



2008 BMCRC CHAMPIONSHIPS BRANDS HATCH, 8TH-9TH MARCH



Palmer finds right formula

He was a top Rookie 400 in 2005 but for the next two years Steve Palmer struggled with mechanical and handling difficulties on his Kwaka, but it now looks like the 28-year-old design engineer has turned his fortunes around after he dominated the opening rounds of the EDIasia Formula 400 Championship at Brands Hatch, writes Terry Howe.

Following a classy victory over former British Supersport 400 champion Mike Edwards in Saturday's opening race Palmer then went on to master some tricky conditions and claim maximum points in the second one from Dan Willmott. It may have been a different story if a number of competitors had stayed on board but Palmer was wary of a slippery line at Graham Hill which caught several riders out.



Adam Lyon's (No 29) hopes of a successful weekend were dashed early on when his Kawasaki clutch failed during practice. A fuel problem kept him out of race one so his dash from the back row of the grid in race two was nothing short of sensational. By lap four the 16-year-old had arrived into third and a podium result looked likely. But like so many before him the young Scot succumbed to the problematic left hander at Graham Hill. Initially David Scott got the hole-shot away from Mark Parbury but Palmer later took control powering his Hodson Engineering prepared

Kawasaki ZXR to win number two.

Race three on Sunday was a straight dog fight between Palmer and the EDIasia backed Phil Polden. On the final lap Palmer completed a neat inside move on Polden at Druids to take the lead and the win.

It looked odds on that Palmer would complete four out of four but Lyon was determined to get something out of the weekend and arrived on the tail of Palmer mid way. Lyon's long trip from Scotland was made worth while when he eventually overhauled Palmer to take a hard earned victory.

A light shower greeted competitors from the Norfolk Line Yamaha Past masters championship; a dozen or so decided it was party time at various parts of the circuit, but it was the calm and collected Mark Hardy who not only managed the track but the out of retirement Dexter Eyre and former champion Tyler Bacon as well. Later on Peter Branton and Tyler Bacon both got the better of Hardy, but in the final encounter of the weekend it was Branton again from Hardy and Keith Roissetter.

Chelmsford racer John Cobbold staged a fantastic recovery after having to sit out the opening Rookie 600 race with an electrical nuisance on his Yamaha R6. Brian Woodhams, Yamaha R6, Spencer Caseley, Honda CBR, and Stephan Capella, Suzuki GSX-R, were the top three. Cobbold then made up for lost time by firstly powering his Seton Tuning Yamaha R6 from a back of the grid position to take victory in race two, then the 26-year-old electrician, who has had to overcome serious road traffic accident injuries, grabbed two stylish victories in round two on Sunday.

Cambridgeshire racer Dean Stimpson began the new season the way in which he finished the last one by taking the opening race in the MZ 250 championships from Phil Belenkin and reigning champion Chris Rogers. But Stimpson, the 18-year-old student from March, departed race two on lap three as Rogers stormed ahead. Belenkin clawed his way back into fifth after a mistake, but 2007 Rookie Nick Murton Jones slotted into second ahead of Gavin Sherwood.

Sunday's races brought about a familiar scenario as Rogers and Belenkin shared one apiece but it was a brace of thirds for Hertfordshire racer Mark Jones that attracted the attention.

Garry Budgen opened up his Thunderbike UK account with a blistering display on his Honda CBR 'Steelie'. Following a less than efficient departure Simon Peyto soon got his Diablo 666 Suzuki SV up to speed circulating in fourth. Soon after he was underneath Rob Wittey at Druids but the

former champion Wittey retired his VFR 750 with an electrical fault soon after. Local ace Mike Baxter (No 88) fired his Ducati 745 into contention and eventually snatched the third spot.

As the pack headed into Paddock for race two it was Peyto who got the better of the Suzuki SV mounted Tony Rand, but at McLaren Rand, the Hastings builder, was out. In the meantime Budgen had recovered from a front wheel lifting departure and joined Peyto, with Baxter into third and Wittey fourth. But Peyto stayed strong and held on for victory.

Budgen and Peyto shared top honours on Sunday, while Wittey's machine performed well for some good results, but Baxter's weekend was spoiled when the Gillingham racer tumbled from his Ducati at the Graham Hill lefthander.

Peter Baker powered his stock Morello Suzuki K8 to a maximum points haul from his allotted races in Saturday's Powerbikes. In race one the Norfolk ace capitalised when pole sitter Tim Bourne stalled his Yamaha R1 and was circulating in 22nd position after lap one. With Baker getting away it was Carl Nelson and Paul Davies, both Suzuki GSX-R, who got it on for the podium places but were unable to haul in the runaway Baker. Midway Bourne was up to 11th but the laps ran out for the former British contender.

Race two saw Baker get the hole-shot away, while soon after Oli Henderson, Suzuki GSX-R, was getting into a fight with Bourne and eventually took the second spot from him. In a drama packed conclusion Stephen Thomson edged out Manxman Gavin Hunt, Dean Daniels and Henderson to secure second.

In this oversubscribed class six races were required so that all riders completed four races each. Other successful winners over the weekend included Gavin Hunt, Suzuki GSX-R, Tim Bourne and Andrew Burke, Yamaha R1.

After a race-long duel with talented teenager Tony Coombs the opening race in the BCL Watches



sponsored MiniTwins championship went to the sponsors own rider Glynn Davies. (No 26) This was a great way to start the season for backers BCL. Race two saw victory for Marc Woodward from Mark Silcox and Colin Stephenson, all Suzuki SV 650. In this over-subscribed competition a third race was necessary and took place in wretched racing conditions. Two thousand and seven MiniTwins Clubman champion Peter Molloy got the verdict from Davies and Coombs. Sunday's three winners were Molloy, Silcox and Coombs.



Two sidecar incidents on Saturday did reduce the field a little but never dampened the enthusiasm and determination of the remaining 20-strong grid, which for the most part was dominated by the F2 entry who adapted better in the slippery conditions. Steve Coombs and Gary Partridge powered their Ireson Honda to victory in race one then later repeated the feat getting the verdict over Matt Dix and Rob Beer, Baker Honda (pictured).



Roger Body and Mark Cox eventually got their F1 LCR Suzuki into the winning slot and took both of round two's races but Coombs and Partridge and Brian and Ben Gray, LCR Yamaha, shared the podium in a mixed bag of results in these early rounds.