

Mark Hoppé 2024 autotest champion elect?



Evening Production Car Autotest Clay Pigeon, Warden Hill, Evershot

Friday Night's Alright for Mark Hoppé

Words and photos: GEOFF PICKETT

The second day of the National Motorsport Week saw the running of the first grass autotest of Woolbridge Motor Clubs summer season with the 2023 champion Mark Hoppé proclaiming his intent to repeat that accolade with a ten second winning margin in the Wheelspin Autotest close to the Clay Pigeon Kart Raceway and the George Albert Hotel and Spa. The South Dorset based motor club has previously supported the StreetCar initiative, promoted by Motorsport UK the governing body for four-wheel motorsport in the United Kingdom, to increase the use of the everyday road cars and the introduction of new competitors to grass roots sport and was therefore enthusiastic to be part of the second National Motorsport Week.



Autotest variety. Brendon Hampshire in his Volvo Hillclimber Peter Ramsden swaps MR2 for Midget

'The principle of having a National Motorsport Week' says Motorsport UK CEO Hugh Chambers, 'is to have a focal point off the back of the British Grand Prix to use as a counterpoint to the hyper talented drivers who have probably spent €5 million before they have got to the grid and explain that there are 4000 other events that Motorsport UK and the community put on every year across the whole of the UK in which you can use the car you drive to the shops in and for an entry fee as low as £25'.



A determined Chris Briant took time off of Hoppé once he became accustomed to the Webb Toyota



Ashley Ramsden shared driving duties in MG Midget Will Lawrence takes the 'racing line'

Ten courses offered drivers a test of precision car control against the clock with penalties applied to the elapsed time if a driver should hit a marker cone which defines the route, does not follow the prescribed route or performs some other misdemeanor.

Champion Hoppé started strongly in his diminutive 993 cc Suzuki Alto creating an early two second advantage over Toyota Yaris driver Andy Webb with a time of 55.1 seconds. Sharing driving duties in the Japanese machine was Chris Briant who, forsaking his hillclimb specification MG ZR, slotted into third fourteen tenths of a second shy of the car's owner. The next test saw Hoppé go fastest again with a 54.3 second effort but this time Peter Ramsden was his closest challenger aboard his MG Midget just seven tenths of a second adrift with the Toyota pairing of Webb and Briant clocking 55.4 and 55.9 respectively.



Encouragement from Dave Mears as his son Alfie looks ahead for the next cone

Hoppé, from Sherborne, continued to dominate as rain began to fall, posting fastest times until the fifth round when Briant, now getting used to his mount, marked his card with a run of 53.5 seconds, two point one seconds up on the event leader, with Will Lawrence claiming third at the wheel of his Peugeot 205 (57.0s) just one tenth faster than the Volkswagen Polo driven by Dave Mears.

Bridport driving instructor Briant proceeded to win the next three tests, in an effort to take the overall victory, but Hoppé retaliated to claim the final two and finish on a total of 587.6 seconds thereby defeating Briant by just 10.2 seconds with Webb just over fifteen seconds shy in third.



Clay Pigeon Grass Autotest

Friday, July 12th 2024

No.	Driver	Car	cc	TESTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Pos
1	Mark Hoppe	Suzuki Alto	993		55.1	54.3	52.0	52.3	55.6	62.3	57.5	59.6	69.2	69.7	587.6	1
2	Brendan Hampshire	Volvo	1400		75.3	84.3	67.6	62.3	61.5	87.0	82.9	77.5	97.1	84.7	780.2	9
3	Peter Ramsden	MG Midget	1310		58.7	55.0	54.9	54.1	62.2	66.3	74.0	74.8	84.6	82.9	667.5	7
4	Ashley Ramsden	MG Midget	1310		85.1	57.5	56.4	59.2	64.6	65.8	78.8	65.0	82.3	81.5	696.2	8
5	Dave Mears	VW Polo	1293		60.6	57.4	55.7	56.0	57.1	61.9	60.9	61.1	75.5	73.2	619.4	4
6	Alfie Mears	VW Polo	1293		59.8	57.2	56.1	55.2	60.6	62.1	60.6	70.0	76.4	75.2	633.2	6
7	Will Lawrence	Peugeot 206	1600		59.7	58.5	56.6	56.7	57.0	61.7	61.3	61.1	75.9	74.5	623.0	5
8	Andy Webb	Toyota Yaris	1500		57.1	55.4	56.6	54.6	57.9	63.6	60.6	59.8	75.2	72.2	613.0	3
9	Chris Briant	Toyota Yaris	1500		58.5	55.9	65.4	53.0	53.5	57.0	56.7	57.5	70.5	69.8	597.8	2



Andy Webb on his way to a third place finish