



Donington Park National – Round 1

Qualifying

The session was scheduled two to three hours ahead of our normal timetable, and that meant the track temperature was rising with the sun. I knew I needed to get out and put in some quali pace laps early in the session when the tyres were absolutely optimum (laps 3 - 5), and as the clock ticks, the chance increases of yellow flag incidents or fluids being dropped on the circuit - "get the job done early" as the team principal would say. I've never qualified on the front row at Donington and wondered whether the Cayman and 996 which I had previously campaigned weren't quite as strong at this particularly high-speed circuit as the 997's I was competing against... now I'm in one of those, I wanted to see what I could do, especially as I had just lost my excuse!

I knew a late 1:13s was going to be needed for pole, although with later and higher surface temperature quali session maybe an early 1:14s would suffice - I'd never got into a 1:13s so that was my aim, almost irrespective of others. If I cracked the magic 1:13 something, I'd have been happy with my pace, even if it put me on the 3rd row.

As it turned out, an early 1:14s would have made pole, but I went 6-tenths quicker delivering 1:13.842 on lap 3 and 1:13.623 lap 4. It was textbook stuff, I boxed the car and waited to see if I needed to go back out and try harder. I knew the optimum 3 laps from the tyres had been spent, so any second attempt was futile, just putting further wear on the tyres that I now needed to preserve for the races. A double pole, collecting both championship points, and stating our intent returning to the championship.



Race 1

I'd never launched the 997 off the line,, as last years' Britcar racing were rolling starts and Porsche Club operates a standing start - and what a place to be doing it from, pole position!



I got a great start, crossing the line after the first lap a full 2 seconds ahead of McAleer and his 997, I further gapped him to a 3.5 second delta and I'm sure it looked to everyone that I had the race win sewn up but unfortunately for me, as the lead car, I alert the slower cars of the fast charging and I lost half of my lead with the first back marker.

I then caught the next just at the apex of the chicane between the two long straights which cost me dearly. McAleer was able to capitalise on the overlap and made a firm, but fair move into Redgate - we battled for the next couple of corners only to find my progress was severally hampered by yet another back marker. I'd ran out of racing laps to get back onto him and had to settle for the 2nd place.

Race 2

I was only going to feel truly at peace with the 2nd place if I could convert the last race pole position into the win! McAleer had pulled a 3 championship point advantage over me with his win (4 points for the win to my second place, plus his fastest lap of the race point, less my 2 points for pole positions), and I needed the next win and fastest lap to finish the day ahead.

The first lap was like a replay of race 1, great start breaking away from McAleer to find a 2-second lead as we embarked on lap 2 only to find an incident had caused the safety car to be deployed. This negated my comfortable lead and bunched the pack back up behind me as we weaved behind the SC for 2 laps before a rolling restart, something I had been well practiced at.

I did a good job, but a hard charging McAleer, complete with retina burning headlights pushed me all the way, trading tenths across the line to the chequered flag. A hard-fought race and it's certainly easier to "chase" than be "chased" - the point of reference, and slipstream, for the following driver makes it not quite so intense, albeit hardly a walk in the park either.

I'd got the win, but McAleer secured fastest lap at 34 hundredths quicker than mine - even at an average lap speed of 86.5mph, that's not many inches! The aerodynamic tow he was picking up from me meant there was nothing I could do about it - so we leave Round 1 tied for the championship lead!



A great comeback and reflective of why we've enjoyed the racing so much in Porsche Club, it's a competitive field with 9 former Porsche Champions in Class 1 and an overall 21 drivers registered to participate this season.

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NEXT RACE:

18th May – Brands Hatch