

RACING RESULTS ROUND-UP

ZANDVOORT: BRITISH GT BY ROB LADBROOK

BRITISH GT

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Photos: Jakob Ebrey

Motorbase Performance duo Michael Caine and Ahmad al Harthy reignited their title challenge with their second victory of the season at Zandvoort last weekend.

It was far from plain sailing for the defending champion team though, and a battling performance snatched a points finish against the odds in race two. The Dutch seaside venue proved to be a perfect hunting ground for the Porsche 911 GT3R, which thrived on the traction-dependent nature of the hairpin-strewn circuit. Trackspeed duo Nick Tandy and David Ashburn dominated much of the weekend and took a deserved win in race two after disaster in the first.

Race one

Caine produced arguably the drive of the season to help the Motorbase team to its second victory of the year, and its first on-track triumph.

Caine and team-mate al Harthy did pick up a win at Snetterton, but only after Trackspeed's Phil Keen was thrown out. That win meant the world to Motorbase, but never really felt perfect. The team has worked exceptionally hard to find a balance with its heavily ballasted Porsche, and has had to rely on tactical nous, consistency and the odd bit of luck – and all three came into play.

Qualifying was disrupted by a heavy rain shower after five minutes. Many teams never saw it coming, but Motorbase did.



Nick Tandy and David Ashburn (ahead) topped race two

Team head David Bartrum ordered al Harthy to get on track first and set a banker time. The Omani's second flying lap put him on pole, just as the rain arrived. That was tactical nous, and luck, dose one. It marked Motorbase's first pole of the year.

Al Harthy then showed his class by leading Marco Attard's Ecurie Ecosse BMW Z4 before the amateur drivers' stint was reduced to a parade thanks to carnage on the second lap.

David Ashburn had qualified the Trackspeed Porsche he shares with Nick Tandy second, but the car developed a misfire on the way to the grid. A surge in power caused Ashburn to spin into Hugenholtz and clip the barriers, damaging the radiator and putting the car out. Then when Rick Parfitt Jr's GT4 Ginetta was nerfed into the barriers exiting Arie Luyendijk corner the safety car made a lengthy, and key, appearance on track.

When the race restarted the pit window opened just as al Harthy led the pack past the entry. Lee Mowle pitted from sixth, as did virtually everybody behind him. But a blunder by the race officials meant that many of those cars got held accidentally by the red light at the end of the pit lane, which wasn't switched off following the withdrawal of the safety car. That's luck dose two.

Al Harthy pitted to hand over to Caine a lap later and when the order emerged he held a 12s lead over John Gaw's Aston Martin,

MOTORBASE PAIR RULE AMID THE SAND DUNES



Caine and al Harthy were worthy race one winners

Rob Barff's resurgent FF.Corse Ferrari and Daniel Brown's 888Optimum BMW.

Brown mounted a charge to vault up to second place and lapped 0.7s faster than Caine. With 20 minutes left, Caine and Motorbase's number looked up. Cue consistency: a large dose. Caine defended solidly until a desperate lunge from Brown into Tarzan on the final lap sent the BMW briefly into the lead before skittering wide and allowing the Porsche back ahead.

Barff took advantage to snatch second and then made a move on Caine into the Esses, but caught his rear corner. Both cars survived, and Brown snatched back second as Caine kept his foot nailed to the flag. "I can't believe it," said Caine. "We didn't think we could win that. I saw Dan

coming on the last lap and had to leave him room and then I thought I had a puncture when Rob caught me at the end but I wasn't going to lift!"

Gaw was fourth with Oliver Bryant, Phil Keen and Matt Bell in close attendance. Bryant's fifth handed him the points lead after the Beechdean team suffered a nightmare outing. Andrew Howard mistimed his qualifying run in the wet and started 17th. He and Jonny Adam could only climb to 11th at the flag.

Dan Smith and Matt Eagling took the British GT4 class victory in their Ginetta G50, but were almost a minute behind Luc Braams and Duncan Huisman's Chevrolet Camaro GT4.

Race two
The second event of the weekend

was far from a classic and instead turned out to be a Nick Tandy cakewalk. With his Porsche patched up, Tandy dominated the race from pole position and was never troubled before handing over to Ashburn, who simply had to keep it on the black stuff.

Tandy got a great start as Phil Keen slotted the sister Trackspeed car into second ahead of Barff's Ferrari and Joe Osborne's 888Optimum BMW. That set the order for the first 40 minutes as Tandy gradually streaked eight seconds clear. He pitted at the last possible moment to hand over to Ashburn and, because of the car's non-finish, the pair enjoyed a shorter mandatory stop too. When Ashburn rejoined he was 17s clear and the contest was over. Barff chased Tandy hard and

RESULTS

1 Michael Caine/Ahmad al Harthy (Motorbase Porsche 911 GT3R) 31 laps in 1h 00m 51.912s (81.77mph); 2 Steve Tandy/Daniel Brown (888Optimum BMW Z4 GT3) +0.579s; 3 Gary Eastwood/Rob Barff (FF.Corse Ferrari 458 Italia GT3); 4 John Gaw/Phil Dryburgh (PGF-Kinfuam AMR Aston Martin Racing Vantage GT3); 5 Marco Attard/Oliver Bryant (Ecurie Ecosse BMW Z4 GT3); 6 Jon Minshaw/Phil Keen (Trackspeed Porsche 911 GT3R); 7 Mark Patterson/Matt Bell (United Autosports Audi R8 LMS Ultra); 8 Lee Mowle/Joe Osborne (888Optimum BMW Z4 GT3); 9 Rembert Berg/Warren Hughes (Team WRT Audi R8 LMS Ultra); 10 Piers Johnson/Ron Johnson (Ecurie Ecosse BMW Z4 GT3). Fastest lap: Patterson/Bell 1m 42.473s (91.76mph). Pole position: al Harthy/Caine 1m 42.986s (93.4mph). Class winners: al Harthy/Caine, 1m 42.986s (93.4mph). Starters: 29.

Race two: 1 Nick Tandy/David Ashburn (Trackspeed Porsche 911 GT3R) 34 laps in 1h 00m 57.850s (89.55mph); 2 Barff/Eastwood +12.907s; 3 Keen/Minshaw; 4 Jonny Adam/Andrew Howard (Beechdean Aston Martin Vantage GT3); 5 Aaron Scott/John Dhillon (AF Corse Ferrari 458 Italia GT3); 6 Bryant/Attard; 7 Osborne/Mowle; 8 Gaw/Dryburgh; 9 Caine/al Harthy; 10 Bell/Patterson; FL: Tandy/Ashburn 1m 40.964s (93.00mph). PP: Tandy/Ashburn 1m 39.661s (96.67mph). CW: Tandy/Ashburn, Bailey/Schulz, Huisman/Braams, Rory Bryant/David Barker (Blundini/Triple R Ginetta G50). S: 28.

Smiley turns the screw as rival Smith has a seaside nightmare

The Dutch seaside venue of Zandvoort fittingly staged a turning of the tide in the chase for this year's Mini Challenge championship.

Season-long points leader Chris Smith suffered a nightmare weekend in the Netherlands, which played in favour of rapid Northern Irishman Chris Smiley. His hat trick of victories has

handed him the R56 JCW Class championship lead with just three races left at Donington Park and, on this form, Smiley simply looks unstoppable.

He qualified on pole for race one and then resisted extreme early pressure from Jake Packun to notch his first win. Luke Caudle was third ahead of Jono Brown. Things started to go wrong for Smith in race one. His ExcelR8 team noticed a flat spot in engine power during testing so replaced some components, but it didn't work and Smith struggled to get any straight-line speed. He lagged to seventh.

A wet but drying track for race two meant testing tyre choices, but Smiley again called it perfectly. Second and third placed starters Packun

and Caudle both fitted slicks, meaning wet-shod Smiley could build a huge advantage at the start while they battled. Lawrence Davey nipped through to second on his worn wets, but Caudle managed to squeeze back ahead at the flag.

Smiley was then gifted the lead in the reversed grid race three when Packun and Caudle locked horns at Tarzan. That allowed Smiley into an unassailable five-second lead.

Shane Stoney won twice in the Cooper Class to tighten his grip on the overall championship crown. Josh Gollin used a slick tyre gamble to claim his first win in race two, with Stoney recovering to third after pitting for slicks on the green flag lap. Hamish Brandon took three second places.



All smiles for...Smiley (c)

MINI CHALLENGE



Smiley was the pace man in the Mini Challenge field

RESULTS

1 Chris Smiley 11 laps in 21m 53.524s (80.67mph); 2 Jake Packun +3.328s; 3 Luke Caudle; 4 Jono Brown; 5 Lee Allen; 6 Lawrence Davey; 7 Chris Smith; 8 Mark Steward; 9 Shane Stoney; 10 Hamish Brandon. FL: Smiley 1m 57.873s (80.00mph). PP: Smiley 1m 57.449s (82.21mph). CW: Stoney, S: 18. Race two: 1 Smiley 10 laps in 21m 14.723s (75.55mph); 2 Caudle +3.828s; 3 Davey; 4 Packun; 5 Allen; 6 Brown; 7 Smith; 8 Steward; 9 Stewart Calder; 10 Josh Gollin. FL: Caudle 2m 02.276s (76.21mph). PP: Smiley. CW: Gollin, S: 18. Race three: 1 Smiley 9 laps in 21m 41.875s (66.59mph); 2 Packun +5.185s; 3 Allen; 4 Davey; 5 Caudle; 6 Steward; 7 Calder; 8 Stoney; 9 Brandon; 10 Gollin. FL: Smiley 1m 57.795s (80.00mph). PP: Brown. CW: Stoney, S: 18.