



Fifties Sports Car Racing Club Invitation Race

At the MG Car Club Meeting Brands Hatch Indy

Sunday 6 May 2012



Race winner Nick Ruddell (Aston Martin DB Mk III) shaved 3 seconds off his best qualifying lap time to forge a convincing lead despite the wet conditions

In the second round of the Fifties Inter-Marque series, 18 drivers managed the start at a very wet Brands Hatch for a 30 minutes thrash on the Indy Circuit. Very dull weather, a prominent feature of the race calendar this year, was to provide a real challenge on this wintry day. The qualifying session set off just after 11 am in the rain and Mike Thorne set the gauntlet down with a whisker under 1.12, well 1.11.999 to be precise. The field was actually very close given the conditions, and a further 3 seconds included the top 8 cars.



Conrad Bos MGA leads the Stamper/Bell DB2/4

An interesting feature of the day was the mix of cars, 7 different marques in the top 7 qualifiers. A most welcome addition to the grid was the TR3 of Stephen Skinner trying his car out, alas not to make the race though. Geoff Ottley was farther back down the grid in his XK120, but maybe, just maybe, his time was influenced by his last trip down Paddock Hill Bend 18 months or so ago. In fairness to Geoff it would be difficult to erase from one's memory a roll down there in an open top car, especially when you had to drive it back to Dorset afterwards.



Geoff Ottley XK120 fought off Jim Campbell DB2/4

Of the 18 who took part in the qualifying, only 14 made it to the race. Retirees included Mike Thorne who had engine problems, leaving that pole slot up for grabs. Contenders included Andy Sheppard (AC Ace), Anne Reed (DB2/4) and Kevin Zwolinski in his XK140, an interesting mix and it really could be anyone's day in the rain.

After a gruelling wait until gone 5pm watching the

rain all day (the bike racing at Oulton Park was on telly in the sunshine!), the grid formed up to challenge the elements. There had been a safety car out in every single race before FISCAR, so pit stop strategies were foremost in the driver's minds. The start was orderly considering the weather conditions, and it's fair to say that caution would be a key consideration in the race of survival.



Kevin Zwolinski a convincing second in his XK140

As it turned out, the threat didn't come from the front, but a low starting Nick Ruddell on new "afternoon tyres" on his Mk111 Aston was storming through the field from 14th on the grid. He pitted very early (and quickly) on lap 6, after catching Kevin Zwolinski's XK Jaguar, but not getting past. Others progressively used the pit lane over the following 10 laps or so, to stay within the 5-25 mins window of the open pit lane.



Jonathan Abecassis Healey shadowed by the Reed's 2/4

The threat of a safety car was looming, which could upset the race if anyone had been unlucky enough to get caught in the pits. This isn't Formula 1, where the safety car period is often the best time to pit. We have to wait until "the train" has passed before re-summing the track, so you could easily end up last, irrespective of position coming into the pit lane.



John Hilbery Lotus Elite S2

This didn't happen, and Nick Ruddell cleared off into a progressive lead once that new rubber got to grips with the rain. Kevin Zwolinski was a late stopper coming out right on the tail of Andy Sheppard on lap 17 out of 23, game on here chaps.

By this time many were off the circuit, some back on again, and some not. The conditions were deteriorating and survival was the name of the game. Desperately unlucky was James Wiseman who

parked up somewhat unintentionally at the top of Paddock Hill on lap 22, classified as a non-finisher after a strong run and within sight of the chequered flag (if he looked the right way).



James Wiseman was unlucky on the final lap

So the finishing order included a lovely mix yet again, this time 8 marques in the top 8 positions. Nick Ruddell "drove it like he stole it", Kevin Zwolinski was a steady second after he nipped ahead of Andy Sheppard during an excursion at Paddock Hill, leaving Andy third. Then followed the nip and tuck battle of John Hilbery (Lotus Elite) and Rob Cobden (Fairthorpe Electron) who were 0.057s apart over the line, Jason Kennedy (Lancia Aurelia), Nils Frederick Nybleus (Healy 100M) and Conrad Bos (MGA TC) in hot pursuit. The Reeds had a slow pit stop which thwarted progress, but nevertheless put in some very healthy lap times thereafter, albeit finishing way down the grid.



Andy Shepherd AC Ace crests ahead of Jag & Aston

All in all a good challenging race that was genuinely "up for grabs". Congratulations to all drivers for coping with the conditions, and everyone went home a bit wet but with a smile. The presentation in the hospitality centre was a bit of a damp affair, once you had found it, and well done to all award winners, well deserved.



Rob Cobden Fairthorpe Electron slips past the Reeds

Team awards were:

1st	Feltham Fliers	4pts.
2nd	British Bulldogs (Lotus, MG, TR)	3pts.
3rd	Jagged Edge	2pts

Full Results www.tsl-timing.com