

Happy Arnie Says “Ill be back, if youl lend me your motor son”

After a suspicious weather report the previous evening the SW Adair Tyres Northern Ireland Sprint Championship circus arrived at Kirkistown on 07 August for the second round of the championship. This round was also rounds 12 and 13 of the SBD Motorsport British sprint Championship.

As always, this event was superbly supported with an entry of 104 competitors entering to see who really was the best in Britain. 7 of the British Championship competitors made their way across to do battle with the local competitors, and boy did everyone step up to the mark!!

It was great to see Simon and Tim Woodside return again to the championship, with Tim driving the ex-Robert and John Morgan Pilbeam. Robert Dwane made the long trip up and was driving Patrick Roche`s OMS CS after his own car wasn`t just quite read. However after beating Patrick in his own car it is unknown if Patrick will lend him it again. Other new, or different competitors to note included Trevor Roberts who debuted his new Force nine, Jim Hutchinson, in his RSR Escort, Richie O`Mahoney Jnr and Snr who travelled from Dublin with a Mark2 Escort and another Escort RSR, Ryan Murray who debuted his newly rebuilt Subaru in class 12 after having a mare of a year with technical issues.

Another debut driver was Arnie Wishart who borrowed his sons Peugeot 106 GTI and had a “bit of craic” in class 1. Arnie only got his first competition licence at the turn of the year. This was his maiden event at kirkistown and his maiden sprint as well and he drove to a superb second in class on his debut event. Rumour has it that Arnie has well and truly caught the sprinting bug and was overheard saying “Il be back”. It will be interesting to see if Stephen lends him his 106 again although the fact that he returned this competition car back to Stephen intact on this occasion is a big bonus in his favour. Ohh and to make it an extra special event for Arnie, he turns 70 this week. so Happy Birthday Arnie!!

In terms of the action on the track, first practice was a little hectic and so it was decided to go straight into the rimed runs after only 1 practice as the weather forecast was showing rain from lunchtime onwards. As always it was close at the top. Alan Cassells blasted away into the next week in his OMS 25 setting a first timed run of 109.37 secs on his first run, although not his fastest run, he was unbeaten all day and finished up with FTD on his third run with a 108.31 sec run to win the event.

Steven Gault from Ballymoney continued with his tradition of attacking from the start and set a blinder of a first run to go 2nd overall with a 114.32. Steven, who is always consistently fast with every run set his fastest run in his second when he did a 114.06secs. All 3 of his runs were within 0.26 of a sec of each other all on 114.00 secs runs. This goes to show just how consistently fast Steven was in every run. Steven was also the fastest through the speed traps with a 125mph time. Only Gerard O`Connell matched this time in his World Series car. Interestingly Alan Cassells, the event winner set a fastest speed trap time of 113mph in his last run.

Second Overall went to Gerard O`Connell in his World Series car with a best run of 110.61 mph in his second run. Third overall was taken by the returning Simon

Woodside who improved steadily during the day, despite never being out of the top 4, when he set a blinding 113.10 sec run in his last run. Steven Gault took fourth overall ahead of the fastest of the visiting English Competitors Graham Porrett who steered his 3.4 Lola Tegra T90 to fifth overall with Tim Woodside sixth in his debut event in his Pilbeam MP82.

Working our way through the time sheets we saw an epic drive from the returning Ryan Murray who finished a mere 1.33 secs behind his class winner Oliver Cormican in his Mitsubishi Evo. Trevor Roberts Debuted his new Force Nine and was simply stunning to watch. Despite only doing 2 timed runs, he blitzed the existing class record in his first run and took 0.26 secs of the record which has been unbeaten in 10 yrs. When he gets some more seat time in the car Trevor will definitely be at the top of the time sheets in that car. Watch this space!! It was fantastic to see Scott McMullan back in the family Locost after some slight issues at Carncastle. Scott took a fabulous 3rd in class which is a brilliant result and further proof, if it was needed of how talented Scott is behind the wheel. Also, it's great to see John Donnelly getting the hang of his Pilbeam MP62 and doing so well in it after a troubled start. John was 8th overall and 6th local in what is an older generation single seater, so well done John!

In terms of the categories, Oliver Cormican took Modified category honours ahead of Ryan Murray by a mere 1.33 secs. Neither Oliver nor Ryan managed 3 timed runs so the results could have been different had both drivers had 3 runs at it. Third in the modified category went to Stewart Strain who once again pulled a giant killing drive off in his little 205. When you watch Stewart you simply cannot miss his smooth and precise driving style and wonder how on earth he manages to carry so much speed into corners. I swear he must source his front tyres from whoever makes the wheels for the Portrush flyer as the car handles like it's on rails. I've also had the pleasure of getting a run in the car with Stewart and he is so cool and calm you would think he was only doing 30 mph, until you looked out the window!!

Jim Hutchinson took Specialist Category Honours in his Escort RSR despite still having a couple of technical gremlins. Jim had a fantastic drive to 18th overall, David Hawthorne once again proved to be the fastest Hawthorne as he took second in the specialist category a huge 2.1 secs ahead of his brother Steven Hawthorne who was third in the category.

Road going honours once again went to Phillip Cardy in his Subaru Imprezza, although he was pushed hard by Conor Hamill who took second in his BMW M3 V8 ahead of Aaron Vance in his clio 197.

In the Heaslip Ladies Challenge trophy it was role reversal today as Sheryl McBride took the challenge win from Emma Campbell with Kathy McDade third and Amy Hawthorne fourth. When the factored times were compiled Sheryl had the nod by a mere 2.51 secs from Emma who was 3.75 secs ahead of Kathy. Amy was fourth but as she had only previously completed in 1 event her factor conversion time wasn't as favourable as the rest of the girls, however this will correct itself as Amy does more events. A quick comparison of times between this event and the last shows that Sheryl and Amy have both made significant leaps in their times since the last event and Amy especially has found 18 seconds since her first day out in the car. Amy also competed on the Sunday and brought her times down even further. Saturday evening also saw

the first ever presentation of the Heaslip Ladies Challenge trophy as the prizes from the 2020 Season were distributed. A massive congratulations must go to Sheryl on her win but and a huge thank you must also go to Jimmy Heaslip for sponsoring not only a scorcher of a trophy, which I would love to have on my mantelpiece, as well as beautiful bouquets of flowers for the top 3 as well. Well done and thank you Jimmy Heaslip

With Gary Milligan not being present it was a 2 way shoot out for the title of fastest mini in the West, which Karl Johnston won, by a country mile, from Gerry McGarrity. Gerry obviously decided to see if he could drive as slowly as Gary and it turns out he can!

In terms of the British Championship competitors Graham Porrett was the fastest of the visiting drivers with Graham Blackwell second and Pete Goulding third. The British championship is worked out slightly differently from us and as a result Graham Porrett won one of the Championship run offs and Graham Blackwell won the other.

All in all it was a fabulous day and the weather was fabulous. Despite a forecast for heavy rain in the afternoon it remained dry right up until the last car crossed the line. Then as if by prior arrangement, the heavens opened not 5 minutes after the last car crossed the line!

3 regular attendees at this event were sadly missing on Saturday due to illness, so on behalf of the entire SW Adair Tyres Northern Ireland Sprint Championship, all its drivers, supporters and friends we would like to wish Tom Lawther, Wendy Young and Richard Young a speedy and full recovery, all our best wishes and we hope that they all get well soon, We are all thinking of you

The next event is scheduled to be to be the North Ulster Car Club September sprint at Nutts Corner on 25 September. Details of this event will be announced as they become available.

If you keep watching the championship facebook page and the website on <https://www.anicc.org.uk/Discipline.aspx?d=7> any updates will be posted there.

Now for the class battles:

Class 1 – Road Cars up to 1700cc

Class 1 for the smaller engine road going cars had a more normal entry of 4 today. However sadly Alan Wallace had gearbox issues in practice meaning only 3 completed the day. Mark Brogan took class honours in his Saxo ahead of birthday boy Arnie Wishart in his son Stephens Peugeot 106. Third in class went to Billy Nutt in his Mazda MX5. Marks win puts him joint top of the class championship with Stephen Donnelly, and Arnie Wishart is third.

Class 2a – Road cars over 1700cc

Saturday was the first time in a long time since we saw someone other than Andrew Robb head the time sheets in class 2a. However a common trend was still adamant when the class was won by a BMW M3, however on this occasion it was Conor Hamill in his V8 BMW M3 who took class honours on the day. It is great to see Conor, who is normally a hill climb man, making the switch across to the sprint scene and he certainly seems to be enjoying himself as he took the class with over 4.75 secs from hard charging Adam Vance in his Clio. Again I must confess to growing more fond of the little Clio's and could be sorely tempted to try my hand in one. Third in class went to another Clio, this one had a hard charging Crawford Ewing at the wheel and he battled hard all day with Robert Savage in his diesel Skoda Fabia. Jimmy Heaslip decided to try his hand in the seat Leon his daughter Kathy drives and he and Kathy had a real battle royale all day with Jimmy taking the family honours home as the fastest Heaslip (although Kathy is still the fastest McDade) with just under 4 seconds separating them. This just goes to show how hard Kathy drives tweety pie, as she calls her car, as Jimmy is a hard charger on the track and he didn't finish as far in front of Kathy as others suspected he would. Mervyn Johnston separated the Heaslips in his BMW mini despite having some technical issues and Amy Hawthorne again improved her times considerably and managed to find 5 seconds across her 3 timed runs today. After this event Aaron Vance has a 2 point championship lead over Conor Hamill and Andrew Robb who tied on points in second and third.

Class 2b – Road cars Mazda MX5 challenge

Adam Brogan continued from where he left off at the last event and once again took class honours with a convincing 7 second win over Kevin McNamee who led Dessie Martin home. Adam also managed to take 0.04 secs off his previous class record as well which shows just how well Adam was going. Adams class win puts him well ahead in the class championship ahead of his father Derek who wasn't competing and George McMillan who also wasn't out on Saturday.

Class 3 – Road cars specialist Production cars 4wd

Phillip Cardy has well untruly stamped his authority on class 3 this year with another class win over Barry Griffin. Both these guys pushed their respective Subaru's to the limit and I watched Phillip leaving the start line on one of his runs. It is incredible to see just how much grip these cars can get off the line on road tyres!! After a second class win Phillip now has a 2 point lead over Barry Griffin in the class championship!

Class 5 – Road cars specialist Production cars

After feeling very alone in class 5 over the last couple of years and wishing for someone to play with, Richard Munnis now finds himself wondering if he really got what he wanted. On Saturday Class 5 had 6 competitors out and none of them could be described as anything other than competitive. Trevor Allen once again took the class win and shed another 1.26 secs off the class record he took at the last event. Andy Hawthorne finished 2nd in class 2.77 seconds behind Trevor and a mere 1.02 secs ahead of third placed Richard Munnis. When you consider that Trevor and Richard are running bike engines and Andy Hawthorne is running a 2l 16v red top, it

shows just how well Andy was driving as his car is significantly heavier than those round him. Fourth in class went to another car engined Westfield, this one driven by Gardiner McIlwaine who has campaigned his little Westfield for quite some time. James Perry from Donaghadee took 5th ahead of Gilmore Murphy's Westfield. After this event Trevor Allen leads Andy Hawthorne in the class championship with Richard Munnis third, Gardiner McIlwaine Fourth and James Perry fifth. Interestingly this is exactly the same order that this class finished at the last event.

Class 6a Modified Cars – Series Production cars 8v

Jonny Strain returned to winning ways on his maiden outing on Saturday. Sadly Jonny suffered a gearbox issue during his second run which prevented him from breaking the class record which he took on his first timed run. I'm sure Jonny was relieved that there was no second practice on Saturday morning! Second in class went to David Evans in his Peugeot 205 gti after a hard charging battle all day with Karl Johnstone in the mini which saw them never any more than point 0.75 secs apart and with both of them leading that particular battle at some point of the day. Fourth went to newcomer Chris Nicholl in his Morris mini. Sadly neither Gary Milligan nor William Hutton were out as this class is very fiercely contested amongst them all. After Saturday's event David Still leads the class championship standings with Karl second and Jonny Strain third ahead of William Hutton, Gary Milligan and Chris Nichol in that order. The next event is at Nutts corner where Karl and the other minis are expected to teach David Evans in his Peugeot a lesson.

Class 6b Modified Cars – Series Production cars 16v

As has been the case already this season Stephen Colbert left the starting blocks in front and didn't ever look back as he took class honours again. Stephen is super consistent and all of his timed runs were 136 secs runs with only 0.3 secs separating his fastest and his slowest run. Dermot O'Hagan took second with a 139.26 sec run in his slick shod Honda Civic. Unusually for Dermot his first run was his fastest and he seemed to get slower rather than faster as the day progressed, although he was clearly trying hard to catch the flying sunbeam in front. Ken Colbert, father of Stephen, took third in class finishing a mere 0.59 secs behind Dermot and a mere 0.48 seconds ahead of fourth placed Dara Fay in his Suzuki Swift. Andrew Straney, Andrew Kernohan, Alfred Robb and Jason Frazer completed the class order in that that order. It was great to see Jason Frazer returning in his immaculate little metro to do this, his second sprint. I had a good look at the car and the preparation and paint work is some of the best work I've seen in some time. Jason sadly is lacking in the power needed to compete in this class however after a brief chat to his father I suspect he has something else in mind.

In terms of the class championship Stephen Colbert now leads the way from Dermot O'Hagan, Ken Colbert Raymond Johnston, (who was doing the Dogleap Rally in his escort Mk 2 on Saturday finishing 40th overall) Dara Fay and Andrew Straney, in that order.

On a different note Stephen Colbert competed on the Sunday in Gerard O'Connell's World Series Dallara and not only beat Gerard but also won the event with FTD. Unbeknown to most of us Stephen has a vast array of experience driving World Series cars, world F3 cars and various other single seaters at world level so it is great to see him in action in our championship. I also had a magnificent chat with his father Ken

Colbert on the Saturday who explained the finer points of suspension set up, in a single seater, to me. Whilst this is completely irrelevant to how Betsy operates it was fabulous to learn and Ken had a wonderful way of explaining it, complete with informative hand signals etc, which made it super easy for me to understand. So thank you for that lesson Ken, and I told you I'd include it in the report, but without giving away the trade secrets!

Class 7 Modified Cars Specialist Production

As usual class 7 was a Hawthorne fight out at the top with David Once again showing his brother Stephen the way home. What was however unusual was the gap between the terrible twins, with David beating Stephen by a whopping 2.10 secs. Usually this gap is only a few tenths. It had been rumoured that David was getting Stephen to go first, to warm the tyres etc for him, but I couldn't possibly comment on this awful allegation. On a more positive note Scott McMullan pulled a flanker of a drive to take third overall, on his first time in the car since a chalk and cheese trip to Carncastle. Scott has steadily got faster and faster on every event in this car and is certain to be pushing the chuckle brothers hard by the season end, mark my words. David McMullan, Scott's father finished a fine 4th and sadly Jonny Armstrong had another unlucky day with his Westfield side lined due to technical issues. In terms of the class championship David Hawthorne leads Steven Hawthorne with Graham Boyce third and Scoot McMullan fourth, Jimmy Dougan, David McMullan and Ian "Robbo" Robinson complete the class in that order.

Class 8 Sports Libre cars Special Saloons

It was great to see 3 RSR's out today in class 8 with Jim Hutchinson, Rory Stephens and Richard O'Mahoney all coming out to play. There are still another couple of these in the country which haven't been out to sprint yet, and a rumour of a couple more in build / rebuild so things are looking up for class 8. Anyhow Jim Hutchinson took the class win along with the specialist category win and 18th overall in his RSR. Rory Stephens was second in his copper coloured RSR which has an ex BTCC Swindon touring car engine in it. Richard O'Mahoney was third in his example. In terms of the class championship Rory Leads the way with a 4 point advantage over Jim Hutchinson.

Class 9a Sports Libre cars Saloons and GT's

Class 9a is sadly under supported this season with only Emma Campbell competing on Saturday. Obviously this meant that Emma took class honours and maximum points as well and subsequently leads the class championship too with a 100 % win record. It's a shame to see what used to be a very competitive class now being so low on numbers, in what is the fastest saloon class where literally anything goes due to it being a Libre class. Hopefully some more competitors will come and play in class 9A before the season is out or I may be forced to move there myself to keep Emma Company

Class 9b Sports libre Closed wheel sports racing cars.

Unlike class 9a, class 9B seems to find itself on the up an up this season with 5 cars entered on Saturday, which is one of the biggest entries I can remember in this class. Robert Dwane took class honours in the OMS SC car which he borrowed and double drove with its owner Patrick Roche. Patrick simply had no answer to Robert and finished 2nd in class 1.54 secs behind Robert. Third in class went to British Championship contender Graham Harden who led Sheryl McBride home. Sadly the unfortunate Simon Bainbridge continued his run of bad luck at Kirkistown and broke a tie rod then a prop shaft in his awesome 4.2 SBR Crono. As a result of his misfortunes he was unable to complete a run at all and went back home with no points in the bag after such a long trek to compete. With Robert Dwane and Graham Harden not registered for NI Championship points Patrick Roche doubled his lead from Sheryl McBride in the championship standings.

Class 10 Sports libre Cars – small capacity Rally cars

Class 10 is another class which sadly doesn't seem to attract the numbers it should, which a shame is considering that it is a good class with some very hard charging competitors involved. Alan Roddy and Derek Robinson were the class 10 representatives on Saturday and not only did they finish in that order but they are stacked in that order in the championship standings as well. Oh, and Alan Roddy beat Derek Robinson at the last event as well so the points are very easy to calculate here.

Class 11 Sports libre Cars – large capacity Rally cars

Saturday saw 6 cars entered class 11 which is one of the biggest entries seen in this class in a long time. Stewart Strain regained his place at the top of the timesheets in his first run and no matter what Jaye Nevin or any of the others did they simply couldn't catch Stewart on Saturday. Jaye finished second a mere 1.8 secs behind Stewart and 2.47 secs ahead of Third Placed Richie O'Mahoney in his mk2 escort. Noel Strain guided his beautiful BMW Mini to 4th in class ahead of Martin Flannigan in his Beautiful BMW E30 and Seamus Murray was sixth. The top 5 in this class were separated by 8 seconds with no one any more than 3 secs ahead of the person in front. This further emphasises what we have always said that class 11, like class 10 is a good competitive classes for rally cars to be in, although there is a huge misconception amongst competitors that they are better off in lesser classes where trophies seem to be easier to collect. In terms of the class championship, Saturday's event puts Stewart Strain ahead of Jaye Nevin in the championship standings. Wesley Patterson is third ahead of Noel Strain and Miceal Boyle.

Class 12 4WD sports Libre Cars

At long last Oliver Cormican finally had someone to play with in class 12. Ryan Murray. Ryan finally got his Subaru Imprezza back in action again after a troublesome rebuild. Ryan was well on Oliver's pace and finished second a mere 1.33 secs behind Oliver. It was great to see these 2 cars battle it out on track and hopefully this battle will continue over the season and we will see someone take the fight to Oliver, who will relish the additional craic associated with a class battle. In terms of the championship Oliver is in the lead with Ryan Murray a close second.

Class 13 Formula Racing cars

Class 13 was another class with a larger entry today as 4 people wheeled their formula fords out to play. It was great to see John Whitley make the long run north to compete and also good to see Basil Barnes and Stephen Whitley wheel their SERC Formula ford onto the startline. This car is built, maintained and prepared by the students of the South Eastern Regional College as their education into motorsport. The car has been fully rebuilt by the students and despite a slight technical issue the car was running faultlessly. Hopefully there will be some motorsport mechanics of the future amongst the course? Henry Campbell was the man to beat on Saturday and was infact unbeaten, although Stephen Wishart pushed him hard to take second place. Third place went to Basil Barnes with John Whitley fourth. In terms of the championship, it is a mirror image of today's results.

Class 14 small Capacity Racing Cars

The main talking point in class 14 today, and around the paddock as well was the new Force Nine which Trevor Roberts debuted today. Despite having never sat in the car before Trevor pulled a blinder of a run in his second run to set a new class record of 116.40 which was 0.26secs under Eamon Byrnes 2011 record. Second in class went to Ryan McGimpsey who simply had no answer for Trevor despite setting a cracker run of 120.75 secs. Third in class went to visiting Mark Anson with John Loudon fourth despite gear selector issues and Brian Fitzmaurice fifth ahead of Roy Coulter, Chris Houston and Nick Houston who suffered technical gremlins with their OMS Hornet. In terms of the class championship battle Brian Fitzmaurice is top of the tree with George Stephenson, Trevor Roberts and Ryan McGimpsey all snapping at his heels.

Class 15 large Capacity Racing Cars

As mentioned above Alan Cassells took class honours as well as FTD today in his Oms 25. Gerard O'Connell finished second in his World Series Dallara , with Simon Woodside third ahead of Steven Gault. Alans FTD was a 108.31 sec run which was 2.3 secs quicker than Gerard OConnell who set a 110.61 sec run. Third Placed Simon Woodside did a 113.1 sec run and then fourth to ninth inclusive were separated by a mere 2.04 secs. So when you look at it like this, if you remove the top 2 cars from the times the remainder of the class were all very closely matched and seriously on each other's pace. This is what makes class 15 so good to watch, it's a mix of the fastest cars in the sport, with huge power, huge acceleration but close racing with only tenths of a second separating the countries best drivers. This is also one of the biggest class 15 grids we have witnessed in a long time, and long may it continue.

Championship wise Alan Cassells is on the top spot ahead of Gerard O'Connell, Steven Gault, Adrian Pollock Simon Woodside, John Donnelly and new comer to class 15 Tim Woodside. Now that is a line up and a half!!!

Class 16a Historic Road Cars

Class 16a had a tinge of repetition about it on Saturday as once again Gerry McGarrity lead from the outset in his mini. He had a comfortable win of 13.04secs over second placed Trevor McIlroy. Ever the eejit, Gerry phoned me on Friday afternoon as he was loading the van. He wanted to know if he should load the mini onto the trailer or bring the canoe and Jet Ski instead. In true eejit style I responded by

asking if the Jet Ski was an historic spec one or not. Mervyn Getty once again won the battle of the MGB GT`s beating Vincent Rodgers by a mere 2.32 secs. John Hamill was fifth in class just under 10 secs ahead of Ian McCullough in his Lotus Elan. Once again, in another flash of Déjà vu the top 5 finishing order today was exactly the same order as the last event and therefore the championship listings are exactly as they finished today. Talk about keeping things simple for me to work out!

Class 16b Historic Saloons and Sports cars

In our last class of the day once again Stephen Nevin thrashed the absolute life out of one of the nicest prepared cars in the paddock to take the class win in his Escort Mk1. Arthur Ovens was second in his little 1.3 MG Midget in which he has great fun at events. Due to finding a local B&B Arthur stayed and did both days. In terms of the championship Stephen now extended his lead over second placed Paul Taggart.

Heaslip Ladies Challenge Trophy

In today`s event Sheryl took the win from Emma Campbell with Kathy McDade third and Amy Hawthorne fourth. All of the ladies drove their socks off and the additional challenge of the “r factor” is encouraging all the girls to drive faster which is great to see. Now that Amy has completed 2 events her “r factor” will again be adjusted more favourably to bring her closer to the mix and with the way her times are improving I would expect to see an event win for her before the season is out. When all the points are added together Sheryl, Kathy and Emma are all joint first with an equal 20 points each, Amy is fourth just behind the other 3. So it is all very much to play for at the next event!