

AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL BTRDA CLUBMANS RALLYCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP, PRESENTED BY
COOPER TIRES ROUND 1,
LYDDEN HILL, 8TH MAY 2021

AFTER A longer than usual winter break, the 2021 season for the BTRDA Clubmans Rallycross Championship dawned at the home of the sport at Lydden Hill on May 8th, with Autosport International on board as title sponsors once again and a quite stunning field of over 80 cars on show across six classes. The upsurge in entries clearly showed how eager drivers were to get back into competition after the preceding months of confusion and uncertainty, but one thing that did not change was the seemingly traditional Lydden rainstorm during the morning's heats, but thankfully things brightened up by Final time.

One major point of interest was the introduction of a brand new category in the shape of the **AVO Suspension UK Modified** class, designed to bridge the gap between the Production and Super Modified divisions. A quartet of entries assembled with Max Weatherly (Suzuki Swift) and Maciek Florczak (Citroen Saxo) sharing the heat wins two to one, while Chris Wheeler's Fiesta scored a trio of third places over the Swift of David Watt. The A Final soon split into two two-car battles, with Florczak leaving his joker lap to the final tour and just failing to hold off Weatherly who became the new category's first victor, while Wheeler narrowly shaded Watt for third.

Another talking point was that the field in the **AS Performance Super Modified** division was the largest in terms of car numbers on the day, and several new machines made their debuts. Chief among the notable cars was the awesome new BMW E92 M3 of Slawomir Woloch and the Cosworth-motivated RWD Ford Focus of Chris Langley, while a large field of BMW Mini class cars swelled the entry superbly to 24 cars. Having impressed on a previous guest appearance at Blyton, Jason Bleasdale had signed up for the full 2021 season and took the opening heat in his Vauxhall VX220 ahead of Woloch whose spectacular BMW went one better in heat two. Bleasdale failed to finish heat three as Alan Crockett's Corsa led home Fred Ling, the Fiesta pilot having been fastest overall in the wet in morning practice. A C Final was necessary in the class for the first meeting in some time, the grid consisting solely of BMW Minis with the exception of Tomasz Wielgosz's Saxo and it was Andy Pecover who took the win with young Junior graduate Abbie McGuinness taking the other qualifying spot. Langley's Focus led home the B Final ahead of Oliver Foord's BMW Mini but sadly problems meant that Langley was unable to start the A Final. Woloch led away from pole but Bleasdale's repaired Vauxhall was able to catch and overhaul the BMW and take the victory, the Pole second and Ling third. The latter took the Class 2 win for cars under 2100cc while Foord was best BMW Mini home in a fine fourth overall and Class 1 went to the Citroen C2 of Phil Chicken who was eliminated in the B Final. Of the remaining A Final runners, Stan Bovill showed well early on but his RWD Escort slowed in the closing stages and was overhauled by Foord and Paul Johnston's big BMW, while former champion Gary Cook (Fiesta) and Todd Crooks (BMW Mini) completed the finishers, the latter stymied by a burst turbo hose. Crockett, meanwhile, was sadly an early casualty.

There was plenty of action and attrition in equal measure in the **Steve Gaunt Trailer Hire Pre-1995 Classic** category. Tony Browes' MG Maestro sadly didn't get past practice, while former Ka man Tony Crisp's newly acquired Vauxhall Nova would fail to make the Finals after a breakdown in heat three. A more significant absentee come Final time was Ray Morgan, whose familiar RWD Mk3 Escort had won the first two heats before taking third in heat three before slipping to sixth in heat three as Vince "Mr Sideways" Bristow won in his BMW. David Martin (205) led home the B Final ahead of the quite stunning new Mk2 Escort of Lea Wood, a car which had wowed the rallycross press upon its unveiling and dropped several jaws in the Lydden paddock on arrival, but a major gearbox failure sadly prevented it from starting the A Final. That left seven cars for the event, and these would be reduced further as Martin's Peugeot failed to get off the line bringing out the reds, and he and John Cross's Stratos clone would not take the restart. Bristow set off from the front row into the lead as behind him reigning champion Marc Jones (MR2) went into battle with David Ewin in the Fiesta EVO, Davy Crockett's spectacular Chevette HSE and welcome returnee Barry Stewart's Porsche 911. Jones retained second by a scant margin after his joker lap, but a lap later it all came apart for the Welshman as a rear wheel came flying off the MR2 as he entered Devil's Elbow putting him out of the race. Ewin, plagued by ECU issues earlier in the day, was the next to suffer as his

steering broke sending him flying over the chicane kerbs and onto the infield into retirement. All that mayhem left Bristow to secure a comfortable victory in his ever-sideways BMW ahead of Crockett's Vauxhall and Stewart's Porsche with Mark Finch's Fiesta the only other survivor. Crockett took the Class 2 prize and Bristow won Class 3, while Ian Clark bested reigning champion Helen Crooks in the battle of the Minis in Class 1 with third in the B Final and despite his retirement Jones topped Class 4.

All eyes were on defending overall champion Dale Ford in the **SG Haulage Ltd Production** category, but the title holder would certainly not have things all his own way. Maciek Florczak was doubling up with the Modified class and his Production Peugeot 106 certainly went like "Magic" in the first two heats for a brace of wins, the Polish driver able to brush off a heat three retirement with top spot for the A Final already secured as James Orton's 106 took the win. Hamish Gilfillan's Corsa led home the C Final ahead of rookie Dan Price who unfortunately was unable to start the B Final due to an oil leak, said event seeing the rapid Saxo of newcomer Charley Moroney overhaul Mark Henry's Alfa Romeo for victory, the Italian machine also passed late on by Paul Oakley's Saxo. In the main event Florczak pulled clear of a huge battle between Orton, Harry Vaulkhard's Saxo and Rory Denning (106) for second place. The latter pair stayed ahead of Orton after the joker laps and it was former BTCC man Vaulkhard who bested his rival for second. Florczak finished a long way clear and celebrated his victory, but unfortunately the Pole had neglected to take his joker lap and the resulting 30-second penalty dropped him to ninth, Vaulkhard inheriting the spoils and the Class B win. Ford, meanwhile, had only managed a best of fourth in the heats and was embroiled in a fine scrap for sixth in the A Final, taking the position after late passes on title sponsor Steve Gaunt's Clio and the Focus of James Avison, Moroney taking a fine fifth ahead of them and Gaunt taking the Class C spoils.

Defending **Cooper Tires Production 4x4** champion Bradley Sampson was kept honest by Paul Davis in the opening heat and won by less than a second, but thereafter the Mitsubishi pilot was dominant, finishing clear of Davis in heat two and welcome returnee Dan Beattie in heat three as the Subaru hordes and Darren Clark's Nissan Pulsar had to give best to Evo power. The story was the same in the A Final as young Sampson was never headed from pole position, comfortably remaining ahead after the joker laps for a ten-second victory over Beattie. Aaron Shaw took a fine third while Clark came out on top in a scrap with former champion Davis for fourth and Chris Baker's Impreza completed the finishers.

It was certainly unusual to see the Constantine name absent from the **Questmead Ltd/710 Oils Junior Rallycross** field with former double champion Luke having moved on up to circuit racing as had defending champion Tom Ovenden, but the latter famous name was still present as Will Ovenden made his debut. Fellow newcomers Alfie Campbell and James Hawkes also acquitted themselves well, the former breaking the Swift dominance with his smart VW Lupo while Hawkes would sadly be plagued by problems and Max Watt was also an early casualty. At the sharp end of the field Kacper Potyra was in dominant form as he scorched his Saxo to a clean sweep of heat wins, and looked initially set for a maximum in the A Final as Owen Robbins and Caitlin May gave chase. May took the undercut on Robbins at the joker lap but cruel luck hit Potyra as his right rear tyre deflated and despite leaving his joker to the final lap he was powerless to halt the progress of May who took a superb maiden victory. The Saxo survived for second ahead of Robbins and Corey Padgett's Swifts, Ovenden acquitting himself well in fifth ahead of Campbell.

Despite the forbiddance of spectators, this was still a phenomenally successful day for everyone involved as the Championship gets back on its feet again, and it will continue to do so in round two at Blyton Park on June 27th.

Dave Goddard