



Brett Smith leading Reece Barr in Qualifying



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MINI CHALLENGE 17

MINI CHALLENGE ROUND 2 SILVERSTONE 3-4 AND 10-11 JUNE

The Silverstone National Circuit suits the MINIs well, with its three blasts and a technical bit around Brooklands and Luffield. For the 15 minutes of Cooper Pro/Am qualifying, it was all go! The early pace-setter was Matt Hammond, followed by Jessica Hawkins. Jessica managed 13 laps, grabbing pole on her last lap with a 1:11.843; Matt was next with 1:12.024 followed by Sam Weller at 1:12.244. Quickest in the Am class was Daniel Bishop on 1:13.691, Stuart McLaren was second in 1:14.495 and third was Chris Middleton at 1:14.958.

In the first race Jessica got a great start, followed by Sam Weller. Matt slotted in behind. The third lap saw Sam take the lead, Jessica stayed in touch followed by Martin Poole. On lap five Jessica took back the lead. Martin stayed in second until the eighth lap when Matt

took second but fell to fourth briefly with Martin Poole in fifth. Sam Weller seized the moment to slot in behind Matt, ending up at the chequered flag in third. Unfortunately he was docked five seconds for exceeding track limits, along with Simon Walton, giving third back to Martin Poole. The grid for Sunday had Jessica on pole, Matt Hammond second and Martin Poole third beside Simon Walton.

In the Am class, Daniel Bishop showed the whole field the way home, leading from start to finish. Daniel was followed by Chris Middleton and Andy Godfrey.

On Sunday morning Jessica did it again, lights to flag. Martin Poole, Sam Weller, Simon Walton and Matt Hammond had their own battle. Martin Poole stayed in second until the ninth when Matt Hammond overtook him. In the Am class, Daniel Bishop and Chris Middleton both

had a good start, but Daniel was first into Copse. Stuart McLaren came from the back to score third.

The next race reversed the grid, giving pole to Martin Poole in the Pro class and Dale Jameson in the Am class. A super start by Sam Weller from the second row saw him get into Copse before Martin Poole and Matt Hammond while Jessica made up a place from fifth to fourth. Jessica waited until the fifth lap then out braked Martin Poole for third, with Matt Hammond slotting into second. The top five were looking good when an incident at Brooklands brought the yellow flag out. The safety car was deployed but the race couldn't continue and the red flag was waved. The Am class saw Stuart McLaren stay in front of Daniel Bishop as Owen Walton slid down the field. Stuart managed to fend off Daniel until the red flag called the race to an end. Not the

best way to end the weekend but cars can be fixed.

There were 10 cars in the very competitive Open class (R53 and R56). Andrew Tsang was very quick in qualifying with a 1:07.771 third lap. Rob Austin was the closest with 1:08.186 closely followed by Ben Dimmack on 1:08.385. Stu Lane has returned to the grid with an R56 while Aaron Reeve's car was eating supercharger belts.

Andrew Tsang got a good start in the first Open race and pulled away for a lights to flag victory. Rob Austin in his R56 had a great battle with Stu Lane and Ben Dimmack. Aaron Reeve's car ate yet another supercharger belt and retired on the fourth while Tim Bell's car was going well sideways around Copse. The head gasket had blown – the end of the weekend for Tim. After the race, all the cars were given attention by the scrutineers and Andrew Tsang's winning place was excluded due to technical infringements. This gave the victory to Stuart Lane.

In the next race Stu Lane got off to a great start with Rob Austin tucked in behind him into Copse. On lap two Rob showed his superior race craft and took the lead from Stu. Ben Dimmack put in a great turn of speed and maintained position behind the two leaders. He was the fastest on the track with a 1:08.329 lap.

Last race and reverse grid time, putting Andrew Tsang on pole alongside Ben Dimmack with Stu Lane on third and Rob



Mark Wakefield leading Charlie Butler-Henderson and James Turkington

Austin fourth. Aaron Reeve was fifth. Andrew Tsang had a good start and was first into Copse with Ben Dimmack very close behind. After the first lap, Ben took the lead and came home 2.5 seconds clear of Andrew Tsang. Rob Austin had a great race with Andrew for second. Aaron Reeve, his car running well at last, battled with Rob Austin in the next few laps. Having passed him on the fourth lap he then went on to challenge for second but in the end, Rob decided to bring the car home in one piece and settled for third. The reverse grid always throws in a joker, you never can predict the outcome!

The following weekend in JCW

qualifying, Brett Smith was on form and set the quickest lap of 2:22.205, with Rob Smith on 2:22.235, Max Bladon on 2:22.446 and with Charlie Butler-Henderson on 2:22.539. In the first race (on Sunday) Brett Smith was still on form and had a lights to flag victory. His only challenge came from Rob Smith who closed the gap but could not get past.

Meanwhile, Mark Wakefield and James Turkington were having their own race. Colin Turkington got past Mark Wakefield briefly but they swapped again just before the flag. Brett Smith was first, Rob Smith second and Mark Wakefield third.

The last race of the meeting and the reversed grid had Henry Neal in pole position next to Max Bladon. James Turkington had third alongside Mark Wakefield in fourth. Lights out and they stormed into Copse side by side.

Henry Neal had contact with Max Bladon that had Henry spinning off, leaving Max to pull out a margin when the safety car came out because JM Littmans' car went off the track. Safety car in, Max pulled away from the field, apart from Rob Smith. Rob was getting ready to reel Max in when the race was red flagged because Ryan Dignan had spun, stalled and refused to start. With so little time before the curfew, the race was stopped and places were put back a lap, giving first to Max Bladon, second to Rob Smith, third to Mark Wakefield and fourth Brett Smith. Disappointment for all – a nine-lap race shortened to four laps including two behind the safety car. That's racing! ■



Rob Smith on his way to the 2nd 2nd place of the weekend