

Armed Forces Race Challenge 2018 Championship

750
ROYALNAVY



Donington 1 September 2018

With 40 points to be awarded at the last two rounds, the Championship winner could be any of the top six drivers, although Chris Slator (RAF) and Mark White (Army) were the front runners.

For this the final rounds of the AFRC Championship some of Team RAF's previous competitors were making a reappearance. Brian Watson had just finished re-commissioning a Mini Miglia, while Andy Holborn had finally got his Westfield Megablade back from the painters. Jason Lapin returned in the MG, while Martyn Astley (Veteran) accompanied by Andrew Somerton would be driving the classic Lotus Elan.



Brian, Andy and Jason.

For Team Navy, James Cantwell was back to reignite the battle with John Mitchell (Army) for top honours in the Novice Championship. James was keen to regain the championship lead which he lost at Rockingham as he was deployed and unable to race.



James back in the 206.

Keith Atwood was also back, lighter in his pockets, after he had to replace his tow car which expired on its way to Rockingham. Also returning for the first time this season was Mike Wells in his Totota MR2, which had only just had a rebuilt engine. Absent would be both the Astra's of Gareth Moss and Adam Dewis were not available, but new driver Simon Vernon was drafted in to bolster the Navy numbers.



New Navy driver, Simon Vernon.

For some their season had ended early. For team Army Farard Darver's BMW was still without a usable engine, while Matty Taylor's engine had expired at Snetterton at the end of August. Ben Gundry was no further forward with his gearbox problems which have plagued him all season. Despite working right up to the wire to be ready to race, unfortunately he would be a non-starter. It was better news for team Army, Ro Barrett was back out in his Golf.



Ro Barrett exits Roberts.

It is prudent practice to get a few quick qualifying laps in as soon as possible as you never know what will happen and so it was to prove to be. Even before they got to the assembly area Chris Slator's Peugeot 306 overheated, possible due to an airlock in the coolant system and the bonnet locks on Brian's Mini broke. Luckily both would be able to qualify out of session, but they would be starting at the back of the grid.



Chris back in action.

Straight out of the box Mark Inman (Veteran) VX220 was fastest, followed by the Hondas of Will Ashmore (Army) and Mark White (Army).



Mark Inman fastest again.

Just as competitors were getting into the swing of qualifying the session had to be red flagged. As Will crossed the start/finish to start lap four there was a large cloud of black smoke, and the unmistakable smell of burning oil. A small fire was extinguished by Will operating the onboard system.

By the time the marshals had cleaned the track there was insufficient time to restart the session before the next track action, so instead of the usual 10 or 12 laps qualifying, the drivers only had 4. The start would be interesting with a lot of cars out of normal position on the grid.

Back in the paddock there was time for the cars to be checked over before the first race which was before lunch.



AFRC Paddock, Donington Park.

Investigations in to the damage to Will's Honda found the flange holding the oil filter to the engine block had sheared, releasing the entire oil content of the engine. There was no way that he would be able to race, and his part in the title race was done.

With the sun out and the track in perfect condition, competitors lined up for the first race. With the lights out Mark Inman took off like a rocket followed by Mark White, Andy Holborn's Westfield, Andy Stacy's Mini and another guest driver Neville Anderson in his Seat Leon. Ed McKean (RAF) was next, followed by the battling Minis of Keith Atwood and Simon Skerton (Army). Keith made a good start passing Simon, but it wasn't long before Simon retook the place and proceeded to extend his lead.



Simon heads Keith.

Chris Slator made an excellent start from 31st on the grid and by the end of lap one had made up thirteen places. By the end of the race he would finish 10th overall.

Scott Lawson (RAF) was taking it easy in the BMW as the newly rebuilt engine still needed bedding in.

On lap three Ro Barrett slid wide and ended up in the gravel trap at Roberts. Normally this would have resulted in a safety car being deployed, or even worst the race being red flagged. At Donington the Marshalls are cleared to 'Live Snatch' the cars. So Ro got an unexpected tow round Roberts!



Not the tow Ro was expecting!

Towards the end of the race Andy Holborn was having problems with the Westfield. For no apparent reason the engine would cut-out, quickly followed by normal power returning. To be on the safe side he pulled into the pits. Also having problems was Jason with the MG TF. A bonnet catch broke so for safety he also retired from race one.



Andy Holborn's Westfield.

Race one would see a lights to flag victory for Mark Inman with Neville Anderson second and Mark White third. A Class C win and fourth overall would see Ed McKean move up in the championship table. Another steady race for Darren Howe (RAF) and Simon Frowen (RAF) would see them consolidate their positions in the championship.

In the Novice Championship John Mitchell was still leading but James Cantwell was closing in.

After a hard morning racing there is nothing like a hearty meal and again lunch was provided by the superb 'CAR B Q' Company.



The hottest Mini at Donington.

The second race would again start with a mixed up grid caused by the shortened qualifying. This meant that some of the main contenders for the championship would be starting way down the grid, but providing they could find clear track they could still be able to put in PI winning performances. With Will Ashmore out of the running it looked like a three horse race for the title.

As the cars left the grid on the warm up lap the rear hatch on Keith Atwood's Mini flew up. Luckily the Marshall re-secured the hatch during the re-grid so there was no delay to the start.



New Mini aero?

Once more the start would see Mark Inman running off into the distance with the other trailing in his wake. With the Westfield firing on all cylinders, Andy would be more of a challenge in this race. Again Chris Slator was charging up through the field from the back of the grid.

For the second race Martin Astley had taken over the Elan. He would have a race long battle with another classic, Chris Dancer's Mk 1 Ford Escort.



Classic Racing Elan V Escort.

Once more in race two the Minis of Simon and Keith would be battling hard. On lap 4 though Simon had a moment when going through Redgate, he spun on coolant dropped from the Mini of Andrew Stacey. A quick restart and he was back in the race hunting Keith down, evenly passing him again.



Simon in a spin.

On lap nine the Championship really started to take a strange turn, Chris Slator had to retire with a broken drive shaft. Two laps later it would be Darren Howe who would have to retire the Golf with front wheel vibration. That meant that all Mark White had to do was cross the line to take the championship. But cruel luck, on the next lap Mark had to retire when the engine started making horrible noises. Therefore who would be the 2018 champion; it would be all down to the last PI count up.

So it would be another lights to flag finish for Mark Inman, another second for Nevelle Anderson and a much improved Andy Holborn finished third.

Pictures by Nick and Mark Rogers

For the second time that day Ed McKean would win Class C and come forth overall. While on the road in the Novice Championship John Mitchell would finish in front of James Cantwell, but who would be the championship winners?

After the final PI Scores had been totted up the results are:

AFRC Championship results are:

	Name	Car	Points
1	Ed McKean	BMW 325	86
2	Chris Slator	Peugeot 306	79
3	Darren Howe	VW Golf Mk 2	77
4	Simon Frowen	Ford Fiesta XR2i	74

The Team Championship positions are:

	Team
1	Veterans
2	RAF
3	Army
4	RN/RM

The second year the Veterans have won the Team championship.

Novice Championship positions are:

	Name	Car	Points
1	James Cantwell	Peugeot 206	36
2	John Mitchell	Renault Clio 182	32
3	Tom Sykes	BMW 330CI	26
4	Si Skerton	Mini Cooper R53	26

Full results can be found at:

Race Results:

[750 MC Donington Results 2018](#)

Performance Index Results:

[AFRC Round 7 and 8 Results](#)



AFRC 2018 Champion. Ed McKean.

The next outing for AFRC drivers will be:

The Birkett Six Hour Relay Race at Silverstone 27 October 2018 where the RAFMSA team hope to repeat last year's win in the Inter-Services Trophy as well as the outright win on handicap.



AFRC Novice 2018 Champion. James Cantwell.



2017 winning Birkett team.