



## Racetruck Open Series, Magny-Cours Event Report, 19-21 October 2018

As I type this from the CSCC office, looking out at a cold, wet Wiltshire landscape, it's hard to believe that just over a month ago I was wishing I'd packed my shorts. Most of you were perhaps glad I hadn't.... A total of 44 entries made the long drive down to Magny-Cours, with the 'pleasure' of the Paris ring road to contend with en route. Some must have questioned if it was going to be worth it, but once they arrived they had their answer. Unusually for an F1 circuit it is in the middle of countryside, this was proper rural France; the local village shops still close for 3 hours over lunch, quaint.

Some who tested or walked the track commented 'we should have bought a bigger diff', such were the length of the straights. Toby Harris and Lisa Selby rolled out their larger diameter wheels from the back of the van, opting to fit them on the front only. Adrian Newey would have raised an eyebrow at the 'nose up' stance, but it worked, no bouncing off the limiter for the Puma.

Signing on took place on Friday afternoon, with a very brief briefing shortly afterwards, cut short by a fire alarm (BBQ in a pit garage). There was just enough time to absorb the full course yellow and safety car procedures, along with the sensible warning about the mix of cars taking place in the Racetruck Open Series. For most a mild, relaxing evening lay ahead, enjoying some French hospitality or perhaps settling down in a motorhome. None of this for William Lynch however, who discovered a problem with his throttle bodies earlier in the day, on his Fiesta ST. The part needed to fix the problem sadly lay back in England; through the night he and his wife drove to Calais, got on a boat, met someone with a part in Dover, got back on the ferry and drove into the early hours to return to the circuit. Second driver and son, Freddie, and their mechanic fitted the new part that morning whilst William tried to get an hours sleep.

### Qualifying

A beautiful sunny morning on Saturday, perfect for burning off any moisture on the track, with our drivers out for 9.20.....and then the fog rolled in. Drivers and cars warmed up and headed for the assembly area. The Finsport Clio Cup was on its stands, revving up and down the 'box, warming the Sadev, only for it to go cold whilst we waited for an hour for the sun to burn off the gloom.

This delay was at least welcomed by team Lynch (Toad Motorsport), who on fitting the new part found that the car wouldn't start. No amount of bump starting would get it to fire into life. A bad electrical connection was discovered, Toby Harris came to the rescue with his crimping tool and the car fired into life as the fog lifted. Finally we could see and the cars were off. Getting a clean lap was always going to be tough, with cars varying in pace by as much as 50 seconds a lap. Colin Watson took pole for Group 2, with Peter Ratcliff in second, just 0.385 seconds back. The fast nature of the circuit suited the BMW M3, with Mark Smith/James Moulton-Smith taking pole for Group 1, in 4th place for the standing start.

I snapped a few photos from different vantage points, what a great circuit to spectate from; the layout is such that from some grandstands you can see action from three parts of the track at once as it zig-zags back and forth.

The ungrateful Fiesta had no sympathy for its drivers efforts, deciding to break again on the first lap! Still, the Stewards were understanding and accepted that they had completed laps in testing, so the Lynch family would start the race later in the day from the back.

Being scheduled as last race can be a nervous affair, would the race be cut short in the event of problems? The fog was a nightmare for event organisers, HVM Racing, to their credit they worked hard through the day to claw back time.

### Race 1

The Marshals sacrificed their lunch break and with evening setting in, we just had enough time to start the race for the full 30 minute race distance, providing darkness held off, that is.

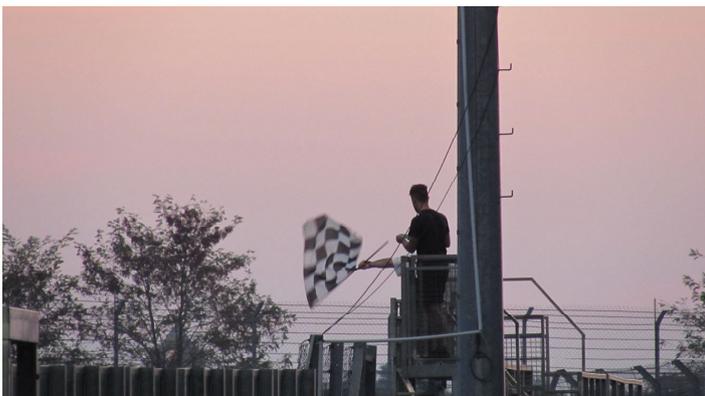




A tremendous race took place at the front between Tim Davis and Peter Ratcliff, the pair slicing through the traffic. Perhaps the best part of the Racetruck Open Series is seeing completely different types of cars enjoying close competition. Local man Christophe Deboffe (MK Indy) just got the measure of Alan Thompson (BMW 328i), by just 0.9 seconds, finishing 10th and 11th respectively. Chris Boon took 28th in the big Jaguar XK8, a second ahead of John Cockerton, finishing off his first ever season of racing, in his 911 RSR, with Mike Holding (Clio 197) a similar distance behind. Chris Blewett (Ginetta G12) and Boyes/Boyes (MGB) were putting on an impromptu drift display as they hurred around their Dunlop Historic-shod machines. Exceptional patience, skill and respect were on show among all competitors, with no contact or complaints from drivers.



The battle between Davis and Ratcliff went to the flag as darkness was almost upon us, Davis taking the Group 2 win, Ratcliff the honour of fastest lap. The Group 1 victory never looked in doubt, the E36 M3 of Smith/Moulton-Smith leading throughout, with a further three BMW M3 following behind. The Lynch Fiesta finally accepted that it was there to race, rocketing up to 27th overall, more importantly 2nd in class and winning an award. There were just two non-finishers, the smoking Escort driven by family Miles and the immaculate Skyline of the Kennedy's. Louise was so pleased with her start that she didn't seem to mind that the car didn't make the chequered flag, see video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yRPuHIH7oA>



## Race 2

Scheduled to finish just before lunch on Sunday, in plenty of time for those making the channel run later that day; the French weather did its best to keep us in the country, with more fog for the first hour, pushing schedules back. Once again the hard working Marshals had minimal break-time, so that we could get our race in. This 35 minute race was once again bathed in full sunshine and 20+ degrees warmth, with drivers trying to keep cool in the assembly area.



By now everyone had learnt the circuit, so the race was on. The gaps were visibly closer between the cars, the French commentators getting very excited by the lead battle between Ratcliff and Davis. A little further back the classics were really mixing it with the more modern machinery, take a look at the onboard footage from Abigail/Ian Whitt <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=987oyScM1F8&t=1s>



Pit stops came and went, the group 2 Sevens having to wait longer for their fixed time stop, then having to make up for lost time, with later braking and momentum through the corners, as Sevens do.

An unfortunate accident occurred under braking as Tim Cairn's well known Frogeye Sprite was assaulted from behind. The tough old girl soldiered on to finish 3rd in class. The safety car came out on lap 12, the rapid Peugeot 206 RC of the Simpson's spearing into the wall after a mechanical failure. It was a high speed impact, but testament to the safety of the circuit and car there was no injury, although the shell is certainly ruined. Top work from the Marshals and circuit recovery just got us in a last lap 'dash for cash'.



With the field completely mixed up behind the leaders, discipline was needed not to overtake before the line once the green flags were displayed. Places were exchanged and as the chequered flag was shown it was Peter Ratcliff who just reached it first, 0.3 seconds ahead of Tim Davis. Colin Watson was 3rd, Richard Carter was 4th. Smith/Moulton-Smith were 5th overall and first of the Group 1 cars, just ahead of Alistair Scott (BMW M3).



There was just enough time for the well attended prize-giving and most were then off to dash home to Blightly. Judging by your Facebook posts you had a fantastic time in the Autumn sun, a superb way to end the CSCC racing season. Hugo and I were taken for a lap in the BMW M2 pace car as it led the rolling start for a single seater race, that was an experience, sliding around on the back seats! To finish, Robert, Hannah, Hugo and I headed high into a grandstand to watch a French championship race in the last of the sun.

Building on the success of this event, next year, at Dijon-Prenois, we will have separate 40 minute grids for our classic series and modern series, plenty of space for all of you. Best of all you won't need to travel via Paris to get there!

My amateur photos can be downloaded from our Facebook page, whilst professional photos can be viewed here:

<http://www.photoclassicracing.com/-CLASSIC-SPORTS-CAR-CLUB->  
 and <http://racingcarmedia.com/index.php/albums-photos-2018/?occur=1&lang=fr&cover=0&album=5e2112732420#wppa-container-1>

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