



Synchro take another Class win ! The 2003 British Touring Car Championship Rounds 12 & 13, Snetterton.

Following another unsuccessful testing session during the break the team arrived at Snetterton Norfolk hoping to put their run of bad luck behind them. They were looking forward to capitalising on the good pace shown at the previous meeting and with the temperature cooling following the hottest week in 10 years the conditions were getting better.

Free Practice 1: With the car ready to go there was only 1 thing missing - the driver ! Delayed due to traffic problems on the motorways James arrived at the track with only 15 mins left in the first session. With a new engine installed the first priority was to ensure that all was running well. Time was against them however they did manage to complete the necessary 2 laps to gain enough data to confirm the engine.

Free Practice 2 : Having confirmed the engine was running OK in the first session James then set about trying the car's handling in this session to enable the correct set up for Qualifying and the races the following day. Early in the session there was a problem with the gear box ! it was stuck in 6th gear and James had to return to the pits, this proved to be the end of the session. The team would have a lot of work to do to ensure the car was ready for Qualifying the next morning.

Qualifying : The morning started misty and looked promising for some more hot weather. The car had been completed late in the night and with the final checks complete the team were optimistic for their first real running of the weekend. With the temperatures rising and the mist clearing James set about warming the tyres and putting in some fast laps during the frantic 20 min session. At the mid point of the session he was in 14th position and improving with each lap. The decision was made to bring the car in and change the front tyres and carry out a small adjustment. Upon his return to the track it was evident that the changes were working as the times were consistently 0.5 secs quicker than the first half of the session. At the end of the session James completed his best lap of the weekend giving him an overall position of 10th and 2nd in class for the first race.



Race 1. Starting from the 5th row James made a good start and maintained position avoiding the crash at the end of the pit lane on the start / finish straight which resulted in the safety car being deployed straight away. Due to the amount of debris it took 5 laps for the track to be cleared and the safety car went off and the racing continued. James had gained 4 places and was running 6th overall and 1st in class and maintained this position until lap 12 when the lead cars started coming in for their mandatory pit stops when he moved to 3rd and then took the lead in laps 13 and 14 at which point it was decided to bring the car in for the mandatory pit stop. A quick stop by the team and a good in and out lap saw James return in 7th position overall and maintain his class lead. Following a good dice with the works Honda of Chilton James finally returned to 8th position overall and still class leader 2 secs ahead of main rival Collard in the Astra. James continued to set consistent times ahead of Collard until lap 21 when the work's Honda of Morrison ahead retired putting James in 7th overall where he remained ahead of Collard for the final 4 laps to take the chequered flag with another class win.



Race 2 : Saw the Synchro Civic start from row 4 following their good finish in the first race. The track temperatures had started to drop along with the sun for the first evening race of the season. Having shown good pace in the first race everyone was hopeful of a good result in race 2 and a few small changes had been made to help improve the set up and help to compensate for the additional 9 Kilos of success ballast that they were now carrying. After another good start from the line James dropped back to 13th position overall due to being forced wide in the first corner and an incident in the next lap dropped him back a further 2 places. However not disheartened James settled down and started to set some competitive lap times and was gaining on the charging pack ahead of him. It was apparent that something was amiss with the car after lap 10 as James reported an unusual noise from the engine following his exit from the chicane onto the start finish straight. The compulsory pit stop was made on lap 13 and another good stop was completed by the team. When he returned to the track there was a smell of burning oil filling the cockpit and as he passed the pit lane a very faint hint of blue smoke was visible, not knowing if it was engine or gearbox oil James continued as best he could however by lap 20 the handling was being affected due to the increasing amount of oil that was landing on the rear wheels. With over 8 sec's of a gap to his next placed class rival the decision was made to continue at a slower pace to try and reach the end of the race and bag some more points and capitalise on the results of the first race. It had become clear that the smoke was in fact engine oil and the cause would have to be investigated.



With his main rival Rob Collard finishing strongly in 2nd and 1st in the races the gap at the top of the independent class leader-board had grown by 2 more points with James now in second position but only 18 points behind with 6 races still to go.

For more information, check the team website: www.synchromotorsport.com

Synchro Motorsport would like to thank the following partners:

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