

Oulton Park - 3rd September 2016
Morgan Challenge Race Series
A report by Dominic House car number 67

After a glorious meeting (weather and race) at Silverstone in August I'm sure expectations were high for a repeat of the conditions at Oulton Park for this weekend. Alas, all hopes were dashed when thick clouds rolled in and persistent rain commenced early on in the proceedings. Those of us that attended general testing on Friday awoke to a completely different track and I'm sure seriously considered rolling over and going back to sleep! However, along with the many others that travelled the length and breadth of our fair Isles to attend, it seemed only right to brave the elements, display some serious backbone and take to the tarmac.

Armed with our brollies we all headed down to the assembly area for qualifying. With the lack of an Ahlers to head the front of the queue it was refreshing to see Patersons Jnr followed by Snr at the head of the snake and we all proceeded to buckle up and knuckle down to the serious job of battling out the starting positions for our afternoon jolly. Considering the conditions everyone performed admirably and no drivers or vehicles were injured in the making of this grid. Notably Elliot appeared to ignore the water or perhaps just thought it was actually dry and set a stonking 2:19 lap time to secure 1st place for the start. An inevitably proud and equally frustrated Paterson Snr, a mighty 1:5 seconds slower (not rubbing it in or anything) took second place on the front row successfully planting the power of his V8 beast firmly on the black stuff. Following closely behind to secure the second row was our famous actor driver fellow (his name always eludes me) and our series salmon expert. Phil G and Mr Ayres made up row 3 and so on and so forth. The more professional among us were keen to test the limits of our brakes on approach to the 2nd chicane, the obvious place to do this considering the run off, and not wanting to embarrass anybody these were cars 10, 67, 69 and 171. These lap times were of course correctly and fairly disallowed. On a side note and voicing a strictly personal opinion, I can only hope that the same rules that apply to us will one day be consistently applied to our F1 peers!

And so to the race....

During our break for lunch I was constantly amazed at the optimism displayed regards the weather....'It's definitely getting brighter over there', 'the rain is definitely easing'. But alas conditions didn't change and in fact the warning from our esteemed race coordinator whilst sitting in the assembly area, once more under our brollies, was that a rather large puddle had appeared on the inside of the track at turn one and those of us on the outside of the grid might consider leaving some extra space to allow for other cars to avoid aquaplaning! Confidence building aside 22 cars successfully negotiated the first lap unscathed and our race commenced.

I would like to apologise in advance for any mistakes in my account. Sitting in one of those 22 cars unfortunately does not offer the most reliable vantage point from which to write a report but ably assisted by Pa's notes (*"Pa" is Dominic's father usually racing car number 70*), here goes...

As per usual Mr Parsons achieved a lightning quick start to momentarily take the lead. However shortly after Elliot, Russell and Phil G cleared him to dominate the front of the race. Further back, Mr Bumble had a great start managing to get past 6 cars to improve on his starting grid position and at the end of lap 1 found himself in a convincing P8. Andrew Thompson appeared to get bogged down and unfortunately slipped back a number of places. Considering my previous in the wet I was best pleased to get past 4 cars off the start. And so we all settled down (as best as possible) to navigate our treacherous way round Oulton. Tim P made a valiant effort to get back on the tail of Phil, didn't get past him but gave us an almost photo finish 0.4 of a second behind him securing 1st place in class R and 4th overall. Car 67 managed to pass another 3 cars to settle in behind Stuart Anderson and proceeded to exchange 8th position well in to the race. A now fully awake Mr Thompson navigated his way back through the crowd claiming 9 victims to finish in a well recovered 8th passing me on the penultimate lap. Kelvin, driving his new beautifully presented class I +8 once again proved that any tyre other than Yokos clearly stick better in the wet and romped home in 6th, an admirable second outing in his new acquisition. Our esteemed actor fellow unfortunately had a 'straight on' moment on lap 6 robbing him the chance to beat that slippery salmon but still finished a very respectable 2nd in class and 5th overall. Back at the front the thot plickened as Elliot, determined to take a weight penalty to give his father a chance of winning, took a trip in to the kitty litter allowing Russell to pass. Paterson snr did not however return the favour and decided 'take no prisoners' was the best course of action firmly ensuring Elliot had some work to do to guarantee his 2016 championship win. On the flip side he won! Notably, Craig and Sharlie provided some very close racing for the crowd and so to our 1 injury..... A tussle between Kelvin and Simon ended with Simon remodelling (in a frighteningly similar way to my design at Rockingham last year) the front end of his Roadster. In reflection it might have been wise to put the 'for sale' stickers on after the race. I'm sure we all join hands in wishing said Roadster a quick and speedy recovery and hope you end up in a better home. Simon stepped away from the car unscathed and I assume he received a free health check as I did last year. Joking aside the incident clearly highlights the exceptional dedication the marshall's have for club racing and our safety, thank you.

This only really leaves me to congratulate our 2016 Champion.

Well done Elliot (no need to attend the last 2 meetings eh?) and as stated at the prize giving, I'm sure there's no need to see a Paterson win the Morgan Challenge for another 10 years, yet somehow I don't think that'll be the case.

Ta-ta and see you all at Mallory.