



The first of four mammoth two-day Speed Weekends came to HRP Lochgelly Raceway this past weekend as the Dechmont Forklift Trucks National Hot Rod European Championship took centre -stage in glorious spring weather. A huge crowd had gathered to see what may well be a record turnout of cars for the major race with drivers from Scotland, England, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Holland and Germany all making the trip as part of a star-studded field.

After the drivers took the applause and warm welcome from the fans as part of the pre-meeting grand parade; it was time to get down to business with Carl Waller-Barrett looking to become the first driver to successfully defend the European title at HRP Lochgelly Raceway. With so many cars in the pits, it was necessary to run three heats with each driver appearing in two of those races – their accumulative points would determine their starting position for the big race later in the evening. It was England's Kym Weaver who drew first blood as claimed victory in heat one in his Tigra A ahead of 2014 European Champion John Christie who is now campaigning a Ford Fiesta that is roughly 20-years old!!! Heat Two saw Scotland's Robert McDonald (who competes in the English Series) take the win at a venue that he has scored many wins at before, plus a few podium finishes in the European Championship, Scottish Open Champion Derek Martin (Northern Ireland) and 2013 Champion Chris Haird (England) filled out the other podium places. Heat Three saw 2016 World Champion Adam Maxwell cross the line in first place, however, Adam a technical infringement saw Adam removed from the results which handed the win to defending champion Waller-Barrett.

With the heats concluded, the points were tallied in race control and it was former British Champion Dave Casey (Republic of Ireland) on pole position with Heat One winner Weaver on his outside. Waller-Barrett would begin the defence of his title on the inside of row two with Jason Kew on his outside.

Scotland's Robert McDonald started the big race from grid position five with English Points Champion Shane Bland on his outside – a stellar line-up!!!



After the build-up set the atmosphere under the HRP Lochgelly floodlights; the green flag dropped and Casey shot into the lead from his pole position start. Waller-Barrett quickly made his way past Weaver and began his pursuit of destiny as he looked to overhaul Casey's lead. Sadly for Casey, his challenge came to an end with roughly one third of the race in the books as he got caught up in an incident with a backmarker. This promoted Waller-Barrett to the lead with Weaver holding station in second while McDonald had made his way up to third spot. Waller-Barrett managed to maintain a lead of a few car lengths over Weaver all the way to the chequered flag where he became the first driver to successfully defend the Dechmont Forklift Trucks National Hot Rod European Championship at HRP Lochgelly Raceway with Weaver taking second and McDonald yet another podium finish in the big race with third to bring a thrilling evening of elite National Hot Rod racing to a conclusion.

Sunday's racing saw the Nationals contesting the Malcolm Chesher memorial Trophy/Open Scottish Championship and Cele Services Four Nations Cup Round One and the heats went the way of Kym Weaver, Robert McDonald and defending Champion Derek Martin. McDonald claimed pole position for the race and surged into a lead he would not give up as he claimed the Scottish Open title for the second time in his career with Dave Casey coming home in second and outgoing champion Martin in third to bring an incredible weekend of National Hot Rod racing to an end.



The National Hot Rods were supported, as they were in 2016, by the hugely popular Classic Hot Rods. The “coolest cars on the track” feature cars such as Ford Escorts, Anglias, Talbot Sunbeams and Vauxhall Chevettes among their grid and look absolutely incredible – harking back to what many regard as the “glory days” of hot rod racing. With 2016’s success leading to the introduction of a Scottish Series for 2017; this would be round one of that series and it was a Scottish driver in the form of Kenny Purdie who took his MK2 Escort to victory lane after heat one. Charlie Schembri has campaigned in the formula for a number of years now and he took his gorgeous MK1 Escort to the win in heat two. The feature final saw Purdie slice his way through the field followed by fellow Scot Brett Sneddon and they remained in this order all the way to the chequered flag which saw Purdie record a heat and final double on his debut in the formula with the Republic of Ireland’s Trevor Cusack coming home in third.



Sunday's action saw the Classic compete for their version of the Scottish Open Championship and things did not go to plan for local man Keith Chesher as his MK2 Escort hit the wall hard on the exit of turn two leaving the car in a very sorry state. Northern Ireland's Thomas Dilly took the win in heat one from fellow Ulsterman Clive Richardson and the Republic of Ireland's Trevor Cusack. Scotsman Kenny Purdie added to his race-winning tally with victory in heat two ahead of Gary Goodswen and Dilly which was enough to see Dilly take pole position for the big race. Dilly drove with every ounce of his experience to keep Richardson behind him, particularly in the closing stages, to take the win and the title of 2017 Classic Hot Rod Scottish Open Champion.

The second round of the MR Coachworks and Ringtone Racepaints Series for 1300 Stock cars took place on the Saturday and it was good to see Jake Perry make the trip from England plus the return of Lochgelly's Billy Wilson. Heat wins went the way of Scottish Champion Dean McGill and Euan Mathieson before Andrew Mathieson beat his brother Euan and Craig Haxton to the line in the feature final before newly-promoted red graded James Ellis taking the win in the grand national. Sunday's action saw McGill take heat one once again before Jordan Cassie claimed heat two. Euan Mathieson took the win in the feature final ahead of Cassie and McGill to finish a busy weekend for the bumper brigade.

The Ministox joined the action on the Sunday at HRP Lochgelly Raceway and heat wins for Lewis Gilchrist and Steven Burgoyne brought us to the final race of the day for the Junior drivers – the Fife Championship. Gilchrist made a great start and it Mika Millar who also challenged for the lead as the lower graded drivers battled at the front but Steven burgoyne had made his way rapidly through the field and overhauled Millar and Gilchrist to claim the Fife Championship.

An incredible weekend of racing with much to remember. The next slice of Stock Car action at HRP Lochgelly Raceway comes your way **this Friday April 7th from 7pm and features Superstox, Stock Rods, Ministox and CC Rods.**