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moleracing 2018 season – report 3 of 4 – Summer Progress

Abingdon

The car loom was repaired following the failure at Pembrey and I was back in action the following weekend. Abingdon is highly unusual in as much as the 140-car entry is split in two, with half the field competing on one course while the other half competes on another. At lunchtime you swap over and at the end of the day your best time from each course is added together for an overall result. I first competed at this event around 2000 and have done so about 6 times – but never won it.

In practice on the Bentley course, I went off three times, due to attempting to find the limit of braking on the dusty airfield surface, but that is what practice is all about! The SBD crew also thought it funny and made a “Super Flymo Cutter’ nose cone label! However only two timed runs were available to set a time, and due to the brake bias coming undone and putting 90% of the braking on the front, I spun off on my first time run. All pressure on the final timed run, so treading that fine line between playing safe and getting decent time I stayed on track to be 0.06 secs behind main rival Dave Simms at the half way point.



The afternoon course was curvier in nature and peaks speeds around 135mph. No spins or offs, but after the first timed run I’d only gone 0.01 quicker than Dave, so all to play for on the final run of the day. I analysed video and past data, planned where I thought I could find a bit more time and attempted to execute it. Dave was also happy with his run as he found 0.81 secs which considering how close things were beforehand, it was a big leap, I however also found time and improved by around 0.9



to take the overall win by just 8 hundredths! So, 18 years after I first attended, I finally got my name on the trophy!



Onboard video of this lap found on this YouTube link

<https://youtu.be/zclkoLMjA1Q>

Snetterton

A successful weekend considering the powerful opposition this year. Nick Algars day didn't start well when he offloaded the car and since he packed it away at the last event when it was working fine, a rear shock absorber mount had fractured in transit – but with the use of a local Norfolk welder he was running again by lunchtime. Steve and Matt had a new rear wing fitted as part of the ongoing development program of the works Dallara.

I qualified 5th fastest and top 2 litre, but this dropped to 7th in the run off as Steve Broughton and John Graham sneaked ahead. Nick snapped a driveshaft on the start line to add to his weekend woes. Jeff Wiltshire was debuting his 620bhp Norma after 12 months of getting it together and it overheated on the start line resulting in a £12k engine rebuild! I went deep at the hairpin on the second run off, and although I'd probably only lost ½ second, decided it wasn't going to be a faster time and backed off to save the tyres. Everyone was suffering with degradation in the extreme heat of the weekend.

Stewart Robb knocked the Calder's of the number 1 spot with his first victory for about 5 years in his Pilbeam with a new V10 LMP1 engine.

Sunday was the same layout and no major incidents. Steve and Matts water leak got worse, so Matt didn't drive the Dallara and Steve only took 3 runs to minimise damage – and still beat me! In the final run off I qualified 7th and finished 6th but it was extremely close, just 0.08secs behind Steve and 0.06secs ahead of the V8 of Terry.

Nick had repaired his driveshaft from yesterday, then blew the gearbox up in timed runs – who said motorsport was easy! The Calder's ran on intermediate tyres as they had run out of slicks, with Colin pushing Heather down to take the win and Stewart couldn't find his top form from yesterday but completed the podium positions.

Lydden

The Lydden event is always a favourite and saw the best result of the year with a 4th in the run off, and after I detected the brake issue at the end of the day, I was left wondering – what if I sorted this earlier!

New wheels and fresh tyres on my Van Diemen were looking rather good!

Numbers weren't as high as usual as Nick was back home rebuilding the gearbox and engine and the 3 big cars from Scotland hadn't made the long journey just for one day. However, Steve and Matt put a new Vauxhall engine in the Dallara after the Snetterton leakage issues and were in fine form with new tyres also.



All pressure was on John Graham who should have taken the run off win easily, but after he spun on his first of 2 runs, he had to strike the balance of a 'Steady Eddy Run' giving reasonable points – or go for it for maximum points but risk coming away with nothing. In the end he managed 3rd, with the SBD car topping the day and Matt, shown here on the left taking his maiden run off win!



Knockhill - Scotland

Just 4 days later the circus pulled into town at the opposite end of the country. On Saturday we run anticlockwise which has only been licensed for a few years and is a challenge as always. The course has everything a drive would want, and it is worth the 700 mile round trip to this Scottish circuit. Only a few runners made the journey, so qualification in the top 12 wasn't an issue, just the quality of the entry with 10 more powerful cars than mine!

I was hoping for rain, now that I have both Intermediate tyres and full wets, but the relentless British summer continued, and it was going to be down to driving skills and brave pills to take time out of the big cars.

I qualified 7th overall, ahead of Nick to take some good 2 litre points, but behind Graham in the more powerful EcoBoost by a few hundredths for the first time this season, although in the run off, I moved ahead of Graham but Nick pushed me down – all so close! Heather Calder won the run off with a new track record! Unfortunately, Steve Brown had a retirement with his chain snapping and damaging the clutch in the process, so he went home early the following morning.

On Sunday we ran the conventional direction, and for the first time I pushed the car hard enough to make it spin, once in practice and annoyingly once in qualifying. So just like Abingdon and John at Lydden, I had to find the balance between setting a good time and not spinning. Interestingly, post meeting professional analysis from the onboard video has given me lots of things to work on and I cannot blame the car!



photo by John Stewart – Flat Out Photography, showing Nick stopping in time to not hit me.

It was great to drive in front of a crowd of a 1000 or so, who were there to see other events as well as the British Sprint Championship.



Graham and I tied to the hundredth on run 1 and I pushed ahead by 0.1secs to finish the Sunday run off in 6th place. Poor Nicks run of gearbox issues continued as the box seized solid this time. Heather demolished the outright track record in this direction to start staking her claim on her defence of the 2018 British title – although a midweek plea on social media for a new driveshaft joint might cause issues to Ireland this weekend.



After getting home with a minor incident, I invested in 4 new trailer tyres. Also, some aerodynamic upgrades have been added for this weekend overseas leg to Northern Ireland. Will Nick rebuild the car in time, what will break next, will the Calder's find a driveshaft joint – and will I manage the ferry without being sea sick?



Steve

British Sprint Championship 2018 – After round 8, best 9 scores to count		
Heather Calder	3.5 Gould55 Nicholson McLaren	84
Colin Calder	3.5 Gould55 Nicholson McLaren	78
John Graham	3.5 Gould55B Nicholson McLaren	72
Stewart Robb	5.0 Pilbeam MP88 B-01	63
Steve Broughton,	2.0 SBD Dallara F3 RB01	48
Steve Miles	2.0 Van Diemen RF96mm17	44
Terry Holmes	3.5 Lola Tegra Judd	42
Pete Goulding	1.6T Mygale FF200	40
Graham Blackwell	1.6T Mygale VVTi	39
Matt Hillam	2.0 SBD Dallara F3 RB01	37
Simon Bainbridge	2.5 SBR Chrono V8 TT	26
Chris Jones	1.0 Force TA	25
Nick Algar	1.3T DJ Firehawk	24
Graham Porrett	3.5 Lola Tegra Judd	12
Steve Brown	1.6 JKS JR01	6
Carole Torkington	1.6 SBD OMS CF08	4
Bill Gouldthorpe	1.6 SBD OMS CF08	3
Grahame Harden	1.0 Jedi	3
Chris Bennett	1.0 Force TA	1
Mark Anson	1.0 Jedi Mk1 GSXR	
Nick Houston	1.0 Jedi Mk 2	
Glynn Sketchley	1.3T Force PT	
Piers Thynne	3.2 Radical	
Jeff Wiltshire	3.2 Norma	
Paul Horrox	2.1 Juno SSE	
John Louden	1.7 Westfield SE	
Martin Pickles	1.0 Jedi Mk1 GSXR	

British Sprint Championship 2018 – 2 Litre class after round 8		
Steve Miles	2.0 Van Diemen RF96mm17	353
Steve Broughton,	2.0 SBD Dallara F3 RB01	273
Matt Hillam	2.0 SBD Dallara F3 RB01	226
Nick Algar	1.3T DJ Firehawk	213
Glynn Sketchley	1.3T Force PT	

Remaining events 2018		
Kirkistown	4 th & 5 th August	Northern Ireland
Rockingham	Sunday 19 th August	Corby, Northants
Blyton Park	8 th & 9 th September	Gainsborough, Lincs
Anglesey	6 th & 7 th October	North Wales

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