

## EVO CATERHAM ACADEMY

ROUND ONE 24<sup>TH</sup> APRIL

### AINTREE SPRINT GROUPS ONE AND TWO

Well, what a start to the season, the weather of course made it even more special, hope you did not get too burnt, I did and have got the red nose to prove it!!

This was our second visit to Aintree with the Academy and we were made very welcome again by Liverpool Motor Club, who I am sure you will all agree, went out of their way to help make your first ever event as enjoyable as possible. My thanks go to Phil Gough, Secretary, who managed to find time to walk the course with you; John Harden and Ron Hunt, Clerks, who were only too happy to give their help and advice to you all throughout the day. Also thanks to James Kerr, ex Academist who walked the course with you giving you the benefit of his knowledge. The day was very smoothly and efficiently run, and you helped in making it that way by being where you should be on time and in order! Well done to all of you for presenting yourselves and your cars in an almost impeccable manner. We did have a few no shows for this first event for different reasons, look forward to seeing you guys at the next events.

Aintree of course is home to the Grand National for those horsy ones amongst you and is a fairly tight and technical course. It starts with a 250 metre straight leading into the first corner, tight left hander, Country Corner, followed by Village Corner, a banked right hander which takes you into Valentines Way, then comes Bechers Bend, a fairly intimidating bend as it starts quite tight but quickly opens out and lasts for around 450 metres. To get this right takes a lot of confidence and if you do get it right you gain that important extra bit of speed to take you on to Railway Straight, the longest straight of the circuit being 600 metres in length.. Phew, what a prospect.

Clerk of the Course Ron Hunt gave a full briefing for all drivers and then had a further chat to all Academy drivers just to ensure you all knew what you were doing.

Luckily we were last on the programme, this gave us time to sort out some minor problems that inevitably happen on a first event... There were a few timing struts missing, lots of numbers to be stuck on but nothing too serious.. (Some things won't be mentioned Chris and Mark!) Few licences needing signatures and photographs, but that's not unusual either. Nick and Simon from Midlands were on hand to help with minor problems with some of the cars and worked very hard to get you all sorted, thanks to them.

1<sup>st</sup> practice seemed to come round all too quickly but you were all organised and ready to go and line up in good time. It is very difficult to say much about a sprint as it is all over in seconds but I will try and write something interesting!

Just a few more checks as you were lining up, making sure you all had your arm restraints on, and in the correct position and that your seat belts were secure and helmets on etc. It was nice to see John Harden giving you all advice at the start line, I expect those butterflies were buzzing around by then.

The competition consisted of two practice runs and three timed runs which was fantastic as it is usual only to get two timed runs.

First practice went seemingly without a hitch all of you managing to get round okay and no failed runs. Second practice was similar, although Paul Ray Johnson had a throttle problem coming down Railway Straight but managed to get to the finish line. There were lots of missed gears coming off the start line but this problem diminished during the day as you got used to it. At the end of the practice runs Henry Fletcher had the fastest time with 55.41 in Group One, and in Group Two Keith Chanter ran away with a 55.17, a very good time indeed.

Lunch time..... this was spent by some of you sunbathing (Henry and Luke looking more at home on the bank of the Thames on their striped deckchairs) and others busily sorting cars out and discussing tyre pressures and colours of roll bars etc, keeping the boys from Midlands busy.

It was lovely to see so much support from family and friends at this first event, and lots of tiny tots as well, hope they did not suffer too much from the sun.. Luckily facilities at Aintree were very good and the arrival of the ice cream van went down very well indeed. There was another ex Academy competitor competing at Aintree, Matt Gilbanks, great to see him and Gail again. This is one of the lovely things about Caterham Racing, you get to see lots of old faces time after time as a huge percentage of previous Academy competitors are competing in speed and race events all over the country.

Enough of all that and down to the serious bit.. timed runs. The weather was still very hot and dry, and the fact you were more used to the track meant times were coming down quite a bit. Most of you knocked about 2 seconds off you practice runs. Brent Marshall had a spin which put his time back a bit, but Jeremy Ellis knocked almost 4 seconds off his first practice time and Claudia managed to knock over 5 seconds off hers! At the end of this first timed run Patrick Scharfegger in Group One managed a 54.82 which put him in the lead and in Group Two Jeremy Ellis was in the lead with a 53.84, which was very close to the Academy record held by John Gaw in 2001 with 53.57.

Second timed run, and again all of you managed to complete the course, Brent having a better run this time with a 59.59. Jamie Mackrill (son of Bob who competed in the Academy two years ago) was improving also. Some of you went slightly slower in this

run and at the end of this run lead in Group One was taken by Paul Jepson who did 54.47, with Jeremy still in the lead with that amazing 53.84.

Now the crunch time and you were all lining up for the very last time... competition was tight, no more so than with the Brown Brothers fighting for family honour, not much to choose between them at that time. Andy Blight not happy with this run with a spin at Country putting him way back, and Adrian just pushing too hard clipping the bales coming out of Village Corner into Valentines Way.. this caused a red flag and a few minutes wait whilst his car was sorted out. Luckily not too much damage done. Meanwhile back at the start poor Claudia was waiting but this did not put her off as she managed to beat her previous time. No more dramas to speak of during this last run, and by the looks on your faces as you came back in the paddock you all looked as though you had enjoyed it!

So, the final results, in Group One it was Paul Jepson who took the honours with a 54.11 well done Paul. Adrian Wagstaff took second with a 54.67 achieved on his second run, and third was Henry Fletcher whose best time was 54.68, so close between him and Adrian! In Group One, Jeremy had already set the fastest time on his first run and this was not beaten, so he took the honours, followed by Guy Harrington who had driven really well all day, with 54.17 and third came Keith Chanter with his 54.19, Keith had improved his times with each run and was delighted to receive an award.

Prize giving was held in the Golf Club, thanks to all of you who stayed to give support not only to our winners but to the winners in the other championships competing that day. I realise you all have a long way to go home but please stay for prize giving if you can, one day it may be you!

John Harden, Chairman of Liverpool Motor Club and Deputy Clerk of the Course congratulated me at the end of the day on your behaviour both on and off the course. He was very impressed with the way in which you handled your first event, and that is praise indeed, well done.

I add my thanks to you all as well, let's have more of the same at our next events. Please don't be offended if I have not mentioned your name in this report, there are far too many of you for me to do that but it does not mean you are any less important!

Kim Denning  
Championship Co-Ordinator