



ARMED FORCES RACE CHALLENGE 2014

With 4 Army, 3 RAF, 2 Navy, 3 ex-servicemen and 1 associated driver, the second round of the Armed Forces Race Challenge (AFRC) was truly a multi-organization event. Held at Donington Park on 23rd August 2014 the AFRC formed part of the BARC Summer Truck Festival Meeting. Unfortunately the grid was smaller than anticipated as Sgt Gareth Nutley (RAF) and Sqn Ldr Darren Howie had to withdrawn at short notice for various reasons. Also Captain Mark Saunders (Army) and Ian Smythe's Cosworth engined cars were under repair. It was nice to see that Mark and Ian, as well as Ed Fuller another regular competitor in the AFRC turned out to provide additional support.

The weather forecast for the Saturday was for sunshine and showers, and so it proved to be. The AFRC was a 15 minutes practice followed by a 20 minute race. There was also the opportunity to take part in an additional practice/race organized by the South East Sevenesque Series (SES), although this would cause the organizers a bit of a headache. Not everyone took part in the SES race, and as their practice was before the AFRC the paddock was a hive of activity for some, while others had time for 'that extra cup of tea'. At least one driver nearly missed the boat and only just made it onto the track in time.

For those that were entering both races this would provide useful information on how the track was. This was the first outing this year for Sqn Ldr Darren Berris in the V8 Wesfield, but he was soon back in the groove posting a time of 1:17.468, to put him third on the grid.

Billy Fletcher was still having problems with the engine of the Mk 2 Fletcher Hornet, so he had opted to using the Mk 4. As it looked like he would have a fairly quiet time on track (The Mk 4 is usually only bested by



Darren in the V8 Wesfield



Billy in the Hornet Mk 4

Darren in the Westfield) his strategic goal was to do a lap in under the 1 minute 20 second barrier, his current best being 1:20.8. To this end he used the SES practice as a test session trying a variety of lines, gears and braking points, consequently only managed a 1:23.096. SAC Adam Twine had managed to get his car sorted since his DNF in the last race at

Snetterton. As his Peugeot 205 GTI is almost standard he was always going to be at the tail of the field, but this race was all about learning racecraft, gaining a finish and one race nearer losing the novice cross from the back of his car.

With the heavens threatening to open and give everyone a soaking, the AFRC practice formed up. As expected Darren was on pole, with Billy beside him,



Sean's Race is done

although it hadn't been straightforward for Darren as the engine cutting out briefly when the positive lead for the fuel pump came off and the HP pump stopped. Fortunately it came straight back on again. Billy was also down on pace which he put down to the strong head-wind down the two straights, where he was about 300 RPM down on his usual speed. Also having problems was PO Sean Graham (RN) in the HMS Sultan Locost when on lap 4 the engine cried enough,

and his racing day was over. Dan Murphy and Chris Camp also had disturbed practice when their cars developed faults, although these would be fixed before race time.

In only his second race and his first at Donington, LCpl Stewart Ross-Cumming (Army) decided to try the 'Jason Plato' line through Roberts Corner, the car under steered, headed for the Armco-barrier, and sent at least one photographer diving for cover. Unlike Plato, Stewart regained control of the car and completed the lap.



Stewart tries a different racing line

With all cars returned to the paddock the heavens opened sending everyone for cover.

As part of the deal with BARC the AFRC had entry to the second race but for whatever reason drivers were called forward to the assembly area as it was apparent we were in the first race as well. Only some of the drivers were ready and in the confusion those that were ready, went. Darren had fitted wet weather tyres and appeared it was the wrong call as the track was at best damp. As it turned out the track was damp enough to make the dry tyres the other cars were on a challenge, so he was able to get into the lead from the second row. Unfortunately on the last lap despite his 'brave' manoeuvre around the outside at the start of the back straight, Darren had to yield into the chicane and he crossed the line half a second behind Tony Bennett to finish second.

The first race after lunch was the AFRC, and again in threatening weather the cars took the grid. Billy's plan for the race was to have a good start and hopefully put himself ahead of Darren, then only use a little kerb on clear laps and lots of kerb on laps where he was passing others to maintain an even pace. He had a good start and put himself ahead of Darren until the back straight when Darren sailed past, but allowing Billy to hold onto his shirt tails against the head-wind to get a good first lap time. Paul Waterhouse in the Peugeot 205 Mi16 made a cracker of a start and was determined to keep Simon Wing (Another regular competitor in the AFRC) in his Rover 216 Gti behind him. Paul held it tight and passed the BMW 328i of Sgt Chris Wood (Army) on the exit of Redgate and the Westfield of Flt Lt Christopher Vosper through McLeans. This was Chris's second attempt at starting a race, his first was curtailed by the appalling weather at Snetterton earlier in the year. Chris in the Westfield was soon past Paul on sheer grunt as was the BMW of Chris Wood once he was up to speed on the following lap.



Paul with Simon in close attendance



Dan just out of reach of Chris

From his 3rd place on the grid Cpl Dan Smee (Army) made a good start behind Darren and Billy, just keeping ahead of the chasing pack of both Chris's, Paul and Simon. Although Chris Vosper in the Westfield got to within a second of Dan he was never close enough to mount a serious challenge.

The rest of the of the field were well strung out and despite a spin through Old Hairpin Chris

Camp managed to stay ahead of Dan, Lt Cdr Richard Scott (RN) in the second Navy Locost and Adam.

The final results once the Performance Indexes had been calculated are:

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|------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 1 st | Simon Wing | Rover 216 Gti |
| 2 nd | Billy Fletcher | Fletcher Hornet Mk 4 |
| 3 rd | Paul Waterhouse | Peugeot 205 Mi16 |

After 2 Round of the Armed Forces Race Challenge the top 3 are:

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|------|----------------|----------------------|
| 1 st | Adam Twine | Peugeot 205 GTI |
| 2 nd | Billy Fletcher | Fletcher Hornet Mk 4 |
| 3 rd | Dan Smee | Honda Integra |

Well done Adam it just goes to prove in the AFRC is it not about who is first past the post that wins, it's the most consistent driver that wins in the end.



Billy drafting the mini

In the second of the SES races Billy managed to chase a Mini Miglia spec Mini, but fitted with a Yamaha R1 bike engine. Best of all, on the last lap he was able to slipstream the mini on both straights and subsequently posted a 1:19.194 lap, to get him well under his target time.

practice session. Seeing how they slide those big rigs around the corners, no wonder even the marshals' retreat behind the catch fencing.

At the end of day the racing trucks came out for a



When the big boys come out to play

Pictures by Nick and Mark Rogers