

## EVO CATERHAM ACADEMY

### RACE REPORT – GROUP TWO

STOWE – 30<sup>TH</sup> -31<sup>ST</sup> AUGUST 2003

Silverstone, Stowe circuit, the venue for the very first Academy race of the season. The circuit is 0.796 miles in length and runs in an anti-clockwise direction. There are two long straights, leading into North and coming out of North into West. It is broken up by the Esses between West and South. This circuit was familiar to you all as you had completed your ARDS Test and your Academy Test day there.

Another beautiful bright morning, Andy Billett, Championship Scrutineer, had stayed at the circuit on Saturday night and had been amazed at the clarity of the sky, he had even been able to see Mars (not sure how many beers he had consumed). The weather was a huge bonus as the forecast had not been good.

Being Sunday, signing on and scrutineering were an hour later than on the Saturday, (I for one was very grateful for that). All present and correct, no late arrivals a la David Yu, drivers briefing duly completed, on to first practice. Due to the limited number of starters at Stowe Circuit the qualification process is slightly unusual. The group had to be split into two qualifying sessions. The drivers were ordered by class championship and from that ordered list the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> etc in the class would qualify in the first session and the remainder in the second session.

First qualifying session went out, Christian had a spin at North, Bonzo a spin at West but no major damage done. Qualifying two followed, a few more spinners in this one, Cliff had a spin at West, Mike Richards had a spin at the Esses and Garrett had a huge off coming out of the straight into North. Mike then had another spin coming out of South!

Grid for Race 1 was formed by sequentially putting the fastest drivers from the first session in the odd-numbered grid positions and the fastest drivers from the second session in the even-numbered positions, the fastest 12 to race in Race 1 and the remainder in Race 2.

The sun was still shining and no rain to be seen, it looked as though we were going to be very lucky. And so to racing..... Race 1 and quite a surprise in this top half of the group.. Bonzo had out qualified his City Index team mate Jim!!! Gary Brown was on pole which was a huge thrill for him, Mike Richards next to him and on the second row were Christian and Bill. Green flag lap and you were off, Stephen Rowden got a fantastic start, as did Bonzo. Christian seemed to be struggling slightly. Neil Fletcher had a good start also and moved up to 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Pole man Gary had not had a good first lap, moving down to around 5<sup>th</sup> place. Mike Richards took an early lead followed by Bill, Nathan and Stephen. Bonzo must have had a moment somewhere because he was now bringing up the rear. Nathan was making a charge and took Neil at North, Christian had a spin at

South which put him at the back of the grid (more about Christian's demise later). The race seemed to take on a pattern, Mike, Bill, Nathan and Stephen. Cliff had a spin at West and managed to continue, he and Bonzo were having a great tussle at the back of the field. Christian was battling all the time, there was obviously a problem with him or his car!! Gary was fighting to get back to the front and took Neil coming out of North, as did Stephen Rowden. Nathan put on a spurt towards the end of the race and slightly overshot coming out of South!! The winner was Mike who had had a fairly easy run for his money, with Bill second, Nathan third and Gary fourth.

Christian was not happy with his performance and had a good look at his car at the end of the race. It transpired that he had been racing with a screwdriver jammed between the steering column!!! ( think he had a word with his spanner man)... A lesson to be learnt guys. Mike Richards also got fastest lap.

And so to the race for the slower qualifiers... Merlin found himself on pole, with Matt Louth next door and Simon and Jimbo on the second row. All of you managed to get round the first corner, but Matt had a spin ,allowing Merlin to take the lead which he kept until the 12<sup>th</sup> lap. Peter Dickinson had started last on the grid and had moved up to 5<sup>th</sup> place at the end of lap 3!! A good battle was emerging between Mike Styles and Andrew Beaumont, Andrew having made his way up the field slowly but surely. Matt Louth had another spin at North, putting him at the back of the field. Simon eventually managed to take Merlin as Merlin ran wide coming out of South on lap 12, and at this stage Jim Tatchell was in second place, having woken up somewhere after the third lap. There was a tremendous tussle between Jim and Merlin before Simon Mardle appeared from nowhere to take the lead on lap 12. Jim briefly took the lead again before spinning on the penultimate lap coming out of North which left Simon to win the race with Jim finishing 8<sup>th</sup>. It was a tremendous race, very closely contested with no contact which was amazing considering how close the racing was. The winner therefore, Simon Mardle, despite carrying a cone under his car for part of the race, with Merlin in second place and an immensely delighted Peter Dickinson in third.

At the end of this race the Clerk of the Course, Tony Watts congratulated all of you for contesting such a well fought race with no contact, praise indeed.

As if that was not enough excitement for the day, the Academy Challenge race was still to come for those of you who had entered the optional race.

This race was won by Mike Richards, with Nathan second, Bill third, Gary fourth and Jimbo 5<sup>th</sup>, Mike Richards getting fastest lap.

Thanks to all for staying for prize giving, it had been a long exciting day.

Kim Denning