

The '74 Nationals

Chris Frost.

The 74 Individual National Finals took place in Lytham on the 2nd. and 3rd of November. Almost all the big names were present, with the notable exception of Phil Enos, the 1973 Spts and F1 champion, who unfortunately still has the trophies, (please can we have 'em back Phil). Also the threatened invasion of two famous wissocks didn't materialise, thanks Doob and Jos! (thats the way to get a mention, don't turn up, must remember that, Lionel).

The track took some sorting out on Friday night, but was in normal running order in time for the Sat. morning practise. The power supply was not as good as is normally expected for the National Championships, apart from this there were few complaints, (except for those that came from drivers who'd drank too much in the bar of the Anthrax Arms the previous night).

FORMULA 32

In qualifying Andy Mills set first and second fastest times, to top qualify over $1\frac{1}{2}$ laps clear. The other finalists were Peter Philipson and Phil Goldsmith from Haydon, two newcomers Roger Gratton from Leeds and Dave Croft from Hastings, and the much improved Russell Ward from Heron (Bury St Edmunds).

Russell made an excellent start, but by the end of lap 1 Andy was firmly ahead and pulling away. On lap 2 one of the cars deslotted on the straight and there was a 4 car pile up. which despite some really heroic marshalling let Andy into a lead he was to increase throughout the race. Immediately the mix up Pete was 3rd, Roger 4th, Dave 5th, and Phil 6th. Russell was making a good job of keeping the second place car in the slot, but as it was clearly slower than 3 of the cars behind him it was only a matter of time before he lost that place. At 30 laps Andy was extending his two lap lead, followed by Peter, Roger Russell, Dave and Phil. Russell and Dave were very closely matched and stayed in close company swopping 4th place for the next 15 laps untill Dave dropped back. Phil's car was quick enough to improve on 6th place and when he finally discovered where the corners where and kept it in the slot he hauled his way up to 4th. With 60 laps gone Andy's lead on Peter was over 3 laps, and in the remaining 15 laps he lapped him again, thus becoming National Champion by a greater margin than even the Dominy's ever managed. The final order was :- ANDY MILLS, Peter, Roger, Philip, Russell and Dave. After the race Roger was heard to say that there had been no way that anyone had been going to catch Andy.

GRAND PRIX

The qualifying times were very close, but no one got near 'Crazy' Dick Birtles time set in 1973. Surbiton's Mick Burnham was the fastest, the other finalists being ECRA Comp. Sec. Ian Jensen (Haydon), Dick Smith and Ian Fisher (Nth. London), and from Scotland Phil Ratcliffe and Ian Stevenson.

Ian Jensen and Fisher made the best starts in the final, but Ian F soon fell off to allow Dick, Phil, Ian S and Mick into the places behind the Comp. Sec. Dick took first place on lap 6, but was unable to extend his lead to much more than 10 feet. Over 15 laps all that Dick gained on the main straight was regained by Ian J on the rest of the track. While all this was going on Mick had taken third and was well clear of 4th place man Phil Ratcliffe. Mick was driving very carefully at this stage waiting for the leaders to fall off and on lap 22 Dick fell off and Ian J retook the lead. However Dick and Mick started to close up on the leader. Lap 30 saw Dick fall off again letting Mick draw level for 2nd. place, but again he started to edge away from Mick and gain on Ian J., and when Ian lost it he was close enough to take the lead. Over the next 20 laps Ian's bottle got a little bit cracked and he dropped into third place behind Mick, who was making no impression on Dick's slender lead. Meanwhile at the rear Ian S and F enjoyed themselves with their own private dice for 5th place. With just 6 laps to go Dick had $\frac{1}{4}$ lap on Mick and he had about 10 feet on Ian J then Dick dropped it and found himself in third place. In the closing 4 laps Dick made valiant efforts to catch Mick and was rewarded by second place. Final positions:- Mick Burnham 75.00 2nd. Dick Smith 74.88 3rd. Ian Jensen 74.85. surely the closest finish to a final yet. (Obviously excited by the close finish Chris has left out the other places, will have to find them and leave room for them). 4th Phil Ratcliffe 73.54, 5th Ian Stevenson 69.50, 6th Ian Fisher 66.90.

SPORTS/G.T.

Even though the 1973 Phil Enos outright track record was never approached one driver did manage to qualify comfortably clear of the opposition, that being Phil Firth. This proved a great surprise to most forecasters (except those from Leeds, Lionel), few if any having considered Phil had a chance, but there were more surprise to come.....

The other finalists were Mick Burnham and John Ballard (Surbiton), Adrian Coppola from Edinburgh, Dick Smith (Nth. London, using the car Tony Condon took the title with in '72) and a conventionally dressed Derek Cooper (Leicester).

Right from the start of the final Phil pulled away from the opposition, the order of the minor placings being Mick, Dick, Derek, John and Adrian. These 5 swapped places quite frequently in the early stages. At 10 laps Phil had a big lead from Dick who was being caught by Mick, John was 4th and Adrian and Derek were disputing 5th. Mick took 2nd. place on lap 19 and pulled slowly away, but he was

not going as fast as Phil. The 5th place dispute was settled in Adrian's favour as Dee developed bottle trouble. At about the half way point Dick's car started slowing down, (old age?), and John who earlier had shown no signs of catching him was able to take third place on lap 45 and pull well clear. Ten laps later Adrian drove past putting Dick 5th but thanks to Adrian falling off he regained 4th. At the start of Phil's last lap, well clear of the rest of the field, Dick had 15 feet on Adrian, dropped it was marshalled just as the power went on exactly alongside Adrian, a dead heat for 4th. Thus the final result was 1. Phil Firth, 2. Mick Burnham, 3. John Ballard, 4. Adrian Coppola and Dick Smith and 6. Derek Cooper.

SALOON

Ian Jensen top qualified, setting the fastest time of the day in the process, and a new sal. record. The other finalists were defending Saloon champ Dick Smith, using the same car, Steve Barden (Hastings) Paul Hunter (Bexhill), both these two Area 9 drivers using Pete Williams cars as Pete had been taken to hospital a few days before the Nats, Phil Firth and John Ballard.

Ian led the first lap of the final from Steve, next time round it was Steve from Ian, then Ian from Steve and so it went on for a few laps until Ian fell off. By 10 laps Steve had a small lead from the following pack of Dick, Paul, Phil and Ian, these four being side by side and leaning on each others door handles through the corners, and swapping places continuously. Phil was slightly faster than the rest and pulled clear of this bunch so when Steve dropped it on lap 19 it was Phil that took the lead. At 25 laps the bunch had spread out a little and the order was Phil, Steve, Dick, John, Ian and Paul. Steve was falling off more than Dick so occasionally Dick would get second place for a short time until Steve's greater speed took him past, but the speed was not enough to make any headway on Phil's slender lead. Meanwhile back in the pack Ian had got his bottle together and was moving up the order, taking third from Dick on lap 60. In the last 10 laps Steve's attempts to find the extra speed to catch Phil became a mite to desperate and he started falling off but still held onto 2nd. So Phil, who no one expected to win even one title walked off with two.

The Victor Ludorum went to Dick Smith, the only driver to make all three finals.

Concours Results	Constructors Trophy	Kev Appelby (Blackpool)
	Best Presented F32	John Goldsmith (Heron)
	" " G.P.	John Goldsmith (Heron)
	" " G.T.	Andy Powles (Gorleston)
	" " Sal.	John Goldsmith (Heron)

Well that was it, for some it was all over, others started again, dismantling the track and thinking up the excuses as to why they went lousy, perhaps we are getting too old Tone....