

In recognition of military forces, the Snetterton round of the Armed Forces Race Challenge was run as an Armed Forces Day event.



MSV and 750MC gave the AFRC a large area of the paddock, which allowed all three Services space to erect their gazebos. With the support of Podium Preparation's lorry/awning, sponsorship from Bowmoor Consulting and Countrywide Grounds Maintenance, as well as a lot of hard work from AFRC members Sunday morning saw the paddock transformed into an impressive hospitality area.



The competitors had been busy since Croft. The RNRMMSA Endurance 206 GTI had been in dry dock after its mishap and although not in A1 condition, it certainly looked a lot better.

Flt Lt Simon Frowen (RAF) had reworked the engine breathers on the Fiesta which had caused his retirement from the last round at Croft, but he couldn't be sure that the problem had been resolved until he could drive the car in anger.



Royal Navy 206 GTI and Simon's Fiesta

Captain Mark Saunders (Army) was back and had the Sierra firing on all cylinders, but with 500 plus horsepower wet conditions would be tricky.

During race preparations, SSgt Chris Wood (Army) found that the head gasket on the BMW was damaged and the quickest solution was to replace the engine. Unfortunately, the replacement unit was a bit of an unknown as it had not been run in the last 2 years.

After testing at Croft a brake rumble on Sqn Ldr Darren Howe's (RAF) Golf was traced to a cracked disc, so with new brakes, practice would be used as a shakedown session.

The day started with heavy down pours, but typically, just as people were considering fitting wet tyres (those that had them), the sun came out to confuse matters. No lap records would be set as the track was still wet and very slippery, so it would be caution all the way.



Jonathan Candler's Peugeot 306 GTI

As practice progressed and people gained in confidence Cfn Jonathan Candler (Army) in a Peugeot 306 GTI decided to try for a quick lap. All was going well until he got to Coram; the car went wide onto the grass,

Jonathan managed to catch the slide and after a trip across the grass rejoined the circuit. Luckily there was not much damage done and he could continue.

Also struggling was Matt Hoskins (BAMA), despite the wet weather the Subaru Justy was overheating.

Mne Adam Dewis (RM) was first to take the Endurance 206 GTI out. After a couple of laps he noticed that there was more wind noise than usual. Going down Bentley Straight he had time to look around to see the rear hatch was wide open; great for air conditioning but no use in the aerodynamic department. A trip to the pits was required. This would not be the only trouble for the Endurance 206 GTI, as at the start of Cdr Richard Scott's (RN) practice he coasted to a halt on the grass at Murrays. A quick check under the bonnet revealed the fuel feed to the injector rail had detached, which was refitted and he managed to complete practice. Joining Sgt Andy Holborn (RAF) in the MX-5 was Martyn Astley, a seasoned competitor from the RAFMSA Race Challenge; the fore runner of the AFRC.

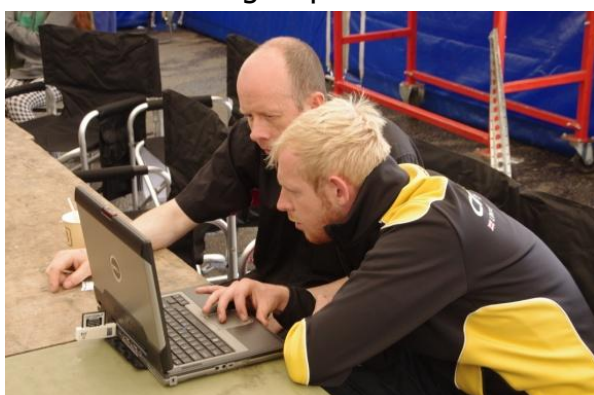
With the weather improving final practice times would be some 15 seconds quicker than at the start. Pole position again went to Sqn Ldr Darren Berris (RAF) in the Westfield, with Andrew Stacey's (Podium Prep) Mini second and Richard Evans' M3 third. Paul Waterhouse (RAFMSA) was back and was just ahead of Sgt Chris Slator (RAF), each driving a Peugeot 306, resuming the race battle they had at Donington.



Darren in the Westfield on his way to pole

As at Croft professional driver Max Coates was on hand to give practical advice to the drivers.

With the changeable weather conditions it was a gamble on tyre choice and settings. With a drying track but heavily laden skies dry tyres were the choice, although a shower just before the race caused a few glances skyward.



Max Coates discusses Mark Saunders lap data

The first couple of laps proved tricky until the track dried fully again. The lights went green and the cars left the grid; all except the Endurance 206 GTI. The electrical cut-out had operated and killed the engine. A quick reset and Richard was off, albeit last.

From the start Cpl Daz Smee (Army) had his Honda Integra latched on to the back of Mark's Sierra before making a swift pass. Mark was having problems, the steering was becoming vague with more and more play. Eventually the steering was so bad he had to pit, where he found one of the steering joints had disintegrated.

Paul got a better start than Chris and managed to get a few cars between them, but after a couple of laps Chris managed to catch and pass Paul but couldn't make a break.



Chris chasing Paul down Bentley Straight

Jonathan's 306 GTI was sounding increasingly noisy and at his pit stop a check over the car revealed that the silencer had separated, possibly as a result of his earlier excursion onto the grass, but he was forced to retire. Simon was still having problems so

also retired the Fiesta.

Chris Wood was having a good battle with Cpl Dan Tedstone (Army). Since Croft, Dan had the Honda's suspension sorted and with new tyres the car was handling much better. Unfortunately it wouldn't last as the clutch on Chris' BMW gave out.



Chris Wood BMW

At the back of the field, the Endurance 206 GTI was gaining ground on SAC Dan Smith (RAF) and by lap 11 managed to pass. The next target would be the team Navy's Locost driven by AET Lewis Pemble and PO Sean Graham, but the end of the race would come before they could pass.

For some it would be one lap too many. Chris had managed to keep Paul at bay all race until the final corner, where one of the drive shafts popped and he coasted to a halt, his first ever DNF.



Dan Smith and Lewis Corton battling for PI

Although Darren in the Westfield drove an impressive light to flag race it would be a while before the all important Performance Index (PI) results could be calculated. Although the race is run for 40 minutes with a 60 seconds pit stop, for PI results it is run as two races; one before the pit stop (a), one after (b).

The final PI results were:

- | | | | |
|-----|-------------------|--------|-----|
| 1st | Cdr Richard Scott | (RN) | 6a |
| 2nd | SAC Daniel Smith | (RAF) | 42a |
| 3rd | Pte Lewis Corton | (Army) | 54b |

Full results can be found on the AFRC website below.

<http://www.armedforcesracechallenge.net/>

The AFRC breaks for Summer now, but will be returning in September at Rockingham for the final round of the Armed Forces Race Challenge.

See you there.

Pictures by Nick and Mark Rogers

