

REPORT: OULTON PARK GOLD CUP

Once again, the Historic Sports Car Club's Oulton Park Gold Cup weekend (28-30 August) delivered some outstanding racing on the beautiful parkland circuit in Cheshire.

With bumper grids for most races, fine weather, a large and enthusiastic crowd and lots of off-track attractions, it all added to a great weekend of historic racing with 21 races across Sunday and Monday.

Star billing went to two races for the HSCC Historic Formula 2 Championship, with the aggregate winner being awarded the hugely prestigious Gold Cup. Ultimately, it was Matthew Watts who took the big prize after victory in the second race backed up a third overall in the opener. On Sunday, Andrew Smith just had the legs of Miles Griffiths (Ralt RT1) to take a resounding win in his March 742 as Watts chased them home from a little distance back.

Local star Callum Grant was a magnificent fourth in his less powerful Formula Atlantic March 79B but denied a result, after starting at the back of the grid, was Matt Wrigley who made tremendous progress on the opening lap only to be later forced to retire with a lack of oil pressure. Mark Dwyer (March 742) could also have featured but a bump of the start left him with a damaged wheel rim and resultant puncture at the first corner.

Monday's race turned into one of attrition as Griffiths led the early laps from Smith. But the leading Ralt RT1 suddenly cut out without warning at the Knickerbrook chicane and Smith was so closely tucked in behind that he could not avoid contact. While Griffiths retired, Smith pressed on but with a damaged nose cone but eventually retired with engine issues.

Meanwhile, Watts had been running them very close and took over the lead but with Dwyer chasing him down. Dwyer got closer and closer but was then forced out with a major engine issue, leaving Watts a clear victor and winner of the Gold Cup.

Grant moved up to a superb second overall from James Murray, who had a fine weekend on his first time out in two years in his ex-Peter Gethin Chevron B25. Mark Mercer was another star of the weekend with two fighting performances in his formula Atlantic March 73B.