

Round 4 Report & Results



CASTLE TAKES THE WIN & THE TITLE

The 4th and final round of the 2007 EDC season made its way to North Weald Airfield. The event would run in conjunction with the Donny South show. North Weald is very different to the other tracks this season due to the fact that the track is not a permanent dedicated track like the previous 3. This means that the surface may not be as well prepared, but also gives a great opportunity to create the track exactly how a drift track should be. The course was laid out to give maximum impact and bring the fastest action as close to the crowds as possible.

Qualifying began on the Saturday, one day before the main show. Once again, more drivers tried out for EDC licenses to make a last minute mark on the championship. After an intense session, Paul Smith and Robin Neeson earned their licenses.

Practice started directly after. The track proved to be a lot more technical than the drivers initially expected. The track begins with a quick right hander at approximately 90 MPH

then suddenly tightens to a hairpin. This section requires the cars to slow down whilst maintaining drift angle. The most effective way of achieving this is through left foot braking. Many drivers struggled to do this effectively but the more experienced drifters were pulling this off to good effect. Phil Morrison had finally made the Driftworks R32 Skyline work for him and was putting in some very impressive runs. Similarly, veterans Brett Castle and Mark Luney were also on form.

Just as practice ended, rain struck the site and so qualifying, like the last round, would once again be in the wet. This did not stop Phil Morrison from continuing his dominant performance. He qualified top of the pile proving to everyone why he was 2006 champion. Brett Castle in the Autoglym/Abbey Motorsport Nissan 200sx made very clear that he was still chasing for the championship. Some very tidy runs from Brett saw him qualify 2nd. Mark "The Rain Man" Buckle once again made full use of the wet conditions and put in some impressive giving him third place. Mark Luney and Mark Johnston both kept their championship chances alive by qualifying 7th and 8th respectively.

The finals would run on Sunday which still remained wet for the opening practice session. The top 16 drivers remained professional and put on a confident show for the crowd which was simply awe inspiring despite the gloomy weather. The crowd all look excited by the upcoming finals where they would be able to see 2 cars at a time do battle to determine the winner of the round and the championship.

Phil Morrison took a comfortable win in the first of the top 16 battles whilst opponent Kieran Cameron took a rather uncomfortable ride backwards through the run off grass. Mark Coyne and Peter Barber battled through in a very close match would require a "One More Time" sudden death situation. The WGT Auto Developments RX7 of Pete Barber had the edge in the later runs securing his place in the Top 8.

The Battle between Ben Broke Smith and Maciej Polody was filled with a little confusion by some involved. The first run saw Polody fall off the track on the straight section taking out a marker sign along with his chances of making the top 8. The polish driver fought back in the second leg but it wasn't enough to prevent the Driftwork Toyota Chaser from advancing to the next stage of competition.

Newly licensed Paul Smith was able to hold off Championship regular Declan Hicks in the 4th of the Top 16 battles. Smith had struggled to get his car working right when he tried for a license earlier this year, but today he showed no sign of any trouble with a fantastic display of skill and mental strength.

Mark Buckle spun the DCY skyline allowing Tim Marshall a relatively simple way into the top 8. The second run was a close affair but again Marshall took the advantage.

Daniel Eyles in the Japspeed R33 Skyline was outclassed by the experience of Mark Luney. The SVA Imports 350Z charged through and dominated this battle. The staff were all very impressed with Eyles' performance and expect him to do great things in 2008.

Championship leader Mark Johnston was struggling in the wet conditions as was his opponent James Grimsey. Johnston had a great amount of speed compared with Grimsey and took the advantage when he was in the lead, but struggled to maintain his drift whilst chasing the slower car. As a result, he straightened up which levelled the score. Sudden death followed and the same situation repeated itself. This time the mistake made by Johnston was deemed to be a bigger disadvantage than the slower speeds of Grimsey, knocking the Weston Performance Silvia out of the competition.

Brett Castle and Chris Parry had one of the closest battles in the competition. Parry in the Team Nightspirit Corolla closed right in on Castle but had to make some corrections to maintain his drift. The second leg saw Castle return the favour by getting within inches but kept his drift tidy which saw him take the advantage and the win.

The weather finally came good and the rain was gone, the track gradually dried out and allowed for the speed and the tyre smoke to return for the top 8 battles.

Pete Barber cracked under the immense pressure applied by Phil Morrison. Two 10-0 runs saw another comfortable victory for Morrison!

Ben Broke Smith remained calm to defeat Paul Smith who had looked good all day but a big mistake from him was to be fatal. The Driftworks Chaser advancing to the Semi final to face his team mate.

Tim Marshall was able to secure a 10-0 advantage against Mark Luney in the first run when the SVA imports Z got a little too close to Marshall and spun. Marshall threw away his advantage in the second run by making his own mistakes forcing another "One More Time" decision. Luney once again struggled whilst chasing. He seemed to have the pace but struggled to maintain his drift when having to match the slightly slower speeds of Marshall. It was later revealed that the SVA Imports team were still running their wet setup even though the track had now dried out.

Brett castle continued his path of dominance with a strong performance against James Grimsey. The GBH Motorsport 180SX was simply not able to match the form that Castle was on.

The Semi Finals were to begin, but before hand the staff were told that Tim Marshall had broken both driveshafts. Several people from other teams all rushed to try and get the Apex Performance/K-Sport Skyline running again. They had the duration of the first semi final plus 5 minutes to get the car competition ready.

The first semi was an all Driftworks affair with Ben Broke Smith battling against his boss and team mate, Phil Morrison. These two drivers have a lot of experience driving with each other and it showed as the two cars looked very focused but in unison with each other. The battle had to go into sudden death with no clear winner after two runs. Morrison made his first mistake of the day and allowed Broke Smith into the final.

The struggle continued for Team Apex Performance as they continued to fix the Skyline. The "5 minute rule" allows a competitor to have 5 minutes to fix their car once his/her opponent has lined up on the start line. The Apex Performance team narrowly missed this limit which meant that Castle would have a bye into the final. Marshall would have to battle with Morrison to determine who would claim the bottom step of the podium.

With Marshall back on track with the help of his team and many other teams, he was able to compete against Phil Morrison for 3rd place. A very intense battle between the two guys literally left no space for error as cars were almost touching in all of their battles. Sudden death was called once again but Marshall had to make a big correction in the 3rd leg giving 3rd place to Morrison.

The final would be between Brett Castle in the Autoglym/Abbey Motorsport S14 200sx and Ben Broke Smith in the Driftworks JZX81 Chaser. With nothing to call between the two drivers after the first run, it would all come down to the second leg. Ben Broke Smith made an uncharacteristic mistake straightening out as they approached the hairpin and gave the victory to Brett Castle. A very powerful performance by Castle where not a single mistake was made all day by the drift veteran.

1st Brett Castle

2nd Ben Broke Smith

3rd Phil Morrison

The championship was also decided at this point. 3rd place went to Mark Johnston in the Weston Performance Silvia. His rollercoaster season saw his take two round wins which gave him 3rd place overall despite two disappointing results. 2nd place went to Mark Luney in the SVA imports 350Z. Despite never winning a round, he consistently scored good points at every round taking a well deserved 2nd place. Brett Castle was crowned 2007 champion with 1 round win and several podium finishes. The final points do not give a clear

representation of how close the 2007 season turned out to be. Any of these 3 drivers could have been champion at the end of the day, but Castle gave everyone a master class on how it should be done.

And so ends the 2007 season for the European Drift Championship. A very exciting eventful season which enjoyed tremendous support from the competitors, teams, sponsors and most importantly the fans and spectators at each and every round. Roll on 2008 where the EDC superstars and hopefully some rookies will be locked once again in intense battle.