2-3 as Martin Rowe led home Michael Thomson and Raymond Worrall as a fleet of MX5s did battle for fourth. In 1E for the over 2 litre sports cars Robert Tongue was back with a roof over his head. His Arctic white Audi TT Mk 3 led throughout and, on his second run, he broke the 2014 record. Aaron Perrot in his battle-scarred Aston Martin Vantage took second with Paul Trill in the shrill RX7 third. The battle for Elise honours in Class 1E looked destined for Phillip Wood until Steve Wilson snatched the win on his fourth run.

Into the Kit Cars and in the Up to 1700 Class 2A Martin Walker, who delighted in filling the commentary box with tyre smoke, took the win in his Toyota powered Westfield after battling back from second relegating Dan Hollis in the ex-Caterham Academy car in the process. Third went to another Harewood refugee in the lanky form of Leon Franks on his first visit to Aintree in his Striker. Class 2B saw Nigel Fox take a solo win in his Caterham before we moved onto the Mod Prod classes.

There was another solo win in Class 3B for the 'veteran racer' John Moxham in his trusty 205 before we moved onto Class 3E. There Robbie Birrell in his raucous Lotus Exige V6 Cup led throughout and he twice broke the class record that dated back to 2010, with David Welton's throaty TVR Tasmin taking second. Phil Day then took a solo win in Class 3G in his Duratec powered Locost. In the only Sports Libre class (4A for the up to 2 litres) we had a trio of disparate race cars. Jae Davies was third in his re-engine Peugeot 205, Jon Woolfit took second in his turbocharged Hayabusa powered MK Indy kit car complete with massive rear wing whilst the class

went to Paul Woolfit who has replaced his spaceframe Mini with a turbocharged Hayabusa powered Lotus Exige.

Into the Racing Car classes and a very healthy Class 5A (10 entries) included Craig Powers & Eve Whitehead in Craig's OMS 2000M which has been "resting" for three years. We also had no less than four entries which utilised 600cc engines (all in Jedi!) which begs the question why don't we have a class for these tiny terrors? Robert Bailey in the family Empire EVO 2 led throughout whilst Craig Powers just held Eve Whitehead at bay for second despite, or maybe because, of losing his gloves! The battling Jedi 600s saw Monoposto racer Roger Wright take the 'win' ahead of Daniel Williams and Tomos Brogden both of whom were making their single seater debuts.

The four car Formula Ford class saw the "Usual Suspects" doing battle and once again Geoff Ward emerged victorious as Graham Curwen, Phil Perks and Peter Ibbotson gave chase; nobody got particularly close to their PBs but Ward was the nearest. In Class 5C Steve Brown took the win in his ex-circuit racing JKS whilst Chris Thomas in the ex-Mark Dalton OMS 2000M was second and Jim MacDiarmid third in the ex-Gary Thomas Force PC as both made their debuts in "new" cars.

In Class 5D Steve Miles dominated in his uprated Van Diemen (it started life as a Formula Ford!) The car now sports an SBD tuned Duratec, a sequential Hewland gearbox and fully carbon fibre bodywork and wings. James Wilkinson took second in his Formula Vauxhall Lotus. In Class 5E Graham Blackwell was a tad outgunned in his Mygale G18 EcoBoost ex-Formula Ford circuit racer. Up front John Graham led throughout and on his last two runs finally broke his previous best time from 2 years ago.

The two Classic classes were next and in Road-Going it was Alan Wilson in his Big Healey that was the runaway leader from the first. Peter Garforth of Wigton Motor Club took second in his 1977 Skoda Estelle (aka Snotty) whilst Paul Boscott was a close third in his Lotus Elan +2. In the Racing Car class Malcolm Evans was top dog in practice however, on his first timed run his overly enthusiastic start broke a driveshaft and the cheery Mallock-man was out as he had no spare. This left the door wide open and Les Procter sped through to take the win in his lovely Elva Mk 7 Twin Cam with the similar car of Rod Stansfield third, and the pair split by Liverpool Motor Club's Edward Lea in his trusty Lotus 61 FF1600.

Next were the Aston Martin Owners Club Speed Series contenders and Tom Whittaker looked to be cruising to a steady win until on his fourth run he pulled his finger out! He carved over 4 tenths off his own class record and was pleased as punch at the prize-giving. In second was Peter House in his very un-Aston looking VW Beetle Rsi whilst the brutal Vantage S V12 of Neil Simms took third.

The final two classes were for the Caterham Academy 'classes'. In the "Green Group" the initial leaders, Ben Buckley and Tom Brown, would slowly fall back down the order. Greg Smith took the lead on the second run with Buckley second. On the

third run Andrew Murgatroyd took the lead before there was a massive shuffle round on the fourth run. Ben Lopez Appleton just shaded out Murgatroyd meanwhile Stuart Bell climbed up to third. The top three were each split by 0.01 seconds and with fourth to eighth covered by just a further 0.33 seconds it was definitely tight at the top.

In the Caterham “White Group” Gregory Monks led after the first run with Dan Piper just a whisker away in second and Chris Moore third. After the second runs the order was the same but they were now covered by 0.03 seconds. They again ‘held station’ on the third run but the decisive fourth run saw Dan Piper take first with Monks second and Moore in third, the spread between the three being 0.07 seconds.

As the fourth runs concluded there was rain in the air and the Liverpool Motor Club team worked feverishly to clear-up before the deluge arrived. With 771 starts in the day (two practice runs and four timed runs) the organisers again excelled and the event couldn’t have been any better – unlike the weather which was very un-spring-like!

Steve Wilkinson www.facebook.com/Sprinty

Full results are available at www.liverpoolmotorclub.com