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MGCC Race Report – Round 1 Silverstone - 29 March 2014

As the sun shone down on the Silverstone circuit on Saturday 29th March it was a thrilling start to the MG Car Club race season. A total of six different series' and championships set up camp in the paddock, to battle it out over nine races.

Drayton Manor Park MG Metro Cup

After a series of smooth qualifying sessions, racing began earlier than planned, with the Drayton Manor Park MG Metro Cup first to hit the track.

New to racing and the MG Metro Cup, novice racer Ben Rushworth led the way with a pole position start. As the first five red lights of the new season diminished, a strong launch from Rushworth saw him leap ahead, until Tom Sanderson wiggled his way past.

After losing the lead to Sanderson, Rushworth found himself immersed in battle, as Mike Williams and Jack Ashton muscled their way past. After a gripping squabble for a number of laps, Rushworth was sadly thwarted by mechanical difficulties, when he was forced to pull over in a plume of smoke.

A familiar sight soon resumed when Williams joined Sanderson at the front, as the pair battled for supremacy. Unable to make his way into the lead, Williams trailed Sanderson to the chequered flag, with the pair some 28 seconds ahead of third place.

Behind, bad luck befell third placed Ashton, when he suddenly disappeared from the running and into retirement. In his absence, Tony Howe was promoted to third place, to secure a sound start to his 2014 campaign. Philip Gough banked fifth place, despite starting 16th on the grid following a troubled qualifying session.

It was Williams' turn to celebrate in race two, when Sanderson's Rover Metro GTi suddenly slowed with just one minute to go.

Another effective getaway saw Sanderson immediately inherit the lead, as Williams again slotted into second. The pair appeared to be set for the remainder of the outing once again, however with just moments to go Sanderson was forced to vacate his position.

With clear track in front of him, Williams steered his way to victory, ahead of David Javes, Philip Gough, whilst Jonathan Woodcock narrowly beat Oli Hood to fourth place.

Peter Best Insurance MG Cup

Andrew Young was a force to be reckoned with in the first Peter Best Insurance MG Cup race. After stealing pole position, he immediately dived into the lead, to keep the chasing Robert Campbell at bay for the full 20 minutes.

With the top two positions decided early on, there was everything to play for further back. Paul Eales and Alan Brooke wrestled furiously over third place, as reigning champion James Walpole chased. With the trio engulfed in their own scrap, Tom Diment managed to weave his way up to third place.

Both keen to score class victory, the battle between Eales and Walpole certainly ignited. As Eales had the upper hand, a sudden spin saw him pirouette from fourth to sixth place, as Walpole and Brooke romped ahead.

A man on a mission, Eales was soon back on the tail of his chief rivals, once again keen to displace Brooke and Walpole. A series of speedy laps gave Eales the edge he needed, when he found himself displacing Brooke and closing in on Walpole once more.

A brave move around the outside of Copse onto the final lap saw Eales sneak ahead. As the pair weaved around the final tour, Walpole immediately fought back, but it was Eales who held the advantage across the finish line.

Young completed the perfect weekend with yet another victory in race two, again ahead of Campbell. Brooke looked set to score a third place finish, however as Diment caught up in the latter stages his race became unsettled.

After a spot of wheel to wheel action, Diment managed to sneak ahead of Brooke, with the latter picking up fourth place. Further back, a fierce race long tussle between Eales, Clive Jones and Walpole saw Eales land ahead of Jones as they reached the chequered flag.

College Motors MG Trophy Championship – Non-Championship Race

Jake Fraser-Burns and Richard Buckley provided thrilling entertainment for the first MG Trophy outing of the season, albeit in non-championship capacity, with the pair finishing side by side, just 0.006 seconds apart.

A good getaway for Fraser-Burns from pole position gave him the ideal advantage, however it was Buckley who had the edge as the pair toured their opening lap. From here, both Buckley and Fraser-Burns battled furiously.

As we settled into the middle phase of the race, Fraser-Burns saw his opportunity to sneak ahead, however it was short lived, when Buckley soon regained control. It was far from over between the top two, when the final lap introduced us to a whole new level of excitement. With the chequered flag readied, Buckley and Fraser-Burns toured side by side, each trying to edge ahead. As the flag came into the sight it was a drag race to the end, with Fraser-Burns' MG ZR ahead by just 0.006 seconds to give him his first race win.

Behind the battle was just as exciting, with Richard Marsh able to defend his third place from Toby Sowery and Julia Penfold. A strong performance saw Penfold pile the pressure onto Marsh's similar MG ZR, however when a late race spin caught her off guard, Marsh was able to run away, taking the chasing Sowery with him.

Despite immense pressure from Sowery in the final stages, Marsh held on for third place, ahead of Sowery and Penfold. David Candy, Christopher Boulton and Ian Boulton completed the order.

Fraser-Burns made it two out of two, when the chasing Buckley suddenly slowed before retiring in race two. With more than 30 seconds protecting his lead, the final seven minutes appeared very lonely, until a dramatically slowing Fraser-Burns found himself fighting for the lead.

In the absence of Buckley, Marsh was promoted to second, bringing Sowery and Christopher Boulton with him. As the trio battled furiously, Fraser-Burns began to lose time, to drop into their clutches.

As the final lap came to a close Fraser-Burns managed to hold on, just three seconds ahead as he swept past the chequered flag. Marsh secured Class C victory and second place, ahead of Sowery and Christopher Boulton.

Cockshoot Cup

In only his second ever race, Jason Simm tasted victory in the sole Cockshoot Cup race. Courtesy of a good start in his MG ZS from pole position, both he and David Coulthard rocketed towards Copse corner. Initially, it was Coulthard, in his new MG F Cup car, who stole the lead, however Simm managed to retake the lead, a position he never relinquished.

Paul Clackett steered his way to a third place finish, some six seconds adrift of Coulthard. Mike Peters had held the fourth place spot for much of the 20 minute encounter, however with just two and a half minutes to go, he was forced to pull off at Copse, handing fourth place to Michael Ashcroft.

Simon Lowery and Ashley Woodward wrestled furiously, with Lowery eventually stealing fifth place, ahead of the MG ZS specialist.

Ecurie GTS

Mark Halstead and Stuart McPherson returned to winning ways in the Ecurie GTS season opener. After rapidly switching pole for the race lead, the pair were untroubled in their 45 minute pursuit.

With the top spot set in stone, the battle for second was certainly an attention grabber. Brian Lambert and Robi Bernberg were the gentlemen wrestling position, with Lambert leading the way during the first half of the race.

Despite his best efforts Bernberg was unable to find a way past the MGB pilot. However, as the mandatory pit stop window came into play, things began to work in Bernberg's favour. A later stop than his chief rival enabled Bernberg to dash ahead of Lambert, however it wasn't long before the pair were once again thrown into battle.

With just a handful of laps left to impress, Lambert and Bernberg enjoyed their final laps side by side. A brief slip onto the grass for Lambert saw his attempt for second come under threat, as Bernberg held on for second place, just half a second ahead as the chequered flag fell.

Elsewhere, drama found its way to John Andon, who suffered a drive through penalty due to a pit lane speed infringement, whilst Craig Taylor was handed a three second penalty due to making his pit stop too early.

Iconic 50s

The MMM's, T-Types and invited VSCC outing started well, however after just a few laps the red flag was thrown following an incident for Hamish McNinch.

As he rounded the Maggots section of the circuit, McNinch raised his hand having noticed a puncture on his MG C-Type. As the car struggled he was thrown from the car. After precautionary checks at the circuit's medical centre, McNinch was airlifted to hospital for further checks on his back.

At the restart a shortened 12 minute encounter saw John Bussey romp to T-Type victory, ahead of Stuart Dean. Original third placed man Nick Ashman seemed to struggle with a loss of power, as he dropped out of position multiple times. However, after dropping to fourth place he appeared to solve his MG TC's ailments, as he set about chasing Jonathan Harmer for third.

Unable to disturb Harmer's rhythm, Ashman was forced to settle for fourth, just 0.4 seconds behind as the flag fell.

After a fantastic day for our season opener, everyone at the MGCC is very much looking forward to Brands Hatch during 3rd-4th May, where we will have even more racing action to thrill and entertain.