

## CNC HEADS SPORTS SALOON CHAMPIONSHIP 2026 - RACE REPORT

### Rounds 3 & 4 - Donington Park

### ROBERTS & PRIMETT ON THE TOP STEP!!

#### QUALIFYING

Another huge grid made sure that there was plenty of action throughout the field, as the CNC Heads Sports Saloons made it's first visit of the season to Donington Park. It had rained before qualifying, so almost everyone went for wet tyres on a drying track and began to regret their decisions.

Chris Roberts qualified his BMW M4 on pole, 0.969 secs up on Andrew Armiger's Vauxhall Tigra. "Chaotic as usual and no clear laps. Wets were the wrong choice, but the car was good," said Roberts. "We had sorted the issues after Oulton, so it seemed good too," Armiger added. Richard Wright's Subaru Impreza was next up, with Andy Thomas' Ginetta G56 GT sharing the second row, "difficult in traffic and it dried enough for slicks, but I only got one good lap," Thomas explained.

Deri Davies' Darrian T90 and Mark Primett's MG Midget were on the next row. "I think everything was OK, I had thought of going on slicks. I only did half of the session to look after my wets, as the rear was getting a bit loose," Davies explained. "I was the only one on slicks, as the wets were catching on the callipers, but it turned out not to be such a disadvantage," Primett added.



Garry Wardle's Audi A3 TCR was seventh, "I only managed a few laps as they couldn't see my scrutineering ticket and wouldn't let me out," he explained. Zack Booth's Renault Megane R26 was alongside, "it ran well and I did what I could. Then I pulled into parc ferme and it caught fire," he said, and was forced to effect quick repairs to make the race. The next row was headed by Jamie Cryer's Ginetta G20, well rested and just back from holiday. "all good," he

reckoned, as he had Paul Rankin's Westfield Aero Race alongside. "With wets on a drying track there was so much movement that my traction control kept cutting in," Rankin added.

Nicholas Stott was delighted to be 11<sup>th</sup> best, first time out in his self-built Mini Cooper S R58. "I usually do the Miata Trophy in a Mazda MX-5 so getting used to front wheel drive," said the recently married debutant. Ryan Nelson was back with his Ginetta G56 GTA, after gearbox issues, while Paul Dobson was another returnee in his freshly built Mazda RX7. "It was a road car, built from bare metal in 12 months, it's road legal and I drove it about 40 miles on the road to test it, so looking after it," he reckoned.

Marshall Groves' Vauxhall Vectra was next, "I had a few braking problems, but wish I had slicks on, a good session though," he said. Only 15<sup>th</sup> best though was Roddie Paterson's Caterham C400, fractionally quicker than David Blockley's Ginetta G55. "No drama's," said Blockley, while ex Champion Steven Parker continues to make progress with his BMW M235i. "I was on old wets, so fairly good. Everything was working including the brakes," he confirmed.

Matt Hibbert's Honda Civic Type R was next best, but he was only doing race two, with father Richard going out first and qualifying 29<sup>th</sup>. "I got the car warm for him and created a dry line, super though," said Richard. It wasn't a day for Caterham, as Bod Buckby suffered similarly to Paterson and was only 19<sup>th</sup>. "It was awful, no rear grip and I even had to steer through Hollywood and that's not a corner," he explained.

James Owen's Escort RSR completed the top 20, but wasn't on it's usual pace either, while experience told for Howard Hunt, as his MG ZS 180 was next. "It was pretty much routine and did what I had to," said Hunt. "Fine" said Rob Wakelin as his Honda Civic comfortably took Class F pole, but he should have been followed by Oliver Thomas' Subaru Impreza, that became another casualty. "It's a Subaru," is all Thomas had to say. So Jon Price's Vauxhall Tigra was next up, "very twitchy on wets," he reckoned. He had race debutant Richy Briscow's Renault Megane R26 alongside. "I have done two track days before, so this was my first ever qualifying session.," he said after an impressive scythe through the Redgate gravel.

Nigel Beardsmore's Escort was also making it's CNC debut, with Stuart Connolly's Honda Civic alongside. "The tyres were worn out and I was crossing up on the Craner Curves", said Connolly. Paul Goodlad had a few issues with his VW Scirocco, "wrong line on the Craner Curves and I spun and destroyed a tyre, the gearbox wasn't happy too," he explained.

But Cavan Taylor had drama's too. "I thought I had solved a previous problem, but soon realised I hadn't. The revs hit the wall, no acceleration, engine popped and it caught fire," he said. Jonjo Lee was delighted with his Mini Cooper. "So long as I wasn't last," he said, and he wasn't. Behind Lee was Gary Warburton's Mini Miglia, "I should have gone straight on slicks," he reckoned. Stuart Burnett continued to have issues getting the Spire GTR to run, while Brian Gilsenan had a slide or two in his Clio, but went for safety first.

Louie Dobson only managed one lap in his Honda Civic, "there was an airlock in the radiator and it overheated, the brakes were smoking too so we stopped," he explained. There should have been another debutant but it didn't start well for Andrew Gash's Peugeot 207 Gti. "It blew the radiator pipe off into the first corner, so coolant everywhere and I spun onto the grass. The gear linkage broke too so I had to pull off without making a lap," he concluded.

## **RACE ONE**

Despite the casualties from qualifying, 32 cars were still due to take the start, but Owen was soon out too, retiring on the opening lap after a pitlane start. Roberts had let into Redgate, with Davies just holding off Wright for second into the chicane, as Armiger, Primett, Booth, Wardle, Paterson, Cryer and Groves followed. By the end of lap two Davies had started to consolidate second, but Armiger was poised to challenge Wright for third, while further down the order Buckby was into the top 10, followed by Rankin, with Cryer and Groves losing out.

Wright had surged back to challenge for second, but into the chicane on lap his car died, and was lucky not to have contact. "I was having a good race, it must have been something electrical," he explained. "I don't know how I managed to avoid him though," Davies added.

With the lead duo escaping, Armiger was into third from Primett, which then developed into a great scrap with a number of exchanges, which allowed Paterson to close. Rankin had climbed to sixth but hit trouble too, "it cut out twice and I was going to pit, but then it started again so I carried on," he explained. It lost him four places though, as Wardle, Buckby, Nelson and Cryer were through, with Thomas challenging. Beardsmore had made good progress, but his challenge on Groves at the chicane put them both out of the race, as the Escort appeared to slow on the exit and was t-boned by the Vectra.

Roberts continued to build on his lead, with Davies looking equally secure in second. On lap eight both Primett and Paterson took Armiger and from there Primett eased clear to settle in third too. At the flag Roberts was over 11 secs clear, "it had been a bit close at Redgate, as it takes a while to launch such a big car. But once it was hooked up I was on my own, but always seemed to be lapping in the wrong place," he said. "My rear tyres had got too hot, so it got lively and I could see Mark closing too. But early on I felt so vulnerable side by side with an Impreza," Davies added.

Primett had managed to close the gap to 1.3 secs, but was delighted with third. "Another lap and I think I could have got him," he reckoned. Although Paterson had taken fourth from Armiger mid-race, he struggled to shake-off the Tigra, "the handling was superb, but I made a couple of mistakes," Paterson admitted.

Booth's challenge had ebbed in the second half, firstly losing out to the duelling Wardle and Nelson and eventually slipping to 12<sup>th</sup> and a lap down. "I had got punted off and it damaged the steering rack," he explained. Nelson managed to get away from Wardle to win Class A and complete the top six. "Just good to be back, it was a great race," said Nelson. "I was on road tyres in case it rained, and it didn't," Wardle replied.

Buckby was eighth but was still struggling, "massive vibration from the right rear, better than qualifying but I got a tap too," he said. Rankin's recovery took him past Cryer on the last lap to complete the top 10. "It was a bit lonely a times, as I couldn't live with some of them on the straights, Cryer admitted.

Thomas was the last unlapped runner in 11<sup>th</sup>. I had to go into the gravel a Redgate on the first lap to avoid contact, so lost places, had a good race after that though," he admitted. Paul Dobson followed Booth home in 13<sup>th</sup>, with Parker not far behind. Blockley and Goodlad were next home, followed by Richard Hibbert and Class F winner Wakelin.



Hunt and Warburton rounded off the top 20, with Price, Lee, Louie Dobson and Gilsenan completing the finishers. "It was too hard and oversteering," Dobson reckoned. "Louie had a couple of moments so that gave me a chance," Lee replied.

Briscow had been an early retirement when his gearbox broke, Stott's race ended on lap four in the Old Hairpin gravel, where he was later joined by Connolly. "Brakes, it kept snatching at the rear, so I went off at Redgate and then the Old Hairpin," Connolly confirmed.

## RACE TWO

Wright, Briscow and Beardsmore joined the absentees on Sunday morning, but it was still a 29 car grid.

As the lights went out it was desperately close for the lead into Redgate, with Davies challenging Roberts. But as the Darrian cut in at the Old Hairpin, there was contact and Davies was off and out of the race. "Deri tried to squeeze me and I already had two wheels on the grass, but you can't stop big cars so quickly," said Roberts. Primett emerged as the new leader from Roberts, who was under pressure from Armiger at the chicane, before they swapped at Redgate on lap two. Paterson, Booth and Wardle had settled in the top six too, but Armiger then got ahead a lap later, with the top three going for broke. With Primett challenging Armiger, Roberts got them both on lap five, with Primett losing out, while Paterson was continuing to close.

Thomas and Nelson were having a great dual for seventh too, with Buckby trying to close, while behind them Groves, Cryer and Dobson were starting a battle that would last most the race. Roberts had managed make a slight break as Armiger's pace seemed to slow. "It had been great leading, but we had the wrong suspension setting, it affected the grip and I started to lose time," Armiger explained.

Second was now a dual between Primett and Paterson, sharing more exchanges as they closed in on Roberts' lead, while Booth was into fourth at the chicane at Armiger's expense. Wardle was running solo in sixth, with Nelson chasing, but once Rankin had passed Buckby on lap seven, he began to close in.

By lap 11 the lead trio were as one, with Paterson and Primett working together. Booth was still fourth from Armiger, but in sixth Wardle was being challenged by Nelson as he tried to challenge Armiger, with Rankin threatening too.



A lap later Roberts' defence was breached and he was down to third, with a grandstand seat to watch Paterson and Primett continue their dual for the lead again. The decisive move came at McLeans though, three laps from the flag. "At the beginning I was quicker on the Craners. It was fantastic on the brakes and very nippy in the slow corners. But we were exiting McLeans and I hit a backmarker and

burst radiator," Paterson explained.

Primett was through and just held out for the remaining laps to take the narrowest of victories. "Originally I thought if I could hold onto Chris we had a chance. Then Roddie joined in and I think that helped, as we could work together and kept Chris back," said the victor.

"That race was ace, Andrew and Mark had got me early on at Redgate. I lost a bit of time but when I caught Mark and Roddie, it left me compromised. Great race though," Roberts replied, after taking third and a class A win.

Booth's luck once again ran out in the closing laps. "it was good until I ran out fuel, I showed good pace," he said. So Rankin's late charge bore rewards taking fourth a lap from home from the slowing Booth, with Wardle following. But after taking the flag Wardle's car speared off right hitting the perimeter wall very hard after a spin. Gary walked away, dazed and battered but his car was extensively damaged.

Nelson was seventh on the road behind Booth, but a track limit penalty dropped him back behind Armiger. "Some good clean battles, but I had a little off at Schwantz and got airborne," Nelson admitted. Thomas and Cryer completed the top 10. "It was a great dual early on with Darren, but he had slicks, I didn't and after taking me at Coppice he drove away," said Thomas.

"It was a great battle with Marshall and Dobbo, but I managed to get away," said Cryer. Dobson eventually won the remaining dual by 0.285s secs. "Fantastic, but I had a gear oil leak and had some lurid slides on the Craners," Groves said. "Really close but we gave each room, brilliant," Dobson replied. Parker was next home, one lap down, but it took a while to shake-off Price. "It was vice versa, he caught me and I got away, but still learning the car," Parker explained.

Stott came in 15<sup>th</sup>, "I went off with front tyre delamination in the first race, and the tyres went again today as they seem to rub on the arch," he reckoned. Matt Hibbert headed home Wakelin who took another clear Class F win, while Connolly, Goodlad and Louie Dobson were the remaining top 20. "I felt I could trust the brakes, better but not 100%," said Connolly.

Warburton, Lee, Gilsean and Burnett were the final finishers, after Hunt crashed at Coppice, after contact with Goodlad. Buckby had his engine cut out at the Old Hairpin while ninth and Owen retired from 14<sup>th</sup> to the pits nine laps in.



Published by Peter Scherer for BARC NW, June 8th 2026