

Away in the Wolds.

A report on round 3 of the Aero Challenge.

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Photography; Chris Dicken of Tripos Media.

The third round of the Morgan Aero Challenge was held at Cadwell Park, a picturesque circuit set in rolling Lincolnshire countryside, just North of Horncastle. Never mind the racing, Cadwell is a great place for a day out, but of course the drivers were concentrating on mastering the twists and turns of the track rather than a picnic lunch in the Paddock. The entry was surprisingly meagre with just 21 cars turning up for the single 20 minute race, with many of the regular entrants opting to miss the meeting for various reasons. Originally the programme had listed two twenty minute outings for the Morgans, however, the organising club, MGCC, had made the change, which probably contributed to the reduced entry list. Qualifying had twenty cars on track, battling for places on the grid, and one stuck in the pits, the new MMC Plus Four of Tony Hirst had failed scrutineering due to an electrical fault, and failed to get out. The meant at least one grid position had been decided. Tony would start dead last in the race. When the dust had settled, and, the drivers back in the Paddock for the picnic lunch, it was Russell Paterson who had claimed Pole position with Roger Whiteside in second spot, while Andrew Thompson in third, had Tom Andrew alongside. The third row was made up of Shane Kelly in the second works Plus Four, joined by reigning Champion, Brett Syndercombe. The top ten were completed by Craig Hamilton-Smith, Stephen Lockett, James Sumner, and Tim Parsons. The performance of Russell Paterson was particularly impressive, as it was four years since he had last raced anywhere, and five since competing at Cadwell Park.

The two Class 1 cars at the head of affairs were both concerned with the fast starting ARV6 of Andrew Thomson that would prove hard to pass once in front, however, their worries were eased as Andrew bogged down when the red lights went out. A surfeit of revs, spinning up the rear wheels leaving him a tardy seventh, which left Paterson's bright red V8 in the lead, as Whiteside fought off a determined Shane Kelly's Plus Four through the first corner.. At the end of lap one Russell held a slender lead over Roger's black V8, and Andrew was back to third place, but too far back to trouble the cars in front. Shane held off Tom Andrew's Plus Six initially before Tom regained fourth position on lap 10. Up at the head of affairs, Roger and passed Russell to take the lead, and slowly pull away to the tune of 3,5 seconds, however, Russell had begun to find his form and inched back on to the boot of Roger's car, taking advantage of a rare mistake from the leader to sweep past on the uphill climb from the Mountain.

While never far behind Roger was not able to find an opening to attack, and finishing less than a second in arrears after 15 laps, Andrew had an untroubled run to third, as Tom Andrew held off Shane Kelly for 4/5th places. In his first race of the year, Craig Hamilton-Smith came home sixth well clear of Brett Syndercombe. Tim Parsons, Steve Lockett, and John Milbank were at one lap to round out the top ten. From the back of the grid, Tony Hirst made it up to 11th place, having passed, James Sumner, Simon Sherry, Phillip Tisdall, Greg Parnell, Tim Grigsby, Peter Sargeant, Phil Merson, Tony Kilby, John Bevan and Richard Fearn. There were no retirements, which was good news. In a post race interview Russell revealed that as he was lapping two slower cars across the timing line he had failed to see the Chequered flag, and race on for a further lap, officials were sympathetic at his failure to slow down on the 'last lap'.

After just three rounds the battle for the Championship, looks to be between, Brett Syndercombe, and Andrew Thompson in Class's 2 and 3. The points system requires a minimum number of entries in a race for the Class winner to get maximum points, and both 2 and 3 regularly meet this requirement, unlike Class 1 that rarely has more than two cars running. Closest rival to Brett and Andrew is Stephen Lockett in Class 4, also well supported, and Steve is fiercely competitive. Time will tell. Two names new to the series this season, are Tim Grigsby, who has the ex-Andy Green +8, and Phil Merson with a Roadster, welcome lads, to a wonderfully friendly series.

Next Round is at Spa at Belgium's Grand Prix circuit.