

ARMED FORCES RACE CHALLENGE 2015

With the onset of spring, people's thoughts turn to the important things in life, the start of the 2015 Armed Forces Race Challenge (AFRC).



1st practice for AFRC

The AFRC is open to Serving Military Personnel, Ex-service personnel and invited associate members. With an eclectic range of cars from purpose designed race cars to converted family run-a-rounds, trying to find a race meeting where the AFRC can all run together has not been an easy task. In past years the RAFMSA had been able to get exclusive grids, within some race meetings organized by various other

motor clubs. Unfortunately at the end of 2014, many of the events previously available to the AFRC were not going to be available for the 2015 season. It was looking like the AFRC for 2015 would be a 'Virtual Series', where drivers would enter results from different race meetings, and gain points on the table. Luckily the 750 Motor Club came to the rescue with the offer of some spare grid places within their existing race series. As not all cars are eligible to race in the same series, competitors would have to race in different races, but at least it would be at the same event, so some of the 'esprit de corps' of previous years could be maintained. Sgt Chris Slator (RAF) took on the role as co-ordinator and devised the plan for a three core race challenge.

Event one was held on the National Circuit at Silverstone 02 May. The weather for the week previously had been wet and windy, but a weather window was expected and Saturday was expected to be dry.

Out first were the SR> drivers Ian Fletcher/Ian Smythe sharing the Fletcher Hornet Mk II and Ed Fuller in the Tiger

Super Six. With a 40 minute race later in the day, the idea was for a gentle practice just to make sure the cars were ready to go. The Ian's qualified eight with Ed a little further back in twelfth.



Ed Fuller's Tiger Super Six

The remaining drivers were entered in the Roadsport Endurance series.



Brian shows Dan the way round

Compact Cup because of forthcoming deployments. Last year's top AFRC driver Cpl Daz Smee (Army) would also be locking horns with Sgt Chris Wood (Army), the pair having numerous battles in the past. To ensure the event was Tri-service the Navy were represented by Lt Cdr Rich Scott and LH Seb Unwin sharing a BMW 318.

The SR> race was a 40 minute race, with a compulsory pit stop where driver changes would be completed for those sharing cars. Ian Smythe started in the Hornet and after the problems on the start line for the Porsche 917 replica and the deployment of the safety car, managed to settle into a good rhythm set some



Team Navy BMW 318

impressive times before handing over to the other Ian. Coming out of the pits checking the gauges he saw the Ammeter at full deflection, as all



Frying tonight?

appeared normal he carried on racing. Ed was not without his dramas. A couple of laps in and the rear under tray decided to become detached, rather than get blacked flagged, he pitted early were the offending article was deftly removed, and he rejoined the race. Both cars finished in roughly the same as the start order, but on the slowing down lap Ian did notice the now fried

battery lying by the passenger seat, the alternator had been

sending out 35 amps for the race.

The Roadsport's race was 45 minutes, again with a mandatory pit stop but Team Navy would be the only ones changing drivers, the rest would stop for the required time. Having followed Brian's Mini for a couple of laps, Sqn Ldr



Darren makes his move

Darren Howe made his move come out of Brooklands and was passed and clear. Over the next few laps Darren pulled away, eventually finishing fifteenth overall and first in Class C.

Chris Camp (BAMA) had put the Lexus I200 on a diet over winter, so now some 100 kg lighter it was feeling a little unhappy and during practice proved reluctant to play. Finally diagnosed as a dodgy spark plug which was

replaced, the race went without a hitch and the now lighter IS200 was a great improvement over last year.



Daz Smee's new colour scheme

Daz Smee's Honda Integra had also undergone a transformation over winter. Now sporting a new coloured wrap, more at home on a challenger tank, the camo pattern certainly makes the car look different.

As expected the race between Daz and Chris was fierce with the lead changing constantly. Eventually Daz managed to make a small gap which Chris was unable to close, finishing half a second behind, although it would be Chris at the end of the day laughing as he had the better Performance Index (PI) and would therefore be the top BAMA racer.



Close racing between Chris and Daz

Daniel Smith had certainly chosen a hard race to start with. Most drivers start with a 15 minute sprint not a mini endurance. He had a good race and was never far away for Kelly Williams (RAFMSA). Kelly and her brother Dan had brought up a couple of MX5's up from Castle Combe, where the Williams family prepare and race cars. Dan was sharing his car with James Canfer another new comer to racing.



Darren keeping tabs on Kelly

So after two exciting races with no major incidents and for a change no retirements, the first of the 2015 AFRC rounds ends. As with previous race challenges the winners are not the ones first past the post, but those who have achieved the best performance index (PI). So once Chris Slator had done his magic working out the PI's, the table after Round 1 is as follows:

Overall

1	Lt Cdr Richard Scott	RNRMMSA
2	Sgt Chris Wood	BAMA
3	Mr Ian 'Billy' Fletcher	RAFMSA
4	Cpl Daz Smee	BAMA
5	Capt Farard Darver	BAMA
6	Mr Chris Camp	BAMA
7	Sqn Ldr Darren Howe	RAFMSA
8	Mr Ed Fuller	RAFMSA
9	Wg Cdr Brian Watson	RAFMSA

Round 2 of the Armed Forces Race Challenge is at Cadwell Park 21 June 2015, See you there.

More pictures can be viewed at:
<https://goo.gl/yhNWUs>

Pictures by Nick and Mark Rogers