

2011 / 2012 Championship

IRC Round 1

Manfield

1st & 2nd October 2011

After what seemed like such a long winter layoff, the new Race Season got underway with practice beneath a beautiful, cloudless sky on Friday 30th September. The Manfield track looked exceptional and was an absolute picture.

It really was a stunning day and a large number of competitors took full advantage of the hot dry conditions to test their cars out and scrub in the new race rubber.

A new welcome face to Sports Car Racing was Andrew Mellor in his new 'Pro Sports' class Car. Unfortunately for Andrew he had fuel pump issues which prevented him from getting out on to the track and after working tirelessly for most of Friday to solve the problem, he finally decided that a new pump was required and returned home early to prepare for Taupo.

Qualifying on the Saturday was held again under beautiful warm conditions and the lap times were pretty impressive for the start of the season.

Both Iain Slight and Alan Barker in their factory Juno's managed to get into the 1.10's with Johnny Mines and David Glasson only a fraction outside that in the 1.11 bracket.

In the new Club Sport Open Class Huw Allen, Trev Lines and John Bloemendal were also turning in some impressive times.

Club Sport was a Fraser fest with Craig Alexander, Chris MacLennan, James Coup and Lloyd Wilson all looking fast with new engine modifications and new tyres to assist them this season.

Star Cars fronted up with 7 great looking little race cars and took full advantage of warm conditions also with some great lap times.

Race 1 Rolling Start - Saturday

Iain Slight in his brand new LMP3 Juno on pole got the season started and roared into the first corner only to spin up in front of a full field, fortunately no one touched, although Johnny Mines was running out of tarmac as he avoided the incident.

The pace was fast and the track was starting to rubber in nicely when unfortunately on lap 3 one of the Star Cars went off and dropped a significant amount of oil prior to Dunlop which brought out the double yellows and oil flags for the remainder of the race. It was a real shame as there were battles looming right through the field in every class.

Johnny Mines, from 4th on the grid, won ahead of Alan Barker and David Glasson in 3rd. James Coup in his Fraser had a DNF and Lloyd Wilson DNS, both with clutch issues.

In Club Sport Open, Huw Allen and

his Turbo Saker was too quick for Trev Lines and John Bloemendal who finished 2nd and 3rd respectively.

Club Sport had Chris MacLennan winning ahead of Craig Alexander.

Race 2 Rolling Start – Sunday (Wet)

What a contrast to the previous two days, it was cold and wet when the drivers and crews arrived at the track and the pit tents were struggling to keep the water out.

We were Race 6 on the programme and by this time things were slowly on the improve, although drivers still had to use their wets.

It was agreed that in the interest of common sense and safety that all cars would hold their formation until the infield hairpin and then it was racing normal. For the Pro Sport guys, lap times were approximately 8 seconds a lap slower than race one so the pace was not great. “Bloomers” Bloemendal had an eventful race with a couple of excursions off the track, but to his credit still managed to finish, and there were also a number of other drivers with similar close calls.

In tricky conditions Chris MacLennan and Trev lines had a very close fought battle throughout and by the smiles on their faces afterwards both enjoyed the experience.

David Glasson finished in first place with Johnny Mines 2nd and Alan Barker 3rd.

Club Sport Open saw Huw Allen winning ahead of Trev Lines and John Bloemendal.

In Club Sport it was Chris MacLennan, Lloyd Wilson 2nd and James Coup 3rd.

Race 3 – Rolling Handicap Start – Sunday (Dry)

Club Sport headed the field in the last race of the weekend with an approximate 30 sec gap back to Club Sport Open and what was meant to be another 30 sec gap back to Pro Sport, but unfortunately the actual gap back to Pro Sport pole sitter David Glasson in his very fast Radical was only a few seconds. However it was great to see Club Sport cars getting a well deserved run at the front of the field.

The fast boys at the back quickly got to work with John Mines in sensational driving form; he carved his way through the pack and within a couple of laps was on David Glasson’s bumper. These two went at for the whole 8 laps with a slight coming together at Higgins bend. Iain Slight had car troubles and retired early, and the Alan Barker had a lonely race back in third.

Huw Allen was running well in 4th with Lloyd Wilson and Chris MacLennan having a very close battle and James Coup and Craig Alexander a little further back.

John Bloemendal had another off the track moment and Trev Lines pulled out on the warm up lap with electrical issues.

At the drop of the flag, David Glasson did a great job to hold out the charging Jonny Mines, Allan Barker 3rd.

Summary

It was a very successful weekend for the first round of 8 for the 2012 Championship, and a pleasing turnout of sports cars were well supported by the Star Cars.

Taupo is only 2 weeks away and a number of drivers have some work to do to get their cars ready, the competition in all classes looks very close this year with the margin for error being very thin.

See you all in Taupo

Stumpy.