



## CLOSE RACING AT NOGARO

Set in the South West corner of France, not far from Pau, the Pyrenees and Atlantic coast, the 50th anniversary Grand Prix Historic de Nogaro weekend had a good HF2 entry with some close racing, no accident damage, fine, dry, hot sunny weather and only one race retirement.

Everyone was new to the circuit so took advantage of some testing prior to practice. Martin Stretton (March 742) was quickest by over a second from Matthew Watts (March 772) and Peter Meyrick (March 782) with Philip Harper (Ralt RT1) next.

In race one Stretton went straight into the lead closely followed by Watts and Meyrick. Then came Harper, Hans Peter (Ralt RT1) and Robert Shaw (Chevron B42). Watts stayed with Stretton for half the race, setting fastest lap, but dropped back a bit by the flag. Harper meanwhile, although quicker than Meyrick, just couldn't get past and on to the podium, but it was not for want of trying. Class A (1600cc cars) was very close again with Katsu Kubota and Diogo Ferrao (both March 712s) having a very close battle, often nearly side by side. The man from Japan just kept in front. There wasn't a lot of overtaking but many close battles through the field.

Race two nearly started with a disaster because the race officials messed up the start procedure. After the green flag lap two cars stalled and there was a long delay while the cars were taken off the grid and some cars were beginning to overheat. When the delayed start was given two of them switched off their engines, then soon after the race started with no prior warning, nor another green flag lap. Quite how everyone avoided the two or three cars that couldn't get their engines started in time to take the start, we will never know.

Stretton went into the lead again with Meyrick next then Hans Peter and Shaw, no one knowing if it was really a race start or not. So when they came round on the first lap and no signals were given, it was game on. Both Watts and Harper were very slow off the line and were well down, but after a few laps Watts was back up to second and Harper fourth, where they stayed. Both Kubota and Ferrao started from the pit lane so for Kubota to come through the field to not only finish seventh overall, but to win Class A was a brilliant drive and as a result he took a good points lead in the championship. At the flag Meyrick stayed third, Peter fifth and Shaw sixth.

### NOGARO NUGGETS

Many improvements have been made to the Nogaro circuit, particularly the pit garages and all our HF2 competitors had use

of these facilities all weekend. The circuit seems generally popular with all the drivers although quite physical, some said; hard work in other words.

Both Peter Meyrick and Katsu Kubota were driving Formula One cars at the same meeting so had plenty of track time.

Laurie Bennett is continuing to enjoy his European season having shipped his rare Elfin 600B over from Australia. It was good to see Michel Ghio going well in his Lotus 69 having a top 10 finish in race two.

Swiss driver Walter Nef had two class podiums with a second and third. He prepares the car and builds his own engines and only ever has his wife to help him at the race meetings. He never seems to go very well in practice but always puts up a great performance in the races.

Daryl Taylor didn't have a chance to improve his championship points tally, with no other runners in his class, but is still well up in the overall placings.

The flying dentist, Paul Bason, looked really pleased to be on the podium in race two with a very good Class A third place. His team manager for the weekend was long standing best mate Tim Barrington, whose own car is nearly rebuilt after its start line accident at the Brands Hatch Superprix F2 race earlier in the year.

Roger Bevan is back on the grid after his long engine rebuild and enjoying his racing just as much. He was full of praise for the marshals after he went off gently in race two with his Lotus 69.

Alan Lagache was enjoying the track but was finding it quite difficult to go quickly, he is normally a little higher up the finishing order.

A very welcome newcomer to the grid for this race was Gerard Gamand who raced his very unusual and rare Pygme MdB1 after its long rebuild. He just missed a top ten finish in race one and had a nasty engine failure in race two – we hope to see the car out regularly in the future.