

WATTS AT THE DOUBLE AT HOCKENHEIM

The Hockenheim historic meeting is back on the calendar with a new name and new organisers, but still in memory of Jim Clark who lost his life at this circuit in 1968. The very full programme of races included the first round of this year's HSCC-administered Historic F2 championship with a good entry including some new car and driver combinations. Grahame White reports.

In spite of all the Iceland volcano travel disruptions, everyone made it to the circuit in time for practice on a sunny, dry warm track. With the absence of Martin Stretton, who had damaged his new March 742 in testing, early pacesetters were Philip Harper (Ralt RT1) and Hans Peter (Ralt RT1) but then right at the end Matthew Watts (March 772) set pole with a 1m38.9s lap, followed by another six 2-litre cars until the first 1600cc car, which was the March 712 of Katsu Kubota.

Watts led into the first corner of race one, closely followed by Harper, Peter Meyrick (March 782), Richard Meins (March 762) and Peter Wuensch (Ralt RT1) and a full field behind. Then Harper got past Watts on lap two and was on a real charge only for it all to go wrong one lap later when his engine dropped a valve and the car pulled into the pits and retired. This left Watts unchallenged all the way to the flag. Behind there were battles all the way down the field. Meyrick settled into second place with Peter third and Wuensch up to fourth, soon to be third when getting past Peter, while up to an amazing fourth overall was Kubota. Meanwhile Richard Meins' first HF2 race started well but then not one but two spins on separate laps dropped him down the field but he got back to a good sixth by the finish. Then Wuensch and Kubota both had fuel starvation problems and lost a few positions, which benefited Richard Shaw (Chevron B42) who moved up to a podium third place.

Chris Lillingston-Price (Tecno T70) passed lots of cars until he accidentally knocked the ignition switch off and cut the engine and then later had a spin but still finished, lower down than he expected. A man on a real push was Walter Nef (March 712M) who, from 17th on the grid eventually finished seventh overall after a brilliant drive. Third in the 1600cc class was Alain Lagache (March 712M) after a very good drive, in spite of having done less than a dozen races in a single-seater. Daryl Taylor (March 78B) had a good first HF2 run and the scrap between Roger Bevan (ex-Fittipaldi Lotus 69) and Laurent Fort (Brabham BT30) was fun to watch, as was battle between Jorgen Egdal (March 712M) and David Brown (Brabham BT23C).

It was a good clean race, no accidents and only three retirements with Watts, Meyrick and Shaw taking the overall podium positions with trophies and champagne to help them on their way.

The race two grid was made up of the cars' fastest lap in race one, so it had a different look, Harper non-started, so on lap one it was Watts who soon pulled out a lead from Shaw, Meyrick and Meins. Three laps in and Meyrick got past Shaw and Meins stopped with engine problems, then Peter got past Shaw up to third.

By half distance of this 25-minute race, Watts had a comfortable lead from Meyrick, Peter, Shaw and Wuensch with Franz Guggemos (March 782) catching them all. Then came Kubota up with them as well, but soon after this Shaw retired with engine problems. A few minutes from the end Watts spun away his lead due to oil on the track, which let Meyrick through, however Watts rejoined and on the very last lap retook the lead to take his second win of the weekend. Meyrick was second and Hans Peter third to complete the podium visitors. 1600cc honours went to Kubota, who drove superbly with Nef second and a delighted Lillingston-Price third after a spin.



Matthew Watts leads Peter Meyrick

NEWS IN BRIEF

With so many flight problems over the weekend it was surprising that everybody managed to get to the meeting. The Iceland Volcano caused a lot of disruption and there were lots of tales of long car journeys; the FIA stewards, for instance, drove from Northern Ireland to Dublin, crossed by ferry to Holyhead, drove to Dover, took a ferry to Calais then drove to Hockenheim.

There was an informal and well-attended prize giving on Saturday where the 2009 championship class award winners were given their trophies. A general discussion about the future of the championship and the possible design of a new logo was also put forward.

It was very good to see newcomers Peter Wuensch and Richard Meins, both enjoying F2 for the first time as they are normally racing with Historic Formula One cars. Roland Wiltschegg, also new to the championship, was getting to grips nicely with his ex-Sandy Watson Chevron B39.

Michel Ghio was going extremely well with his Lotus 69 as was Jorgen Egdal, who was very proud of the fact that the engine he re-built at home preformed so well with not one slight liquid leak all weekend. Paul Bason, however, although he had a good first race unfortunately didn't even complete a lap in race two due to a tangle with Daryl Taylor.

Franz Guggemos is in the process of finalising his design of equipment to measure engine cubic capacity, which we will be using during the season.

David Brown was kept really busy; not only was he racing his Brabham in our two F2 races he also did both Formula Junior races and some parade laps honouring German driver Kurt Ahrens (he has an ex-Ahrens car).

Many visitors to the meeting spent some quiet moments in front of the Jim Clark memorial.