

Club FF1600 MS Race Report - Mallory Park 27th September 2009

Race Report:

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Rounds 9 & 10 of the Club Formula Ford Championship (Midlands South) in association with Richard Egger Insurance

Raceday:

A clear blue sky and warm temperatures greeted the drivers for their second visit of the season to the Mallory Park circuit in Leicestershire. This double header round of the Club Formula Ford Midlands South Championship was the season finale, and the scene was set for some frantic battles for championship and class honours.

Qualifying:

The drivers assembled for qualifying in excellent weather conditions, and soon ventured out on track to try and secure a good grid placing. Adam Quartermaine and Stuart Kestenbaum were the early pacesetters and the only two drivers to dip into the sub 50 second lap times. Snapping at their heels were Martin Galpin, Josh Barnett and John Owen who traded lap times in their efforts to get onto the front row of the grid.

In the end it was Quartermaine in his Van Dieman RF99 and Kestenbaum running his 'new' Reynard FF89 who shared the front row, with Quartermaine on pole by three tenths of a second – a gap that belied the 10 years difference in chassis age. Bedding in new brakes and an overheating issue put Galpin on the back foot, but he still managed an excellent third spot just in front of Barnett and Owen. Ian Wood, Richard Hall, Stephen Williams and John Fay completed the line up for the next couple of rows and the compact grid ensured that the crowd were in for some close racing.

Race 1:

After a slight delay from the previous race to remove a much shortened MR2 from the gravel trap and rebuild the barrier at Gerard's Bend, the Club FF1600 drivers lined up on the grid for round 9 of the championship. As the lights went out Quartermaine made the most of his pole position and shot off into an early lead while Kestenbaum and Galpin fought tooth and nail for second place. By the end of lap 1 Quartermaine was over a second ahead of the charging pack and looking comfortable at the front, but at the end of lap two this lead was down to a tenth and his engine sounded distinctly unwell. Unfortunately it didn't improve and he retired on lap three.

The lead was then taken over by Kestenbaum and he was being pushed all the way by the hard charging Galpin. They were involved in a healthy battle for the next couple of laps where Galpin set fastest lap of the race on lap 5 and on the very next lap picked up a puncture and was forced to retire, allowing Kestenbaum some breathing space up at the front. Barnett and Owen were involved in an entertaining and close fought battle for second, with Barnett keeping Owen at bay for lap after lap. Owen was extremely feisty and made several brave attempts for second place, Barnett finally succumbing at Shaw's hairpin on lap 17. Barnett wanted the place

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back and hounded the Swift SC92F driver for the remaining laps, but Owen soaked up the pressure and kept focussed.

Further down the order the drivers started to spread out and Williams ended his first run out in a FF1600 for 15 years(!) with a broken gear linkage in lap 13. As the chequered flag fell it was a victorious Kestenbaum who crossed the line first in his Class C Reynard, 12 seconds ahead of Owen and Barnett. Wood, Hall and Fay rounded out the top six in a race where many of the top runners retired with mechanical issues. Kestenbaum who is a previous two times champion of the series, gratefully accepted his trophy, garland and obligatory kiss as he celebrated the win.

Race 2:

With the threat of light rain disappearing and the drivers relieved they didn't have to adjust to a wet setup at the last minute, the final round of the championship was all set to get underway. This promised to be an exciting race as some of the quickest cars were starting at the back of the grid after the retirements in race 1. Kestenbaum made a good getaway and headed off into the lead, but it was Galpin and Quartermaine who were making the headlines as they sliced their way through the pack to 2nd and 3rd respectively by the end of lap 2. Owen was second but he wasn't to repeat his superb performance in race 1, as he went off at Gerard's and ended up beached in the gravel.

Meanwhile Galpin and Quartermaine continued to swap fastest laps and slowly reeled in the leader. As Galpin was readying himself for an attack on Kestenbaum, Quartermaine overtook him on the outside coming into the John Cooper Esses in a bold move that almost rendered circuit commentator Andrew Wilkins speechless! One lap later Quartermaine repeated the same manoeuvre on Kestenbaum to take the lead and quickly put some distance between himself and the second place man. Galpin also moved in, sensing an opportunity to take the place from Kestenbaum but unfortunately his mechanical gremlins reappeared and his engine temperature started to soar, resulting in another DNF on lap 18.

Quartermaine and Kestenbaum started to encounter traffic, but it was the leader who was the most decisive at dealing with the well behaved backmarkers, and he maintained his advantage to win by six tenths of a second. It was an epic drive by Quartermaine and well deserved win, especially as he had fought his way from last on the grid to take the top spot on the podium.

Summary:

The championship finale provided two excellent races with highs and lows for the drivers, and great wheel to wheel battles. Now that all the classes and overall championship have been decided, it's time to prepare for the upcoming Formula Ford Festival and Walter Hayes Trophy, and then plan for the 2010 Club FF1600 Championship!!