

ACU 250 CHAMPIONSHIP

ROUND 3 OULTON PARK APRIL 5

Ant Hodson (FCL Racing Yamaha) moved to the top of the ACU 250 championship points' table after grabbing third place in the third round of 2014 series at Oulton Park.

It was the third time in succession that Hodson, the 40-year-old from Saxelby, has filled third place this season and he now has 48 points, eight more than Jonathan Stamper, who was absent from the meeting because of work commitments.

Reigning ACU 250 champion, Chris Martin (Dave Dean Honda), the 33-year-old from North Newbald, Yorkshire, opened his defence of the title with a clear-cut victory in the NG Racing organised event, leading the eight-lap race from start-to-finish.

Phil Atkinson (Declan's Racing Yamaha), the 30-year-old Horley-based South African, was second home, nearly ten seconds behind Martin.

Hodson was chased home by Darrell Higgins (Dennis Trollope Yamaha) and series-newcomer Adam Hoare (Amit Rail Services Honda) with little more than half a second covering the trio.

Both Higgins and Hoare overcame crashes in practice.

Hoare, the 36-year-old railway worker from Heanor, broke a toe on his right foot in a 120mph get-off in Friday's test day, in which his crash-helmet was torn off.

He was unable to sleep that night, but still figured in the thrilling, three-rider, race-long battle for third place with Hodson and Higgins.

Higgins, the 55-year-old from Melksham, Wiltshire, the veteran of the series, slid off at the Hizzie's Chicane after just three laps of the early morning practice.

He was unhurt, but could only manage 11th fastest time in qualifying.

Starting from the fourth of the grid in the race he charged through to join the group fighting for third place.

He finally took fourth position and now lies joint third in the championship, only ten points down on Hodson.

That gutsy ride earned Higgins the Dunlop rear GP tyre award.

Dave Hampton (J & RB Racing Yamaha) qualified in pole-position in the morning's wet qualifying session, but the 36-year-old from Southampton crashed out on the opening lap in damp, but drying conditions, at Hizzie's Chicane, when up with the leading group, without injury.

Despite the crash Hampton is joint third in the points table with Higgins.

Rich Grinling (RG Carpentry Yamaha), the 42-year-old from Lincoln, headed home his arch rival, Andrew Sawford (St Neots M/Cycles/TSM), in the Pre-02 class, to take his second win of the season, but still trails Sawford by 65 points to 50.

Grinling qualified fifth fastest, almost four seconds a lap better than Sawford who was 12th quickest, but Sawford was back on form in the race.

Grinling was fifth at the end of the opening lap, with Sawford 11th, but as Grinling slipped back Sawford moved towards him.

At the chequered flag Grinling was less than a fifth of a second ahead.

Simon Hunt (Todd & Ransby Racing Yamaha), the 40-year-old from Messingham, near Scunthorpe, maintained his unbeaten record in the supporting 100% Suspension NG Cup, taking his points tally for the season to 75, 19 more than his closest rival, Paul Metcalfe (Honda).

Hunt qualified an impressive sixth fastest over a second a lap faster than his closest rival, Neil Smith (Jim Carden Racing Honda), who was ninth quickest.

Hunt was ninth first time round, but picked up two places to finish seventh overall and top of his class.

Paul Metcalfe (Honda) was only 17th fastest in timed practice, but charged through the pack to finish 11th and take third place in the NG Cup.

The next round of the championship will be at Cadwell Park on May 11 and 12

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Ant Hodson 48, Jonathan Stamper 40, Dave Hampton 38, Darrell Higgins 38, Andrew Sawford 27, Chris Martin 25, Simon Hunt 23, Rich Grinling 21, Gary Vines 20, Phil Atkinson 20, Carl Hudson 18, Paul Metcalfe 17, Adrian Martin 16, Derek Clark 13, Adam Hoare 11, Carl Hudson 10, Phill Guillou 9, Lee Goddard 7, Ste Howard 6, Tony Russell 3, Neil Smith 3, Rhys Hardisty 2, George Murray 1.

Pre-92

Andrew Sawford 65, Rich Grinling 50, Ste Howard 45, Tony Russell 24, Rhys Hardisty 13, G Murray 11, Adrian Morris 10.

100% Suspension NG Cup

Simon Hunt 75, Paul Metcalfe 56, Neil Smith 20.