

Libre victory to Reid

INGLINGTON had a lot going for it when the Scottish circuit racing season opened on Sunday. The weather was marvellous, there was a fine crowd, and the Rothmans Trophy race meeting had brought along the top local drivers, many of them in new or much-modified cars. Lap record holder Tommy Reid won the libre race, Bill Dryden and Douglas Niven revived the perennial special saloons battle, Graham Birrell was back to win the production saloons race, while Tony Charnell took the flag first in a race which, of all the ones he's competed in, must have seemed most like a lost cause from the start.

MODIFIED SPORTS CARS — 10 laps

The programme was dead right in saying that John Absalom's familiar Ginetta was the hottest tip of the day in the opening race. Kenny Allen, in Johnny Blades's last year's Clan Crusader, made a brave effort to keep level for the first hundred yards, but Absalom was three seconds ahead by the end of the first lap, then five seconds, then eight and just won as he pleased. Allen was second throughout, always far enough ahead of Bill Wood's Midget, but Alex Souter's Vegantune Elan, usually right up with the leaders, was strangely off form. Tom Irvine's Sprite started going tough on the third lap and retired soon after. Rollo's Midget petered out at the pavilion, Ken Shade's similar car unwisely tried to get round the hairpin outside Wilson's Ginetta and collected the Armo, while Kenny Allen was pleased to equal Johnny Blades' under 1150 cc class record, set up last year in the same car.

1. J. Absalom (1.8 Ginetta G4), 9m 08.4s (67.61 mph); 2. K. Allen (1.0 Clan Crusader); 3. W. Wood (1.3 MG Midget); 4. A. Souter (1.6 Lotus Elan). Fastest lap: Absalom, 53.8s (68.92 mph).

FORMULA FORD—10 laps

Round one of the Rothmans F1 championship saw an entry of 28 cars and only 10 places on the grid. Formula Ford has at last really taken off in Scotland, but a drivers' deputation — made up of qualifiers and non-qualifiers — saw both the secretary of the meeting and a Rothmans representative to explain that for the ones who didn't make the "cut", the whole thing was pretty pointless, since there was only one race. They suggested the later meetings should have a consolation race so that everybody managed some competitive driving, this being something that had already been in the sponsors' mind.

Scottish champion Graham Cuthbert wasn't entered, and Norman Dickson had severely mangled his car against a tree during a practice day the previous week. Stuart Lawson looked the likely winner, but when the flag fell Graham Hamilton, who'd been alongside him on the front row, made a tremendous effort to hold Lawson's new Hawke DL 11, and snicked his Van Diemen in front by the Esses. Lawson was soon into the lead, but Hamilton showed for the rest of the race that his 1973 season probably wasn't helped by inferior machinery.

Much was expected of Andrew Jeffrey in a works Elden, but he suffered from a connection at the hairpin on the opening lap, pulled off by the pavilion where a neat "pit stop" with marshals as crew saw the Elden's loose nose cone whipped off, carried on but retired to the pits. By the end of lap two there was the usual remarkable spread of distance from first to last, but Hamilton kept the interest alive to the end with a spirited attempt to get back on level terms with the Hawke. After a practice stunt Duncan Hall field third place throughout, and Wilson's Elden did the same in fourth.

1. S. Lawson (1.6 Hawke DL 11), 9m 07.6s (67.71 mph); 2. G. Hamilton (1.6 Van Diemen RF74); 3. D. Hall (Hawke DL 11); 4. A. Wilson (1.6 Elden Mark 8). Fastest lap: Hamilton, 53.8s (68.92 mph).



BILL DRYDEN'S Firenza and Doug Niven's Boss Escort seen side by side on the back straight during the Rothmans Trophy Final.

Ingliston



FAMILY AFFAIR: Graham Birrell, winner of the Gp 1 race in the Hunter GLS, leads his wife Jennifer in the SMT Firenza.

1. W. Dryden (2.3 Firenza), 9m 05.3s (68.00 mph); 2. D. Niven (5.7 Boss Escort); 3. E. Smith (1.3 Mini Allen-BDA); 4. F. Gunn (2.0 Escort-BDA). Fastest lap over 1300 cc: Smith, 53.8s (68.92 mph), new class record. Fastest lap over 1500 cc: Niven, 53.2s (69.70 mph).

SPECIAL GTs, SPORTS AND CLUBMANS — 10 laps

With a practice lap in 51.6s, Tony Charnell's Lola T212 was more than a second quicker than Eddie Labinjoh's Fisher Spyder with which it should have shared the front row of the grid in this Hartley Wrayton championship qualifier. However, the Lola was in serious trouble with its clutch, and Charnell decided to start late from behind the grid, after everybody else had gone. Jack Fisher had somehow managed during the winter to insinuate most of a 1570 cc BDA engine into what is a Mini-based car, and it was expected that Eddie would have the best of the start.

In fact, John Absalom's modsports Ginetta shot off with Labinjoh's Mallock and Kenny Allen's Clan in pursuit, with Charnell's Lola getting under way much later. Labinjoh was push-pushing the Ginetta along, although not actually making contact, and darted ahead on lap three. Charnell, meanwhile, was having a fairly horrendous time fighting his way through the downfield cars, being forced to ease off several times in the middle of a melee to avoid collisions. By the end of lap five he was in third place. Early in the next lap, Eddie Labinjoh was clearly in some kind of trouble as the Fisher shaped up for the Esses, and once through them the transverse BDA engine seized solid. In the mechanical carnage which followed, a rod came through the block, through the bulkhead, through the sea and belted Eddie in the back! When he got out, he was fairly agitated, but unhurt.

The Lola finally got to the front on lap nine, passing the Ginetta about Caravan. Charnell was then at the start of what may prove to be his usual season-long stranglehold on this class; but he's never been there by a more bewildering route.

1. T. Charnell (1.6 Lola T212-FVA), 9m 09.8s (67.44 mph); 2. J. Absalom (1.8 Ginetta

G4); 3. K. Allen (1.0 Clan Crusader); 4. A. Souter (1.6 Lotus Elan). Fastest lap under 1150 cc: Allen, 56.6s (65.51 mph). Fastest lap over 1150 cc: Charnell, 50.6s (73.28 mph).

FORMULE LIBRE — 15 laps

The presence of the Charities Queen always brings out the best in Tommy Reid for the Edinburgh Students Charities Cup race. The circuit record-holder was on pole position with the Irish Racing Cars Brabham BT38/40, with Tony Charnell alongside, this time in the ex-Jägermeister BT38 which had had oil leak and overheating troubles during practice. Iain McLaren was close behind in the ex-Jaoussaud Rondel Motor M1, saloon ace Andy Barton had the ex-Johnny Blades Lotus 69. Douglas Thomson the ex-Roger Williamson GRD 273 now in Formula Atlantic trim, while Campbell Graham's Chevron was ordered off the grid when it was found to have an oil leak. In an effort to pad out the field, assorted FF's and others had been included; but when the fastest men are lapping in the 48s, it doesn't seem wise to include cars which couldn't beat 6s in practice.

Prize money in these events at Ingliston is much better this year, and here's a full-scale BP Super Visco sponsorship running. The libre cars celebrated their enhanced status with a fine full-power start. Reid leading away from Charnell, and holding off a determined challenge to reach the all-important Esses first. For the first nine laps the order was a steady Reid, Charnell-McLaren, at least after McLaren have moved ahead of Douglas Thomson's Thistle Metallics GRD on the second lap. Up front, Reid and Charnell were really having a go, and the blue-flag marshals were overwhelmed with work, as the first back-marker was annihilated on lap four.

On the next two laps, things really began to happen. Charnell slipped the BT38 into second instead of fourth on the dash from Caravan, but he was steady, but realised the mistake quickly enough not to lift his clutch foot, thus avoiding spraying red-hot bits of F2 engine all over the back of the circuit. While stirring around in

neutral, he arrived at Southland and sailed off, though without much damage. The Charnell equipé then withdrew, to do some panic repair work before going south to Thruaxon for the next day's racing. On lap 11, Andy Barton passed Douglas Thomson for third place into the hairpin, but spun at Lefthander, the next corner, where Thomson and John Barr's Lotus 69 Atlantic moved ahead. Barr was hauled back in by lap 13, and there was no more drama until the finish, where Tommy Reid recorded a clear win, with McLaren's Rondel less than six seconds behind and Thomson's Atlantic 3.1 seconds away.

1. T. Reid (2.0 Brabham BT38/40), 12m 20.6s (75.10 mph); 2. I. McLaren (2.0 Rondel Motor M1-BD/G); 3. D. Thomson (1.8 GRD 273 Atlantic-BDA); 4. A. Barton (1.8 Lotus 69-BDE). Fastest lap: Reid, 47.3s (78.39 mph).

SPECIAL SALOONS — 15 laps

The SMT versus Border Rivers struggle continued in the final of the Rothmans Trophy race, feature event of the day. From the start Niven moved first, Dryden got momentarily ahead, but Niven chopped decisively in front before the Esses. With sparks flying from its exhaust pipe because of the lowering brought on by having smaller front wheels, the V8 Escort hurtled round ahead of the Firenza, three seconds clear by the fourth lap, when it suddenly seemed to lose its edge. At Caravan on lap seven Douglas suddenly found himself with no clutch. Dryden took the lead under braking for the hairpin, and then the Escort clutch started behaving itself again.

That settled, the brake fluid started boiling, then the engine threw oil into its compartment and fumes into the cockpit. Niven fought back to within a couple of car's lengths, but Dryden would not be unsettled. Never missing a beat, although with a handling problem still to be sorted out, the SMT Firenza held on to win by less than a second. Niven was whisked into the first-aid tent for 15 minutes while the fumes cleared, came out to find a nail in one of his tyres, and was then told he'd broken his own saloon record; but the Lombard North Central championship lead had gone to the Firenza.

Further back, Frank Gunn held third place till lap 10, when he spun it away at the hairpin. Among the Allen-BDA Minis, Eric Smith's 1300 cc version passed Sedic Bell's one-litre for fourth on lap three, but dropped several places on the very next lap. He made it back into fourth place by the end, after a tussle with Jim Dryden's conventional Cooper S.

1. W. Dryden (2.3 Vauxhall Firenza), 13m 29.1s (68.74 mph); 2. D. Niven (5.7 Boss Escort); 3. S. Bell (1.0 Mini Allen-BDA); 4. E. Smith (1.3 Mini Allen-BDA). Fastest lap over 1000cc: Bell, 55.0s (67.42 mph). Fastest lap 1000-1300cc: Smith, 54.2s (68.41 mph). Fastest lap over 1300cc: Niven, 52.8s (70.23 mph), new class record. 1000-1300 cc: Smith, 54.2s (68.41 mph). Fastest lap over 1300 cc: Niven, 52.8s (70.23 mph), new class record.

PRODUCTION SALOON AND HANDICAP — 10 laps

The programme finished with a rather curious event in which an undersubscribed production saloons entry found itself mixed up with a kind of general-post handicap field including special saloons, modsports and a Clubmans car. Some were aiming to do nine laps, some 10, and there were time handicaps as well. It didn't strike the same chord as the successful handicap event late last season, but the best production saloons had a good dice among themselves, and Peter MacNaughtan enjoyed hurtling through the field in his Mallock.

After Eddie Labinjoh's Alfa Romeo 2000GTV and Jennifer Birrell in the SMT Group 1 Firenza had fought it out for the first lap, Graham Birrell took over in the Halesfield Motors ex-Bernard Ucut Hillman Hunter. Although the Hunter wouldn't reach its rev limit without going on three cylinders, it was never again headed and won by more than six seconds from the Alfa. Peter MacNaughtan couldn't defeat the Mallock's handicap, and was 10 seconds behind the Firenza at the end, although he did manage a bit in front of Bob Leckie in the Roy Thomson Avenger, which was the next production saloon along.

R.F. 1. G. Birrell (Hillman Hunter GLS), 9m 57.0s (65.90 mph); 2. E. Labinjoh (Alfa Romeo 2000GTV), 10m 00.0s (65.00 mph) (Vauxhall Firenza); 4. P. MacNaughtan (Mallock U2). Fastest lap, production saloons: G. Birrell, 65.0s (67.04 mph). Fastest lap, handicaps: P. MacNaughtan, 56.2s (65.98 mph).

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Diemen led the first heat from start to finish with Roger Orge's Dulon narrowly beating Peter White's Palliser for second place. Jeremy Rossiter lost his chance to qualify when he got "star-struck", went through island too fast and spun his Dulon off the track. Danny Burritt spun his Titan out of fourth place on the second lap and so Keith Wilson's Jaun took the place, with Rupert Keegan's Hawke finishing right on his tail.

1. M. Young (Van Diemen), 9m 48.0s (84.52 mph); 2. R. Orge (Dulon), 3. P. White (Palliser); 4. K. Wilson (Jaun). Fastest lap: Young, 1m 55.8s (85.83 mph).

(Heat Two) — 5 laps

Tiff Needell's Elden led the second heat away, but spun at Esso leaving Stephen South (Ray) to complete the first lap in front. Making full use of the available grass, Richard Hawkins moved his Dulon past Bernard Vermilio's Van Diemen at Knicker Brook on the second lap to take second place, but he was never able to get on terms with South. Behind Vermilio,

Chris Mudge (Merlyn) drove a steady race to fourth place ahead of Patrick Neve (Lola) and Syd Fox (Hawke).

1. S. South (Ray), 9m 49.2s (84.35 mph); 2. R. Hawkins (Dulon); 3. B. Vermilio (Van Diemen); 4. C. Mudge (Merlyn). Fastest lap: South, 1m 55.8s (85.83 mph).

Final — 10 laps

South led Hawkins and Vermilio away at the start of the final and they completed the first lap in that order, with Young and Neve completing the leading group right up with them. Vermilio got past Hawkins as they came into Knicker Brook for the second time and a lap later he was past South and leading the race. However, South was ready to put up a fight and the two swapped places continually leaving the final result tight open. Hawkins' car was misfiring on slow corners and dropped to fourth place before understeering off into the armo at Old Hall after five laps.

With nine laps completed, Vermilio led into the final circuit, but South Young and Neve were all right behind him just waiting for their chance. South began the lap

pushing Vermilio very hard, as he had been doing for most of the previous laps, but in the final dive for positions he got pushed to the back of the quartet as they crossed the line in the order Vermilio, Young, Neve and South with just four-fifths of a second covering the lot of them.

John Murphy (Hawke) came up well from a low grid position and finished fifth, right behind South. After this very close leading group it was some seven seconds before White's Palliser appeared in a lonely sixth place where he'd been for the entire race. Ten seconds further back, P. Orge, on the seventh lap from Mudge on the last lap, Stu Baird (Merlyn) set fastest lap on his climb up to ninth place.

D.B.G.

1. B. Vermilio (Van Diemen RF74-Scholar), 17m 58.4s (92.16 mph); 2. M. Young (Van Diemen RF74-Scholar); 3. P. Neve (Lola 1340-Scholar); 4. S. South (Ray 2011-Close); 5. J. Murphy (Hawke DL11-Close); 6. P. White (Palliser WDF Rowland). Fastest lap: S. Baird (Merlyn MK23-Rowland), 1m 45.8s (93.95 mph).