



UK GP45 CHAMPIONSHIP

Race report rounds one and two

17/18 March 2012

NG Road Racing enjoyed a season of unusually complementary weather conditions through 2011 – perfect for the inaugural season of their Pirelli backed GP45 Championship. The 450 Super Singles and Super Twins battled head-to-head with each other and the mini-twins, regularly featuring on the front row, swapping paint with the leaders and taking overall podium finishes. Following a long winter the 450cc regulars, plus some new faces and machines, arrived at Brands Hatch for the opening round of the 2012 season, eager to get back in the saddle.

Saturday 17th March, round one qualifier

Despite a week of unseasonal balmy weather, the famous undulating Kent circuit was well and truly cold and wet and so under tricky conditions the riders assembled on the heavily cambered grid. Amid a blast of spray and thumping twins and singles Matt Andrew, returning Super Single Champion, made his charge for the front of the pack. Andrew took his *ADP Group* Suzuki GP45 to an impressive 2nd place on-the-road and an easy GP45 win – 11 seconds clear of the next mini-twin riders challenging for their podium positions.

Robbie Robson on board the distinctive orange *Trevor Pope Racing* KTM and fellow GP45 regular Tony Bridgefoot on his *Bluebell Lakes'* Honda, claimed 2nd and 3rd Super Single positions respectively. Bridgefoot's team mate James Stacey wasn't so lucky, suffering a DNF for his first meeting of the year. The soggy conditions also sealed the fate of new GP45 entrants Alan Cragg and Peter Carr. However, before retiring with a snapped chain, Carr showed his hand as a serious contender on board the ex-NGRRC GP45 Kawasaki with a dynamic run at the front of the mini-twin/GP45 field and putting *pistolracing.co.uk* into the spotlight.

Saturday 17th March, round one final

Conditions for the final remained extremely tricky with a drying track. Matt Andrew had clear tarmac ahead in P2 on the front row. In contrast another GP45 competitor, Mark Carkeek on board the *Corby Kawasaki* FXF450, was forced to join the back of the grid after failing to start in race one. Joining Carkeek on row six sat Peter Carr clearly champing at the bit and eager to turnaround his bad luck from the previous outing.

Matt Andrew dropped a couple of places on-the-road in the opening laps but soon got into his stride once again heading up the GP45s. Andrew enjoyed battling with the #1 plated mini-twin of Ben Marsden and after 11 laps crossed the line in 3rd overall and the first 2012 GP45 points victory was in the bag. Hot on Andrew's heels came Peter Carr with an inspired charge from the back to clinch 4th on-the-road, his first GP45 2nd place finish and fastest Super Single lap of 57.99 – only a fraction off Ben Marsden's mini-twin best lap of 57.80. Mark Carkeek also made a notable debut on the 450 single taking the *Corby Kawasaki* machine from the rear of the pack to eighth spot overall and 3rd GP45.

This time out all the Super Singles completed the race giving Alan Cragg his first GP45 finish for *cumbriacoldstorage.co.uk*. Unfortunately Robbie Robson proved a little too keen and was handed a jump start plus 10 second penalty.

Sunday 18th March, round two qualifier

Round two and the paddock was treated to bright sunny conditions although the air and track temperatures remained bitterly cold. With the qualifier scheduled for a lunchtime slot GP45 riders could look forward to some of the best conditions of the chilly weekend. Matt Andrew set about securing the best grid position he could for the *ADP Group* Suzuki although only half a second off the best mini-twin lap time he settled in 6th place on-the-road. >





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Continued. Race report round 1/2

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Whilst battling a clutch of mini-twins Mark Carkeek was determined to outshine fellow class newbie Peter Carr. Carkeek finished just two seconds clear of his rival but grabbed 2nd of the Super Singles and a healthy 9th overall. CRF450 Honda mounted riders, *Bluebell Lakes'* James Stacey and *cumbriacoldstorage.co.uk's* Alan Cragg, enjoyed a race long tussle for 4th and 5th spot. Robbie Robson managed a clean getaway from the line this time and successfully fended off the CRF450 Honda of *Bluebell Lakes'* rider Tony Bridgefoot.

Sunday 18th March, round two final

Come the final the clouds had begun to gather but the weather remained dry for the time being. Following a strong performance in the qualifier Mark Carkeek, on the *Corby Kawasaki* Super Single, was on a quest to bring the race to Champion Matt Andrew, positioned just one row in front. Andrew however had other ideas and with a season of GP45 experience on his side took flight as soon as the lights changed finishing some 14 seconds ahead of his nearest Super Single rival.

Despite achieving the fastest lap of the Super Singles Carkeek was unable to catch Andrew and had to settle for 2nd GP45 spot and 7th on-the-road, rounding out a successful debut for rider and machine in the class.

Next to take the flag and 3rd Super Single was Peter Carr on the *pistolracing.co.uk* Kawasaki. Carr enjoyed a close fought battle with the mini-twins and arrived at the line less than three tenths behind Carkeek, enough to secure joint second place in the Championship standings. All the GP45s came through to the finish line to complete the opening rounds of the *Pirelli UK GP45 Championship* in time to avoid the heavy downpour looming above Clearways.



Above: Peter Carr hot on the heels of last season's champion Matt Andrew

Credit: www.EDPphoto.co.uk



Above: Mark Carkeek proved he will be one to watch this season

Credit: www.EDPphoto.co.uk

Pirelli UK GP45 Championship results:

Super Singles: Matthew Andrew 50, Peter Carr 36, Mark Carkeek 36, James Stacey 26

Next round: Mallory Park 29th April.

Check www.ngroadracing.org and www.gp45.co.uk for the latest information.

