

THE RAPTOR SENSES BLOOD

Peter Herbert

Increasingly this season, as Scott Moran progresses imperiously towards a likely fourth British Hillclimb Championship, interest is focused upon the Martin Ogilvy designed and Graeme Wight Junior built and run GWR Raptor, and the unbelievable times its co drivers Lee Adams and Jos Goodyear are capable of setting in this diminutive 1600 cc projectile.

In the first of the July Sunday's Top 12 Run-offs, on a near perfect track, only Moran was able to better the Scottish car, largely due to the immense grunt of the Nicholson McLaren V8 behind his head as the orange Gould rocketed up Quarry straight.

Goodyear, seemingly barely lifting around the long Farmhouse curve, climbed the Raptor to within half a second of the 49.39s winning time, with the ever present Trevor Willis a strong third in the quickest OMS 25 of all. Roger Moran, Lee Adams and an inspired John Bradburn, Gould Judd, completed the top six.

The Tillicoultry Quarries DJ Firestorm of Wallis Menzies was expected to have been up at the sharp end too, but an all or nothing class ascent ended in the Quarry gravel trap and non run-off qualification.

Amazingly, it was Goodyear in the Raptor who was fastest qualifier for the second run-off by equaling Scott's winning opening shoot-out time, and everyone held their breath as the red car came to the line for the final shot of the day. The defending champion had increased his pace only a little with a 49.32s run, what would was the Prodrive engineer capable of?

Barreling into the tricky left-right Orchard complex Jos was on terms with the Gould, but his pace was such that it was impossible to brake, drop a gear and change direction without spinning.

This left Scott with FTD and another win, ahead of Willis who is having a well deserved best ever season at this level, Moran Senior, and Adams. Menzies hustled the DJ into fifth place in his inimitable style, the popping and banging on the overrun reminiscent of an ascending shooting party. Oliver Tomlin was a fine sixth in the Pilbeam MP97 shared with mother Sandra.

On the second day in succession blessed with fine weather, totally at odds with the summer so far, the first of the class runs, for 2 litre Road Going

Series Production Cars, fell to Karl Jackson's Honda S2000. His two class rivals, Vic Lord, Elise, and Heinz Ofner, MG TF mysteriously disappearing during the course of practice.

Still awaiting an engine rebuild following a BDH blow up earlier in the year, Peter Herbert substituted his old air cooled Porsche 911 for the once faithful Westfield, and ran unopposed in the unlimited division, claiming Andy Birkitt's May record by just over a second en route.

Road Going Series Production Cars saw former HSA Champion John Palmer getting the better of the Warburtons, with the Puma powered Westfield half a second to the good over Allan. However, alternator and gear selection woes hampered the Caterham's progress, and class record holder David was forced to settle for a distant third.

It was a straight fight between Wil Ker and Andy Russell in the 1400 cc Modified series production class, and it was the former's turbo charged Mini, now recovered from the previous day's adventures, that took the honours. The familiar orange Russell Ginetta 15 finished a second and a half behind.

Early 2 litre class leader and record holder Vini Dobson, Golf, was pipped by just a hundredth of a second on the final run by visiting Scotsman David Paterson at the wheel his Peugeot 106. Gurston Champion Paul Webster pushed his Mazda MX5 to keep pace, and was rewarded by third place, narrowly ahead of the Peugeot 205s of David Adam and Ralph Pinder.

York driver Paul Martin blitzed the unlimited class with the Mitsubishi Evo, almost two seconds under Richard Hargreaves' 2011 record. Geoff Twemlow, Impreza, and Alex Graham, Firenza looked on from a safe distance.

The 2 litre Modified Specialist Production Cars class was the scene of another close encounter, with Scot Stuart Dow climbing his Caterham to the top of the hill 0.12s quicker than the Avon Sprint of Mick Lancashire.

Peter Hubbard was in a class of his own, literally, in the unlimited division aboard a Marcos GT.

Leaders Championship sponsor Graham Wynn was The Man in the 2 litre Sports Libre class in the Force LM001, although he was made to work hard by the amazing Mini with Mitsubishi Evo running gear of former TT rider John Mackenzie, less than a second separating the two. Les Proctor was a little way behind in his immaculate black OMS SC4 CF.

The opening Racing Car class, for 600 cc machinery, fell to Force founder Bill Chaplin in the Force Empire. But he was kept honest by Mr and Mrs Goodyear, sharing Dave Oldridge's OMS Hornet, one of Steve Owen's prettiest creations.

Gary Thomas was the man to beat in the 1100 cc division, but his Force PT was only 0.13s up on Simon Fidoe's Empire 002. Simon Andrews, OMS, Scott Sheridan, Reynard, and Steve Filkin, OMS were the leading pair's closest pursuers.

Raptor co drivers Goodyear and Adams were well ahead in the 1600 cc class, but Richard Spedding drove the wheels off the Force to keep in touch, followed by the OMS of Steve Owen and Dave Uren in the ex Will Hall Force. The class record now stands to Jos at a remarkable 49.39s, only 0.26s shy of the outright course record!

Morgan Jenkins topped the 2 litres in the Pilbeam MP87 ahead of Jason Maurant's OMS 25. Tim Elmer, sharing Ian Fidoe's OMS, held off the owner for third place.

Finally, it was Trevor Willis in the Powertec engined OMS who topped the unlimited cars, ahead of the Morans, Menzies, Bradburn and Will Hall, making steady progress in the Force Nissan.

And so another fine day's motor sport at Stockton Farm came to a close. This season is turning out to be a cracker, with the course looking better than ever. The smooth running of the event was a credit to all concerned, and the build up to the September climax of this Golden Jubilee year promises many good things to come.