



Castle Combe FF1600 Championship Round 8, Monday 30th August.



(Image: Oliver Read)

Ben Norton bounced back from two DNFs with a superb drive to complete the driver's hat trick of pole, win and fastest lap, whilst Marcus Allen wrapped up the 2010 title with a measured drive to fifth. David Vivian was second to complete a one-two for the Wiltshire College.

Qualifying

A mid-session safety car left only a few laps in which everyone could improve their lap times in a fraught qualifying session.

Ben Norton (Checkpoint Tyres/Wiltshire College Spectrum 011B) lapped in 1m10.616s to take a dominant pole position, 0.332s ahead of archrival Felix Fisher (Rochford Garden Machinery Van Diemen RF00).

Josh Fisher returned to the series and showed improved pace in his Van Diemen RF05 to line up third just ahead of champion-in-waiting Marcus Allen (Swift SC92).

David Vivian and Nathan Ward would occupy row three whilst Rob Hall (Swift SC10) and Andy Jones (Coachstyle Ray GRS07) had relatively quiet sessions by their standards, just over a second off the pace.

Race

As the five red lights extinguished, Ben Norton got away from the line well, safeguarding his pole position on the run through Folly but, instead of being challenged by Felix into Quarry Corner, it was the older of the two Fisher's who was on his tail for the first lap.

This was about to change on lap two though, as Josh Fisher retired at Quarry on only the second tour, allowing his younger brother to take the fight to the Wiltshire College-run Spectrum.

Felix was never far from the gearbox of Norton's car however, the Bratton driver appeared to have enough pace in hand to keep his rival at bay.

A safety car period, to clear up the stranded cars of Luke Cooper (Drivetech/Swift Cooper Swift SC92) and Josh Barnett (Saab City Racing Van Diemen RF00), appeared to present the Van Diemen driver with his best opportunity to take the lead.

Unfortunately, for him, just before the restart on lap seven, Felix pulled into the pits with a broken gear linkage. As Fisher slowed, the train of cars had to follow suit as they were still under yellow flag conditions.

This allowed Norton to cross the line 2.1 seconds ahead of Marcus Allen as the pack returned to racing for the final five laps.

With a huge margin over the rest of the field, at least in FF1600 terms, Norton was able to do what he does best; control the race from the head of the pack.

Lapping over half a second faster than his rival, at times, the 2009 champion eased away from the chasing field, to take his third win of the season – this one tasting particularly sweet after his recent clashes in the previous two rounds.

As Norton sprinted away from the field, the real intrigue was in the battle for the final podium positions. Before the intervention of the safety car, Allen had looked reasonably comfortable in third.

However, having been promoted to second thanks to Felix's retirement, the champion elect found himself under heavy pressure from a hard-charging David Vivian (Widcombe Dental Surgery Swift SC92) at the restart.

A good run through Quarry and the Esses on lap seven saw the Wiltshire College driver take second place away from Allen.

Despite the bigger picture of championship glory, Allen fought back with two laps to go, but now it was no longer a two horse race as the pair of Swifts had been joined by Adam Higgins (RIADRO Racing Van Diemen RF90), who had scythed his way through the fighting hordes behind to join in on the podium battle.

Higgins was looking very racy all over the back of Vivian on the run to the Esses, but the Swift of Allen was dictating the pace, keeping everything in check behind.

On the final lap, Allen slowed to let the scrapping pair go at it without the danger of being involved in a possible accident. However, for Higgins this was too late to mount a challenge of the Bradford-on-Avon driver. Higgins settled for third, his third podium of 2010, just 0.303s behind Vivian.

A further second behind came the 2010 champion, Marcus Allen, understandably ecstatic as he crossed the finish line.

Just behind Allen was Coventry University student, Nathan Ward putting in another good performance in his GoldenBullRacing.co.uk Swift SC95. Ward is definitely one to watch at Combe in 2011 if his performances continue on this upward spiral.

Steve Jensen (KMR/tomandsteve.co.uk Spectrum 011C) put in arguably one of the drives of the day to fight through from 12th on the grid to sixth, just ahead of Andrew Jones (Coachstyle Ray GRS07) who enjoyed a quiet day by his standards.

Rob Hall (Swift Cooper Swift SC10) fended off the attentions of Roger Orgee (Van Diemen RF00) - whose pace has definitely improved since joining Kevin Mills' squad - for eighth. Thomas Barrow (Saxon Motorsport Mygale SJ00) shadowed them in 10th, but was never able to mount a challenge.

With Kyle Tilley absent due to a lack of budget, the way was paved for Martin Pickles (Van Diemen RF87) to pick up his first class win of the season in the battle for Pre '90 honours. Pickles fought past Iain Houston (Van Diemen RF89) at the start to take the win, setting fastest lap along the way.

2010 Champion – Marcus Allen

Having shown tremendous pace and race craft in his debut season last year, Marcus Allen was earmarked as 'one to watch' by Autosport magazine. However, despite his obvious speed, Allen's 2009 season was marred by a number of crashes, meaning that his raw talent didn't often convert into results.

This season however, the Moreton-in-Marsh driver has been the epitome of consistency, with a 100% finishing record. This, along with three race victories has seen him take the 2010 Castle Combe FF1600 championship with a round to spare.

Allen's title sees him join Chris Axford, Tim Reynolds (who made his return in a KMR Spectrum at this round) and the team owner himself as winners of the Castle Combe crown in that Swift SC92 - a remarkable feat for car, driver and team.

Results

Pos	Cl	Cl.	Driver	Car	Time	Qual.
1	A	1	Ben Norton	Spectrum 011B	17m28.593s	1
2	B	1	David Vivian	Swift SC92	+ 4.929s	5
3	B	2	Adam Higgins	Van Diemen RF90	+ 5.232s	9
4	B	3	Marcus Allen	Swift SC92	+ 6.311s	4
5	B	4	Nathan Ward	Swift SC95	+ 6.823s	6
6	A	2	Steve Jensen	Spectrum 011C	+ 7.879s	12
7	A	3	Andy Jones	Rav GRS07	+ 8.137s	8
8	A	4	Robert Hall	Swift SC10	+ 8.408s	7
9	A	5	Roger Orgee	Van Diemen RF00	+ 8.764s	10
10	A	6	Thomas Barrow	Mvqale SJ00	+ 9.253s	11
11	B	5	Dan Wells	Van Diemen RF91	+ 17.809s	16
12	B	6	Richard Higgins	Van Diemen RF94	+ 18.207s	19
13	B	7	Shaun Macklin	Swift SC92	+ 27.175s	20
14	A	7	James Hammond	Mvqale SJ00	+ 27.488s	21
15	C	1	Martin Pickles	Van Diemen RF87	+ 31.442s	23
16	A	8	Steve Chapman	Van Diemen RF02	+ 33.548s	17
17	C	2	Iain Houston	Van Diemen RF89	+ 36.936s	22
18	C	3	John Hallam	Van Diemen RF89	+ 38.845s	24
19	C	4	Pete Diccox	Van Diemen RF89	+ 41.023s	31
20	B	8	Kelvin Foy	Swift SC93	+ 41.625s	27
21	A	9	David Tansley	Rav GRS10	+ 48.585s	26
22	C	5	Stephen Bracegirdle	Van Diemen RF88	+ 53.795s	28
23	C	6	Michael Phillips	Swift FB87	+ 56.983s	29
24	A	10	Claudio Viveiros	Van Diemen RF99	+ 57.189s	30
25	B	9	Mike Madge	Vector MG93	+ 1m04.410s	32
DNF	A	N/A	Tim Reynolds	Spectrum 011C	+ 2 Laps	15
DNF	A	N/A	Geoff Janes	Van Diemen RF01	+ 5 Laps	18
DNF	A	N/A	Felix Fisher	Van Diemen RF00	+ 5 Laps	2
DNF	A	N/A	Josh Barnett	Van Diemen RF00	+ 9 Laps	13
DNF	B	N/A	Luke Cooper	Swift SC92	+ 9 Laps	14
DNF	A	N/A	Josh Fisher	Van Diemen RF05	+ 11 Laps	3
DNF	C	N/A	Pete O'Shea	Swift FB89	+ 12 Laps	25

For more information regarding Oliver Read's images, please contact oliverread@yahoo.com