

Although the AFRC Championship season has finished, there is one more race that teams from the AFRC would be involved in, the 67th Birkett Relay. Originally devised as an all-encompassing, one race fits-all by Holland Birkett back in 1951, the exact formula he devised would be used this year and would see 70 teams racing for 6 hours round the classic Grand Prix Circuit. Qualifying would be run in twenty minute sessions and each team would have space for one driver in each session. In total there would be six sessions from 9.00 till 11.00.

There would be three teams of drivers from the AFRC, one made up from Army competitors, one from the RAFMSA and the other would be made up of regular competitors from the AFRC championship. Also running out of the same garage as the AFRC team was 'Mostly Rusty Two Seaters' and at least three of this team were members of the RAFMSA.

With the weather predicted to be dry but windy there should be some good racing. Unfortunately for some qualifying would be as far as they would go. For Mark White



Not the way Chalky White wanted to finish.

(Army) a few laps in to his session the Honda engine decided enough was enough, and let go at Maggotts forcing him to retire. Back in the pits the damage seemed to be terminal, a blow to Army Motorsport as they would now be down to four cars for the race. It would be even more difficult as it was discovered that Daz Smee's Honda would need a clutch change, not the normal thing to be undertaken during a race.

So Army Motorsport was effectively now a three car team.

After qualifying Team AFRC were 50th on the grid, Army Motorsport 56th and the RAFMSA 61st. But although there is a 'Scratch' victory, the real prize is the converted Handicap Trophy, something the RAFMSA have won before. In fact the RAFMSA have in the past 11 years won the Handicap Trophy three times. The Military teams would also be racing for the Inter-Service Trophy, which the Army were hoping to retain from last year.

There would be less than 45 minutes between the end of qualifying and the start of the race, so the paddock was a hive of activity prepping the cars to start the race. After a number of accidents from standing starts the organizers again opted for a flying start. While the faster cars flew away from the line the AFRC teams opted for a more pragmatic approach after all, the race is not won at the first corner.

Paul Roddison (AFRC Team) was first to cross the line followed by Matty Taylor (Army) then Chris Slator (RAF). Most team would run their first cars for at least an hour to get well settled into the race. After the first hour, Army Motorsport was 5th, RAFMSA 13th and AFRC 16th. Dan Tedstone would be next out on track for the Army, but it wouldn't be long before his Honda was in mechanical trouble and needed to pit. Fantastic work by Team Army Mechanics meant that Daz Smee was ready to take to the track and little time would be wasted in the changeover.



Lead Man for the AFRC

At the end of the second hour it was Army 10th, AFRC 20th and RAFMSA 27th who were suffering with Dan Smith being given a handicap lap time he could not achieve. Dan handed over to Ed McKean who hopefully would be able to bring the RAFMSA back into the race. At some point in the third hour during a safety car period Matty Taylor's BMW was unceremoniously punted from behind by a driver who was concentrating more on what was going on at the side of the track rather than on it, something more akin to the M25 rather than an international race circuit. The upshot of this event was that both drivers were out of the race and Matty now has a winters work building a new race car. This meant that the Army were now down to two serviceable cars. A long stint would be required by Ben Gundry in his Fiesta.



Dan Smith followed by fellow AFRC competitors

At the half way point the RAFMSA were now up to 2nd, Army 6th and AFRC 26th. In the next hour Ed McKean handed over to another seasoned racer in the RAFMSA Team, Darren Howe. For the Army Ben was still putting in consistent laps, although they were losing time to the RAFMSA.

As hour three passed into hour four, Andy Pretorius in his MX-5 took over for the AFRC, although he lost a little time with a spin at Luffield. Darren's Golf was pounding out the laps and at the end of four hours the RAFMSA had taken the overall lead in the handicap race, AFRC were maintaining a consistent 25th while the Army had slipped to 37th.



Darren Howe having another fine Birkett

During the next hour teams had uneventful handovers with Scott Lawson for the RAFMSA, Trevor Hancock for AFRC and Daz Smee back out for the Army, while Ben Gundry's Fiesta was received some TLC from the Army mechanics on the Fiesta's suspension. Ben put in the greatest number of laps for the Army, and although not the fastest was certainly the most reliable.

With the race entering its final stages Ed McKean again took to the track at the time a Safety Car was deployed that would last for half an hour. When the Safety Car pulled in and the race restarted team tactician for the RAFMSA Ian Harmer calculated that Ed would be short on fuel by 2 laps, pulling Ed into the pits would mean they would lose 1st place to the team in second place 'Production GTI



Ben it's behind you!

Gentlemen' who were about a minute behind. If they left him out and he ran out of fuel they would not finish. As it was Ed managed to eke out the fuel and take the 4th Birkett win for the RAFMSA in 11 years. The two remaining Army drivers Daz and Ben did an amazing job to bring the Army home in 11th and the AFRC team finished 18th. Mostly Rusty Two Seaters finished 15th.

Unfortunately for the Army the RAFMSA were also to take the Inter-Service Trophy, well there is always next year.



SAC
Dan Smith

Sqn Ldr
Darren Berris
(Team Manager)

Sgt
Chris Slator

Sqn Ldr
Darren Howe

WO
Ed McKean

C/T
Scott Lawson

**RAFMSA
WINNERS OF THE 67TH BIRKETT 2017**

Full result at:

[Birkett 2017 Results](#)

Well that really is it for the 2017 AFRC season, they will be back next year. Keep an eye on the [AFRC Forum](#) or [750 MC](#) website for more news.