

Historic Formula 3 Championship Rounds 11 & 12 Silverstone 14-15 October 2023

Report by Alan Jones

The Final Rounds of the HSCC Historic Formula 3 Championship took place at Silverstone on the National Circuit. To close the season and herald the start of the 60th Anniversary year, the two races gained sponsorship from MKM Building Supplies. This year would also see the inaugural presentation of the Julia O'Brien Trophy to the aggregate winner of the two races.

Julia who sadly passed away in 2022 following a battle with cancer, was the wife of Mike O'Brien the team principal of SpeedSport and owner of the Ian Walker Racing Brabham BT21B in which Samuel Harrison had won the 2023 Championship. Mike and Julia's son Michael who is now a professional racing driver for McLaren in their GT cars, would be racing the family Brabham at this event alongside his SpeedSport teammate Mark Carter in a Chevron B15.

The entry for this event had 24 Formula 3 cars from the screamer era, with Samuel Hamilton taking part in the invitation classes with his Formula Ford Lotus 51, a chassis derived from the Lotus 31, built for the Formula 3 Championship when it began in 1964.

In an entry dominated by Brabham cars, aside from Michael O'Brien other names to watch in this competitive entry were Jon Milicevic returning to the class after a lay off whilst his engine was being rebuilt plus Jason Timms, second in the Championship standings. Michael and Jon both fielded BT21Bs whilst Jason had a BT21. Another welcome new name, Glenn Loxton, swelled the Merlyn ranks to 3 in his ex-Tony Lanfranchi Merlyn Mk14. Enrico Spaggiari had made the trip from Italy to race the ex-John Miles Lotus 41X, resplendent as ever in its GLTL colours, along with fellow Lotus racer Tony Wallen in his immaculately self-prepared Lotus 59A. There was only one Tecno in the entry for this meeting, that of Peter Hamilton. The Alexis marque were represented by both Ian Bankhurst's Mk8 (running Hoosier tyres as part of the Association's thorough review of tyres for 2024) and Peter De La Roche driving Ian Phillips Mk17. Simon Armer and Andy Jarvis both fielding March 703s.

Qualifying

Being the second qualifying session of the morning, the Historic Formula 3s were met with a patchy damp track on the Saturday morning with multiple spinners. The two areas with the most damp were Copse and Luffield.

The early pace setters were Michael O'Brien, Jon Milicevic, Peter De La Roche and Ian Bankhurst. Richard Trott in the Brabham BT28 formerly owned by Michael Scott would be 5th with Andy Jarvis 6th.

The qualifying was stopped after Mark Carter made heavy contact with the outside barrier at Copse. A disappointed Mark confirming he was "ok" but the car and his wallet would be feeling the pain for some time to come. At the restart it was Jon Milicevic and Michael O'Brien who traded times to take pole position with Michael finally topping the sheet almost a second clear of his rival. The top six were almost the same from before the stop with, the Alexis next Peter De La Roche leading Ian Bankhurst. Simon Armer would be 5th with Richard Trott in 6th place. Completing the top 10 would be, Enrico Spaggiari, Jason Timms, Andy Jarvis and Ross Drybrough.

Mark Carter was listed as 12th but the car would not take any further part in the weekend action. Unusually at the back of the grid was Andrew Tart. Having had a high speed spin at Copse prior to the

Red Flag he decided discretion would be the better part of valour, waiting for the race to have some fun.

Race 1

On what was now a dry track with bright sunny, but slightly chill conditions. It was Jon Millicevic who made the best start to lead Michael O'Brien on lap1. In third place was Peter De La Roche with Ian Bankhurst 4th. Simon Armer had a spin, rejoining in 17th place. Glenn Loxton would end his race on lap 2 pulling off at Luffield with falling oil pressure. Mark Linstone pulled into the pits on the same lap with a rough sounding engine.

Lap 2 and Michael O'Brien led an epic scrap including Jon Millicevic and Peter De La Roche, all three producing a typical hard fought F3 slipstreamer. Richard Trott came through in 4th place. Lap 3 the lead went back to Jon, but at Copse Richard Trott sadly ended his race painfully as the car turned sharp left into the barrier under braking. The Safety Car controlled the race for three laps before battle resumed at the front. Jon again leading the race in a battle with Michael that took them well clear of the chasing pack for four laps.

Peter De La Roche settled into a comfortable 3rd place whilst Ian Bankhurst and Jason Timms battled for 4th with a three-car scrap for 6th place headed by Andy Jarvis from Ross Drybrough, and Enrico Spaggiari. Simon Armer was having a good recovery drive and was back up to 9th place with Andrew Tart homing in on Peter Hamilton who in turn was lining up Martin Whitlock.

On lap 11 Michael O'Brien, finally got the pass he wanted on Jon Millicevic to ease away to win the first part of the aggregate race, with Jon finishing second. Peter De La Roche retired on lap 15 from what looked to be a safe 3rd place with a broken gear linkage. Jason Timms taking the final podium place from Ian Bankhurst. Andy Jarvis had been following Ian but was passed on the last lap by Enrico Spaggiari. Andy being followed home by the recovering March of Simon Armer. Completing the top ten were Ross Drybrough 8th Peter Hamilton 9th and Leif Bosson in 10th place.

Keith Messer had a spin on Lap 11 at Luffield, luckily avoiding contact, which dropped him back behind Tony Wallen to 18th place.

Having started from the pit lane when his car wouldn't start, Steve Nichols followed fellow back row starter Andrew Tart to 13th place Andrew finishing 12th.

Post race Michael admitted on the podium that the build up to the start had been a little anxious when he experienced clutch problems but was obviously pleased to have that first victory of the weekend under his belt.

Race 2

A presentation took place in the BRDC Clubhouse on Saturday evening where Mike and Michael O'Brien unveiled the gleaming Silver Julia O'Brien Trophy. Sponsors MKM builders and their MD Gordon Walker were thanked for their generous support of the event. As team principal Mike O'Brien also confirmed the 4 cars that he planned to enter the Historic Formula 3 Championship in 2024 including a Titan Mk3 and the Rodney Bloor Chevron B7.

It is anticipated that many more exciting entries will be forthcoming from across Europe and the UK for the Diamond Anniversary of the Formula.

With the cars lining up on the grid based on their fastest lap times in Race 1, it was the podium finishers that occupied the top 3 slots with Jon Millicevic on pole. Peter De La Roche was in 4th place

with a repaired gear linkage. 5th Would be Andy Jarvis sharing row 3 with Ian Bankhurst. Row 4 would be Enrico Spaggiari and Ross Drybrough. Peter Hamilton would line up alongside Simon Armer on Row 5. At the back of the grid would be Mark Linstone in his Brabham BT21.

Glenn Loxton, Richard Trott and Mark Carter would not be competing in Race 2 bringing the entry down to 21 cars.

At the start it was Jon Milicevic who led on Lap 1. On lap 2 Michael O'Brien led pulling clear for the overall victory not just in the race but on the aggregate too making him the first name to go on the plinth of the Trophy in memory of his mother.

Jon had a lonely race in second place, although in the later stages of the race Peter De La Roche did start to close creating excitement in the commentary box. Jason Timms was 4th but he did have to defend the position from Ian Bankhurst in the opening laps, who had Enrico in the Lotus pressuring him.

On lap 9 Ian slowed and pulled into the pits ending his race, two laps later on lap 11 Enrico did the same when his steering became suspiciously "loose". This left Andy Jarvis in 5th place in a dice with Ross Drybrough both of them having Simon Armer closing on them.

By lap 5 Mark Linstone from the back of the grid had latched onto a train of cars, headed by Steve Nichols, followed by Peter Hamilton, Leif Bosson and Andrew Tart.

The result would see Simon Armer in the March finishing in 5th place behind Jason Timms. 6th place went to Andy Jarvis in the second of the March cars, with Ross Drybrough 7th, Peter Hamilton 8th Leif Bosson 9th and Steve Nichols completing the top 10. Mark Linstone from his back of the grid position finishing 11th.