

ACU 250 CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 1

Dave Hampton (J &RB Racing Yamaha) and Darrell Higgins (Dennis Trollope Racing Yamaha) shared the victories in the opening round of the NG Racing organised ACU 250 Championship at Brands Hatch, but it was Jonathan Stamper (File Tuning/FRGB Yamaha), the 48-year-old from Egerton, Kent, with two solid second places, who now tops the points' table.

Higgins, using tuner Dennis Trollope's number one TZ engine, qualified on pole, but there was less than a second covering the top five.

The 55-year-old from Melksham, Wiltshire led Saturday's race, but on the third of 15 laps, he crashed out, uninjured, at Druids.

Hampton, a 36-year-old motor cycle dealership salesman from Southampton, took over at the front, but Stamper grabbed the lead on lap four and stayed there for six more laps, before Hampton regained the advantage, pulling away to beat Stamper home by 1.6 seconds after setting the fastest lap.

Ant Hodson (FCL Racing Yamaha), the 40-year-old from Saxelby, Lincolnshire property maintenance man, was third home, just under nine seconds further back.

Rich Grinling (RG Carpentry Yamaha), the 42-year-old carpenter from Lincoln, was eighth at the end of the opening lap, but picked off places to take fifth position home, first in the new Pre-92 class, just half a second in front of arch rival, Andrew Sawford (St Neots M/Cycles/TSM Yamaha), the 35-year-old motorcycle mechanic from Sandy, Bedfordshire, another man with eyes on winning the new category.

Adrian Martin (J & RB Racing/File Tuning) was sixth, climbing steadily through the pack after holding tenth spot first time run.

He beat Gary Vines (MPS Heavy Haulage Ltd Yamaha) by just three fifths of a second.

Vines regretting that he had not fitted a new tyre for the race.

Carl Hudson (DWH Racing Honda) was eighth home, two seconds further back.

Unlucky South African, 30-year-old Phil Atkinson (Declan's Racing Yamaha), suffered a broken piston in Friday's practice day. The bike was repaired and he qualified second fastest, three tenths of a second slower than Higgins.

In the first race Atkinson quickly slipped back to seventh on the opening lap and though he climbed up to fourth was forced to stop on the fifth lap with same problem.

That good ride by Grinling earned him Saturday's Dunlop GP Rear Tyre Award.

Sunday morning's Warm Up was just as close at the previous day's qualifying.

Stamper was quickest, improving on his own qualifying time and equalling Hampton's fastest lap in race one.

Conditions were very tricky for everyone in Sunday's race, but with lap times a little slower than race one, nobody crashed.

Stamper made a sluggish start, though, lying fifth on the opening lap, but he quickly picked off the opposition and grabbed the lead on lap four.

Higgins and Hodson were right with him, though and the trio battled it out for the rest of the 18 laps.

Higgins won, followed closely by Stamper and Hodson. Just three quarters of a second covered the trio, with Hampton a good fourth, three tenths of a second further back.

Hodson, back racing for the first time since breaking both wrists and cracking some ribs in a crash last season at Castle Combe when he was leading the championship, was gradually getting back into the groove.

He might have finished even higher if he had fitted a new rear tyre for the race. To his big surprise the tyre wore unusually badly and adversely affected his performance.

Hampton was disappointed at his result, unable to force the pace because of the slippery track.

Vines made a much better start this time, staying in touch with the front runners and finishing fifth, well clear of Hudson, who was sixth.

Grinling was leading the Pre-92 class, but pulled out after three big slides, leaving Sawford to finish seventh and so head the new championship.

Former sidecar racer Simon Hunt (Todd & Ransby Yamaha), the 40-year-old power station engineer from Messingham, near Scunthorpe, was eighth over the line. That, with a tenth place in race one, was enough for him to top the NG Cup points' table.

Paul Metcalfe (Honda) qualified down in 15th place, struggling to find his best form after the long winter lay-off.

The 47-year-old inventor from Colby on the Isle of Man, chopped more than two seconds a lap off his best qualifying lap in race one, where he finished 11th, close behind Hunt.

In race two Metcalfe was 11th over the line, running with Hunt until the later stages.

He is ten point behind Hunt in the NG Cup.

Stamper was awarded the Dunlop GP Rear Tyre Award for his performance in Sunday's race.

Round two of the series is at Oulton Park on April 5.

ACU 250 CHAMPIONSHIP

Jonathan Stamper 40, Dave Hampton 38, Ant Hodson 32, Darrell Higgins 25, Andrew Sawford 20, Gary Vines 20, Carl Hudson 18, Simon Hunt 14, Rich Grinling 13, Paul Metcalfe 12, Adrian Martin 10, Derek Clark 9 Phil Guillou 9, Lee Goodard 7, Steven Howard 6, Tony Russell 3.

Pre-92

Andrew Sawford 50, Stephen Howard 36, Rich Grinling 26, Tony Russell 16.

NG Cup

Simon Hunt 50, Paul Metcalfe 40.