

Armed Forces Race Challenge 2018 Championship

750
MOTORCLUB



Oulton Park 14 April 2018



For this, the third year of the Armed Forces Race Challenge Championship there would be a change to previous formats. Races would still be run as Performance Index (PI) races but instead of one 45 minute race, there would be two twenty minute races, with each race gaining a PI score. There would still be the team event as in previous years.



Oulton Park Paddock.

Its six months since the RAF team were successful at the Birkett Relay 6hr, but competitors have been busy preparing for the opening race of the 2018 season. Some had more work to do than others; Matty Taylor (Army) probably had the most to do. Matty's car was destroyed at the Birkett and like the phoenix has risen from the ashes ready for Oulton Park, Race 1.



Matt's Rebuilt BMW.

Army Motorsport have drafted in some new drivers to the series. John Mitchell has bitten the bullet and after many years doing track day, has finally decided to come racing. Blair Thomson had brought his rally prepared Peugeot 205 to try a bit

of circuit racing. Regulars Will Ashmore and Mark White have been tuning their Honda Civics' and been out on a reconnaissance mission to Oulton Park for the test day. Army Sports Car Racing also held their first team training camp, on a track day at Abingdon Airfield, to give their cars a good shake down prior to the 2018 season commencing.

The RAF would be fielding their usual team racing in the RAF Engineering Colours. The winning team from the Birkett would be supplemented with additional drivers, Simon Frowen and Simon Barlow.



Two of Team RAF Engineering.

Team Navy's cars have also had upgrades. The Mini of last year's Novice Champion Keith Attwood has had major engine surgery. Returning again this year after last year's disappointing results would be the Astra's of Gareth Moss and Adam Dewis.



Keith Attwood's Mini Cooper.

Also running for the Navy would be the venerable 'RN Endurance' Peugeot 206, this time driven by James Cantwell and Richard Scott.

Many of the old stalwarts of the AFRC would return this year but with other cars. Ed Fuller (Guest) had retired his Tiger Super Six which he raced for many years and would now be campaigning a Caterham Seven. Billy Fletcher (RAFMSA) brought his Fletcher Hornet Mk 4 for an outing as the Mk 2 was still undergoing repairs. Paul Roddison (Guest) would be driving his new Renault Clio Cup Car.



The Fletcher Hornet Mk 4.

It would be a change of teams for Mark Inman and Dom Benfell, both of whom have now left the service and are racing under the Veterans' banner, as well as returning Champion Paul Waterhouse. Over winter Mark has had the Vauxhall VX220 supercharged so should be up with the front runners, although he would still be racing hard to catch Darren Berris (RAF) in his very rapid Westfield V8. Darren has had some upgrades done in preparation for racing with the Sports Specials later in the year. These upgrades have meant the Westfield is now back in the Invitation class and unlikely to win on PI.

Also taking advantage of the AFRC grid was a couple of new drivers from Mission Motorsport, the charity for injured service personal. Paul Vice and Andy Jones would be racing in their Mazda MX5s. Being ex-servicemen Paul and Andy would be racing as Veterans.

The qualifying seasons had been rearranged and the AFRC would now be first out. With the track still damp from overnight rain, the first season would be tricky. The first to find this out would be WO Ed McKean, coming through Lodge corner he put a wheel on the curb and did a perfect 360

through deer leap ending up backwards against the tyre wall. With no apparent damage he continued practice. He would not be the only one to find out that the grass was very slippery.

Richard Scott was also having problems during practice. The Peugeot 206s gearbox locked in 5th gear. Back in the paddock the problem was traced to the battery clamp getting stuck in the gear linkage. Once removed all was fine.



'RN Endurance' Peugeot 206.

The gremlins were at work on Mattys BMW. The problem, water had penetrated a plug during the previous night. Once dried out the BMW seemed to run a lot better. A number of cars were reported for not having transponders working. This would mean that their lap times were being recoded manually.

Chris Slator (RAF) who currently is living in Cyprus, flew over for the event, his car being delivered in the Podium Prep Truck. His qualifying times were slightly down on expected, possible due to the brakes feeling slightly soft, so he took the opportunity to get them bleed.

At the end of practice Darren had put the Westfield on pole, with the Hondas of Will Ashmore and Mark White 2nd and 3rd.



Darren's Westfield V8.

With Thirty cars on the grid and the weather improving all the time, race one was going to be busy. There would be problems from the start. On the warm up lap Darren Howe's (RAF) normally reliable VW Golf suddenly lost power and he would be unable to take the start.

From the lights Darren took off, but Will Ashmore and Mark White were slower away, allowing Mark Inman and Mike Nash (Veteran) in his Seat Supercopa to move ahead.



AFRC Racing 2018.

Unfortunately for Adam Dewis the Astra stalled on the grid and had difficulty getting it restarted. By the time he got it going the ambulance had overtaken him, so he had to follow it for almost the entire first lap before he could start racing.

For another guest, Stan Palmer it would not be a happy race, the Lotus Elise engine let go on the first lap and his race was over. It would be a short race for Paul Roddison too, at Dentons he would spin and end up in the gravel trap at cascades.

Team Army's leader, Farard Darver had managed to get his BMW M3 ahead of Matty Taylor who was still experiencing loss of power in his BMW. Chris Camp (Veteran) in his Nissan Skyline GTR was in a battle with Andy Stacey's Mini.



Chris behind you!

All through the field drivers were have to keep an eye on the mirrors, not only for the faster cars coming through but for the car behind looking to gain a place.

Another good dice was between Simon Frowen (RAF) in his Fiesta and Gareth Moss (Navy) in his Astra. Simon had the initial advantage but it would be Gareth who would win out in the end.



Astra chases Fiesta.

Race 1 would end with Darren crossing the line first, followed by Mark Inman and Mike Nash.

Back in the paddock there would be time for those who were having problems to get them resolved before race 2. Darren Howe had traced the fault on the Golf to a faulty alternator meaning he was running on battery power alone. Some frantic calls to local motor factors managed to trace one that had 'Just arrived that morning'. A team was dispatched to collect it. With a little help he would be able to get it fitted just in time for race 2.

Ben Gundry (Army) had also been having problems. A mounting bolt had sheared meaning that under braking it was difficult to select gears properly. A suitable substitute was located and he would be out for race 2.

Matty was still chasing the electrical gremlins, eventually traced to a broken wire in part of the wiring harness transferred from his old car. Hopefully this time it was fixed.

After a hearty lunch provided by the 'Car B Q' it was time for race 2.



The other hot mini.

The grid for race 2 was decided on by the 2nd best lap achieved in qualifying. Like race 1 it would be the Westfield of Darren Berris that would lead the field away from the lights with Mark Inman nipping past Will Ashmore just behind Darren. It would be a DNF for Blair Thomson when the gear linkage on the Peugeot 205 broke on lap one. After a reasonable finish in race 1 Paul Waterhouse was having a torrid time in race 2. The car wasn't handling well and suffering from lack of grip, especially on the corners, a problem which would eventually gain him a five second penalty for exceeding track limits. It would also be unfortunate for Adam Dewis, after contact with Paul, Adam was forced to retire.

Ed McKean (RAF) was managing to keep his Class C BMW in touch with the faster class B drivers Paul Roddison and Andrew Stacey.



Paul Andy and Ed.

A fast run down from Hill top to Hislops would cause problems for a few drivers, either running out of talent, brakes or having to take the escape road. This happened to Mark White as he was fighting with Billy Fletcher in the Hornet.

Pictures by Nick and Mark Rogers

Down near the back of the field there was exciting racing too. John Mitchell in his Clio was just keeping a head of Paul Vice in the Mazda MX5.

Gareth Moss in the Astra was slowing running out of gears. It would be touch and go if he would actually finish. Another driver with problems would be Will Ashmore. Fuel management problems on the Honda would mean he would stop within sight of the finish.

So that concludes the AFRC Rounds 1 and 2 from Oulton Park. Rounds 3 and 4 will take place at Silverstone on 5 May 2018.

With only a couple of weeks till the next event some of the competitors are going to have to burn the midnight oil to be ready to race.

After Race 2 the Championship positions are:

	Name	Car	Points
1	Mark White	Honda Civic Type R	33
2	Ian Fletcher	Hornet Mk 4	24
3	Chris Slator	Peugeot 306 Rallye	23

After Race 2 the Team Championship positions are:

	Team
1	Veterans
2	Army
3	RAF
4	RN/RM

For Army Motosport there is an extra award the 'Nankang Army Driver Award'. The winner of Oulton Park round was Ben Gundry.



Ben Gundry Winner of 'Nankang Army Driver Award'.

Full results can be found at:

Race Results:

750mc.co.uk/AFRC/Oulton_Park

Performance Index Results:

AFRC/Oulton_Park/PI/Results