



August 2010

MONDELLO PARK NEWSLETTER

Round four of the Fun Cup saw the series go West to the Emerald Isle. Mondello Park was the destination, with a six hour race and everything to play for.

TDI Classification

In car 2, regulars, Neil Plimmer and Geoff Fawcett teamed up with Lance Robson, having shaken off the frustration of the Rockingham and Silverstone misfortunes, Team Honeywell were intent on a podium to get their results back on track.

A strong test pace on Friday and a grid draw of 5th saw Fawcett take the start, with stiff competition from Track Torque's 211 car.

A lead after the pit window extended, with Robson and Plimmer lapping consistently throughout.

Into the 5th, hour, a 1:45 second lead over car 131, JPR/Indigo Racing was slashed to twenty seconds with a safety car period putting Robson under pressure, as JPR/Indigo's Harris carved his way through traffic at the restart.

Robson maintained the twenty second gap, handing over to Plimmer with twenty minutes to go and instruction to go "easy". Drama unfolded with only five laps to go, as the car cut out and coasted to a standstill at the back of the circuit – the Autolec switch having knocked off.

Having restarted, Plimmer was forced to deal with the headlights of car 131 dancing in his mirrors and only a six second lead at the start of the penultimate lap.

With both crews anxiously climbing the (pit) wall, Plimmer eased the car over the line with a controlled one second margin.

Plimmer said: **"What a race! You just never know what the next lap is going to bring. Will it be frustration, disbelief, relief or satisfaction? But, one thing is for sure, there is always strong competition and camaraderie from a group of serious race teams, intent on having a good time, both on and off track. It can only be Fun Cup"**.

In car 131, JPR /Indigo Racing, the driver line-up consisted of Steve Harris, Mark Hope and Steve Johansen.

Harris started the race, as Johansen who normally starts, was starting in car 345, the JPR twin seater, taking guests and pit crew out for laps at the start of the race. A fabulous opportunity not to be missed.

Harris drove a blistering first stint, charging through the field, coming from the back of the grid to 4th place, before handing over to Johansen. Johansen kept up the pace to chase down the leaders, bringing the car back in 3rd place before handing over to Hope, to continue the charge. Hope duly took up the challenge and by the end of his stint, had reached 2nd place.

Harris was back in the car for the penultimate stint when a safety car reduced the gap between him and 1st placed Team Honeywell, down to ten seconds. Harris was taking a second a lap out of Team Honeywell after the restart, but an extremely fast pit stop from the opposition, left Johansen with nineteen seconds to find in the last stint.

The electrical glitch with the Honeywell car lost them about ten seconds in one lap, providing Johansen with the opportunity to close them down and start reeling them in. He pushed the car to the limit, putting in their fastest lap on the last lap to finish in 2nd place, just 0.72 seconds behind Team Honeywell, in what must have been one of the closest finishes to a six hour race that the Fun Cup series has ever seen.

After their UK victory at Spa, Team RAM were confident of a strong performance at Mondello Park, with Mark Owen, Richard Ince and Austin Reynolds at the wheel of the 245 car.

Although testing went well on Friday, race day saw the team struggle for pace during qualifying. After being drawn 11th on the grid, they pulled the car up into the top five after two hours, but couldn't make any significant impact on the leaders. As the race passed the half way mark, the drivers picked up the pace, but despite improved pitstops and the car running faultlessly for the entire six hours, the third step on the podium was as good as the team could manage.

Mark Owen was philosophical. He said: **"We were just not quick enough at the start and by the time we got our act together we were too far behind Honeywell and JPR/Indigo to make a serious challenge. We are all very pleased with our ninth consecutive Fun Cup podium though. Mondello is a long way from home, but we made sure we enjoyed the weekend, particularly the evening after the race!"**.

The fastest diesel lap was by Gilles Debrus in JPR car 101. He set a 2:03.219.



Honeywell took the victory in the closest finish of the 2010 season so far.



JPR/Indigo Racing were long overdue a podium finish.

Petrol Classification

The winners of the petrol class were John Hayman and pro driver Nigel Greensall, racing in car 110, JPR/Track Driver.

John said: "Prior to departing for Mondello Park, I was all too aware how many superstar scalps have been taken in the Fun Cup over the years; so what fate would await an ageing journo?"

He continued: "My team mate Nigel Greensall told me 'you have to tailor your driving style to the car's demands and not the other way around'. By the end of the six hour race, I think I was just starting to get the hang of it. The race is something I'll remember fondly for many years to come. Yes, winning is fabulous and yes I did feel a little pang of sorrow for the JPR/Credit Crunch team, having the win snatched from under their noses in the last five minutes before the end of a six-hour race. But, the biggest revelation, was witnessing Nigel's unstinting enthusiasm and excitement for the whole two days. After all, this is a man who has raced all manner of exotica, including Formula One. The fact that he was so fired up by the Fun Cup speaks volumes for the quality of the series. I hope everyone enjoys reading about the adventure in Track Driver magazine later in the year."

JPR/Credit Crunch were back to their regular line up of Tim Wheeldon, Dominic Jackson and Nigel Griffiths, for the Irish round.

Wheeldon started the race from 12th position and had a good first stint with plenty of dicing, which saw him bring the car in to the pits in 1st for the petrol class, with car JPR/Track Driver a close 2nd. Jackson then took up the baton, being chased by pro driver Nigel Greensall.

The shape of the petrol race was cast with JPR/Credit Crunch pulling out a lead in the pit stops and on alternate legs, with Greensall pulling it back from them during his stints and then the occasional safety car gathering the field together periodically.

With an hour to go, a crucial safety car drew the whole field together and the seventy second lead formed over five hours by Credit Crunch Racing was reduced to two seconds. Jackson then stretched the lead prior to the final stop, but Greensall was already on circuit in car 110 and biting into the lead.

Griffiths left the pits for the final stint, with a slender fourteen second lead and the words of Wheeldon's advice "give it death and enjoy" ringing in his ears.

The crowd and pit crews were then kept on tenter hooks for both the petrol and diesel races, as Harris hunted down Honeywell whilst Greensall and Griffiths did battle in the petrol class.



The Solutions Racing Crew were out in force as usual.

Griffiths recalls: "Each lap saw the gap close and the excitement on the wall become greater and greater. Spurred on by Tim's 'give it death' advice, I managed to bring my times down to the low 2:05's, but with less than two laps to go the JPR/Track Driver's yellow peril was right on my tail. I held the inside line in to turn one, but Greensall just drove round the outside of the corner and had the inside line into turn two and the game was up."

He continued: "A fantastic last session ended in glorious failure, but I still felt I would rather lose in this way to a consummate professional like Nigel with the excitement it brought to both teams, than have a mundane seventy second victory. Well done to the 110 team and thank you Fun Cup for another great event and unbelievable finish, after six hours of racing. The Guinness tasted even better that evening!"

The final step of the petrol podium went to David L Walker's Paul Calladine and Tom Walker in car 92, who arrived at Mondello full of optimism for the weekend ahead. Friday practice identified a damaged gearbox in need of change and despite a lack of sleep for Adrian Bailey and the crew, the gearbox was replaced and the car ready for exclusive testing on Friday afternoon.

The team drew 14th place on the grid and Calladine became almost a lap down after the first few laps following contact, an off track excursion and pit stop. Despite the damage to the car, Calladine and Walker found they could still lap at competitive speeds and the teams first good luck of the weekend came when the first safety car period brought them back into contention.

A battle then followed with car 190, Bean Racing with Solutions Racing vying for 3rd place and final podium position, which raged until the last fifteen minutes of the race. Throughout the race, the teams were never more than thirty seconds apart and at one point during the final safety car period, the teams were only four seconds apart. However, it was David L Walker who managed to hold on and claim their second podium of the season.

Nigel Greensall set the fastest petrol lap, with a 2:04.201 in car 110, JPR/Track Driver.

Mondello Park Photographs

To view photographs from Mondello Park, please visit:

<http://s855.photobucket.com/albums/ab116/funcupuk/2010/mondello/>

Thanks Nuala and Marv for great snaps!



The sweet taste of victory!



The Honeywell boys have been racing Fun Cup since 2002 and still love it!

Saker Sportscars Sell Fifth and Sixth Cars

Congratulations to Graham Pattle and Mark Burton, who will be the proud new owners of the fifth Saker GT in the UK! Bob Tomlinson and Alan Honarmand also placed an order for the sixth car, after testing one at Donington Park on Sunday!

Graham Pattle, said: "New to racing, Mark and myself joined the Fun Cup in 2006 and have enjoyed the experience immensely since. We feel that our driving and general race-craft has come on in leaps and bounds and now, the time is right to further challenge ourselves. The aim is to try something that is quicker and perhaps more technically sophisticated than Fun Cup cars. And so, we have been looking at possible series to take part in. That said, we didn't really want to lose touch with the great bunch of people associated with Fun Cup."

He added: "The Saker offers us a chance to drive a faster, lightweight, Sportscar that has been specifically designed for the purpose. With Mark having tested the car at Oulton Park, I briefly drove it at Mondello Park last weekend and it certainly lived up to its advertised billing. With the Saker running alongside the Fun Cup weekends, where costs are clearly controlled, we feel it's an ideal series to move into. We expect to be able to rationalise the costs of mechanical/technical support, and transport, via our existing relationship with Solutions Racing, who currently support us at all Fun Cup meetings".

If you are interested in testing a Saker, or indeed a Fun Cup car, or would like any further information, please email me at roxie@funcup.co.uk.



Saker GT Win for Graham Tilley

Graham Tilley, the first racer to purchase a Saker in the UK, stormed to an overall victory at Rockingham on Bank Holiday Monday in the Euro Saloon and Sports Car Championship.

Grahame shared the story of his victory with us...

He said: "Race day started with a twenty minute qualifying session on a dry, but cool track. There was a strong breeze blowing down the main straight, which no doubt helped the car's speed. On Friday, during testing, I was going through the first banked turn at 122 mph. During qualifying, with the tail wind, the speed increased to 132mph. Unusually, for a racetrack, it actually felt very quick, especially with the wall looming up on the outside. However, the Saker was really good in the high speed turns and absolutely awesome on the infield section, to the point where I managed to gain pole by almost nine tenths of a second."

He continued: "The Championship has a wide variety of vehicles entered in four classes, ranging from the slowest, which is probably a Mini Cooper S, up to the fastest, which is an Australian V8 Supercar (Ford Falcon) that previously raced at Bathurst and produces 650 bhp. After qualifying, my nearest rival was a Lotus Exige, driven by extremely experienced racer, Rex Stamp. His supercharged car is exceptionally quick in a straight line and through the corners. Although I had managed to better him in practice, I knew from qualifying that if I did not get ahead of him at the beginning, I was going to struggle because of his straight line speed."

Describing the race, he added: "Although I was out dragged into the first chicane by both the Lotus and V8 supercar, they were preoccupied with holding each other up and I managed to squeeze my extremely nimble Saker GT inside them to take the lead. This was all I needed and I managed to open a gap through the infield section, which meant that they could not attack me on the long straights. I then managed to control the race from the front and hold the gap to the Lotus at about 2.5 seconds throughout the race. I was delighted to win my first race at Rockingham. It was a such a memorable win, as it was also the first victory for the Saker GT in a British championship event!"

End of Season Party

Don't forget to keep Saturday 6th November free for the end of season party! It will be held at the Hinckley Island Hotel once again and is always a night to remember! The "out takes" from Sky's Chris Hartley were so hilarious last year they literally had people in tears, mascara ran, make-up came off (and that was only the men!). Further details of the "do" will follow shortly. Don't miss out!



Finally...

I look forward to seeing you all at Anglesey for the six hour race and the sprint!

Kindest regards

Roxie Marandi Rose
Fun Cup UK/Saker Sports Cars UK

