

Round 1 Report & Results



The first round of the European Drift Championship was held over the Easter Bank Holiday weekend at Donington Park in association with the ISTS Donny Show 2007.

Blessed with fantastic weather throughout the weekend, the action had started on the Friday well before the show had begun. All drivers who had scored championship points in the 2006 national series were granted 2007 licenses. However with a sport growing at an exponential rate, many new comers wanted to challenge the established professionals. A licensing day was held on Good Friday to determine which drivers would earn EDC driver status and compete for the title of European Drift Champion 2007.

A field of 20 drivers stepped up and gave it their all in an effort to secure EDC licenses. The level of drivers is continuously improving and this was apparent in the standard which was shown by all drivers. Many of the drivers would have probably gained Licenses if they had challenged in 2006 with their current skill, but as the standard continues to increase, the bar must be raised to maintain the highest standard of drifting throughout Europe. After an intense licensing session 4 drivers where granted EDC licenses with a further 2 gaining provisional licenses. Provisional license holders must achieve a top 16 qualification position within 2 rounds to upgrade their license or they will have to undergo licensing procedures once again.

Licensing prior to Round 1 (Held at Drift Central) :-

The successful drivers were:

Dean Kearney: Xtreme Autos PS13 Silvia (Ireland)

Alan McCord: Hi Octane Jap Performance Parts S15 Silvia (N. Ireland)

Chris Parry: Team Nightspirit AE86 Corolla (England)

Peter Barber: WGT Auto Developments FC3S RX7 (England)

Provisional Licenses:

John Power: Xtreme Autos RPS13 180SX (Ireland)

Bruno Esperanca: Drift Garage PS13 Silvia (Portugal)

EDC Round 1:

Due to the ISTS Donny show being a two day show, the competition was also split into two days. The Saturday would see the drivers practice sessions and qualification, Sunday would host the Top 16 Showdown.

The Saturday saw a few surprise performances. 2006 Champion Phil Morrison changed from his 2006 championship winning S14 200SX to an HCR32 Skyline. The horse and rider combination was clearly not working to the standard that everyone is used to seeing from the champ and Phil's fortune did not return in time for his qualification runs resulting in him not making the final 16 cut shocking all involved. Team Driftworks' bad luck did not end there; with 2006 final round winner Ben Broke-Smith also struggling with his new car, a JZX81 Toyota Chaser. Ben put in, by his standards a sub par performance which saw him qualify in 17th position. Things were about to get better for Ben however when during the results announcement, 14th place qualifier Ian Harrison revealed that he had blown the engine and clutch in his RS13 200SX. This meant that Ben Broke Smith moved up to claim the 16th spot and subsequently into the finals on Sunday.

The struggles of the "usual suspects" meant there was space for some of the new comers to make their mark on the championship right from the beginning. All drivers who gained licenses on Friday qualified into the top 16 except Bruno Esperanca who due to a last minute issue was unable to compete in round 1. John Power's qualification into the top16 meant that his license was upgraded to a full license.

Top qualifier of the day went to James Hudson in the Driftmoto/SRB Power HCR32 Skyline. James was close to flawless all day and looked very confident for the finals on the following day. Chris Parry in the Nightspirit AE86 used his fresh license to its full extent and stunned many by qualifying 4th overall. Many of the top drivers where all present in the top 16 including Brett Castle, Mark Luney, Tim Marshall, Ralph Crampton and Mark Johnston.

Sunday Finals:

A morning practice session was held to enable the drivers to learn the changing conditions of the track on a new day. All drivers looked even better than in qualification but the drivers who particularly stood out were Ralph Crampton in the D2/SVA PS13 Silvia and

Peter Barber in the WGT FC3S RX7. Peter's performance surprised the judges due to his continued improvement through out the weekend.

The finals started with a very eventful battle between James Hudson and Ben Broke-Smith. With nothing to call between the two drivers after two runs, the judge called for a sudden death "One More Time". A machine problem from Ben Broke-Smith meant a massive 8-2 Advantage went to Hudson. Ben Broke-Smith had to fix the car to return for his final run within the allocated time. A tense 5 minutes passed and Ben was able to return in the nick of time. Meanwhile, a communications problem meant that Hudson's pit crew were unable to let him know of the situation and his huge advantage. Unaware of the position he was in, Hudson continued to push for the win and made an uncharacteristic mistake and spun, handing the win to Ben Broke-Smith, being lucky on two occasions in this competition. The XTreme Autos team had drawn each other in the top 16s having qualified 8th and 9th. The experience of John Power paid off in a close battle putting him through to the top 8. Everybody was very impressed by Kearney's performance and expect great things from the young 18 year old in the near future.

A near spin by Declan Hicks knocked him out of contention as Chris Parry continued to drive flawlessly. Tim Marshall kept his cool against Mark Coyne and booked his place in the Top 8.

The battle between Ralph Crampton and Niall Gunn became very eventful. The first mistake made all day by Crampton saw him run wide on corner 2. Gunn saw the opportunity to pass and made his move but then closed off all space for Crampton to continue his run. This resulted in some rubbed doors and both drivers off the track. The judge determining that both drivers were equally bad in this situation awarded the first run a tie. Ralph Crampton, unable to recover mentally from the first run makes another mistake on the second run and spins out putting Gunn into the top 8.

Mark Johnston was gradually finding form and confidently took down Alan McCord, whilst Brett Castle controlled his car beautifully to avoid a collision with Mark Buckle who was struggling in the Distinctive Cars of York Skyline.

A big surprise was rookie Pete Barber who held his own against Mark Luney in the SVA Imports 350Z, the pressure finally getting to Pete who spun in the second run handing the win to Mark Luney.

Top 8:

Ben Broke-Smith again managed to recover a 7-3 deficit and managed to pull John Power into sudden death. Ben's Chaser still giving him some problems meant that he was still

unable to perform to the level that he is capable of knocking the second Driftworks driver out of the competition, whilst newly licensed Power found himself in the Semi Finals. In the next battle, a big mistake by Niall Gunn knocked him out of the competition which meant that Chris Parry, another of the newly licensed made it through to the Semi finals. Mark Johnston pulled a controversial manoeuvre against Tim Marshall causing Marshall to spin out, but the move was judged as bad, but not as critical as a spin giving an advantage to Johnston in the Weston Performance Silvia. Marshall managed to pull back an advantage in run 2 but not by enough to put the Apex Performance Skyline into the top 4. Brett Castle looked very composed through out the competition and didn't put a wheel wrong against Mark Luney. The SVA 350Z managed a 5-5 run in run 2 but the advantage gained by Castle in the first run saw the Autoglym/Abbey Motorsport 200SX in the last 4.

Semi Final:

An all newcomer semi final went to sudden death but Chris Parry making a critical error in the 3rd run meant that John Power would be in the finals at his first ever EDC competition. The second semi final also going sudden death showed just how close the competition was. Johnston had upped his game even further and managed to hold off the veteran Brett Castle to book his place in the final.

Final:

The finals turned out to be a clear cut decision with John Power making a big mistake on run 1 giving an 8-2 advantage to Johnston. Power was well aware of the situation and made a daring move to try and turn the match around. This however did not pay off resulting in further mistakes by Power and crowning Mark Johnston of Weston Performance the winner of Round 1 of the European Drift Championship.

The HKS Hard Charger award was awarded to Chris "Paz" Parry in the Team Nightspirit AE86 Corolla for his aggressive yet controlled driving and his alarming achievement over the course of the last three days.

An exciting few days of competition with many unexpected results gave everybody the impression that the 2007 European Drift Championship is something to keep an eye on, each and every round. Next round SILVERSTONE 3rd JUNE 2007.