

MSCC Techniques Speed Championship 2010 Event Report

Venue: Prescott

Date: 3rd October 2010

Weather: Life threatening!

After a week when weather forecasts were watched, analysed, dissected and eventually ignored it was an interesting bunch of nineteen competitors that pitched up at the home of the Bugatti owners club in appalling conditions. The Championship hung in the balance with Greg D-S needing to produce a monster performance and score a full eleven points if he was to stem the Eatock charge.

Clothing was varied; Tim Harrison sported the Tetley's tea bags cap that was wide enough to keep both head and shoulders dry. Housley, a vision in red, had trouble keeping the Ogden's walnut twist incinerator ignited. The industrial strength blue two piece of Gavin Rintoul was effective but appeared to cause chaffing of the nether regions. The Baines entourage varied in style from racy shorts to sartorial galoshes and many were resigned to sitting in puddles inside the cars and everyone was watching the skyline for a glimmer of hope.

Strategies varied, tyre pressures were dropped, spare wheels left on to give extra traction off the line and in the majority of cases roofs remained in place. Only the brave or insane (in some cases both) went topless. "Head and shoulders" aka Eatock, "Ayres no graces", "Parkes the pipe" and Housley chose to sit exposed to the elements and steam up as we queued for the off. The rain continued and tyre warming simply redistributed water to other parts of the track. There was little or no traction to be had off the line and the policy appeared to be to grab second as soon as you had any forward motion. Runners with a unit producing an abundance of torque struggled the most with some of the big boys complaining of still spinning wheels as third gear came into play. At Orchard the car felt decidedly nervous, braking for Ettories wasn't as bad as predicted and Pardon gave more turn in that anticipated. The Esses had to be treated with great respect as the unwelcome addition of fallen autumn leaves added an extra hazard. Your scribe experienced a cataclysmic colonic liberation at Semi Circle last year by disappearing over the edge and was keen not to repeat the experience and as such adopted a tight line and a steady feathered throttle before the short flat out blast to the line. In short race suits with double gussets were the advisable dress of the day.

First practice was an adrenalin filled minute with most runners around six to seven seconds behind their normal dry times. A timing error on run one meant that "Tetley" Harrison, the pair of Parkes, Nigel Ledger Lomas, Tim Ayres and the scribe did not get recorded times but

as we were all back in the paddock in one piece no one complained. Conditions were so demanding that “bogey time” was something that happened in private in the paddock between runs and not a hoped for track performance .

The rain eased off and while there was no defined racing line second practice was a more civilised event with times starting to tumble. Most combatants improved with top of the heap being Jonno Baines and Nigel Housley who knocked seven seconds of their initial times. Greg Parnell in the GTN turned off the CD and air con and promptly went five seconds quicker. Baines senior matched the improvement in his Lightweight. All agreed that there was more grip second time through.

The rain stopped and the skies cleared encouraging the clerk of the course to complete some of the first competitive runs before lunch. More roofs came off, ballast was removed and we went to war! Six of the nineteen came in under the sixty second barrier. A beaming Ian Hargrave wiped a massive 6.43 secs from his second practice time and “Head and Shoulders” Eatock rewarded the valiant support of Mrs Eatock with a sumptuous lunch of burger and chips.....what more could a girl ask for! (Parnell hid in the car unwilling to share his sandwiches)

Meanwhile the displays of flat head V8's, dragsters and steam cars were supported by some really entertaining side shows, a jazz band with an Elvis impersonator, jugglers , stilt walkers and air stream caravans. But these were all put in the shade by the Wall of Death with stunt men and ladies putting on great shows of daring do, riding Indian Motorcycles and driving go carts revolving at ninety degrees while standing on the saddle, sitting backwards and doing handstands.....unbelievable.

Two o'clock saw the start of the afternoon runs and optimism was high. Chris Bailey whipped in a 58.33 that was to secure him 2nd place, Gregor Dixon Smith valiantly tried to close the gap and was rewarded with a 56.69 run and third place. Tea bags Harrison (who needs seatbelts) managed to find all the gears and in the right order and crossed the line in 58.70 earning 4th overall. Michelle Bailey was the fastest lady on the day improving by 5.37secs over the four runs and with a final time of 66.35. Nigel Housley showed the biggest overall improvement of 12.3secs.

As an indication of just how challenging the climb was it is interesting to note that the Dorset Flyer Tim Ayres claimed FTD at a commendable 56.24. He had also claimed FTD in 2009 with a time of 48.89 some 7.35 secs quicker on a dry track!! Even more impressive is the overall Morgan record set by the astronaut Mike Hall in 1993 with an unhinged time of 46.20secs.

However, nothing was to stop “Head and Shoulders” Eatock. Topless from the outset he consistently improved by 7.27 secs throughout the day. He secured not only a well earned

first place and ten points but also the 2010 MSCC Speed Championship. It is the heartfelt wish of all present that he puts aside his strict Yorkshire principals, does the decent thing and buys us all a beer (pints not halves)at the Championship dinner. Come back “John Bloody Stephens” all is forgiven!!

A demanding day at one of the all time classic venues and no damage recorded. Splendid!

Toony (56.77sec and frightened!)