

EVO CATERHAM ACADEMY 2003-05-20

REPORT ROUND ONE

GROUPS ONE AND TWO

BRIDGESTONE HETHEL SPRINT – LOTUS FACTORY, HETHEL, NORFOLK

Well, at last it had arrived, our very first event, after what had seemed like months of waiting. The weekend actually started on the Saturday evening as quite a number of us managed to meet for a meal and a chat which was a good starting point for the day ahead, for some anyway! It was a good time for informal chats and to get to know fellow competitors from each group, as for this first event both groups were competing at the same event on the same day, which idiot planned that!!!! (Oh I think it was me)...

It was great for me being back in Norfolk as it was not long ago that I lived only 20 mins from Hethel, and I knew that we would all be getting a wonderfully warm and very friendly welcome from Neville and Tina Moon and the rest of the BARC Midlands crew who always look after us so well at Hethel.

It was a great sight to behold on arriving at the venue, gaggles of Caterhams all looking pristine and shiny, just like their owners.. Seriously, the cars were very well presented, even the decals were on the right way up and in correct positions!

To say the day started in mild panic was not an exaggeration, but then again what was to be expected with 53 novices on their very first event... Once the signing on and scrutineering was over with, which did not go as smoothly as it could have done, (guys you were lucky that Neville was so lenient with you all), it was down to the serious business of breakfast. The bacon rolls at Hethel are the best, you won't find a better one anywhere else, good old Norfolk piggys, then a little light exercise was required so a walk of the course seemed like a good idea. The circuit is a Test Track for Lotus Cars and is approx 1.2 miles. It consists of Factory straight leading into Clark Corners, which leads into Graham Hill, then on to the Roundabout and out into Senna Curves followed by Windsock Corner and the finish line.

Driver's briefings were next on the agenda, of which you had two, one general one and then a separate one from Tina Moon, Deputy Clerk of the Course. Tina passed on some very important and useful information to you all, this being your very first event.

The weather forecast for the day was not brilliant, it was meant to be dry to start with and rain coming in later. It was therefore prudent to get the meeting underway as quickly as possible. Your first practice run was in any order, the second practice run and both timed

runs were to be in batch and number order. First practice seemed to go without too much trouble until Ken Lowes started his run, Ken was in trouble very soon after the start, he had come out of the chicane and went straight into the tyre wall. Unfortunately for Ken he was taking quite a bit of speed out of the chicane and hit the tyre wall very hard indeed. All the rescue vehicles were there in an instant, but due to the fact that Ken was complaining of pain in his lower back, as a precautionary measure they cut him out of the car and he was taken to the local hospital. We found out later that Ken had fractured a vertebra in his lower back, and in fact he is still in hospital in Norwich, but is in fine fettle and annoying the nurses to his hearts content!! I would like to thank all of you who have so kindly sent best wishes to Ken through myself and we all wish him a speedy recovery. (Don't tell him I told you but they are fitting him for a corset today, he is looking for the fishnets to go with it). Seriously, he is in very good spirits but will have to take things easy for a while.

I was unable to see the practice runs, but at the end of the two practice runs a leader had emerged in the shape of Simon Mardle in Group 2 and Doug Clark in Group 1. Lunch was the next item on the agenda.

It was lovely to see so many supporters for you all, family and friends alike. I do hope you will all come and support the guys at each event, the more the merrier. Neil and Christian I do hope you are paying your dads a decent wage or buying them a decent pint for all their hard work, (Neil no more sleeping on the job either). The weather was still being kind to us which was such a bonus. My thanks to Bonzo and Jimbo alias Tweedledum and Tweedledee for keeping me fed and watered during the day.

So onto the timed runs, penalties came into play, with a failed run if you had all four wheels on the grass, and time penalties if you hit cones. Ben Scammel, Mike Richards, Howard Pessall all had failed runs, Mike Blackadder had a cone penalty of 5 seconds, Chris Milner chose the wrong gear coming out of Senna Curves which spoiled his chance of a good run. So at the end of all this Jethro came out on top in Group One with 78.83 and Nathan came out on top in Group Two with 78.15. Mike Blackadder was kicking himself as his time of 78.82 would have been the fastest time but for the cone penalty of 5 seconds. There was allsorts of chat round the paddock re tyre pressures and understeer and oversteer etc, which anti roll bar to use, how much petrol should be in the car etc etc.

Weather was still holding for us thank goodness, final run up and coming. You were obviously far more confident now most times coming down quite significantly. Richard Irving had a moment coming out of Clark Corners, all four wheels off so a fail for him, Paul Phipps also had four wheels off at the Roundabout so a fail for him, as did James Weedon. Chris Milner messed up at the Senna Curves, knocking out cones etc. The rest of you seemed to handle this final run pretty well, and at the end it was Mike Blackadder who came out on top in Group One with a 78.22, despite having a leery moment going into Graham Hill! Mike was followed by Nick Potter with 78.45 and Jethro coming in close third with 78.83, well done to all of you, so very close. In Group Two it was Nathan Bell who was quickest with 78.15 followed by Mike Styles with 80.75 then in third place a delighted Alan Kingsman with 80.89. Trophies were also given to 4th and

5th places, these went to Doug Clark and Robert Winrow in Group One and Ben Pontin and Mike Richards in Group Two.

Thanks to all of you who stayed for prize giving, it is always nice to stay and congratulate the winners of not just your own championship but those of fellow competitors of the day.

Thanks to all the BARC officials, marshals and medical teams etc, without their hard work and enthusiasm there would be no Motorsport. Special thanks to Neville and Tina who kept us all going in Race Control with their unfailing sense of humour, and their help with getting you novices through your first event successfully.

I hope you all enjoyed the day as much as I did, and judging by all your e mails you certainly did. This season promises to be a very exciting one.

I just hope there are no ladies hen nights anywhere near Harewood or Lydden!!!

Kim Denning
Caterham Motorsport CoOrdinator