

The Texaco Havoline Ginetta Championship: Rounds 9 and 10



Matt Nicoll-Jones scored two wins after dominating a pair of races in the latest rounds of the Texaco Havoline Ginetta Championship this weekend (12th August 2007).

Ben Elliott and Rob Austin joined him on the podium for race one, and Christian Dick stepped up onto the second step with Joe Osborne in third after a clean, hard fought fight that lasted right through to the last lap.

Qualifying

Matt Nicoll-Jones will start both races from pole position this weekend at Silverstone, running on the 2.23 mile International circuit.

Drama on the opening lap at the complex for Spencer McCarthy left him needing a lift out of the gravel trap – but a swift clean out of gravel enabled him to rejoin the track to take an encouraging 6th. An almost identical incident for Paul Morgan also had him rejoining the track, post gravel sweep-out to take 27th in just his second weekend of Ginetta racing.

Daniel Laddiman continued his run of recent bad luck with suspected diff. problems, but in contrast – Neil Merry remains at the height of his game in 15th. Ben Elliott and Joe Osborne complete the top three with Rob Austin lining up on the second row for race one, and Spencer McCarthy for race two.

Daniel Laddiman's luck went on to worsen in Scrutineering when his car was weighed in 2kg under the specified minimum weight allowed to compete. Duncan Gass was also found to be underweight but by 12kg. The two cars were then demoted to the back of the grid with a 10 second start delay.

Race 1

Matt Nicoll-Jones took a lights-to-flag win in the first 25 minute Texaco Havoline Ginetta Championship race. A close on-track fight for the top six places enabled the former Champion to open a gap of over 8 seconds at one point, reduced to 5 by the end.

Rob Austin took second and Ben Elliott just got ahead of Joe Osborne across the line to take third as they took the chequered flag side by side in a photo finish.

Austin had a poor start, Elliott and Osborne getting ahead of him into first corner at Copse, but Osborne then claimed second, under pressure from Elliott and Austin who got past on lap 4.

Daniel Laddiman by this time had made up fifteen places from the back of the grid, and Speedworks Motorsport owner Christian Dick up to fifth and catching Osborne ahead of him.

Austin takes Elliott on lap 6, on the inside at Becketts and are side by side next time around into Copse, but it's Osborne who capitalises by getting past them both temporarily until Austin comes back at him.

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The top cars from 2nd to 7th get right with each other as a result of the exciting battles at the front, with Dick now in third on lap 9.



With the heated racing between Elliott and Austin, they are both given a 'driving standards' flag as a warning that they are being watched by officials following contact between them on the run up to Bridge.



Laddiman continues his charge through the field up the inside of Mark Wania out of Woodcote to take 12th and has Frank Wrathall in his sights – 3 seconds down the road.



Andrew Smith – running among the front-field battle unfortunately retires with five minutes to go with sheared wheel nuts on the left rear. The retirement now brings in a top 10 finish for Laddiman – who takes it by getting past Wrathall on the final lap.



Dick would go on to finish 5th ahead of new team-mate Richard Sykes who had made up 4 places to finish in 6th.

But it was Nicoll-Jones to take maximum points in race one, with Austin and Elliott joining him on the podium.

"All I'm thinking about it points" said Nicoll-Jones. "I wanted to win, I wanted fastest lap and I got both so I'm happy. The car was spot on again – just want to get some more points this afternoon and put it all towards the championship."



"I missed 2nd gear off the line" explained Rob Austin. "So Matt got away while I was trying to get through – it was a bit frustrating. I just wanted to go – I wanted to chase Matt – I want to win – I don't want to finish 2nd but by the time I got through, he was gone again. Like at Brands, it is a bit gutting really.



"It was quite a challenge that" exclaimed Elliott. "I just managed it in the end by I imagine some ridiculously small fraction of a second.

"My plan was to try and be in front through the last lap. I got ahead of Joe and then he went and got me on the inside of Priory. We went side-by-side through Brooklands, and then he had the inside of Luffield. I went around the really wide line, nailed the throttle and came around the outside of him on the way out of the corner pretty much on the grass and then he tried to drive me round the longest way of the circuit, around the outside - back onto the straight but I was able to get on the throttle a little earlier and get me in front!"

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Race 2



Ben Elliott gave Matt Nicoll-Jones the gap he needed to dominate race two of the weekend on the opening lap.



A perfect start for pole man Nicoll-Jones meant Elliott had to tuck in behind him at Copse, but emerging from the gravel on the exit of Becketts was Elliott who had made a mistake going into the corner. His #27 car recovered to rejoin in 13th.



With a gap of 1.6secs at the end of lap one between himself and his championship challengers, the Academy Motorsport driver remained unchallenged for the lead to take the chequered flag.



"I could see them battling behind me" said Nicoll-Jones. "It looked good – I wasn't that interested in being anywhere near it...! It was a good, fun race, I enjoyed it – the Texaco Havoline Ginetta Championship rules!"

Behind him though, the fight for the remaining trophies continued right up to the flag, keeping everybody on their toes throughout the 25 minute race.



Joe Osborne, Rob Austin, Paul Moden and Spencer McCarthy were all initially battling it out for second place, with Austin taking it from Osborne on lap 3. Osborne would go on to momentarily lose out to Paul Moden on the run up to Abbey, but he would reclaim the place in the complex.

Meanwhile, up behind this trio of cars, Christian Dick and Andy Smith had passed McCarthy and were closing up on the battle ahead.



On lap five, Dick and Moden were side-by-side over the line to start their sixth lap, and with Dick having the inside line into Copse, moved up to 4th and Smith followed, demoting Moden now to 6th and the back of the train of five cars. So the order was Nicoll-Jones from Austin, Osborne, Dick, Smith and Moden.



A three second gap preceded the trio of Ben Elliott – now fought back to 7th, McCarthy and Gavin Mitchell. Another recovering driver was that of Laddiman who – by lap 7 – had come from the back of the grid and was clawing back his 10 second penalty to work up to 13th with Richard Sykes in his sights.



Buckinghamshire racer Osborne was under pressure from Cheshire-based Dick who would lose out on lap 7 – meaning championship challenger Osborne would currently be missing from the podium for a second time this weekend.

Things looked even worse for Osborne on lap 10 when Andy Smith took 4th from him, but a runner-up trophy was in sight for Dick into Copse, and in making the move on Austin stick took him into 2nd.

For further information about LNT Automotive please contact Jay Ashton, Media Manager:

Jay.Ashton@TeamLNT.com

LNTautomotive

T: 08452 10 50 50 M: 07919 186291 W: www.Ginettacars.com

Helios 37, Isabella Road, Garforth, Leeds LS25 2DY

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As the field passed the line for the 11th time, Austin pulled into the pits to retire with a damaged wheel bearing as a result of contact with Elliott in race one that had gradually worsened during the second race.



So as the results stood on lap 11, Nicoll-Jones was leading by 7.7 secs ahead of Dick and Smith with Osborne, Moden and Elliott rounding off the top 6.



With the battle far from over and Austin now out of the race, Osborne reclaimed a podium step from Smith on lap 13, but two laps later, the two racers switched places once again – Smith anxious for his first Ginetta podium and clocking the fastest lap of the race in the process.



In the closing stages, Dick and Smith were battling it out for 2nd place and side-by-side over the line to start the final lap, continuing through Becketts, but in a good, clean race between the two of them, Dick held his position with Smith just drifting wide off of the racing line at Brooklands and dropped to 5th.



Osborne and Moden were right behind the battle to capitalise on Smith's misfortune and this gave Osborne the podium he had craved to keep his championship hopes alive.

"I can not explain to you how hard that was" explained a joyful Christian dick. "When you come from 10th on the grid and you get to a position, and you've worked the tyres hard to get up there and then all of a sudden you're thinking towards the end of the race I could do with a break, could do with a breather, they weren't giving me that.



"It was quite fraught, but good to finally get on the podium."



Third-placed man Joe Osborne was pleased with his result despite being down on straight line speed. "I've had a few problems with the car this weekend" he said. "Around the corners it was alright, but even with the slipstream down the back straight I couldn't keep with them unfortunately and Matt's just been in a different league this weekend."



Dan Laddiman managed to finish in 10th once again in another impressive charge, but Neil Merry's run of strong results ended with a retirement caused by a gearbox problem. Julian Barratt also retired having lost 4th gear.

Edd Straw was also forced to park his car in the pits with a fuel leak.

Just a short break is ahead of us before the next outing at Thruxton on August bank holiday weekend, where we are sure to see some exciting overtaking on the country's fastest circuit.