

Taylor and Rose share the spoils in SuperPro VAG Trophy opener

SuperPro VAG Trophy Rounds 1 & 2
Donington Park
27th & 28th April 2013

The first two rounds of the 2013 SuperPro VAG Trophy took place this weekend at Donington Park. Saturday's round one saw 2012 Champion Paul Taylor overcome the changing weather conditions to secure the first win of the season. In contrast, Sunday's round two was an all-dry affair and witnessed 2011 Champion Dan Rose return with a vengeance.

With the first event of the year at Oulton Park on 23rd March cancelled due to icy weather, it meant this weekend's meeting at Donington hosted rounds one and two, rather than three and four. Consequently, the visit to the Cheshire circuit has been replaced with two races on the Snetterton 300 circuit as part of the British GT/BRDC F4/VW Cup programme on 15/16 June.

Organisers were delighted to welcome a near-capacity grid of 30 cars for the first of the season's six double-header meetings, with a mixture of competitors both old and new in a wide variety of cars that - as regulations dictate - are based on a pre-2006 VAG platform.

Adding to the mix for the second year running is the Golf Mk4 TDI/GTI Challenge, a one-make series for identically prepared petrol and diesel engined Mk4 Golfs that exists within the main championship.

Qualifying on Saturday morning saw Rose in his Seat Leon Mk1 straight back to form and claim pole position for race one. Dave Carvell in his VW Scirocco was next in P2, with Paul Taylor in his Golf Mk4 R32 claiming P3 and series newcomer David Fairbrother in his latest-shape Scirocco in P4.

Race 1 (round 1)

With dark clouds looming overhead, everyone in the paddock had their eyes to the sky as cars congregated in the assembly area before the first of the weekend's two 20-minute races. Then, just before they were about to embark onto the 1.957-mile national configuration of the circuit, the inevitable happened and circuit officials immediately deemed the race as wet. This sent competitors scurrying back to the paddock to swap tyres.

The sudden change of plan caught out Dan Rose, Martyn Culley and Barrie Culley, who didn't quite make it back to the track in time to join the rest of the field on their formation lap. This meant they had no choice but to start the race from the pit lane.

Even though the sun was shining, the track surface was still saturated when the lights went green. Carvell made a sharp getaway from the front row, but his efforts were quickly swamped by Taylor, who used his Golf's four-wheel-drive to good effect in the slippery conditions and led the chasing pack as cars streamed down the hill and through the Craner Curves.

By the end of the first lap Taylor had increased his lead to just over three seconds from Carvell, with Joe McMillan in his Seat Leon Mk2 third and Josh Caygill in his Golf Mk5 GTI fourth after both of them had made a storming start from the fifth row of the grid. But the man on a mission was Rose, who had managed to find his way through the spray and past ten cars as he crossed the line for the first time.

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Round 1 Overall & Class A winner:
Paul Taylor



Round 2 Overall & Class A winner:
Dan Rose



Round 1 Class B winner: Daz
Bedford



Round 2 Class B winner: James
Bradley-Silverstone



Round 1 Mk4 Challenge winner:
Mike Smith



Round 1 Start



Round 2 Start

Photo credit: Rich Sams





As the leading pair continued to consolidate their positions, the battle for third between McMillan and Caygill continued for the remainder of the race, with the final gap between them after 14 laps still less than a second. Lap-by-lap Rose ticked off more places and eventually crossed the line an impressive fifth. The other pit lane starters Martyn Culley in a VW Beetle and his father Barrie in a VW Vento, were also slicing their way through the field and ended their races in 8th and 9th places respectively, behind the Golf Mk5 of Chris Adams in sixth and the Golf R32 of Tony Absolum in seventh.

In Class B, for less modified cars, it was Daz Bedford who shone in the conditions, taking his recently acquired Golf Mk1 to its first class victory. He finished comfortably ahead of the next B category car of Mike Smith, who was first of the Mk4 Golf Challenge runners home. Third was James Bradley Silverstone on the first outing in his Mk2 Seat Leon that had been built as a featured project for the Road2Race documentary on Motors TV.

Race 2 (round 2)

With a change to the regulations this year stipulating that grid positions for the second race of the weekend are based on the finishing positions from the first, it was Taylor who started on pole, with Carvell again in P2. McMillan and Caygill were alongside each other once again, but this time they would start from the second row.

Thankfully for competitors, Sunday's bright but cold weather meant there was no chance of rain. Once again, Taylor was first into turn one, although his traction advantage in the dry was significantly reduced. This meant that Cavell was right on his rear bumper as they turned into Redgate, but unfortunately the Scirocco driver suddenly found himself sideways across the bows of the chasing pack after cresting the outer kerb. Miraculously, everyone missed the spinning VW and Cavell ended his impromptu manoeuvre in the gravel trap.

Lap one was a frantic affair with the top three emerging onto the start and finish straight in the order of Taylor, McMillan and Rose. Although positions remained unchanged for lap two, Rose was angling for a way past and, on lap three he demoted McMillan and did the same to Taylor on lap four.

Once ahead, the 2011 champion began to pull away, although his task was made easier when an unseen incident on lap six saw Taylor drop back and then come into the pits to change a puncture whilst, at the same time, McMillan's pace slowed. This allowed the battling Absolum, Adams and Caygill past, who were joined by Martyn Culley on the next lap.

It was then the turn of Adams to lose ground, which elevated Culley to fourth - and then third when he went past Caygill on lap nine. The Beetle driver then set his sights on Absolum. But, as it transpired, his challenge wasn't necessary as Absolum retired on lap 13 due to an incident. All this activity allowed Rose to build up a comfortable lead and record his first victory of the season. Culley was delighted to finish second, albeit with Caygill less than a second behind in third.

In Class B it was an emotional win for James Bradley-Silverstone in his new Seat Leon specifically built for the championship. Once again, it was a Golf Mk4 Challenge car that claimed the Class B runner up spot, but this time it was 2012 Mk2 Golf Championship title-holder Jamie Martin who delivered the result.

The next event in the calendar provides competitors with a new challenge, when the championship heads to the twisting tarmac of Cadwell Park for rounds three and four on 12th May.

The 2013 SuperPro VAG Trophy is sponsored by: SuperPro suspension parts, Dunlop tyres, Milltek Sport, Tarox brakes, Forge Motorsport, Petronas oils, Bilstein suspension, Louth Volksworld, JCM Direct and the Lubricant Consultancy.

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