

Toyo Tires 7 Race Series

Brands Hatch GP Race Report

Brands Hatch Grand Prix circuit gave drivers a real Bank Holiday treat, but with typical Bank Holiday weather...

With the attraction of Brands Hatch GP it came as no surprise to see an excellent turnout of 38 cars for races 3 & 4 of the Toyo Tires 7 Race Series and in typical 'Bank Holiday' style the weather conditions at Brands Hatch GP were 'changeable', to say the least, and no more so just prior to qualifying, leaving drivers undecided for their setup with minutes to go...

With a mix of dry, wet and something in between setups... the cars headed out from the holding area in the dry, however within a matter of minutes the rain came. Whilst the first drivers out took advantage of a partially dry first flying lap the balance had to settle for wet, however as the rain stopped and the circuit started to dry a little it was Phil Jenkins that took pole position on his final lap, with Chris Wright and Clive Richards relaying on their earlier laps to place them closely behind. Robert Cooper, Glenn Burtenshaw and Oscar Lawry all took advantage of the dryer track and posted their best towards the end of the session, forming the top three in the 1600cc Class.

A combination of bright sunshine, drizzle and rain... and more sun continued to give drivers some tough setup choices prior to the first race and whilst the track was dry the threat of rain was never far away.

Race 1

Whilst a poor start from pole sitter Jenkins saw him drop to 5th, a perfect start from 4th for Justin Armstrong saw him in the lead at the end of the first lap, although with a 30 minute race and the continuous change of positions the early stages are rarely a guide to the final result. With a 15 second delay the 1600cc class started on the national flag and only one driver managed to creep forward on the lights, before coming to an embarrassing halt!

By lap 4 the front three R300's of Richards, Armstrong and Day had a lead of just less than 2 seconds, whilst the 1600cc drivers Lawry, Pursglove and Redding were starting to mix it with the some of the lower positioned R300. With the track offering both a dry and damp line an 'assisted excursion' into the gravel on lap at Druids unfortunately put Billy Nairn out of contention and once deemed to be in a dangerous location brought out the safety car, allowing everyone to close up on their competitors. The restart did catch a couple of drivers out, including some who couldn't wait until the line to overtake, resulting in time penalties and then on lap 9 another safety car, this time for John Reid and again in an unsafe position.

With the car cleared within the lap and the safety car managing to pull off the circuit before a further lap, it did catch some drivers napping allowing the front three of Richards, Day and Thacker to gain a small advantage and one driver (yet again) overtaking just prior to the start line. By this time the front three 1600cc drivers of Lawry, Pursglove and Redding had managed to find some space and whilst a couple of seconds behind their nearest R300 rival they were split by just under a second.

At the end of lap 12 the #66 car of Paul Thacker took the lead, having relegated Clive Richards to 2nd by a massive 0.043s and by now Day was slowly losing touch with the leaders and having to contemplate the catching Jenkins as they started to overtake back markers. Further down, the lead three 1600cc cars were still keeping together although Lawry had managed to gain a 1s advantage over the battling Redding and Pursglove.

In the latter stages of the race a battling Richards and Thacker were now clear by 2sec from an ever chasing Jenkins, having had better luck through the back markers and managing to close up and pass Steve Day in the process. Further back the small lead that 1600cc driver Lawry had was effectively eliminated, with the three split by just over a second on the last lap.

At the line Richards maintained the lead, taking the win by 0.35s from Silverstone race winner Paul Thacker with Phil Jenkins 1.3s behind and perhaps the closest finish 41 seconds later saw the result of the 1600cc class with maiden winner Oscar Lawry taking the win by 0.6s from Lucy Redding, ahead of Pursglove in third by 0.18s.

Race 1

R300 Class Results;

1 - Clive Richards
2 - Paul Thacker
3 - Phil Jenkins
FL - Phil Jenkins - 1.37.921

1600cc Class Results;

1 - Oscar Lawry
2 - Lucy Redding
3 - Richard Pursglove
FL - Lucy Redding - 1.42.976

With only a couple of 'post race interviews' with the Clerk of the Course to remind drivers of the need to wait for the control line before overtaking after the safety car... drivers were given a couple of hours to have lunch and relax before race 2 in the afternoon. However, with the ongoing threat of rain, outbreaks of warm sun and a sudden very, very dark cloud the heavens literally opened and torrential rain appeared, rapidly turning to hail. This caused some temporary problems for the track and circuit (understandably so!!!) and an inevitable delay to the proceedings.

Shortly afterwards it was a case of dry, drizzle or sun and back to the dilemma of setup choices, however the weather conditions and the noise curfew meant that race 2 would be shortened down to 25mins.

Race 2

With an ever approaching curfew and a fuel spill in the previous race on Graham Hill Bend, time was not on the side of organisers MSVR, and so the race started under the safety car to minimise clearing time and to give all drivers sight of the problem. At the end of the first lap, the safety car pitted and the race was on, this time with no one overtaking before the line..!

After the opening race lap at the line on lap 3 it was again Richards and Thacker that were the lead pair and Jenkins less than a second behind, although by now 4th place sat 2 seconds behind to give some breathing room to Jenkins and to allow him to concentrate on catching the lead pair. Equally, in the 1600cc Class it was again the same front three of Redding, Lawry and Pursglove, albeit that Lucy Redding had managed to break free by just over 2 seconds from the chasing pair.

By lap 6 the front pair of Richards and Thacker had built up a whopping 2 second lead over the chasing Jenkins, with Richards having the better 'Indy' part of the circuit and Thacker the 'GP' side and whilst the gap fluctuated to as much as 1.3seconds Thacker had managed to close it down to 0.376s behind Richards before the red flag was brought out due to a stranded car on the exit of Clearways.

With the count back to the previous lap Richards had managed to repeat his earlier win, keeping Thacker just behind and the now closing Jenkins into 3rd and a repeat of the first race for the final positions.

However, back in the 1600cc Class Lucy Redding took her maiden win beating Richard Pursglove into 2nd and Robert Cooper taking 3rd and his first podium in the Toyo Tires 7 Race Series.

Race 1

R300 Class Results;

1 - Clive Richards
2 - Paul Thacker
3 - Phil Jenkins
FL - Paul Thacker - 1.52.715

1600cc Class Results;

1 - Lucy Redding
2 - Richard Pursglove
3 - Robert Cooper
FL - Robert Cooper - 1.58.839

Whilst the R300 class had their moment of glory on the circuit podium, the Toyo Tires 7 Race Series trophies and presentations all take place back at the hospitality awning in the paddock, allowing all drivers and guests the opportunity to show their appreciation and acknowledgement of their fellow competitors. Special mention goes to Lucy Redding, having finished 3rd in the second race at Silverstone, 2nd in the first Brands GP race and then winning in the second GP race there is clearly a pattern forming and perhaps some recent input from previous 7 Race Series Estoril attendee and current British GT driver Jon Barnes is starting to give the results.

The final trophy of the day, the 'unfortunately named trophy' award went to Oscar Lawry, despite his win in the first race it was his foray into the gravel, ultimately causing the red flag of race 2 and the 'drive of shame', still seated in his car on the back of the recovery truck into the paddock, that perfectly summed up the 'hero to zero' tag...

Full results available here - <http://www.tsl-timing.com/file/?f=MSVR/2017/171851s7i.pdf>

Next Toyo Tires 7 Race Series event is at Oulton Park on Saturday 27th May, see you all there...

