
RAFMSA RACE CHALLENGE ROUND 6

BRANDS HATCH 15 SEPTEMBER 2013

Round 6, the final round of the 2013 season was held at Brands Hatch, Kent. Hosted by the South East Motor Sport Club (SEMSEC) the day's events would include a round of the British Sprint Championship in the morning followed by saloon and sports car racing in the afternoon. With the first gales of autumn predicted the weather was always going to be a gamble.

'Team Army' were there in force, Lead by Captain Mark Saunders and Corporal Chris Camp as well as Daniel Murphy, their plan was to stem the tide of RAF wins. They even brought in local boy Lance Corporal Stewart Ross-Cumming with the very rapid Ford Focus RS. Although Stewart was taking part in his first race, he has done a few track days at Brands before, so had better knowledge of the track than some of the new boys who had never been to the circuit before.



Team Army (plus Dom)

The RAFMSA scrambled to meet the challenge skillfully lead by Flt Sgt John Davies and Sgt Dom Benfell. Billy Fletcher in the Hornet Mk 2 and Trevor Hancock in the Peugeot 206 made up the rest of the RAFMSA Team. John nearly didn't make the event as up until a few days before he had been stranded in Norway after a squadron deployment. While unloading the tiger, the gearbox sounded very clunky. Inspections revealed it to be a soft gearbox mount which was letting the drive shaft and gearbox hit various bits of the frame. Luckily, Team Army's well equipped mobile workshop came to the rescue, manufacturing a new mounting plate, job done.

The Navy was represented by LT RN Michael Wells. Michael is currently competing in the Millers Oils Toyota MR2 Championship where he is 4th in class with one round to go.

The morning Sprinting would prove how the track would perform. Although the weather was clear and bright the track was still damp in places after the rain of the previous night, especially down Paddock Hill which caught a few people out resulting in some spectacular spins. As the morning progressed the wind increased and the sky clouded over ominously. The sprinting over ran so it would be well past lunchtime before practice for the saloon and sports car races could start.



Dan struggling with a sick Evo

With the call forward issued and still no substantial rain everyone decided to practice on dry weather tires. Although the track seemed dry there was very little grip and Billy complained that the car just kept running away from the apex. Mark Saunders managed to get clear of the traffic and after putting in what he thought would be the fastest lap called it a day and returned to the pits. Daniel Murphy in the Evo IV was having troubles as he started to have problems with the gearbox and selection problems with 4th gear.



After a bit of a scare going through clearways, Stewart in the Focus RS realized that he still had the traction control selected which was sapping power at the most inopportune moments. A quick flick of the switch restored full power so he settled down to get in some quick laps. On lap 9 he put in a stunner, 1/10 of a second quicker than Mark's Sierra Cosworth to take pole position on the grid. Beginners luck or have Team Army brought in a ringer? Anyway part one of the Army plan had worked, a front row lock out to them.



Stewart goes for gold!

With the weather still undecided as to be wet or dry the decision of which tires to fit was resolved when just before the start of the preceding race the heavens opened and gave a good soaking. Decision made, those that had wet tires available, would fit them, despite the fact it would cost them their performance index. So it was all available hands to help, even the photographers were roped in. It was then off to the assembly area with Mark, John and Billy equipped with wet weather tires and the rest remained on drys.

As the race was on the short Indy circuit 2 green flag laps were needed, give competitors a good opportunity to check out the conditions. The start was going to be difficult given the conditions, and it



Billy leads into Haiwoods Hill

was Billy in the lighter, more nimble Hornet that got the best start and lead by the end of the Brabham straight. Once Mark and Stewart got the quicker Fords going they easily overtook Billy. It wasn't long before John in the tiger joined in the scrap for the lead.

Trevor was having fun sliding the 206 around 'Rally Style' (Another event he competes in) and it wasn't long before he had overtaken Stewart's RS. Stewart had decided that it was better to go home in one piece, rather than risk all, especially as he had to return to Germany that evening.

Michael in the MR2 was having a terrible time and going through Graham Hill bend did well not to spin out completely, but it meant that he was now back of the pack and having to battle to get back on par with the others.

Chris Camp was doing his own thing and like the rest of the season was putting in consistent laps time, which would secure his position as one of the top consistent drivers of the year in both the RAF and Army challenges.

A new track and difficult conditions mean Dom in the Lotus was concentrating on keeping his lines clean and pushing further but found the damp track reined him in. Dan Murphy's Evo was not happy and was now without 4th and reverse as well as a blowing manifold.

Back at the front John was doing all he could to get past Mark, and on the tighter parts he would succeed, only for Mark to use the superior power of the Sierra to retake the lead going down the straight. Mark



John tries nipping past at Druids

had to be careful though as the boost was stuck on max so it was either no power or the full 500!

With the last lap board being displayed as they crossed the start/finish line John knew he had to keep close to the Sierra. Mark could see that John was setting him up for a pass at Druids, so went defensive and down to Graham Hill bend where getting on the power slightly too early John found himself going sideways with no chance of recovery.

After the spin and with no damage to the car, he restarted the engine and with Billy still not passing, carried on for the rest of the lap to finish second behind Mark.

So the on track results were:

- 1st Mark Saunders
- 2nd John Davies
- 3rd Billy Fletcher

As mentioned previously the RAFMSA Race Challenge is not about having the fastest car on track, so after applying the PI, the adjusted results are:

- 1st Trevor Hancock
- 2nd Chris Camp
- 3rd Dom Benfell

So that concludes the 2013 RAFMSA race challenge, this is a challenge and not a championship so there is no outright winner, but bragging rights will go to the most consistent driver. As for the Army, Major Phil Robinson you'd better polish up the 'Piston Cup', it's got a new home.

The RAFMSA Challenge 2013 Most Consistent Drivers are:

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------|
| Billy Fletcher | 393.69 points |
| Cpl Chris Camp | 393.43 points |
| Flt Sgt John Davies | 392.70 points |
| Ed Fuller | 391.93 points |

See you all next year.

Pictures by Nick and Mark Rogers

