

Morgan and Caygill do the business at Brands

SuperPro VAG Trophy Rounds 9 & 10

Brands Hatch – GP Circuit

24th & 25th August 2013

Back in the UK, following the championship's first-ever overseas trip to Spa last month, rounds nine and ten of this year's SuperPro VAG Trophy took place on the 2.43-mile Brands Hatch Grand Prix circuit on 24th and 25th August. The weekend's activities were given a twist by the changing weather, with Saturday afternoon's race-one seeing Richard Morgan master the significantly wet conditions, whilst Josh Caygill recorded his third overall victory of the season in a drier race-two on Sunday morning – both of them driving Mk5 Golf GTIs.

James Dowding was the best in Class B – the category for cars that are closer to standard specification – taking his Mk4 Golf to victory in both races and winning the Mk4 TDI/GTI Challenge in the process.

Brands Hatch is always popular with competitors and, with a grid of 36 cars lining up for the weekend's double-header, this year's visit to the Kent circuit was no exception.

Qualifying for the first race took place on Saturday morning, with Andy Thompson in his ex-BTCC Seat Toledo delighted to claim Pole Position in his first SuperPro VAG Trophy race of the year. He was joined on the front row by an equally pleased Martyn Culley, whose VW Beetle was at long last performing to his liking.

Behind them on row two were the Mk5 Golfs of Chris Adams and Richard Morgan, with Dave Carvell in his Scirocco and double-winner at Spa Stewart Lines in his Mk5 Golf on row three. Uncharacteristically Caygill – the championship leader after round eight - was to start from P9, his pace undoubtedly stifled by the 74kgs of success ballast he currently has to carry. Behind him on row 10 was regular Class B winner Andrew Aldridge in his Golf Mk2 8-valve and this weekend's Class B winner-elect Dowding.

2012 Champion Paul Taylor didn't take part the session when his Mk4 R32 Golf developed a clutch problem. Fortunately, another competitor lent the 2012 Champion a part that meant he would be able to start the first race, albeit from the back of the grid.

Race 1 (round 9)

Whilst qualifying was held in the dry, Saturday afternoon's race-one most certainly was not. When the lights went green, Thompson made the most of his advantage and was followed into Paddock Hill Bend – the circuit's notorious first corner – by Culley, Adams and Morgan, who had also held station in the spray.

However, it didn't take long before the leading pack was shuffled and, as the field crossed the line at the end of the first lap, the lap charts showed that it was now Morgan in the lead, followed by Lines, Culley and then Thompson. Adams, however, had dropped back due to a suspected driveshaft problem that subsequently forced his retirement on lap three.

With the wet conditions making visibility and grip somewhat of a lottery - more so on the 'Indy' section of the circuit rather than the 'Grand Prix' loop – the leaders stayed put for two laps, until Thompson re-took a place from Culley on lap four and then Lines on lap five. Behind them the two prime movers were Caygill, who was now up to fifth and moving in on the

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Round 9 winner Richard Morgan leads Andy Thompson



Round 9 start



Round 10 winner Josh Caygill



Round 10 start



Rounds 9 & 10 Class B winner James Dowding



Richard Morgan leads Josh Caygill, Tony Absolom and Andy Thompson

All photos credit: Rich Sams





leading quartet; and Taylor, who was making the most of his car's four-wheel-drive and had scythed his way through the field to reach 12th place by the end of the first lap and eighth place by the end of lap five.

As the leaders began to lap back markers, the opportunities to make up a place increased during the final three laps. With his car's rear hatch open - and acting as a make-shift air-brake after the catch had broken - Caygill still managed to pass Culley on lap six. Then, on the eighth and final lap, he also found his way past Lines, which meant he crossed the line third behind Thompson in second and Morgan in first, who had held on to his lead in determined fashion.

But then, having returned to the paddock, Caygill found he had been given a 10-second penalty for passing Culley under a yellow flag, which meant he was later classified as finishing in fifth ahead of Tony Absolom in his Mk2 R32 Golf and Taylor, who was an impressive seventh having passed 29 cars in 15-minutes.

In Class B it was Dowding all the way. Not even his regular Mk4 TDI/GTI sparring partner Mike Smith could get close enough to mount a challenge this time round and finished fourth, behind Rob Allum in his Seat Ibiza and Simon Gusterson in his Mk2 Golf.

Race 2 (round 10)

The overnight rain meant the track was still damp when the 32 car grid ventured out for round ten on Sunday morning, but nowhere near as wet as it was for round nine the day before. By virtue of winning the first race, Morgan started on Pole for the second and made his advantageous position stick into Paddock Hill Bend.

With the odds of a coming together on the first lap more – rather than less - likely at this infamous corner, the inevitable happened: Lines' Golf and Thompson's Seat 'touched' on the approach, followed by Culley's Beetle and Ken Lark's Corrado which 'touched' even more. As cars dived left-and-right, a surprised Len Simpson drove his VW Vento through the resulting gap and into fifth place, the experienced operator very pleased to accept the opportunity to gain a few places.

By the end of the first lap it was the Golf of Caygill that filled Morgan's mirrors, the thought of getting the 10-second penalty the previous evening still on the championship leader's mind and fuelling his charge. Such was his eagerness to make amends, Caygill got past Morgan on lap three and then proceeded to ease out an ever increasing gap as the race progressed. Behind him, Thompson was third and doing his best to recover from his brush with Lines, who was consequently unable to recover and retired just after the incident.

Thompson eventually caught and passed Morgan on lap five and, although he couldn't catch Caygill, he was able to consolidate his second place. Absolom was now fourth with Simpson fifth and Culley sixth, until the Beetle driver's first lap clash got the better of his car and he retired on lap six.

Further back, Taylor was having to execute a repeat performance after a recurrence of the clutch problems meant had to start from the pit lane. It was also a case of déjà vu for Dowding, who was again ahead of the Class B field, but this time it was Smith who was his closest contender, with MK2 Golf GTI Championship front-runner James Bark third. Up front, Caygill never put a foot wrong and crossed the line to take his third victory of the season, this time by just over four-seconds, ahead of Thompson and Morgan.

Following the two races at Brands Hatch, the 2013 SuperPro VAG Trophy title is still to be decided. But, with rounds 11 and 12 taking place at Snetterton on 26th and 27th October, there's now a two-month wait before this year's champion will be crowned.

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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