

Round 4, Paul Fahey, Hampton Downs, Mar. 2021

It has been just over 2 years ago that we had last raced on the National Circuit at Hampton Downs, and as such there was certainly some re-familiarization required between drivers and the track. In typical racing driver fashion though, as soon as the visor was flipped down, gone were any lingering doubts, with all thoughts now focused on the race at hand.

The same grid arrangement continued with the FONZ cars starting 200m ahead on the track and qualifying and all racing was held on the Saturday.

Dean McCarroll was looking forward to setting a new lap record and was hoping to provide a challenge to the leading FONZ cars.

It was great to be joined by Tim Edgell who was driving the very smart looking, latest Radical SR3 XX.

Richard Kelly was prepared for another challenge from Robert Hulme who had changed back to the Juno as it was expected to be more competitive. Robert's Juno now had an update and was running with the latest rear suspension arrangement.

Nick Barker had taken over driving duties from brother Anthony in the ARES.

Nick Rae was set to improve on his performance at Pukekohe and was supported by Anton Aalders.

Steve Sharp was also hoping for another very successful Pukekohe like performance.

Steve Armstrong made his first appearance with us in the Hulson. Unfortunately, it was to be a troubled weekend for him with a number of problems hampering his efforts.

Mike Greenfield was a late scratching as his replacement axles had been delayed in Singapore.

Matt Howe who owns the ex-McConkey Juno, took the opportunity to come out and meet some of the Sports Car drivers and to see how it's done. We hope to see Matt join us in a race in due course.

Practice

Not everyone could make practice on Friday.

F5000, FONZ, Formula Ford and Sports Cars were grouped together in the same session. After the first practice, F5000 and Spots Cars ran in the same session and FONZ and Formula Ford were in a separate practice run.

Qualifying

Dean very quickly established himself as the as the fastest car on the track, qualifying .365s ahead of Tom Alexander in a TRS FT50 in what was a very busy qualifying session.

Robert qualified second. However, on the slow down lap he spun at turn 1 on oil and sadly damaged the Juno quite considerably.

Next was Tim in the Radical as he demonstrated the performance of the new Radical.

Richard was just ahead of Nick R. who had made a large improvement in lap times. A surprised Nick B. was a little further back.

Nick B. spun at a corner for which both Barker boys are known to have a few moments. Nick B. was handed a grid penalty for being too slow to rejoin the track despite being under the direction of the flag marshals.

Steve S. and Steve A. were next down the order.

Race 1

Dean was soon amongst the FONZ cars and in his enthusiasm spun on lap 1 only to re-start from the back of the field. Despite this hiccup, he finished just behind the faster FONZ cars and set a new Sports Car lap record in the process.

The next four Sports Cars all improved on their practice times. Tim finished ahead of Richard, Nick R. and Nick B. Richard had endeavored to keep in touch with Tim until he was baulked by a slower car. Nick R. was delighted to find after the race that he had bettered Richard's best lap time by .003s.

Steve S. finished ahead of Grant Rivers who had spun.

Race 2

Robert did not start as he had returned home to grab his other race car, the Nemesis returning just as the cars headed out on track. Nick B. also did not start as a circlip had become unseated on a gearbox selector fork.

This time Dean did not make any mistakes in the pursuit of the race leaders. He worked his way through the field to be second overall by lap 4 and finished 5 seconds behind Tom Alexander. In the process, he again set a new Sports Car lap record, 1.01.293, as well as posting the fastest time of the meeting.

Richard made amends for race 1 and jumped Tim on the first lap. He held this position until lap 6 when he pulled into the pits with an alternator belt problem. Meanwhile, Tim had again improved his best lap time to 1m 5.917s.

Nick R. was a little further back, however, he was unable to improve on his already impressive lap time.

Steve S. finished ahead of Grant Rivers and Steve A. finished his first race.

Race 3

Robert re-joined us in the Nemesis with the help of Mike Limbrick.

The longer 12 lap race held out the promise that Dean would challenge Tom and so it was to be. For the last 3 laps they both put on a breathtaking performance, as Dean challenged, finishing .056s behind.

Tim once again set a new personal best lap time as he sought to keep in touch with Geoff Harriman. Richard, content to finish the race, was a little further back.

Nick R. managed to pass Robert as he lost 4th gear. Once Robert got the better of his problems, he re-took Nick R. to finish behind Richard and keep his championship hopes alive.

Steve S. and Grant Rivers were not too far apart.

Summary

It was a good meeting for a lot of the drivers with PB's being set for several people.

Dean's performance in the Juno was outstanding and the finish of race 3 was thrilling to watch.

Tim's drive of the Radical was impressive especially when you consider that he was running Hankook medium C52 compound tyres.

Both Richard and Robert were very resilient in the face of problems, going to great lengths in keeping their championship hopes alive.

Thank you to HRC for another well run meeting and to the support crews who often go unrecognized.

We look forward to seeing you all at the Jack Nazer meeting at Taupo, 10th – 11th April 2021.