



CUTTINGS

BRITISH LAWN MOWER RACING ASSOCIATION

Racing wise, July has been the busiest month the club has seen in quite some time with meetings held at Holly Farm and Matterley Basin, and just one week to go until we visit another new venue at Blindley Heath.

Thankfully though, from an organisational point of view, Winchester was almost a pleasure following the headaches of the Lockdown rules, which appeared to have been written in some sort of code. Hopefully these are now a thing of the past and something we can look back on with a certain amusement as memories start to fade and the whole thing looks even more surreal in hindsight as it was to live.

Whilst it was great to see new faces at The Dip and Newdigate, it was even better to see old faces start to filter back into the paddock at Winchester with restrictions eased. Attendance in Group 3 had hitherto been fairly poor, so it was satisfying to see numbers almost nudge double figures, which is nearer where they should be!

The British Championships are all still to play for, with a handful of points between the top two in Groups 2 & 3, but much larger gaps starting to form in Group 4 with Alfie Smith already 47 points ahead. With only three rounds in the bag offering a maximum of 30 points, the Endurance Championship is very much still in the air for those who like to play the long game!

Onwards and upwards!

Graham

Newdigate

The second weekend of our 2021 season proper took us just North of the Gatwick flight line to Holly Farm, Newdigate. This was the site of our 2019 cross country event, but sadly due to groundworks and changes to fencing we were unable to run through the trees. Thus this was run as a reasonably straight forward sprint event taking up as much of the first field as we could.

With orders not to damage the ground too badly, the track generally had fairly long sweeping corners with tighter sections around a nasty set of tractor ruts and race control to limit speeds. The field was already slightly moist underfoot (with cowpats aplenty) due to recent rains (and cows), and when the first spots of rain started to fall at about 0830 on Saturday morning it seemed that the extremely poor forecast was about to be proven correct. However in true Michael Fish style, after a brief shower the weekend stayed miraculously dry!

The wet grass took its first casualty in Saturday practice when Algirdas's steering column parted from his universal joint and, unable to stop, soon found himself in the ditch that Deano had also found in 2019. Unfortunately that ended his race weekend after just four laps, but thankfully besides a very swollen knee he has been given the all clear and is already itching to go racing again!

Attendance in Groups 2 & 4 was very good with 8 and 16 respectively, Group



Podiums in Groups 2 (top), 3 (middle) and 4 (bottom)

2 featuring the first proper outing for Charlie Thurston in the adult class and our first Junior entrant in Jenson Cresswell. Due to a very poor turnout of just three Group 3s, it was decided to run 3s and 4s together in all but the Championship races, which most affected Les who had brought both.

We opted once again to take short breaks throughout the day rather than a single long lunch, which seems to be proving popular and is likely to be the

shape of things to come. At the very least it does give a bit more chance for people to tend to themselves and their mowers between rounds.

The running order for Saturday took the form of heat, Championship, heat, heat, Championship, heat and then a 30 minute Animal race, which counted towards the endurance Championship. Sunday had a similar format; heat, Championship, heat, Championship, heat, heat, heat – with a relatively early finish allowing people time to get home, cook a pizza, crack open a Peroni and support England in some ball sport or other.

Racing was as close as it was at The Dip and showed us that there are some battles worth keeping an eye on this season between the front runners in each Group, as well as between similarly matched midfielders.

Event winners were 58 Mike Cresswell, 43 Dean Fuller & 27 Alfie Smith in Groups 2, 3 & 4 respectively. Second places were taken by 243 Christian Belcher, 8 Stuart Johnson & 66 Kenny Goodesmith, and 123 Graham Tibbenham, 12 Les Pantry & 44 Karl Selby took Third.

Prize giving was slightly delayed due to the need to clear the blocks (which was largely taken care of under power by members of Groups 3 & 4, which was very much appreciated and makes us wonder if there is a fun race in there somewhere?!) rake the corners and reseed the track. Trophies this time were 5L jerry cans.

Winchester

New for the 2021 calendar was our first visit to Matterley Basin near Winchester. The plan was to make use of some of the motocross track and the massive venue that regularly attracts around 35,000 spectators in its normal function as one of the UK's premier Motocross venues. What was devised was a kind of cross between a cross country and the recent Red Bull meetings, with the start finish straight crossing the motocross start line, Saturday making use of a service tunnel and Sunday instead using a berm that was (only slightly) less demanding on man and machine.

As this year's most expensive venue, we were desperate for it to attract numbers and as the weekend approached the weather forecast was becoming something of a worry, but ultimately 27 mowers hit the track, with 6, 8 and 13 entrants from groups 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

Friday night proved to be a very windy one and overnight we were subjected to thunder, lightning and torrential rain that turned caravans into snare drums. However, seemingly defying the odds, we're now three for three this season with three events promising to be a washout, but thankfully being spared all but a few scattered showers during the race days themselves. Indeed with the ground being so hard and sloping, there was rarely little more than a layer of surface mud that dried quickly between showers.

With all but Les's gazebo surviving the night (and attacking him in the morning) we kicked off Saturday heading clockwise, which saw racers pass the line and then head downhill, with a steep right hand camber into a sweeping right hander, a quick dogleg and then sharp right into the service tunnel, it was then single file up a steep hill and right into a left, right, left, right complex before crossing the line. With minimal overtaking points, racing was close and frantic, with drivers forced to take advantage of top speeds on the downhill stretch and braking zones elsewhere. Particularly earlier on, a slushy top layer of mud caught a few drivers out and saw a number of hero to zero moments where all was lost due to spins or drivers sliding wide and into deeper mud.

The last race of the day was a thirty minute animal race counting towards the endurance championship, 17 racers took part with only 11 finishing. 25 Rick Peacock took the win from 27 Alfie Smith and 29 Nick Clark.

Sunday saw a change of direction, meaning that racing started at the hilltop complex, then, bypassing the tunnel, a tight right, left saw mowers dive down the other side of a berm, 90 left at the bottom and then dogleg to the bottom of the long cambered climb back to the start line.

Lap times came down slightly in this configuration, although top speeds were limited a little by the change from the long downhill plummet from the start line to a long climb to the



Cutting from Monday's Daily Star with Charlie Thurston leading the way in Group 2!

finish line – the advantage being given to those who were able to out drag the others on this stretch as overtaking points were again few and far between.

The weekend was largely incident free, although the multiple camber changes at the bottom of the track did catch a couple out, including Dan Mahkonen who, whilst proving what Pete Moore's MTD is capable of, also managed to prove how well he bounces. Thankfully though, both Dan and the mower were able to leave the scene under their own power following a brief catching of breath.

Consensus was that it was an enjoyable weekend and a venue we hope to revisit. Winners were 70 Roger Knowlson, 18 Sean Tanswell & 27 Alfie Smith. 58 Mike Cresswell, 32 Pete Sque & 29 Nick Clark took second, and 123 Graham Tibbenham, 43 Dean Fuller & 139 Dan Godden took third.

Prizes this time were baked by Vikki and were scrumptious!

Open Forum

We plan to hold an open forum at the Blindley Heath meeting for members to reflect on the season thus far and discuss any concerns that have arisen.

We'd encourage any member who wishes to raise something, particularly if you're not going to be present, to submit your query in advance so we can answer it to the best of our ability—committee@blmra.co.uk

The Loncins Have Landed!

If you pre-ordered one we'll be in touch very shortly. If you didn't but want one, get in touch: engines@blmra.co.uk

2021 Championship Standings

Group 2 (British Championship)

1. Mike Cresswell (215)
2. Graham Tibbenham (214)
3. Roger Knowlson (175)

Group 2 (Endurance Championship)

1. Graham Tibbenham (18)
2. Christian Belcher (14)
3. Charlie Thurston (14)

Group 3 (British Championship)

1. Dean Fuller (228)
2. Stuart Johnson (222)
3. Sean Tanswell (148)

Group 3 (Endurance Championship)

1. Les Pantry (20)
2. Pete Sque (18)
3. Kevin Edden (10)

Group 4 (British Championship)

1. Alfie Smith (241)
2. Gary Botting (194)
3. Dan Godden (159)

Group 4 (Endurance Championship)

1. Karl Selby (20)
2. Alfie Smith (16)
3. Rick Peacock (15)