



After one or two showers in the afternoon, the skies were clear and the air was chilly as drivers, teams and fans gathered at HRP Lochgelly Raceway this past Saturday for the latest slice of stock car action presented by Hardie Race Promotions.

After the exertions of last week's mammoth Speed Weekend; many would have thought that the season would now be winding down towards its inevitable conclusion but nothing could be further from the truth as CHAMPIONSHIP FEVER continued at Scotland's most-modern short oval motorsports facility with the Junior Productions and 2.0 Hot Rods holding their Scottish Championship events!

The Juniors were first on track and it was great to see another car on track to join the usual suspects with seven drivers now registered in the formula and more scheduled to appear in the coming months! It was Cameron Willacy (many people's favourite for the title) who claimed a favourable grid draw which saw him claim the two heat wins – meaning pole position for the former Ministox driver in the Scottish Championship race itself and he went on to underline his tag as favourite with a dominant drive to claim the inaugural Scottish title ahead of Kris Watson and Chelsey-Lee Kirton. Willacy is expected to be racing in a brand-new car for 2017 having just sold his current mount to one of HRP Ninja Kart drivers.

Coincidentally, the Ninja Karts were also on track this past Saturday and featured good numbers once again including debutants Hamish Plenderleith and Billie Summer Glen as the formula continues to go from strength to strength. As usual, the event for the tiny terrors got underway with a whites and yellows race for those less experienced drivers or those who have not scored so many points this season. Connor Frame surged into an early lead in this race and was kept honest by the hard-charging Jack Baird and Demi Ritchie but held on to take an excellent win ahead of the chasing pack. Heat One saw the higher graded drivers on track for the first time and they had their work cut out to chase down the flying lower graders but, by the time of the chequered flag, Lennon Grant had managed to do just

that as he claimed an excellent win ahead of Jay Carruthers and Harry Robertson. Scottish Champion Charlie Hardie made up for lost time after a non-finish in heat one as he stormed to victory in heat two with after eventually overhauling Ritchie, who was enjoying an excellent night, and European/British Champion Robbie Armit. The final heat failed to see Armit or Hardie challenge for the win with Armit going out after a brush with the wall on turn two at virtually the same time as Hardie slowed down to a halt on the same turn. This left Grant with the opportunity to take full advantage which he duly did as he scooped his second win of the night with Demi Ritchie taking another podium spot and Callum Beaton posting a fine third ahead of an upgrading to blue for October.

The ProStocks were in action for the final time before their biggest event of 2017 when the 2017 World Cup will be held here at HRP Lochgelly Raceway on the weekend of October 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. This was the last chance for drivers to test their cars in racing trim ahead of the big event with fifteen top Northern Irish stars already booked in for what promises to be a monumental weekend of action also featuring well in excess of 100 Micro Bangers!!! The first heat went true to form as National Point leader Paul Barron went on to take the win ahead of Scott Gordon and Ryan O'Shea as a number of cars fell by the wayside due to mechanical maladies. The second heat saw Barron give it his best shot (literally) as he took a huge dive at long-time race leader Bob Hamilton on the final corner but did not connect which resulted in Hamilton taking a fine win ahead of Barron and Scottish Champion Tam Melrose. The feature final certainly did not go Barron's way as a clutch issue saw the 755 Astra struggling for its usual pace. This handed the initiative to star graders Ian Christie and Jason McAlpine and these two scythed their way through the field (followed by the returning John Taylor) to claim the top three spots in the final race for the limited contact class ahead of what should be a great weekend of racing for them in mid-October.

The Superstox were also back in action for the final time in their current points campaign and, after a brilliant season, David Frame went into the event knowing that he held enough of a lead over Bryan Forrest to secure the silver roof but both drivers deserve huge credit for the fantastic season-long battle. Another excellent field of over twenty cars was in the pits head of the event and heat one produced some great action as the star drivers used their bumpers to full effect as they attempted to chase down the hard-charging lower-graders such as Paul Dunn, Jordan Black, Adam Low and Dean Johnston amongst others. Outgoing Points Champion Stuart Gilchrist made short work of those in front of him and went on to take a relatively easy win ahead Black and Forrest. Paul Dunn made the early running in heat two but Gilchrist was on a mission once again and he came through to claim his second win of the night with Allan Gibson and Bryan Forrest in the other podium positions. The feature final was another fast-paced race with plenty going on throughout the field as the drivers battled under the HRP Lochgelly Raceway floodlights. Once again, Dunn led the early stages but the blue grade led by Gibson and Steven Ballantine were not hanging around and soon made their way to the front but the stars were on the move led once again by Gilchrist and he managed to make his way to the front and stay there to claim a faultless hat-trick with 2016/17 National Points Champion David Frame coming home in second and Barry Stephen, in his first meeting with the ex-Hardie/Fewings/Carberry RCE in third to round off a great night of Superstox racing.

The final formula on show were the 2.0 Hot Rods and, while disciplinary issues and mechanical woes saw a number of drivers miss the event, those that were there on both sides of the fence will remember the evening for a long time. Drivers drew for grid starting positions for heat one with William Hardie taking pole while arch-rival and defending champion Gordon Alexander drew near the rear of the pack.

Hardie went on to take a routine win but was pressed hard by Kevin Stewart all the way while Alexander made his way up to third by the finish. The second heat saw Alexander claim victory but, crucially, Hardie had managed to take second spot which secured pole position for the championship race. With the two top drivers in the formula anywhere in Europe on the front row; expectations were high for a classic and they did not disappoint. At the drop of the green flag, Alexander made the better start and surged into the lead on turn one from the outside of the front row with Hardie slotting in behind. What followed was 25 laps of pure hot rod racing with the drivers racing nose to tail and wheel to wheel for the entire race with Hardie getting his nose ahead on the outside line a few times but unable to get around the World Champion and this is how it stayed until the end when Alexander crossed the line just ahead of Hardie to successfully defend his Scottish title ahead of Hardie with Kevin Stewart coming home in third – a brilliant hot rod race from two great exponents of the formula.

The next slice of stock car action at HRP Lochgelly Raceway is this Saturday October 7<sup>th</sup> as CHAMPIONSHIP FEVER continues with the CC Rods battling it out for their Scottish Championship with Ian Donaldson defending his title while the Superstox, Stock Rods, Ministox and Ninja Karts form the rest of a cracking five formula, sixteen race programme of events starting at HRP Lochgelly Raceway this Saturday from 5:45pm.