

SAXMAX ...A VIEW FROM THE WINDOWS OF RACE CONTROL  
*Claire Smith gives her view on the SAXMAX race at Silverstone 18<sup>th</sup> August 2007.*

With less than a second separating the first eleven, and less than six seconds separating the whole field, it was going to be a tight race to say the least.

James Rooker-Edwards took Pole with Chrissy Palmer next to him. Jake Farndon, number five, was on row two, together with Abbie Eaton who improved on fifth in the untimed session to get forth on the grid. I may be biased, but it's great to see the girls going for it, if you ask me there isn't enough women in motorsport so when I saw 15 year old Miss Eaton claim forth on the grid it pleased me no end. Josh Cook who is improving with the season and James Colburn were next, then Tommy Davison and Leyton Clarke. Leyton came to Silverstone leading the championship but although he made third fastest in the untimed session...his time had slipped and he now claimed 8<sup>th</sup> on the grid. Joe Ferguson and Aaron Williamson were ninth and tenth respectively, then Sam Schofield and Andy Tibbs took the next row. Cassey Watson, who is sixth in the championship and Declan Armstrong were on row seven followed by Joe Grinsell and Matthew Venn. David Ratcliffe came next with Sam Walmsley, then Jamie Brown and Josh Benson, with Nina Jo Atkinson and Matthew Weller on row eleven. I must say another plus was the late inclusion of Nina, it was good to see her now better than when I saw her at Brands Hatch earlier in the season ....lots more confidence.

Patrick Fletcher, who had come 8<sup>th</sup> quickest in the untimed session, had rotten luck, his engine blew and alas he retired before the race, better luck next time Patrick.

So that was how the grid looked...the weather on the other hand...looked awful and was getting worse by the minute....two green flag laps would start this heat and everyone waited to see how SAXMAX would cope with the sudden downpour...

As they got away it was clear that the drivers were rightfully cautious. At the front as James Rooker Edwards and Chrissy Palmer seemed to be slow, Jake Farndon capitalised on it, and so they were three abreast as they and the pack headed for Copse in what can only be described as a ball of spray. For a brief time I was blind as the spray was so intense and the first three cars all appeared to be orange ... no one could see but it was Jake Farndon who emerged first, with pole position James Rooker Edwards in second but he was quickly overtaken by James Colburn who made a great start round the outside. Andrew Tibbs in the number four car came through with a squeeze and made up good ground with Aaron Williamson making it hard for him to get by. Abbie was being cautious and to be honest...I wouldn't blame her! But it cost her five places as she dropped back in the pack.

I lost Tommy Davison who had gone quickest in the untimed session and while I was looking for him I missed Nina as I think she spun and continued ... with visibility down to next to nothing due to the spray and rain.

Meanwhile in the middle of the pack Declan Armstrong pushed on to get nearer the front and was in seventh place by lap three. David Ratcliffe moved up and the pack began to spread out.

The driving standards were superb considering the conditions as the race continued without too much pain for most though Josh Cook suffered and dropped to the back of the grid.

Chrissy Palmer seemed to be taking a different line to most and it paid off, as he took second. Then what seemed to be a misjudged braking error by James Colburn saw him enter the gravel trap at speed and alas bury into it with no chance of escape with Andy Tibbs gaining by it. After being shown the Black and Orange flag, James Rooker-Edwards was into the pits to secure his bonnet, but he was back out soon after.

Aaron Williamson was driving a superb race, from starting tenth he was now up in third and giving Chrissy a run for his money, by lap five Williamson had put his best lap so far and that would go on to be the fastest of the race overall and the new SAXMAX record at Silverstone. Aaron was challenging but Chrissy kept his cool and still looking as if he was taking a different line edged back to keep the position...it was superb racing!!! It was a shame that Aaron took the wrong line out of Woodcote corner and drove through the gravel...losing time as he did, he looked to half spin again going into Brooklands later and again lost time.

Matthew Venn now gained a place from Joe Ferguson and with James Rooker-Edwards losing position from being in the pits they moved up in the ranking. It wasn't for long as James was hungry to get back to the front of the pack, although as the race continued it became harder for him.

Leyton Clarke was still holding sixth place, perhaps he was the sensible one though as the weather continued to claim cars off the track. We had lost Nina, Abbie, Tommy and now Mathew Weller.

Then car 39, Joe Grinsell, spun just in front of Aaron Williamson and somehow after what looked like 150 yards of sideways momentum, managed to save it, the last time I saw a save like that it was David Seaman with an England goal behind him!

The final stages of the race saw Jake not exactly cruising (no pun intended!) because you couldn't in that weather and he put in his best time of the race on lap eight., unfortunately that same lap was the final lap for Cassey Watson with Jamie Brown , Josh Benson and Josh Cook all gaining a place because of it.

As the final lap board was shown, Chrissy Palmer must have thought he would have one last spurt, he put in his best lap but it wasn't to be good enough as Jake Farndon continued a great drive, exited Woodcote at great speed and took the chequered flag. Chrissy was only 1.04 seconds behind him to take second, with Aaron Williamson taking the third spot. Andy Tibbs was in fourth and Declan Armstrong fifth. Leyton took sixth and James Rooker-Edwards seventh.

Then came Matthew Venn, David Ratcliffe, Sam Schofield, Sam Walmsley, Jamie Brown, Josh Benson, and Josh Cook.

After the race finished, I met up with Nicky in Parc Ferme.

There was one clear message that came out of Race Control after this race. It was communicated to Nicky and as we sorted out the ECU's she relayed it to all the remaining drivers & RAs, "The MSA Steward and the Clerks of the Course were very impressed with your race and congratulate you on your driving standards". This was received with a great cheer!

Well guess what SAXMAX...I congratulate you too - It was a great race to watch, I didn't envy you out there in those conditions and I think you all did great.

Now all eyes turn to Oulton Park for the penultimate SAXMAX race of the season ...I'm really looking forward to it ...watch this space...! Claire Smith

*The events quoted within this report are a personal view and are as accurate as could be seen at the time.*