

Tim Woodside breaks his duck!

Saturday 02 April saw the third round of the SW Adair Tyres Northern Ireland Sprint Championship at the North Ulster Car Club April Sprint at Nutts corner. As everyone rolled up on a cold and damp Saturday morning no one was predicting just how good a day it was set to be. A massive thanks must go out to North Ulster Car club for putting on such a fabulous day. Their no nonsense, get it done attitude shines bright and the whole day flows from this.

The previous day's rain and cold temperatures left the circuit greasy under foot, to say the least and a lot of people found this to their detriment under breaking in various places round the circuit, however as the temperature rose and the track dried Mr Grip made himself available again leading to more favourable driving conditions for the entire paddock.

Right from the start I want to mention 1 particular individual who I highlight as the driver of the day. This, in my opinion anyway, goes to complete newcomer and absolute rookie Ethan Faulkner. Ethan made his motorsport debut on Saturday in Jedi mk4 1000CC class 14 car. Now whilst this wouldn't seem to be a beginner's car to many of us but Ethan grabbed the Jedi by the horns and wrung its neck like a turkey farmer in Mid-December. Ethan had previously only done a handful of laps in the car at Nutts Corner the week previous to the event so was coming to the event as a complete new comer. None the less he didn't let his lack of experience put him off and he piloted to an awesome 6th overall and third in class on his debut. Yes you read that right, 6th overall and third in class on his debut. Ethan finished a mere 1.56 secs off seasoned campaigner George Stevenson in his class 14 Force. All in Ethan only finished 10.43secs behind event winner Tim Woodside!!!! Ethan's father joked that Ethan has never driven a car as fast as the 97 mph he achieved on run 3, as the young lad is still on "R" plates on the road. He also assured me that he had left his "black box" firmly attached to his road car at home!! Just to repeat how good a drive this was Ethan finished 6th overall and third in class on his motorsport debut!! This young lad looks like a star of the future!!!

Ethan wasn't the only one who was driving well on Saturday, in fact there were very few who weren't having super drives all day. One of the closest class finishes I have ever seen went down in class 10 where Dermot O'Hagan pipped Alan Roddy by a mere 0.01secs to take the class 10m win. These 2 drivers are coming on leaps and bounds this year as they push each other harder and harder at each event. It is superb to watch and I spoke to Alan Roddy during the day who advised that he hasn't had as much fun in the Saxo in years as he's having at the minute, although he does wish Dermot would go a bit easier lol Alan tried a different rear wing set up for one of his runs, when the boot lid opened. Whilst this extended diffuser helped him greatly under braking and through the corners, the extra drag wouldn't have helped on the straights!!

Other notable drives of the day went to Ryan McGimpsey who pushed his little Jedi out of its hibernation hole and drove the wheels off it to win class 14 by 5.42 secs as he finished up 4th overall!! Jim Hutchinson also had a superbly consistent day where he did a 138.00 on run 1 and a 138.01 sec run on run 3 as he pipped Steven Hawthorne to the specialist class honours. Stewart Strain made a welcome return to

the paddock in his 205 and took class 11 honours and narrowly missed out on the modified category win by a mere 0.22 sec to the ever hard charging Stephen Colbert. This was after Stewart had been spotted underneath David Evans 205gti fine tuning Betsy's wheel alignment after it was discovered that David wasn't as good with the wheel alignment gauges as he thought he was!!

There were a lot of new drivers out at this event and a few returning ones as well, admittedly though some may have been testing for the upcoming hill climb season. It was good to see Phil Dorman return and he finished 7th overall, Patrick Roche made a return in his RSR Escort and guided it to 12 overall and second in class, although he advises that his "proper engine" isn't quite ready and that he will be closer to the front when it is. David Francis returned as well in his class 9a Escort Cosworth and gave a lot of us a lesson in super smooth driving through the more intricate infield section. Brendan Flynn and Davis Buick also returned with Davis in a new MNR Vortex. We also saw 7 Mazda MX5s in Class 2b which is one of the biggest Mazda entries I've ever seen at a sprint!!

In terms of the overall winner, well I don't know where to start with this, which is why I left it to the end to write it. "Woodside" was the word of the day as Simon and Tim Woodside battled all day against each other in their Pilbeam MP82's. Simon had won this event before in 2007 as well as winning 1 NI Hill climb Championship and 3 Sprint Championships in his career and whilst winning these he has had numerous outright wins across many circuits in his career. Tim on the other hand was certainly on the back foot having never won an event outright before and having only driven this car a handful of times. This, as a bit of background, explains why Tim was delighted to take his first ever fastest time of the day and event outright win by a mere 0.29 secs from his brother Simon.

Both the Woodside's battled hard all day Tim set the early pace and Simon couldn't match him despite trying very very hard. I watched their second timed runs through the tight and tricky infield sections, and honestly the 2 guys were throwing their Pilbeam MP82 single seaters around like rally cross supercars as they took loads of kerb, wide fast lines, carrying massive speed and it was just superb to watch. If ever anyone wanted a display of fast, flowing committed driving in single seater then these 2 provided it in spade loads on Saturday. For those who think that single seaters are just point and shoot straight line speed, watching these 2 fellas on Saturday would've changed your mind completely.

Steven Gault made a superb return to the championship in his very rapid Dallara and despite some gremlins he took a very convincing third place ahead of Ryan McGimpsey, George Stevenson and Ethan Faulkner in that order. Stevens speed is increasing in the new car but his super smooth driving style means that he can ring every iota of time from the car and with a bit more seat time I predict Steven will be in between the Woodsides with his sleeves rolled up. If Ryan McGimpsey continues to sprint as well then he also will be in the mix as he just does things in his Jedi that Jedi never envisaged the car to be capable of. He is just awesomely quick.

So far I have mentioned 6 potential outright winners there and then of course we have John Donnelly in his Pilbeam MP62 which sadly had mechanical woes pre event and also the OMS25's of Alan Cassells and Rob Dwane, neither of which managed to set

a timed run on Saturday. All in we have 8 or 9 potential winners on any day which is why the SW Adair Tyres Northern Ireland Sprint championship is so good. In terms of the overall championship Tim Woodside leads the way ahead of Rob Dwane and Alan Cassells and Simon Woodside in that order.

In terms of the Categories we will start with the Raodgoing category where the car in front was once again a BMW. Andrew Robb was out again and took the category and class 2 win as well as 24th overall in his BMW. Conor Hamill pushed him hard but couldn't get the deficit below the final 3.43 secs which really doesn't do the battle justice. Third went to the hard charging and ever improving Crawford Ewing in his Megane. Crawford finished 0.76 adrift of Conor and a firm 1.12secs in front of Aaron Vance. Crawford seems to have gelled well with his Meganne as he chases the BMW'S down. Conor Hamill leads the overall category championship ahead of Andrew Robb and Crawford Ewing.

Stephen Colbert increased his lead in the Modified Category championship after taking the category win on Saturday as well as class 6b honours and 16th overall in his sunbeam. Stewart Strain pushed Stephen hard for the category but failed by a mere 0.22secs. Oliver Cormican was also ready to pounce and finished third in category a mere 0.16 behind Stewart. So all in this category was separated by a mere 0.38 secs. It's close there. Stephen leads the category from Ian Lancashire and his father Ken as his consistent run of 3 points scores puts him 8 points clear. Mark my words this will be a closely fought category this year!!

In the specialist Category battle David Hawthorne (who many would argue is the fastest Hawthorne) was not out on Saturday so he left Steven to defend the family honours. Jim Hutchinson took the category win in his RSR Escort on his way to finishing 8th overall and fastest tin top. Jim put in 2 cracker runs which were only separated by 0.01secs. Talk about consistent. Interestingly it was also Jim Hutchinson's birthday on Saturday. I spoke with Jim and he advises me that his car will do his age in MPH in first gear. Now I won't be drawn to comment on whether the car is highly geared or whether Jim just doesn't look his age, but IL let you all make your own minds up. (Note to self, park well well well away from Jim at the next event). Steven Fought hard and got the deficit to second down to just a mere 1.44secs behind Jim which was impressive going especially as Third placed Scott McMullan was snapping hard at Stevens heels. Scott still leads the category after round 3 but it's tight as the top 2 drivers, Scott McMullan and Steven Hawthorne are equal on 10 points each and Jim Hutchinson and David Hawthorne are equal on 9points each and these pair now have a game in hand. Again I don't fancy predicting a winner in this battle.

In the Heaslip Ladies Challenge Emma Campbell took the Challenge win with a corrected 1.56s advantage over second placed Sheryl McBride. Kathy McDade in her Honda civic with its new "My little pony" influenced livery took third in the category. All 3 girls are improving greatly across each event and the results are showing this as Emma leads Sheryl by 1 point and Kathy is 5 points adrift of Sheryl in Third. Amy is fourth with 19 points and last event winner Catherine Donnelly is fifth on 11 points. Both Amy and Catherine have a game in hand, indeed Catherine has 2, so when the dropped scores kick in this championship really will go down to the wire. Kathy did however have a vital element missing on Saturday as her "powered by fairy dust"

sticker was not ready in time to be added to the car and this being missing, cost her at least a couple of seconds a lap. Is fairy dust going to help her de-throne Emma from the top of the category this year? Let's just wait and see!!

For some the most important category is the fastest mini in the west. Once again this went to Karl Johnston who once again drove the wheels off his little mini. Karl was incredible to watch as he explored every inch of the tarmac, and a wee bit of the gravel trying to keep the elusive McGarrity and Milligan duo behind him. Gary fought hard to take second in the mini battle and third went to the hard charging Gerry McGarrity. Gerry has advised that he has a plan to win the fastest mini trophy again!! He's currently coasting to let Karl and Gary think that they can't be beaten, then as the season draws to a close he'll pull out and pass them, waving in a polite gentlemanly manner as he overtakes them to the crown!!

As those who were there will vouch this slightly light hearted report just sums up the superb, friendly banter filled atmosphere which was to be found round Nutts Corner on 02 April. The action was fast and there were some superb class battles up and down the timesheets all day. These battles are due to continue at our next event which is the fourth round of the SW Adair Tyres Northern Ireland Sprint Championship hosted by Larne Motor Club at Kirkistown on 07 May. Larne Motor club always put on a fabulous day and this event looks set to be a belter!!!

See you all on 07 May at Kirkistown

Now for the class battles:

Class 1 – Road Cars up to 1700cc

Class 1 continued to be a close battle again today. Paul Forsythe took a commanding class win with a time that put him in 34th overall in his super well sorted Peugeot 106. Once again Mark Brogan had the sleeves rolled up was in the middle of a class battle. Today however he was battling with Stephen Donnelly in his Ford Fiesta. Mark managed to edge Stephen out by a mere 0.28 secs to take second. Fourth went to Alan Wallace who had his Honda Del Sol on the trailer early and Kathy McDade took fifth in her newly re-liveried Honda Civic. Hopefully she can source some fairy dust for her next outing, but does that count as pump fuel?? Overall Mark Brogan has a commanding lead over Alan Wallace with Paul Forsythe ahead of Kathy in the class championship.

Class 2a – Road cars over 1700cc

Andrew Robb must have enjoyed his day out 2 weeks ago at Kirkistown as he was out again on Saturday. As you'd expect Andrew went fastest in the class despite Conor Hamill driving the wheels off his BMW to finish second. Crawford Ewing is finally getting the hang of his new Renault Megane and it seems to suit his smooth driving style as he pushed it to third in the class a mere 0.76secs behind Conor and only 0.12secs ahead of Aaron Vance. Ian Thompson took fifth in class and proved to be the fastest car from the VAG stable in his Porsche Boxster as he reversed the last day's

result beating Aiden Savage in his Fabia. In terms of the championship its close at the top As Connor Hamill leads Andrew Robb by 3 points, Crawford Ewing is a further 1 behind Andrew Robb and then there's a 4 point jump to Michael Clarke in fourth.

Class 2b – Road cars Mazda MX5

We had 7 of these Mazda MX5's out today and Adam Brogan again proved to be the fastest Mx5 driver on the day. Adam had a 3.41sec advantage over second placed Paul Magill who lead an epic battle of MX5 which saw 2nd to 8th covered by a mere 3.72 secs. I watched these MXS's through the back straight and into the heavy braking at the bottom of the circuit and these road going Mazda's pitch under braking like a boat in a bad sea, but by jeeppers do they stop and they can carry some serious entry speed into the right hander at bottom of the circuit. I found them excellent craic to watch and fair play to all the drivers as there wasn't one driver who wasn't trying!! Connor O'Boyle took third ahead of Barry McCann, Kevin McNamee Craig and finally Mark Smyth. Championship wise Paul Magill leads the table from Adam Brogan, Conor O'Boyle, Barry McCann and Mark Smyth

Class 3 – Road cars specialist Production cars 4wd

Tony Grady proved to be the fastest Grady today as he pipped Paul Grady by a mere 0.32secs today in their Subaru Imprezza. Third on the day went to Alfred Robb in his beautiful Yaris. Class 3 proved to be an excellent class battle today with all 3 drivers finishing within 0.95 secs of each other. If Paul hadn't eaten the second Soda and Alfred had removed his umbrella from the boot it could've been a completely different top 3. In all fairness the craic amongst these 3 drivers was superb all day and it's great to watch. Championship wise Alfred Robb still tops the class 5 points ahead of the tying Paul and Tony Grady.

Class 5 – Road cars specialist Production cars

Richard Munnis took class honours here today and not because he was on his own!! He had Andy Hawthorne and David Buick to play with. Andy and Richard pushed each other hard all day but the tight twisty circuit suited Richards lighter bike engine car over Andy's heavier car engine Westfield. Davis Buick made his debut in his new MNR Vortex and he improved all day as he got familiar with the car. Davis was very quick in his previous Reis Aero which Scott McMullan now campaigns, and Davis will definitely be mixing it with Andy and Richard as he gets the car dialled into him and himself dialled into the car. Championship wise Richard Munnis leads Andy Hawthorne and Davis Buick in that order.

Class 6a Modified Cars – Series Production cars 8v

Class 6a was once again a bit low in numbers with only 3 out today there are still plenty of eligible cars out there, indeed at least 2 of them had entered but had to withdraw for various reasons. Karl Johnston once again proved to be the man to beat in his black mini. Gary Milligan pushed him hard but ended up second. It was great to see Gary back in his car today after an imposter drove it at the first round lol. Third in class went to championship returnee David Evans who assures us, and his wife, that he is only going to do occasional events this season, however he had so much fun on

Saturday that this particular strategy may be re-thought as the season goes. All 3 cars were separated by a mere 3.05 secs with Gary finishing second by a mere 1.44 secs and David missing Gary by 1.61 secs. It's fair to say that the craic and banter amongst the 6a drivers was still as good as ever and the racing was close too.

Class 6b Modified Cars – Series Production cars 16v

Class 6b was once again dominated by Stephen Colbert who set a 144.88 run to take the class lead. Second went to his father Ken on a 148.95 with Dessie Martin, James Lightbody and Andrew Kernohan all scrapping for third, fourth and fifth in that order. Dessie Martin and James Lightbody had a good tussle with each as they both get used to their new motors and interestingly Dessie is driving the car which used to have the class record for this track in 6B. Sadly numbers in 6B have dropped off a wee bit which is a shame, as there are an abundance of good quick cars out there. Championship wise Stephen Colbert has the class lead ahead of Ken Colbert and Dessie Martin in that order.

Class 7 Modified Specialist Production Cars 2WD.

Class 7 was very low in numbers with only 2 competing today. Steven Hawthorne and Scott McMullan did have a whopper of a ding dong all day with Steven taking the class win ahead of the hard charging Scott. Scott had never driven the longer course in the Reis Aero and was driving the wheels off it trying to catch Steven. In the end Steven took the class win by 2.03secs which is one of the biggest winning margins we have seen in class 7 in ages. Now with that remark, I do not in any way wish to imply that Scott wasn't quick, indeed the very opposite is implied. Class 7 is usually so tightly matched with times being so tight together that a 2.03sec win is unheard of. Steven just had a lucky day and he didn't have to drive the car easy to warm it up and keep it safe for David either so he was able to enjoy himself more!! Championship wise Scott and Steven are now tied at the top on 12 points with David Hawthorne Graham Boyce and Ian Robinson all chasing them hard in that order.

Class 8 Sports Libre cars Special Saloons

Class 8 had one of its biggest entries in a long time today when we had 3 RSR Escorts and Ian Howard in his Maguire Mini. Jim Hutchinson took the class win on what turned out to be his birthday. Second in class went to Patrick Roche who returned with his rebuilt RSR Escort. Patrick advises that he still hasn't got his own engine ready but that it's progressing well and will be fitted again shortly, and that he will go a lot better with it. Third went to the hard charging Ian Howard who proved that a Maguire mini is still a quick and formidable car as well as a super pretty little car. Richard O'Mahoney took fourth in his RSR Escort to round out the class. There are at least 2 other RSR Escorts out there doing speed events in the country and I'd love to see them all together competing at the same time. One point to note is that Jim Hutchinson only did 2 of his 3 timed runs, and there was only 0.01 secs between his first and his second timed run. This goes to show just how committed Jim was on each of his runs when he could only find 0.01 secs on his way to 8th overall and fastest tin top!! Championship wise the determined Richard O'Mahoney still leads the class title with Jim second, Rory Stephens third and Patrick Roche fourth. This is going to be a classic class to watch as the season progresses.

Class 9a Sports Libre cars Saloons and GT`s

Class 9a once again proved to be increasing in popularity again when David Francis made his return in his Ford Escort Cosworth. So far this season we have had 6 different cars enter this class which is great to see after it had been in a period of decline recently. Hopefully we can get all 6 motors out again together as well as some of the other class 9a cars in people's garages, and return class 9a to its former glory of being one of the most hotly contested classes in the championship. As I've said already David Francis returned and gave us a master class in how to drive the infield section as he took a solid class win from the hard charging new comer Damien Corey in his Austin Mini. Third place went to Jason Frazer who is coming quickly to terms with his Rover Metro which he pushed hard to finish in front of Emma Campbell in her Peugeot 106. Championship wise Emma has a 1 point lead over Damien Corey with Jason third, Dan Campbell fourth and David Francis fifth.

Class 9b Sports libre Closed wheel sports racing cars.

Class 9b proved to be a class of many awards for Sheryl McBride today despite her having no one to play with in her class. None the less Sheryl is improving with each and every round as she comes to terms with her little Global. As well as winning the prize for winning the class on Saturday, and the honour of being the runner up in the Ladies challenge Sheryl also wins the prize for the biggest set of eye lashes on a Race circuit on Saturday! I personally had been keeping Sheryl going about her lashes on Saturday morning and she advised that she was going out on Saturday night so had to get them done before she raced. Fair play to her, and she kept them intact, despite wearing a full face helmet. Can you give us any tips Sheryl?

Class 10 Sports libre Cars – small capacity Rally cars

Class 10 once again proved to be a clinker of a class when Alan Roddy and Dermot O'Hagan went head to head on the time sheets. It also saw one of the closest class finishes I've seen in a long long time when Dermot O'Hagan took the class win by a mere 0.01 secs from Alan Roddy. Alan Roddy set the gauntlet on his first run and set a 150.65 target for Dermot to beat. Alan was unable to match or better his first timed run, such was the pace he was going but Dermot rose to the challenge and bettered it in his second by the mere 0.01sec margin which granted him the class win. Honestly both these guys have pushed each other on so much this season that it's going to be an epic season to watch and both Dermot and Alan will tell you that they are relishing the challenge and enjoying every second of it. Third place went to Ian Duff in his Proton Compact which hopefully we will see more of this season? Championship wise Dermot leads Alan by 1 point at the top of the championship table, with Andrew Strain third, Brian Little fourth and Joshua Baird fifth.

Class 11 Sports libre Cars – large capacity Rally cars

Saturday saw Stewart Strain return in his mighty Peugeot 205 to class 11 after he did some winter work to the car. Stewart also returned to his winning ways and took the class win from the luckless Kevin McLaughlin who simply has had no luck with his Nova of late. Sadly Kevin only completed 1 timed run, but third placed Derek Robinson completed 3 runs and finished third in class in his Talbot Sunbeam. Class

11 is hopefully on the up as Jaye Nevin is almost finished rebuilding his car and Richie O'Mahoney had so much fun the last day that he intends to do more sprints in his mark 3 Escort too, as apparently does Norman Armstrong. Championship wise Derek Robinson still leads the class from Stewart Strain and Kevin McLaughlin.

Class 12 4WD sports Libre Cars

After being such a big class in 2021 Oliver Cormican was on his own again in class 12 today. Although this didn't stop him going well. Oliver took the class win as well as third modified car and 18th overall in his Mitsubishi Evo. Oliver leads the class championship also ahead of Ian Lancashire.

Class 13 Formula Racing cars

Today saw a smaller grid of only 2 cars in class 13 where Henry Campbell took the class win ahead of Stephen Wishart. Stephen seems to finally be getting to grips with the Swift SC 96 and is improving every event. Henry's class win puts him 3 points ahead of Mike Todd in the championship tables with Stephen Wish at third, Nicholas Todd fourth and John Whitley fifth.

Class 14 small Capacity Racing Cars

Ryan McGimpsey made a welcome return to the series and picked up where he left off with an awesome run to 4th overall in his little bike engine Jedi. Ryan finished a massive 5.32secs ahead of the hard charging George Stevenson, with Ethan Faulkner Phil Dorman and Thomas Corey filling out the class in that order. Class 14 is as always a well-supported class and we have at least 3 other class 14 drivers out there who will hopefully be competing this season making this class one of the closest classes in the championship. In terms of the championship George Stevenson leads the tables ahead of Thomas Corey, Ryan McGimpsey, Tom Devaney, Catherine Donnelly Ethan Faulkner and Phil Dorman.

Class 15 large Capacity Racing Cars

As usual I gave the main class 15 run down above in the main text but Tim Woodside took the class and the overall event win ahead of Simon Woodside with Steven Gault third. John Donnelly took fourth in class in an unfamiliar car he was testing and setting up for his local friend. Sadly John Donnelly had had an engine issue the previous weekend at Ballyvaughan hill climb in his own car. Fifth went to regular hill climber Brendan Flynn with Alan Cassells and Rob Dwane both failing to record a time due to mechanical issues with their similar turbo charged Hyabussa engined OMS 25s. In terms of the class championship Tim Woodside now leads the table ahead of Robert Dwane and Alan Cassells with Simon Woodside fourth ahead of Steven Gault and John Donnelly.

Class 16a Historic Road Cars

Gerry McGarrity was once again the man to beat in class 16a in his little mini. Gerry drove the wheels off the little car to beat the equally hard charging Bill Blair in his mini. Third went to Vincent Rodgers after a close day long tussle with Mervyn Getty

and David Cochrane rounded the class out in his Austin Healey Sprite. With the exception of first placed Gerry McGarrity second to 5th in this class were only separated by 4.16 secs and Mervyn Getty only lost out to Vincent Rodgers by a mere 0.49 secs. Class 16a, like all the others is closely matched on the time sheets and these older cars get driven with as much vigour as some of the younger cars around the paddock!! In terms of the championship Bill Blair is still at the top of the point's tree but Gerry McGarrity is reeling him in. David Cochrane remains third despite the best efforts of Ian Paget, Mervyn Getty and Vincent Rodgers who are all trying to catch him in that order.

Class 16b Historic Saloons and Sport scars

Class 16b once again saw Robert Coulter out in his beautiful Lotus Cortina but this time he had Arthur Ovens to compete against. Arthur took the class win in his little MG Midget but in terms of the class championship Robert Coulter is still the man in front!