

# ARMED FORCES RACE CHALLENGE NEWS

The end of year bash for the 750 Motor Club, better known as the 'Holly Birkett' for many is the last event of the 2016 season. With 70 teams, over 420 drivers and the GP Circuit to play with for 6 hours of racing, some would say it's the biggest motor racing event at Silverstone. This year would see the inclusion of a new sub-race, open to members of the Armed Forces they would be racing in the inaugural Inter-Service 6 Hrs Race. With performance ranging from Radicals and Saker Rapx's to humble Smart Cars, drivers were going to have to keep their eyes on not only what's ahead, but who steaming up behind them, on both sides. With this much range in performance the handicappers would have a hard time ensuring ever one had a fair chance of winning.



*Team 2 'We Don't Like Second' on way to pole*

Three teams were entered for the inaugural Inter-Service Race, RAF (21), Army (22) and the Armed Forces Race Challenge (23). Unfortunately this year the Navy were unable to field a whole team but were able to make up the majority of Team 23, supported by additional drivers who had race in the AFRC during the year.

Saturday mornings in October are usually cold and drab and the 22nd was no exception. A heavy mist enveloped Silverstone threatening to delay the practice sessions but with a matter of minutes to go, the cloud base started to rise and allow the first session to begin on time, even though the visibility was not good. By the end of the six practice sessions the sun was out and the track dry. At the end of practice the teams would line up on the grid, Team 22 fortieth, Team 21 fiftieth and Team 23 sixty first. Right at the front on pole, 'We Don't Like Second' a team consisting of Radical

sports cars.



*Seb Unwin gets to grip in practice*

sports cars.

To get a six hour race in before dark there is little time between practice and the start of the race, usually cars are go to the assembly area before the last session has finished. With this number of cars on the grid, in the past there have been a number of incidents, so again this year the race would start behind the safety car, allowing the grid to stretch out before passing the line at the classic pits.

Sgt Daz Smee (Army) and WO Ed McKlean (RAF) took the start as a pair with LAET



*Daz and Ed racing for position*

Seb Unwin (RN) not far behind. Once the car was settled Ed started to press on and increased the gap to Daz. Seb was in his own battle with a Noble. Just before the 1st hour mark Ed pitted handing over to SAC Dan Smith. After the 1st hour Team 22 lead Team 21 followed by

Team 23, although on handicap it was Team 23 who would be leading.

Over the next couple of hours the teams relayed from one driver to the next, each driver doing the best stint their car could manage, some could do stints of an hour or so, while for some 40 minutes duration is all the fuel carried would permit. For Sgt Andy Holborn (RAF) in the MX-5 a 90 minutes run would be a shock, his previous longest race had been the 40 minute races in the AFRC. To keep everyone going Sgt Chris Slator (RAF) the chief organizer for the Inter-Service Race had arrange for sustenance in the form of a Fish and Chips for all.

Unusually for this time of year the weather was dry and quite warm, so in previous years where the wet weather was better for the slower cars, this year would be better for the fast cars running on slick tyres. It would be just after 3 o'clock before the safety car was seen on track again.

Unfortunately for team 21 this was just as there fastest driver Sqn Ldr Darren Berris in the Westfield was about to make a concerted effort to catch the other teams. Team 22 (Army) were proving to be the team to catch and by hour three were now 3 laps ahead of the rest, although on handicap Team 23 held a narrow advantage.



*Darren Berris, Westfield V8*

With the Safety Car out and the race moved into the next hour, most teams took the opportunity to change drivers. POET(WE) Sean Graham (RN) brought the Sultan Locost out for his run. Not the fastest car but Sean does seem to be able to lap consistently, which is what you need in a handicap endurance race.



*Darren Howe gets to grip through Luffield*

Another consistent driver Sqn Ldr Darren Howe in the Golf would try to close the gap to Team 22 now represented by WO1 (ASM) Matty Taylor. Over the next hour or so there were a number of driver changes and the race seemed to be heading for a stalemate, that was until Darren Barris came out for his final run. Pressing on the normal great handling Westfield

was not handling as it should, fearing he had a puncture, he returned as quickly as he could to the pits. Luckily the teams always have the next car read to go, so as Darren passed the pits Ed quickly left losing as little time as possible.

Now into the final hour Team 22's Sgt Will Ashmore had put in a superb stint enabling his team not only keep the lead on scratch, but also taken the lead on handicap from Team

23, who had now dropped behind Team 21 as well. With a second Safety Car period Team 22

decided to make their final driver change to SSgt Wood. With the safety car back in Woody was back up to speed, unfortunately in the failing light Woody ran over some debris on the track which



*Will Ashmore, keeping Team Army in front*






somehow broke the fan belt. Managing to limp back to the pits he handed over to Cpl Dan Tedstone, but had the team managed to keep ahead of the other teams?

At the flag Mne Adam Dewis (RM) despite problems with the exhaust on the 206 finished for team 23, Dan Tedstone for Team 22 and as he started Ed McKean finished for Team 21.

But had anyone managed to overhaul the Army? No, Team 22 had done the double winning on scratch and handicap with Team 21 second and Team 23 third. At the front Team 2 had lead from flag to flag completing 152 laps, while the outright overall winners would be, Team 28, Carbon 8 Coupe Cup B, a team of Hyundai Coupes.

Teams for inaugural Inter-Service 6 Hrs Race were:


### Team 21 - Royal Air Force

Sqn Ldr Darren Berris	Sqn Ldr Darren Howe	WO Ed McKean	Sgt Andy Holborn	SAC Daniel Smith
				

### Team 22 - Army

Cpl Dan Tedstone	SSgt Chris Wood	WO1 Matty Taylor	Cpl Darren Smee	Sgt Will Ashmore
				

### Team 23 - Armed Forces Race Challenge

LAET Seb Unwin	Mr Andrew Muirhead-Smith	POET(WE) Sean Graham	Mne Adam Dewis	Mr Paul Roddison
				

The Armed Forces Race Challenge will return next year as the

*ARMED FORCES RACE CHAMPIONSHIP 2017*

Big and Better, See you in 2017.

Pictures by Nick and Mark Rogers

