



Snetterton 300

The final UK round of the Saker Challenge was held at Snetterton, which also hosted the first UK round, back in May. However, on this occasion, the Sakers were going to take part in four, half hour races, for the first time, on the new 300 circuit layout.

Qualifying on Saturday morning, was a twenty five minute session and the fastest times were recorded in the first flying laps of the session. Steve Harris logged an amazing time of 2:02:212, which stood for the rest of the session and handed him pole position, with Wheeldon alongside him on the front row and Carannante and Rose making up the second row. Mark Poole led the invitation class entries in 6th position, with a time of 2:06:218 in his BMW M3.

The first race of the weekend for the Sakers was the last of Saturday's races. The rolling start saw Wheeldon gain a slight advantage approaching Riches, but Harris doggedly held his line and kept first place on the run down to Montreal. Wheeldon misjudged his approach to the hairpin on cold tyres and Rose took the advantage, getting a better drive up to Palmer, where he snatched 2nd place from Wheeldon. The Chevron GR8 driven by Ray Grimes in the invitation class had made a good start, moving ahead of the Saker of Burton, Poole's M3 and Spencer's LM3000 up to 4th place.



By the end of lap one, the leading three Sakers had a six second advantage over the Chevron. By the third lap, the Chevron dropped to 7th place as the Spirit Fitness/Team O'BR Saker of Burton moved up to 4th, closely followed by Poole's BMW M3. But, the three leading Sakers of Harris, Rose and Wheeldon were eighteen seconds ahead and stretching their lead. Poole overtook Burton on lap four and moved into 4th place. For the next seven laps, the gap between Harris and Rose in 1st and 2nd respectively, fluctuated a little, but remained less than a second, with Wheeldon 2.5 seconds behind, but a huge forty seconds ahead of 4th place, as the leaders put in blisteringly consistent 2:02 laps.

By lap twelve, Rose had closed to within 2-tenths of Harris and Wheeldon was only one second behind. The three leaders had lapped Spencer's Prosport LM3000 in the invitation class, who was suffering a lack of power and was way off the pace. On the final lap, Wheeldon spun out on the exit of Hamilton, but rejoined to finish in 3rd place. Harris took the victory by 0.3 seconds over Rose.

Race two took place first thing on Sunday morning and the overnight rain had left a damp track. Harris led the first tentative lap, as the drivers all struggled to warm their slicks, but by the end of lap two, a dry line had started to appear at some parts of the track and the three leaders of Harris, Wheeldon and Rose had stretched out a lead of five seconds over Burton, in the Team OBR car in 4th place.



On lap three, Wheeldon spun on the exit to Riches, gifting 2nd place to Rose and 3rd place to Burton. By lap four, Wheeldon had taken Burton to regain 3rd place and on lap five, with a six second lead, Harris lost control on the exit from the Bomb Hole and went way off the circuit. He rejoined in 4th place, seventeen seconds off the lead, leaving Rose with a nine second lead over Wheeldon in 2nd. Poole was leading the invitation class, but was struggling for grip, eighty three seconds behind Rose. The Chevron GR8 of Nick Jarvis had made the wrong tyre choice, starting on wets and had to pit for slicks. The lack of a consistent dry line was causing problems, but Harris and Wheeldon were putting in faster lap times, Wheeldon making nine seconds on Rose in three laps and Harris being two seconds quicker than anyone.





By lap ten, Poole's lap times in his BMW M3 were approaching those of the leaders and he led the invitation class, albeit ten seconds behind the lead group of Sakers. By lap twelve, Rose led by two seconds from Wheeldon, who was only a couple of tenths ahead of Harris. Wheeldon had not seen Harris spin earlier and had assumed that Harris had pitted with a problem and was a lap down. A garbled radio signal meant that he thought his pit crew had confirmed this, so Wheeldon decided not to challenge Harris for track position. Two laps later when the chequered flag went out, Wheeldon was dismayed to learn that he had finished in 3rd place, not 2nd, behind Rose and Harris. Mark Poole's BMW M3 won the invitation class.

The 3rd and 4th races of the weekend were to be combined, as in previous rounds: the result of race three would decide the grid order for race four. The win was taken by Steve Harris, followed by Wheeldon and Burton.



The start of the 4th race was delayed for ten minutes as the Marshals tried to remove oil from the track which ran from Brundle right the way through Coram. Rose, who was starting at the back of the grid, made a blistering start, moving up to 4th place by turn one. On the 2nd lap, Mark Burton, ahead of Rose, was cautious of the oil at the Esses and Rose took his opportunity to overtake him under braking. He was now behind Harris and Wheeldon. By the end of lap three, less than 1.5 seconds separated Harris, Wheeldon and Rose, whilst the Prospert LM3000 of Paul Spencer battled with the Chevron of Chris Hart for the lead of the invitation class.

On lap four, at the exit of the Bomb Hole, Wheeldon got his rear tyre on some of the oil and spun out, recovering onto the track a fraction of a second ahead of Mark Burton's Team OBR Saker. On the following lap, Chris Hart made it past Spencer and on the next lap he passed Burton, moving into 4th place overall.



Rose had been pressuring Harris for the lead and on lap nine he finally succumbed at turn two, when Rose had a run on him through Riches and took the inside line for Montreal. On lap eleven, Harris then spun and lost ten seconds behind Rose, who set about increasing the gap to fourteen seconds by the time the chequered flag was shown. Harris finished 2nd with Wheeldon eight seconds behind him in 3rd place and Hart's Chevron GR8 took the invitation class win, finishing 4th overall.

Steve Harris, said: **"What a weekend! It's only the first year for the Saker Challenge in the UK, but there is so much competition and so many battles on track already! It's great fun! Bring on the world final in Zandvoort!"**

Other News

One of the Dutch Saker GT's won its class at the 24 hours of Barcelona last weekend! A great effort for the team! Congratulations!



Finally

I am looking forward to seeing our UK teams at Zandvoort on the 29th and 30th October, for the World Final. Here, we expect around thirty Saker teams to battle for the honour of being crowned World Champion!

Kindest regards

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