

Still Binnie

29.3.89

IF THE first meeting of the season was anything to go by, it looks as if FF1600 and the smaller road saloons will be the classes to watch in the 1989 Scottish racing season. Of the former, it was Cameron Binnie who further established himself as the top man in a closely-packed field of increasingly up to date cars.

One wet and one dry practice session caused problems in working out the Formula Ford grid, but the championship race itself ran to a familiar pattern, with Cameron Binnie well ahead of everyone else in the Sony Centre/Howden Motors/Silverscreen Van Diemen. Colin Harper was just as quick as Binnie in his new Swift, but his main aim in the early laps was to find a way past Louis di Resta's Van Diemen. By the time this had been done Binnie was uncatchable, though he did make things interesting by easing right off on the final lap and letting Harper come within a second of him. Ewen Buchan, who had started well but seemed to miss the change into second, was close to di Resta for a while but faded back later on.

Although Ron Cumming was only second on the grid with the Simpson Motors/Claymore Shellfish AC, it was no surprise to see him lead the GT field into the Esses and run away with the rest of the race. Eric Munnoch made an excellent comeback with the ex-Kenny Colmean Esprit and won the 1-litre class from Brian Fletcher after what was a reasonably close battle until Fletcher's Davrian began to sound sick on right-handers. Colin Philip was a distant fourth in his 1600cc class-winning Esprit.

And in case you were wondering where Kenny Coleman had got to after selling his Esprit, up he came in the FF2000 race, driving the Swift with which Harvey Gillanders became 1988 Scottish champion. Coleman was fastest of the sparse entry (the top

half-dozen drivers from last year all having disappeared over the winter), but lost out at the start to Robert Mitchell. Coming out of Caravan on lap one Mitchell felt a shove from behind as Coleman ran into him, and within seconds the Swift was sitting at the side of the track with its left-hand front wheel several inches too far north. Mitchell went on to score his first race win, while behind him David Heeps first passed and then pulled away from Sandy McEwan.

The 1600cc road saloon regulars were joined by Iain Gardner in his new Autofit Fiesta — actually the ex-Ray MacDowall car with a new engine and a respray. Gardner was blindingly fast, knocking half a second off MacDowall's old record. Even if Alan Keith and Kevin Tawse had wanted to do anything about this, they were far too busy outfumbling each other in the battle for second, which Keith led throughout. Glen Mortimer was a lonely fourth in the Peter Flynn Fiesta, mercifully ahead of the usual midfield banging match. The newly-formed 1300cc sub-division was won by Alistair McCarter, who was suffering from having been forced to prepare his Mini too close to the start of the season and had to cope with fuel surge and low oil pressure.

The second FF1600 was better than the first, in that Colin Harper spent all his time trying to pass Cameron Binnie. It nearly happened once, when he found the inside line at Caravan, but in the end it was Binnie first past the flag again, though by only a fifth of a second.

So few over-1600cc road saloons entered the meeting that they were lumped in with the sports cars. Odd though it sounds, it really worked rather well, since the qualifying time of Alister Cunningham, top saloon runner in his Manta, split those of Westfield drivers Neil Gammie and Angus Gray. Gammie, now with a Hewland transaxle between his rear wheels, surged away early and was never headed, which left everyone free to watch the goings-on behind him. Gray made a fine start in the car he has borrowed from brother Stuart while his own is being completed and led Cunningham into the Esses. He now had to drive as defensively as he could, which was not easy since he had never raced before. At times he began to look slightly rattled as the Manta loomed in his mirrors, but by the flag he had a second in hand, having earned a word of praise from his foiled pursuer.

There was never any catching John

Fyda in the Clubmans race, and Allen Johns was similarly secure in second. Alex Dobbie was actually slightly quicker than Johns, but lost time in the first two laps trying to pass Bill Wood, who later drifted smokily into the pits to retire.

The form-book for the Modified race pointed to a win for Olly Ross in the only Davrian present (why only one when there were five last October?). Ross was indeed first for a couple of laps, but was then left standing on the back straight by Alister FF1600 (championship) — 12 laps: 1, C. Binnie (Van Diemen RF88) 10m 24.3s (71.27mph); 2, C. Harper (Swift FB88); 3, L. di Resta (Van Diemen RF88); 4, E. Buchan (Swift FB89). Fastest lap: Binnie and Harper, 51.1s (72.56mph). GT Cars — 12 laps: 1, R. Cumming (2.0 AC300ME), 10m 10.6s (72.87mph); 2, E. Munnoch (1.0 Lotus Esprit); 3, B. Fletcher (1.0 Davrian Mk8); 4, C. Philip (1.6 Lotus Esprit). Over 1600cc: 1, Cumming; 2, D. Anderson (3.5 UVA F33 Can-Am). Fastest lap: Cumming, 49.5s (74.91mph). FF2000 — 12 laps: 1, R. Mitchell (Reynard SF84), 10m 03.4s (73.74mph); 2, D. Heeps (Reynard SF86); 3, S. McEwan (Reynard); 4, T. Worswick (Reynard). Fastest lap: Heeps, 49.2s (75.36mph). FF1600 (non-championship) — 12 laps: 1, C. Binnie (Van Diemen RF88) 10m 25.2s (71.17mph); 2, C. Harper (Swift FB88); 3, L. di Resta (Van Diemen RF88); 4, C. Birkbeck (Van Diemen RF88). Fastest lap: Harper, 51.0s (72.71mph). Road Sports Cars and Saloons over 1600cc — 12 laps: 1, N. Gammie (1.6 Westfield SE1), 11m 24.1s (65.04mph); 2, A. Gray (1.6 Westfield); 3, A. Cunningham (2.4 Opel Manta); 4, J. Peace (2.0 Ginetta G27). Saloons: 1, Cunningham, 11m 28.6s (64.62mph); 2, L. Emslie (2.3 Mazda RX7); 3, E.

Cunningham. Having got ahead, Cunningham realised that "if I made half a mistake he was through — I had a few quarters, though!" Still, he had things sufficiently under control to prevent Ross ever regaining the lead. Mike Ramsay was third in his rally-prepared Sierra Cosworth, though in the final laps we were treated to the unlikely spectacle of the big Ford being harried from behind by Iain Gardner, who was enjoying a spot of Goliath-embarrassing in the Fiesta.

D.F.

McNeillage (2.0 Ford Escort). Fastest lap: Cunningham, 56.5s (65.62mph). Sports over 1600cc: 1, Peace, 11m 35.8s (63.95mph); 2, K. Scott (3.5 Dutton Phaeton); 3, I. Wight (2.0 Dutton Phaeton). Fastest lap: Peace, 57.0s (65.05mph). Sports up to 1600cc: 1, Gammie; 2, Gray; 3, G. Clarke (1.6 Sylvia). Fastest lap: Gammie, 55.6 (66.69mph). Clubmans Cars — 12 laps: 1, J. Fyda (1.7 Vision), 9m 33.4s (77.60mph); 2, A. Johns (1.7 Mallow Mk24); 3, A. Dobbie (1.7 Mallow Mk24); 4, R. Forester-Smith (1.7 Marquiss Mallow). Fastest lap: Fyda, 46.9s (79.06mph). Modified Saloons and Sports Cars — 12 laps: 1, A. Cunningham (2.4 Opel Manta), 10m 51.6s (68.28mph); 2, O. Ross (1.0 Davrian M78); 3, M. Ramsay (2.0 Ford Sierra Cosworth); 4, I. Gardner (1.6 Ford Fiesta). Saloons over 1600cc: 1, Cunningham; 2, Ramsay; 3, L. Emslie (2.3 Mazda RX7). Fastest lap: Cunningham, 53.4s (69.44mph). Saloons up to 1600cc: 1, Gardner, 11m 23.9s (65.05mph); 2, N. Fisher (1.0 Fraser Imp). Fastest lap: Gardner, 55.6s (66.69mph). Sports cars over 1000cc: 1, D. Anderson (3.5 UVA F33 Can-Am), 11m 24.4s (65.01mph). Fastest lap: Anderson, 55.7s (66.57mph). Sports cars up to 1000cc: 1, Ross, 10m 51.8s (68.27mph); 2, G. Clarke (1.6 Sylvia). Fastest lap: Ross, 53.1s (69.83mph).