



ARMED FORCES RACE CHALLENGE 2014

The weekend of the 10th/11th May saw members of the RAFMSA, BAMA and RNRMMSA assemble in Norfolk for the inaugural round of the 'Armed Forces Race Challenge' (AFRC), which was to be held on the 2.99 mile Snetterton 300 circuit.

The AFRC, like its predecessor, the RAFMSA Race Challenge is not a first past the flag wins race, but rather a performance index race. Performance indexes (PI) are calculated by comparing a competitor's average lap time to their fastest lap time. The competitor with the highest PI value wins the race.

Practice was held on the Saturday afternoon in dry conditions which meant newcomers Flt Lt Chris Vosper (RAF), Cpl Tom Pearce (Army) and Cpl Darren Smee (Army) would be able to learn the circuit in the best conditions. After 15 minutes practice guest driver Jeffrey Windsor in his very rapid Ford Escort RS Cosworth would start from pole with local driver WO Edward Mckean (RAF) in a BMW 3 series second and Tom Pearce in his Mitsubishi Evo 6 a creditable third.



Ed Mckean exits Murrays

Unfortunately the nice weather of Saturday would not last and Sunday morning saw heavy rain falling over the circuit. Those that had wet weather tyres would certainly be using them, as opposed to the semi-slicks used in the dry. Chris Vosper, was entering his first ever race and having little experience of the car (It was only finished Thursday night), decided that the mix of a novice driver, a bike-engine car and no wet weather tyres was not a good mix for his first race and decided not to run.

The race start was delayed owing to Lieutenant (RN) Lewis Dallas' Locost stopping on the formation lap and the other competitors have to do an extra formation lap due to the delayed start whilst the stricken Locost was recovered. Another casualty of the formation lap was Tom Pearce. Tom had made some overnight adjustments to the steering geometry of the car to improve its turn-in and had adversely made it feel like the steering was no longer connected. A quick stop in the pit lane, readjust the settings and he returned to the circuit a few laps into the race, with a car that was now handling correctly. Once the race began Jeff Windsor disappeared into the distance in his Ford Escort Cosworth. Edward Mckean in the BMW 3 series was having a lonely race, unable to catch Jeff, but maintain a healthy gap to the rest of the field.



Tom on his way to the pit lane

As is customary with this type of racing small battles began to develop as expected between competitors of similar performance. First Capt Mark Saunders (Army) in his Sierra Cosworth and Pte Daniel Murphy (Army) in his Mitsubishi Evo 4 were having an excellent battle until Dan's Evo started to leak oil onto the rear tyres. Entering corner (9) 'Nelson' Dan had a spin and allowing Mark to past.

Another entertaining battle was between Billy Fletcher in his 'Fletcher Hornet Mk 2' (now sporting new aerodynamic enhancements) and Daz Smee in a Honda Integra Type R. All was going well for Daz until he had an off at corner (6) 'Oggies' and



OPPs!

redesigned the front end of the Integra on the tyre-wall. Daz re-joined the race but was now in no-man's land between Billy and the battle behind.

Another newcomer Sgt Chris Wood (Army) in his BMW was having problems; the windows were streaming up and he also had to recover from a spin at corner (3) 'Palmer' on the first

lap leaving him at the back of the field.

SAC Adam Twine (RAF) in his Peugeot 205 and Chris Camp in his Lexus IS200 were also battling hard. This is a rekindling of the battle from last year when Adam and Chris joined the RAFMSA race Challenge together.



Adam V Chris again!

Between the races most competitors made use of the 'Team Army gazebos' to stay out of the rain and effect the necessary repairs after race one. Lewis Dallas believed he had cured the problems from the earlier race by replacing a stuck non-return valve in the fuel system. Daz Smee's Integra was in need of attention as the 'Kiss' with the tyre-wall had left the front wing with some damage that T-cut couldn't polish out. After a liberal application of Cable Ties the front end was repaired and ready to go. Tom fitted a set of scrubbed tyres and believed they would provide more confidence in the car even in wet conditions. Chris had checked the BMW and realised the tyre pressures were around half what they should have been, after a lot of effort (with a borrowed foot pump) the tyres were now at the correct pressure. During the race Mark had noticed a drop in boost pressure on the Cosworth. Investigations showed some heat damage next to the turbo and a missing bolt. The bolt was replaced and additional heat protection fitted, job done. Billy had noticed a hair-line crack in the exhaust pipe, the same thing had happened at Rockingham a couple of weeks earlier, luckily the borrowed welder was still in his mobile home, so after a trip to find a 240 V socket, temporary repairs were carried out.

The second race was a pursuit start format, with the drivers completing a formation lap and then starting from the pit lane at pre-determined intervals. Unfortunately the gremlins were still in Lewis's Locost and once again the car stopped on the formation lap. Adam managed 3 laps before the car stopped with a dead engine, traced to a faulty cut-off switch. Having sorted the oil leak, Dan was



The new aero kit helps the Hornet's wet handling

going well again until there was a drop in oil pressure, so he backed off and finishing the race in fourth place. The Hornet performed impeccably meaning Billy finished in third place, although an engine change now beckons before the next event as the current engine is using a significant amount of oil, as well as a redesign of the exhaust support system. Daz managed to

keep the Integra on the track, despite suffering large amounts of under steer and came home in second place, first place

being taken by Mark Saunders who had a fairly uneventful race.



Mark at full speed down the Bentley Straight

The AFRC next dedicated race will be at Donington August 23/24, but there are also 'Group Entries' which team members can use to gain extra points in the race challenge. The next of these Group Entries will again be at Donington, Sunday 8th June.

See you there

Pictures by Nick and Mark Rogers