

Robb Dwane wows as the Bus pass rules!!

Saturday 05 August saw The 500 Motor Racing Club of Ireland host the 6th round of the SW Adair Tyres Northern Ireland Sprint Championship at Kirkistown Circuit outside Portavogie. This event was also a round of the Motorsport UK SBD Motorsport Engines British Sprint Championship. In all 76 competitors started the event including the fastest drivers from Mainland UK, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland as well. Whoever was the fastest today could safely boast of being the fastest sprint driver in the UK and Ireland.

With a wet start, a drying afternoon forecast and a superb entry everyone was interested to see who the fastest person around the track would be. Galway man Rob Dwane proved to be the man to beat in his awesomely quick OMS 25 setting an untouchable 105.19 sec run. Rob was not long home from competing in a European Championship Hillclimb in a Speedcar in which he was a guest driver. Robs pace in Spain was unreal and he finished third overall on a hill he had never seen before in a car he had never seen before either!!

Sylvie Mullins from Ballyvaughan Co Clare made the long run north to Kirkistown circuit in his new to him Gould GR 55B and finished second overall on a superb 107.90 run in a car which he is still getting used to and setting up. Alan Cassells from Lurgan was third in his Force HRC with a 108.50 sec run which was 3.31 secs behind Robb and 0.6 secs behind Sylvie Mullins. Tony Greenan from Hilltown pushed hard in his F3 Dallara Mercedes and despite some impressive driving he finished fourth overall and fastest Northern Ireland driver at end of the day.

Up and down the paddock there was some superb action and the usual comradery amongst competitors. There was an amazing buzz around the paddock and an almost carnival atmosphere in which the racing just seemed to be going on in the background. I personally haven't seen an atmosphere as good as this in many an event.

Not only was the atmosphere good but the quality and number of single seaters was awesome. We had a total of 23 ranging from all singing and dancing Gould GR55B of Sylvie Mullins with its ex formula 1 Judd engine, the ex-Sebastian Vettel World Dallara of Gerard O'Connell, Tony Greenan formula 3 Dallara F317. Tim Woodside in his Pilbeam MP82, Scott McMullan and Ethan Faulkner in Jedis and Jenny Pollock and John Whitley in Formula Fords as well – That's a serious line up and a line up which many another championship could only dream of!!

We had one driver who will remain anonymous who went to sign on at event HQ on the morning of the event and when asked to produce his race licence, produced instead, his bus pass!! Thankfully for the quick reactions of the competitor behind him who tapped him on the shoulder and said, "I've got one like that, they're great", severe embarrassment was avoided. This little faux pass will remain a secret for ever more. Now in fairness the driver in question

was definitely not driving like a “gentleman of age.” Infact he was the complete opposite and this individual is now getting well to grips with his steed, so much so that he is beginning to scare his son who wants him to slow down lol. Whilst I wont name him, some people say that’s he’s too old to race, but we call him fast!!

Again, up and down the paddock competitors were doing their usual great things. Poor Ryan Murray had a slight technical issue which sidelined him for the day, but local competitor and friend Adrian Kielt stepped in and lent him his car for the timed runs. Now sadly Ryan didn’t read the contract for borrowing your oppositions car, and he subsequently beat Adrian, in his own car by a mere 1.74 secs – how rude. Adrian was however delighted to see Ryan drive his car and reading between the lines he learnt some tips, from watching Ryan which will improve Adrian’s future times.

There were some debuts and a lot of craic in the rally car classes which are having a bit of a revival again. Jonathan Strain returned to sprinting in his 205 and dominated class 10 on his way to 29th overall. Jonathan was impressive to watch, Infact that term impressive, doesn’t do him justice, through the front chicanes. He was going so well that fellow class competitor Raymond Johnston was hunting the paddock for a parachute to secure to Jonathan’s car to slow him down a bit, and I can assure you Raymond was travelling hard.

In the bigger rally car class Richard O’Mahoney was having a ball but he still hasn’t twigged the art of sprinting. The aim of a sprint is to complete the circuit in the shortest time possible. Richie did manage to complete the circuit on each run, but he did an extra half lap on each run as he fishtailed round the circuit like the little mermaid on her first ever swimming trip! Richie is impressive to watch and is certainly not lacking in skill and talent, but I’m glad I’m not responsible for his tyre bill!!

There were a few family duels ongoing too. There was the father, son (x2) and Grand daughter dual in the Hawthorne camp. No guessing who won that dual as David now seems to be the fastest Hawthorne. There was also a father daughter dual going on there too as Amy chased her Dad David Hard as well. Dan Campbell once again beat his dad Garry Campbell in their starlets. I was speaking to Garry who was blaming this on running older tyres – in fairness Dan has really got to grips with the starlet this year and he, Mr Smyth and Mr Jones are becoming a very formidable trio. Scott McMullan also led his father Carson home, Scott in his Jedi and Carson in the Reis Aero. Its great to see Carson back out again and he’s getting faster and more confident with every outing. The next step is to see him in the jedi!!

There was the usual McGimpsey family battle in which Ryan once again beat his father, Robert. Richie O’Mahoney lead his father Richard home and Crawford Ewing Jr took the honours against his father Crawford Ewing Snr. Robert Fitzgerald also finished ahead of his father Clem in their dual driven Mazda MX5 with its new look paint scheme! Jonathan Strain won the Strain family battle by beating his uncle Noel. In all of these instances youth

persevered over age and the younger family member triumphed. However, in Camp McKee, Adam bucked this trend when he his younger brother Ben in the family Seat Ibiza. So we've had father and sons, uncles and Nephews Fathers and daughters, brothers and we also had a husband and wife combination too with Adrian Pollock the past 3 time Sprint Champion and his wife Jenny Pollock competing in their Van Diemen Formula Ford.

Adrian was superb to watch and showed his knowledge and experience with some more, interesting lines into and through the chicanes. His ability to corner fast and maintain speed shows why his trophy cabinet is so full. There's some individuals who could learn a lot from watching Adrian and his lines. Jenny was also going exceptionally well and is improving hand over fist with every event she does. She has clearly been receiving hints and tips from Adrian on lines and carrying speed as her lines and techniques were very akin to Adrian's. The only way I could tell them apart in the car was the luminous glow from Jenny's bright pink Balacalava!! I did ask Adrian if he had a matching one but didn't get a repeatable answer!!

One other point to note was the massive number of Minis out. There was a total of 8 minis, of which 2 were BMW minis and also 1 metro so the BL group was well represented. The fastest mini was Jimmy Lightbody but the purists amongst us would say that a BMW mini doesn't count, so the fastest "Propper mini" was Karl Johnston.

Now that we've mentioned Mini's the unofficial title of fastest mini in the west went once again to Karl Johnston who pipped Gerry McGarrity by a mere 0.72 secs. It was great to see Gary Milligan back out again, but he was only able to be the third, and some might say slowest mini from the West. Wee Gerry was delighted to see Gary Back out again as it meant that he wouldn't be the slowest mini from the west any more. Gerry also proved that his promise at round 3 was correct that when he promised that he was going to let Gary win the first one so that he thought he was good, then Gerry would blow him into the weeds at the rest of the events.

The modified category was closely fought, and Dan Campbell took not only family honours but Modified honours after pipping his father Gerry by a mere 3.6 secs in their Toyota Starlets. Both these guys were flying on their way to finishing 18th and 22nd overall. Third modified man home was the returning Jonathan Strain in his Peugeot 205 rally car.

In the specialist category David Hawthorne took a superb category win as well as 17th overall in his Westfield. Andy Hawthorne was second ahead of third placed Steven Hawthorne with only 0.26 secs between them. Its hard to tell where the 0.26 was won or lost but had steven not had such a big breakfast he may have been faster, the beans could've been weighing him down, but alternatively had Andy worn his glasses and been able to see just how fast he was going, he may have been slower. Who knows!!

The Roadgoing category was once again dominated by a BMW, however on this occasion it was Aaron Vance in his BMW M3 who was fastest with a

141.76 sec run which put him 35th overall. Crawford Ewing Jr who has been the man to beat so far this season was 2nd on a 143.21 and Crawford Ewing Sr was third on a 146.34 finishing ahead of Stephen Donnelly in his Twingo

In the Heaslip Ladies Challenge Trophy Amy Hawthorne once again took trophy honours in her Clio finishing a mere 1.05 secs, on corrected time ahead of Jenny Pollock who pipped Emma Campbell by a corrected time of 2.29 secs. Now for those reading this who wonder what the corrected time is about, the Heaslip Ladies Challenge trophy works on a corrected time basis which is calculated using a performance indicator conversion based on the drivers' previous times in comparison with the overall FTD. This way the ladies are all pitched together on corrected time and the girl in the fastest car doesn't win every event just by having more horsepower or better tyres, Its all down to how they perform measured against each other!!

The next and seventh round of the 2023 SW Adair Tyres Northern Ireland Sprint Championship takes place Nutts Corner on 23 September and is hosted by North Ulster Car Club. Entries can be found on www.rallyscore.net

Now for the class battles:

Class 1 – Road Cars up to 1700cc

Stephen Donnelly took another class win in his flying Renault Twingo with a superb 148.87 second run which saw him finish 46th overall on the day. With Alan Wallace deciding to play with the hairdressers today poor Stephen was left all on his own in class 1.

Class 2a – Road Cars over 1700cc

Aaron Vance returned to the championship today and reminded us all what it sounded like to hear an M3 at full tilt. With Conor Hamill choosing to spectate, in order to protect his new permed hair from Helmet damage Aaron was the token M3 on the grid. Crawford Ewing Jr pushed Aaron hard to finish second ahead of his father Crawford Ewing Snr with Ian Thompson fourth in his Porsche Boxter

Class 2b – Road Cars Mazda MX5 Challenge

There was another C Ewing at the top of class 2b but on this occasion it was Dundonald's Craig Ewing. Craig had a stonking battle all day with Wayne Clyde who simply had no answer for Craig. Barry McCann returned to the class today and took third ahead of Robert Fitzgerald. Fourth went to Alan Wallace, the oldest scissor swinger in town on his debut in his Mazda MX5. Alan says the Mazda is easier to drive than the Honda Del Sol but a lot more sensitive to throttle inputs. Fifth went to Clem Fitzgerald who had a fabulous new line through colonial which resulted in him creating a new drainage ditch between Colonial and the garages. His car looked like it had starred in an episode of Clarkson's farm, but as it's a Mazda it just kept going.

Class 6a Modified Cars – Series Production Cars 8v

Richard McAlonan once again was the man to beat in class 6a in his Vauxhall Corsa. Richard finished ahead of Leslie Millar who dual drive the Corsa with Richard. Karl Johnston pushed hard in his mini to finish third a mere 0.57 secs behind Leslie Millar but only pipped Gary Milligan home by a mere 0.5 secs. Gary Milligan finished fourth with William Hutton hot on his tail to fifth.

Class 6b Modified Cars – Series Production Cars 16v

James Lightbody once again took the class win in his Mini finishing ahead of Dessie Martin in his civic. Adam McKee took third in class ahead of returning Andrew Kernohan, John Stewart Amy Hawthorne and Ben McKee in that order. Class 6b was still returning big grids despite being down a pair of Colbert's today. Stephen was away to the heat and dry weather with his work, but Ken was at Nutts Corner mentoring and running his grandson Max in the local Kart Championship races. Max proved to be a chip off the old block and won all of his races and is now in prime position to win his first ever Motorsport Championship!! I did ask if Max took his skill from his father or his Granda but in true Colbert style Ken refused to commit. All I can say is watch this space as this young lad is a star of the future. How long until we see a triple driven Sunbeam??

Class 7 Modified Specialist Production Cars 2WD

David Hawthorne proved today why they all say he is the fastest Hawthorne after he analysed his father Andy's times beating him by a massive 2.21 secs. Andy was third a mere 0.26 sec behind Andy. Now many of you may feel that those remarks were a tad unfair, however we all know that it's not very often that David is the fastest so when he is we have to make a big deal of it to make David feel good, and also to ensure that his head fills his helmet!! Graham Boyce made a welcome return to the championship to finish fourth ahead of another returnee Carson McMullan in the family Reis Aero.

Class 8 Sports Libre Cars Special Saloons

Richard O'Mahoney took the class 8 honours again today which is starting to become a bit of a habit for him of late. Sadly, there was no one else for Richard to race against apart from his body double "the stig" who drives the car and pretends to be Richie at events. They even have identical race suits!!!

Class 9a Sports Libre Cars Saloons and GT's

Class 9a was once again about the Campbells. Once again Daniel was the Campbell to beat, and his father Garry pushed hard to try and beat Dan. In the end there was only 3.6 secs between the 2 in Dan's favour. Dan also took the modified category win. Third went to Jonathan Smith who has finally got his Honda engine Escort back out again. Jonathan was going well and has highlighted a few more things which he wants to change for the next event. Jason Fraser made a return to the championship and was flying to finish 4th in

class ahead of Emma Campbell. Jason has been concentrating on the hills more this year and this seems to have helped him as he has gathered severe pace and commitment since going to the hills and has really come on leaps and bounds, either that or he has fitted a huge turbo charger and managed to keep it a secret!!

Class 10 Sports Libre Cars – Small Capacity Rally cars

Class 10 had 3 cars today and one of them was a new one. Jonathan Strain returned to the championship after a wee while away in his now heavily rebuilt 205. Its clear to be seen that since he was last out, he has found some incredible pace after competing in several rallies of late. He romped to the class victory ahead of a hard charging Raymond Johnston in his Escort Mk2. Alan Roddy was third in his Saxo and was also flying. Class 10 has suddenly seen a massive pace injection and its great to see this once suffering class starting to have a bit of a revival!

Class 11 Sports Libre Cars – Large Capacity Rally Cars

Today we saw 4 cars in class 11 and there wasn't a poor one between them. Richie O'Mahoney flew home from Denmark to participate in a charity fundraiser and Mondello on Friday and then came straight to Kirkistown for the sprint!! Fair play. I dread to think what his tyre bill was for the weekend as he seemed to use a set of rears on every run. Unless she's spinning and sliding around Richie isn't having fun!! Although it is amazing to watch. Noel Strain took second in class but was a little put off with a synchro issue for 5th gear. Normally this wouldn't be as big a problem but with it being the long track Noel needed 5th and even 6th, and if he'd had it seventh too. This wee mini looks, sounds, and goes beautifully. Rumour has it that brother Stuart is preparing for a return. When he does, we'll have 2 stigs in the paddock - old Stig and bald Stig!!! (And no before you ask Stuart is not both, but if the cap fits.....) Derek Robinson took a superb third in class in his sunbeam and told me that he was doing his best to remain on the black bits!! Fourth in class went to Alan Griffith who debuted his new Escort Mk2. The car is simply stunning, and Alan had a good run out but only managed 1 timed run unfortunately.

Class 12 4WD Sports Libre Cars

Sadly, there were only 2 cars in class 12 today. Ryan Murray and Adrian Kielt. Ryan was going superbly well in practice, but a technical issue side lined him, so title and class rival Adrian Kielt lent him his car for the runs. Despite only doing 1 run Ryan pipped Adrian, which wasn't very sportsman like, but Adrian admitted that watching Ryan in his car spurred him on a bit and taught him some things about braking and lines. Its great to see such big rivals being such good friends and helping each other out. That's the joys of our sport!!

Class 13 Formula Racing Cars

Class 13 had one of the biggest entries seen in quite a while, and there's more to come!! Adrian Pollock took the class win from James Graham by a mere 0.13 secs. James was pushing Adrian hard which pushed both drivers on. Third went to Henry Campbell a mere 2.07 secs behind James. This shows just how hot a pace Adrian and James were on as Henry is a stalwart at the top of class 13. John Whitley made the long run North and had a great battle with Jenny Pollock whom he pipped to take fourth. Hopefully, this is the sign of good things to come for class 13 especially with Stephen Wishart and the 2 Todd's sprinting in class 13 of late. Let's hope so

Class 14 Small Capacity Racing Cars

Class 14 was one of the smaller classes today for different reasons. However, what it missed in terms of numbers it made up for with pace and quality. Ethan Faulkner and Scott egged each other on like 2 cheeky weans in a play school class. Whatever 1 did the other did better. It was inspiring to watch, for everyone apart from Kenny Faulkner, Ethan's dad. Kenny was last seen chewing his wrist as he nervously chewed all his nails, then the knuckles and finally the wrist!! Ethan however was as cool as a cucumber!! Scott McMullan has finally come to terms with the Jedi and has taken to the revised driving technique like a duck to water. Scott set the early pace of a 121.00 which he identically matched on his second run. Yes, identically matched. Ethan started with a 123.32, then cut that to 121.75 then lined up for his third run. Scott went faster again and set a 120.85 but Ethan had other ideas and dropped down to a 120.14. this was an incredible drive and both Scott and Ethan were seen congratulating each other afterwards. Honestly, the craic between competitors and the friendship around this paddock is awesome. Ryan McGimpsey was third in class on the debut of his new Empire. This is an incredible car which looks superb, but Ryan was having gear selection issues which hampered him severely. When he gets these sorted "Flying Ryan" will be extremely hard to beat, not only in class 14 but overall, as well!!!! I still maintain that class 14 is our closest class and every competitor is capable of winning on the day.

Class 15 Larger Capacity Racing Cars

In total there were 8 cars entered in class 15, which is impressive. It's great to see so many big cars out. The inclusion of a Judd engine just took me back to the old days of the British Championship events here when it was part of the Knockdene Speed Weekend. Now there's a blast from the past for you all, and yes, I remember it too. Rob Dwane was on incredible form and set a 105.19 sec run to take FTD. Rob is the only man who we've seen who looks likely to get near Heather Calders outright record at this circuit and it's only a matter of time before he does this. Sylvie Mullins was second in his Judd engine Gould GR55B which just looks and sounds amazing. Alan Cassells was third in his Force HRC which is incredible in a straight line. Tony Greenan finished fourth a mere 1.09 secs behind Alan in his Mercedes engine Dallara F317. I was speaking to Tony in the pitlane and told him to hurry up a bit.

Tony laughed and replied "I'm driving the door handles off it Davy" when I looked down, he genuinely was as the handles were gone!!! Gerard O'Connell pushed hard in his World Series car and the sight and sound of this car leaving the line and accelerating has to be seen to be heard. I'd say it's the most memorable sound we've heard in sprinting in the last 20 years, and there's been some amazing cares over that period like the Pilbeams of Robert Morgan, John Leinster and Heather Calders Gould and the big 3.5 Lola Judd of Terry Holmes. Tim Woodside had a superb run and was pushing Gerard hard. Tim was also the first person to brave it on slicks in the damp morning runs. Tim just edged home ahead of Steven Robb who was using the day to shake down some changes he's made to his OMS 28 and to iron out a niggle or 2.

Class 16a Historic Road Cars

Once again Gerry McGarrity took the class win in his mini ahead of Robert McGimpsey in the turner. Bill Blair was third in what was also a large grid on class 16a today. Mervyn Getty finished fourth, somewhat off his normal pace – possibly because Vincent wasn't here to egg him on and make him drive hard. Ian Puget finished in 6th behind Mervyn but Infront of Trevor McIlroy, John Acheson, Arnie Wishart and Rodney Getty in that order. Once again there was a good variety of cars in the class and all of them, without exception looked fantastically well. This class seems to be on a bit of a rise and let's hope we can Keep the momentum up and the keep the historic (I'm referring to the cars) competing and having fun Its great to see,

Class 16b Historic Saloons and Sport scars

Last but my no means least was Stephen Harvey who was all by himself again in class 16b. Stephen, nevertheless, pushed hard and finished 49th overall which is impressive. Stephen was described to me recently as doing BDA times in a pinto – which is a big compliment!!!