

## Dwanes World

Saturday 05 March 2022 saw the biggest date in World Motorsport finally arrive, after what seemed like an eternity. Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March was the first and opening round of the 2022 SW Adair Tyres Northern Ireland Sprint Championship. The event, which ran at Nutts Corner circuit was hosted by North Ulster Car Club who have, for many seasons now, hosted the opening round of the championship.

The event had a whopping entry of 79 starters which is virtually unknown for a season opening event. Indeed their initial entry of 80 was filled within 36 hours, and their reserve list of 10 was filled within a further 12 hours. Demand was so high that they opened a reserve reserve list to try and accommodate everyone who wanted to compete.

Anyone who looked down the entry list before the event started could take their pick as to who was going to win in their eyes. The whopping entry contained 2021 Champion Alan Cassells in his OMS25, Rob Dwane from Galway in a similar OMS25, Tim Woodside in a Pilbeam MP82 which has previously won this championship, John Donnelly in a Pilbeam MP62 which is a very proven package, Steven Gault in his new Dallara F301, which is a car with serious history in this championship, George Stevenson in his Force PT which also has a lot of success on the local speed scene, and then throw the Hawthorne brothers, Scott McMullan Tom Devaney, Oliver Cormican (who won this event in 2020) and numerous others into the mix . It was all shaping up to be a brilliant day!

The first practice runs were a little late at kicking off due to circumstances which were unpredictable and completely outwith the control of the organising club. As usual North Ulster Car club wouldn't be beaten and they persevered, sorting out other people's issues to ensure that their event and this sprint went ahead and thank goodness they did, as it ended up being one of the best events I've attended in a long time. Hats off to North Ulster Car Club!!!

With not being used in a while, and with a very cold ambient track temperature in the morning, grip was as hard to find as cheap diesel. Sadly a few competitors found this out to their peril with the recovery vehicle being deployed on more than 1 occasion. As time and track use marched on Mr Grip made himself more readily available and the times started to tumble, as did one unfortunate competitor who sadly had an early finish after having the unfortunate view from his windscreen of sky then tarmac then sky again. Thankfully the said competitor walked away unscathed and his car is not as badly damaged as it could have been. He will return this season!!

By the time the timed runs started the pace was hotting up, as was the track temperature. Robert Dwane set a blinding first run of 92.04 to go 6.69secs ahead of Tim Woodside, who was a further 1.18 ahead of defending champion Alan Cassells. George Stevenson went fourth fastest and Scott McMullan went fifth overall in his first outing in his new car. Sadly Robert Dwane hadn't read the memo to set a fast first run and then slow down, as he went faster again on his second and then again on his third run to get his final time down to 90.5 secs which was a new class record. It needs to be remembered that this new record was set on the first weekend in March when it was cold and the circuit was greasy, so this shows how well Robert was

going. Everyone else went faster too with Alan Cassells getting down to a 95.73 sec run despite having transmission woes and Tim Woodside finished third with a best run of 94.43 which was only 0.73secs off Alans second placed time. Fourth went to Steven Gault who got down to a 98.57 on his debut day in his new car. With some more seat time and fresh new Rubber Steven will be up in amongst the top 3 challenging all around him.

A special mention must go out to Scott McMullan. Scott who is no stranger to the speed scene has campaigned his father's Luego Locost intermittently over the past 4 or 5 seasons, showing a serious potential in a heavier car engine car. For this season Scott purchased himself a Reis Aero which he and his father rebuilt over the winter. They shook the car down last week and this was Scott's first event in his new car. Despite being 400cc down on his closest competitors, the ever fast Hawthorne Twins, Scott drove the wheels off the new car and took a class win on his debut in the new car, which he is still very much learning to drive. This is no mean feat and he, like his extremely proud father had smiles like Cheshire cats at the end of the day. Well done Scott!! With Scott's new car, the chuckle Brothers and the addition of Trevor Roberts to class 7 this season class 7 will, once again be the class to watch as the season progresses. Graham Boyce will also be hard to work with in class 7 as 4 of the top 10 overall were class 7 drivers. I predict a cracker season in class 7 in 2022 and I couldn't at this stage predict a winner.

Working through the paddock there were a lot of new names and cars in the paddock which is great to see. Mike Todd and his son Nicholas made a return to the paddock for this event and Mike certainly is keen to do more events in his class 13 Mondiale. We had Gareth Blaine, Brian Little James Lightbody, Conor O'Boyle Craig Smyth Mark Smyth and Joshua Baird all making their debuts to the championship as well as the return of a few older faces who hadn't been seen in a while such as Brian McLaughlin, Phil Robinson, Ian Howard, Rudy Tate, and Jimmy Dougan.

In terms of the categories the unofficial title of fastest mini in the west went to Karl Johnston once again. Karl is the undisputed Mini king of the west this year. Second went to Gary Milligan who finished a mere 0.43 secs behind Karl. Sadly Gerry McGarrity didn't make the event but he will be at the next sprint on 19 March keen to retake the award for fastest mini in the west, in what some purists will tell you is the best mini in that particular challenge group!!

In the Heaslip Ladies Challenge Trophy Emma Campbell defended her 2021 title with a win ahead of Amy Hawthorne Sheryl McBride and Cathy McDade in that order. Emma had a perfect days driving and appears to have found some pace in the car over the winter. Sheryl had a slight incident during her practice run which left her confidence needing a boost, Cathy took up the family tradition of ploughing on her first timed run in her new car, which she only bought the previous week and had been unable to test, and Amy was having to adapt again to driving like a racing driver having spent the last 4 months driving her road car sensibly, with minimal revs, economical gear changes and no excessive heavy braking or cornering due to her insurance black box which all new drivers now have to use to get insurance. Due to having a new car Kathy's conversion factor was re-set to zero for this event which badly influenced her times but now that she has 1 event under her belt her factor will drop and she will be back amongst the girls on the time sheets. Having watched this

challenge on Saturday I think that this year is going to be tighter than before with every one of the ladies having the ability to win it.

The Specialist Category proved to be tight with only 1.16 secs covering the top 4. Scott McMullan took the maximum points ahead of David and Steven Hawthorne in that order and Graham Boyce. When Jim Hutchinson returns with his RSR and Andy Hawthorne and Richard Munnis all competing in this category, it's going to be a close fought title.

In the modified Ian Lancashire took the early category win ahead of Dan Campbell but there was only 1.36 secs in it with Dan Pushing hard in his 2wd Starlet on a track with conditions better suiting a 4wd car. Third went to Ian Howard in his Maguire mini but Stephen Colbert who was fourth in modified will take the higher points haul as Ian isn't championship registered. Stephen finished a mere 1.25secs behind Dan Campbell which was another superb drive in a rwd car on a cold track. This shows just how hard Stephen and Dan were going.

In the road going section Conor Hamill took his first category win of the year finishing just a mere 1.63 secs ahead of the returning Michael Clarke in his lotus elise. After the second timed run Michael was leading the category but Conor had a superb third run to take the class and the category win. Third in road going went to Adrian Mulholland in his beautiful Escort MK2. Adrian is more of a hill climb regular but its great to see him out competing in our paddock as well. Fourth in the category went to Crawford Ewing who takes points for third as Adrian isn't Championship registered.

The next and second round of the 2022 SW Adair Tyres Northern Ireland Sprint Championship takes place at Kirkistown on 19 March hosted by 500 MRCI. At present there is a massive entry including some very quick single seaters!! See you all there.

Now for the class battles:

### **Class 1 – Road Cars up to 1700cc**

Pre event, all eyes were on Paul Forsythe and his new Peugeot 106 but sadly Paul had mechanical gremlins on his first timed run, which sadly side lined him for the day leaving him fifth in class. Another who was well on the pace in the morning, and continued in this fashion all day was the hard charging Stephen Wishart. Stephen took the class win by a mere 0.04 secs from Ballymoney man Mark Brogan in his little Citroen Saxo. These 2 had a great fight all day with no more than 1.08 secs between them all day. This is what close racing is all about. Third went to Alan Wallace with Arnie Wishart fourth in the same 106 driven by Stephen Wishart. Kathy McDade finished fifth in class in her new to her Honda civic and despite doing some ploughing on one of her runs she was getting faster with seat time. (after a remark like that the Author will have to make sure he stays well outside of Kathy`s reach for an event or 3!!

### **Class 2a – Road cars over 1700cc**

The advert used to say “the car in front is a Toyota” but it appears that in terms of class 2a the car in front is a BMW. Conor Hamill continued where he left off last season and took class honours in his BMW M3. However this is a different M3 than the one he has campaigned of late after choosing not to use the heavier V8 BMW M3 again. When I first heard Conor coming down the main straight towards me I thought it was a 6R4 and my ears pricked up like a hunting fox! Conor had a superb battle all day with second placed Michael Clarke who actually set the pace for a while in his Lotus Elise. Tom Lawther, if you’re reading this, I can confirm that Michael finally heeded your advice and revved the beautiful little Elise, making it purr like a pussy cat (under duress) at well above his standard rev band. Third in class went to one of the nicest turned out cars in the paddock, being Adrian Mulholland’s beautiful Mark 2. It was great to see Adrian back out even if he did get a bit of a shock in the paddock (Sorry about that Adrian) earlier in the day. Crawford Ewing debuted his beautiful new Megane and headed Colin Dines, Ian Thompson Phillip Cardy Mervyn Johnston and Amy Hawthorne all home in that order. As always class 2a looks like it’s going to be close, this season and hopefully we will see a few more of those little Clio’s reappear to the class. I do honestly fancy one for myself! Nicole.....

### **Class 2b – Road cars Mazda MX5 challenge**

I should’ve simply copied the first line from my last report which simply said, “once again Adam Brogan was the man to beat” but that wouldn’t do Adam justice. In fact to say anything like this would upset the rest of class 2A who all fought like cats and dogs with each other on the time sheets all day. Honestly these little Mazda’s were superb to watch and it’s hard to believe the commitment these drivers had in their little Mazda’s. I’d almost fancy a run in one myself if my head would fit. 4 of the 6 competitors were new to the class which is great to see. Overall Adam Brogan took the win ahead of Paul Magill who pipped Conor O’Boyle by a mere 0.67 secs. Barry McCann was fourth ahead of Craig and Mark Smyth. The entire field class finished a mere 7.4 secs apart and of this Adam was 2.71 ahead of Paul so second to fifth was only 4.69 secs apart. Close as a good wet shave!!

### **Class 3 – Road cars specialist Production cars 4wd**

Alfred Robb took class honours in one of the nicest cars in the paddock on Saturday when he piloted his new Yaris gr to the class win. This is a super super quick bit of kit which looks to handle like a dream! Sadly no one wanted to play with Alfred so he was all on his lonesome on Saturday.

### **Class 5 – Road cars specialist Production cars**

After the big grids last year, class 5 was back to a smaller but great quality class with only 2 people out to play. At last we got the big head to head between Richard Munnis and Andy Hawthorne that everyone wanted to see. On Saturday Richard took the class honours a mere 2.48 secs ahead of Andy, but you have to consider that Andy’s car has a much heavier car engine in it, as opposed to Richards bike engine so it is a lot heavier. The big long straights of Kirkistown in 2 weeks will tell a tale, however if both these drivers do a full season, it will be impossible to tell them apart as the year concludes as both drivers are quick in their own rights but go better when pushed hard in competition!! Ohhh and a belated happy birthday to Andy Hawthorne

who's birthday it was in the week preceding the event. I won't say what age he was but I will say that his Westfield won't do that speed in second gear lol Happy birthday Andy

### **Class 6a Modified Cars – Series Production cars 8v**

Class 6a was somewhat smaller than usual today with no Strains and no David Evans however those who did compete were going well. Karl Johnston hit the ground running and set the early pace but someone was pretending to be Gary Milligan and was really wringing the neck out of Gary's little blue mini. Gary, or the "Milligan stig" was flying and during the day there was never any more than 0.86 secs between the 2 minis. Gary actually was leading the class after the second run before Karl did his usual last run flyer to pip Gary by 0.86secs. Third in class went to the hard charging Chris Nichol who finished a mere 3.63 secs behind Gary and Phil Robinson was fourth after an unfortunate incident in practice. It was great to see such a close finish in 6A today in what was one of the closest classes of the day. I hope Gary Milligan was observing how his imposter drove the little blue mini and that he learnt a bit from him, or was it really Gary driving after getting instruction from Gerry McGarrity??

### **Class 6b Modified Cars – Series Production cars 16v**

As of recent events Stephen Colbert was the man to beat today in his Talbot Sunbeam. Stephen lead from start to finish and finished 16<sup>th</sup> overall and a mere 0.93secs off Steven Gault's long standing class record. It will be interesting to see if Stephen can claim this record at one of the later Nutts corner events were conditions will be warmer. Second in class went to Dara Fay who is so committed in his Suzuki swift that is impressive to watch. Third went to Ken Colbert who is also getting faster in the Sunbeam with every event. He and Stephen work well together developing this wee car and it's great to watch. Interestingly I'm told that there is another Colbert who has just stepped onto the Motorsport ladder so hopefully in the future we will see a triple drive in this family Sunbeam. Fourth in class went to Dessie Martin who has recently purchased the ex-Brian Fitzmaurice Honda civic which has previously won the class 6b title. Dessie was getting faster and faster all day in the car and I suspect that the new paint scheme is worth 2 seconds alone!! Fifth in class, and again aided by a superb paint scheme was newcomer Gareth Blaine who slipped his Focus ST ahead of another new comer, James Lightbody in his mini Cooper S. Our avid photographer and videologist Andrew Kernohan rounded out the class in his Renault Clio. Andrews on board is worth a watching for anyone who wants to see how to drive fast, but smoothly around Nutts corner.

### **Class 7 Modified Specialist Production Cars 2WD.**

Class 7 – wow, well there's close and then there's class 7 close – 4 people separated by a mere 1.16 secs and the, and then the next 3 separated by only 1.98 secs!! I've covered the top 4 above so won't say too much other than Scott McMullan was the man to beat beating both David and Steven Hawthorne, in that order and Graham Boyce. Fifth went to Jimmy Dougan who is always hard to beat in his NI 7's car with Rudy Tate, Andrew Straney and Ian Robinson finishing in that order.

It was great to see the return of Andrew Straney and Rudy Tate again in Rudy's Locost Mega blade. "Roundabout Rudy" once again proved to have the legs on "straight-line Straney" as he pipped him by 0.88 seconds proving that not only is he the fastest hairdresser in an ulsterbus, but that he has learned from Andrew on how to drive this little car quickly! It was also great to see Robbo (Not the famous Brian Robson but his name sake) Ian Robinson back out again in his wee Locost Mega blade. Robbo is coming on leaps and bounds in this little car and with some seat time he'll be in the thick of things on the timesheets.

### **Class 8 Sports Libre cars Special Saloons**

Class 8 was a little low in numbers today but in terms of the machinery, it was great. Ian Howard brought his lovely little Maguire mini out again and had a great run to 14<sup>th</sup> overall which is an impressive result. Second went to Richard O'Mahoney in his RSR Escort. Jim Hutchinson was to enter but sadly had to withdraw but with an entry for the next round at Kirkistown we will see at least 3 of these stunning RSR cars running together. With another couple in the country this will be an awesome class when they all appear out together.

### **Class 9a Sports Libre cars Saloons and GT's**

Once again Campbell seems to be the name to have for class 9a with Dan Campbell taking the class win and a new class record in his Toyota Starlett. Dan finished 20.94 seconds ahead of second placed Emma Campbell who pipped Jason Frazer by a mere 0.99secs. The championship registration would indicate that a few ore class 9a cars may make a return this season which will be great to watch on what is the ultimate saloon car class in the championship.

### **Class 9b Sports libre Closed wheel sports racing cars.**

Sheryl McBride had a lonely drive to class honours in class 9B today but none the less she was going well and improved steadily during the day as seat time and confidence improved her times.

### **Class 10 Sports libre Cars – small capacity Rally cars**

At last class 10 had an entry befitting of the class With 6 rally cars competing on the day. Alan Roddy proved to be the man to beat, but second placed Dermot O'Hagan pushed him hard and there was never any more than 0.78 secs between them. Third went to Andrew Strain in his 205 on what proved to be a day he was glad to complete. Omagh competitor Brian little came to play in his Escort G3. Brian had done the Samsonas Fivemiletown gravel rally the previous week in this car and simply washed the car, changed the wheels and came to the sprint in forestry spec!! Brian had a great day and was third up until the last run when Andrew Strain pipped him to it. Fourth in class went to Joshua Baird in his new corsa, but sadly Joshua only managed 1 run and poor Malachy Loughran didn't manage any timed runs in his beautiful Escort Mk2. Everyone you spoke to in class 10 was having a ball and the racing was close and frantic. I must also wish Alan Roddy a belated happy birthday as well. He also

celebrated a birthday of note and again his car wouldn't do that speed in second gear either! Happy Birthday Alan

### **Class 11 Sports libre Cars – large capacity Rally cars**

Class 11 only had 2 competitors today, but they were both new competitors to the class which is great to see. Derek Robinson made his sprint debut in his Talbot Sunbeam and took class honours, sadly Kevin McLaughlin didn't have as good a day when mechanical woes side-lined him early on. Hopefully we can attract more rally cars into this class and build further on the improving entries next year. Both Jaye Nevin and Stewart Strain advise that they are keen to return so here's hoping at long last for a rally car class revival.

### **Class 12 4WD sports Libre Cars**

Class 12 was shaping up to be a real class battle today with Oliver Cormican, who won this event outright in 2020 going head to head with Ian Lancashire. Sadly Oliver had mechanical issues early on which left Ian Lancashire to head up the class battle himself. Ian had a great run, going under Ryan Murrays lap record and taking 11<sup>th</sup> overall in his Subaru. The now ousted record holder Ryan Murray was at the event marshalling and hopefully he and Oliver will be out again at the next round in 2 weeks!

### **Class 13 Formula Racing cars**

Mike Todd made a return to the championship in his Mondial which he was dual driving with his son Nicholas. Henry Campbell set the early pace in the first runs with a 111.84 sec run but Mike Todd set a blistering 109.84 in his second run to take the class win and 15<sup>th</sup> overall. Henry managed to drop his time to a 111.25 sec run to finish second ahead of Nicholas Todd and John Whitley. As always class 13 was a great battle and Mike Todd did tell me that in the 3 sprints he has done in this car, he has taken class wins in all of them. I suspect that this class will be close and good to watch as the year progresses.

### **Class 14 small Capacity Racing Cars**

Class 14 was another class which was a little underrepresented in terms of numbers today, compared to previous events but the 3 drivers who were competing all got their elbows out and their heels in and fought hard with all 3 drivers finishing in the top 13. George Stevenson took opening honours in his Force PT with Tom Devaney second and Thomas Corey third. It's great to see George back out again and feeling better and great to see that he's still as fast as ever. Tom Devaney was also on the pace as was Thomas Corey so class 14 will be interesting as the year progresses. Sadly recent regular Trevor Roberts has elected to leave the class 14 fold having sold his car to another local competitor who will certainly be in the mix and Trevor has decided to try his luck in class 7. Talk about jumping out of the fire and into the frying pan!!

### **Class 15 large Capacity Racing Cars**

Class 15 as always is where the big guns live and we certainly weren't disappointed today. I won't repeat what I'd written in the main body of the report but Robert Dwane took the class win and new lap record in his OMS 25 ahead of Alan Cassells. Third went to Tim Woodside in his Pilbeam MP82 ahead of Steven Gault. Unfortunately John Donnelly had a slight moment in first practice which put him out of the rest of the day but he will be back out again very soon. Looking at the results in detail you can see that Alan Cassells continues to be the fastest in a straight line with an eye watering top speed of 127 mph in his second run and Robert Dwane was second fastest in his first run with a top speed of 123 mph. However Tim Woodside proved to be the fastest off the line with a first 64feet time of a mere 2.07 secs. Interestingly Tim was only beaten over the first 64feet by the 4wd Subaru imprezza of Ian Lancashire, but Ian has all 4 wheels pulling him forward whereas Tim has only got 2.

### **Class 16a Historic Road Cars**

David Cochrane took class honours in class 16a in his beautiful Escort MK1 finishing a mere 1.6 secs ahead of Ian Paget in his mini. Bill Blair was third in another beautiful historic min with Mervyn Getty fourth in his MG BGT Sebring and Vincent Rodgers in his MG BGT. Vincent and Mervyn had a tight battle all day and finished up a mere 0.03secs apart in Mervyn's favour. Indeed the whole class was separated by only 3.27 secs, between 5 drivers.

### **Class 16b Historic Saloons and Sport scars**

Sadly no one entered this class today which is a shame but I will use this opportunity to publicise the changes which have been made. This class has now been expanded to include Historic 2wd rally cars produced up to 31 December 1982 which fall into Historic Category 1, 2 and 3 and have the necessary Historic paperwork. All cars must run as per their historic paperwork and if sufficient numbers compete we will look to split the class as necessary to allow more people to compete!! So if you have a car which fits the bill, why not bring it to a sprint and get some use out of it!!