

250GP ACU National Championship & NG Cup

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The battles of 2010 which saw Andrew Sawford and Adrian Martin claim the National Championship and the 250 NG Cup respectively felt like a distant memory as the show headed for the Brands season opener. With 250's streaming from pit lane onto the popular Indy circuit, it soon felt like we were all back where we belong, business as usual and simply picking up where we left off for the new season of 250 GP National Championship action.

This is the 4th season for the series in its current revised format, and what a success story it is! Supporting the Moto GP in 2010 - the year Moto GP dropped the class is quite a cool! But back to round's 1 and 2 at Brands on 19th 20th March 2011.

Qualifying saw Newark's Rich Grinling put his RS 250 Honda on pole in the cold conditions, and with only 2 minutes of the session remaining. Seconds later his Honda stopped exiting Druids but he had done enough to secure his first pole of the series, but the Honda's attitude meant he would miss lunch! The trend on the lap charts highlighted that one eye should be kept on Melksham veteran Darrell Higgins, who lapped consistently very quickly throughout the session and was only topped by Grinling in the very last moments.

The round 1, 15 lapper kicked off in dry and sunny conditions however, despite her best qualifying slot ever of 9th, Sian Brooks and her Spyre Ltd Honda had missed the warm up lap. Some great team work fixed a water leak which only became apparent when the RS Honda was being warmed up pre race. Sian took the start but from the back of the grid and with lots to do.

In a great battle at the front pole man Grinling lead for 2 laps chased by Ant Hodson's TZ and Southampton's Dave Hampton challenging in 3rd. But quickest on the clock was hard charging Darrell Higgins, picking off Hampton then Hodson both on lap 2. Then with apparent ease he slipped into the lead a lap later and was never headed in a real demonstration of hard riding from the front on his Dennis Trollope TZ Yamaha. The bun fight was for 2nd place though. Grinling, Hodson, Hampton and Jon Stamper were all keeping each other warm running together until the inevitable last lap sort out which saw Hodson tangle with a back marker and crash out entering Clearways while in an established 2nd. Despite remounting and coming over the line in 8th position, he was excluded for illegally remounting following a crash.

Higgins secured a superb opening round win at the flag and Hodson's crash promoted Rich Grinling to 2nd and Jonathan Stamper took a brilliant podium visiting 3rd for the first time in the National Championship. Hampton came home 4th, Bruce Dunn 5th on his TZ and the Team Sigie TZ of Daniel Jackson was 6th just beating Lee Goddards Honda home. Phil Guillou collected 8th following the exclusion of the remounting and desperately disappointed Hodson, Carl Hudson was 9th NG Cup class victor Tom Barrett was a superb 10th on the road.

With Barrett so well up the field, the NG Cup victory was secure just beating The Chippenham Motorcycles TZ of Paul McCullagh who trailed him by just a couple of seconds at the flag collected second. Chris Harrison took a really well deserved podium place in 3rd to kick off his 2011 season in fine style.

Round 2 saw a similar pattern from the previous day as Rich Grinling took advantage of his pole start and headed the pack for 2 laps. The Team Sigie TZ of Dan Jackson was really in touch this time though and slipped through to take up the running. Jackson threatened a win throughout all of 2010, if only he could get away at the front from the off. This was his opportunity and body language hinted that he was not going to give it up too easily.

Ant Hodson's DJG Construction / TSM Yamaha simply did not pull from the start and he sat in a lowly 7th at the end of lap 1 but he was really in a hurry and wanting to make up for his tumble the previous day. On lap 2 he went passed Lee Goddard and set about catching the lead group of Jackson, Grinling, Darrell Higgins and 2009 NG Cup Champ Dave Hampton.

With Jackson in front, Higgins' Dennis Trollope TZ and Grinling was the hot battle on the road swapping places time and again. Hodson joined the fun on lap 10 and 3 laps later made his move on Higgins to sit in 3rd just behind Grinling.

At the flag Dan Jackson was delighted with his maiden win in the National Championship just 4 seconds ahead of Grinling, who was equally pleased with his work, and to be leading the series as it heads for Cadwell next month. Ant Hodson's 3rd was a relief after Saturday's disappointment, and Higgins was also happy with 4th to back up his emphatic win the previous day. 5th was Dave Hampton on the J&RB Honda, 6th Bruce Dunn, 7th Jonathan Stamper with a great ride on board the Graham File TZ, Lee Goddard slipped to 8th at the flag with his LLG Racing Honda. Guernsey's Phil Guillou took 9th and Lincolnshire's Carl Hudson completed the top 10.

The NG Cup battle went the way of Chippenham's Paul McCullagh on his TZ, just ahead of Saturday's victor Tom Barrett from Surrey and Scunthorpe's Simon Hunt completed the podium picture in 3rd.

The Dunlop Performance of the Day Award's went the way of Sian Brooks on Saturday for her recovery from a mechanical disaster just minutes before the start of round 1, to finish 13th from the back of the grid. Sunday the complimentary tyre went the way of Tom Barrett and his RS Honda for a great weekends work with 2 strong rides and his run through the field in Sunday's race.

Championship: Grinling 40, Higgins 38, Jackson 35, Stamper 25, Hampton 24, Dunn 21, Goddard 17, Hodson 16, Guillou 15, Hudson 13

Cup: McCullagh 45, Barrett 45, Hunt 29, Harrison 29, Skaiife 20, Cox 19, Rhys Hardisty 18, Vines 11.

Next Round Cadwell Park 16th 17th April 2011

Images and Media coverage available from official championship photographer – Nigel Dike at EDP Photo News- press@edpphoto.com
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For more information on the 250GP ACU National Championship & NG Cup plus full details about NG Road Racing events and Championships, visit www.ngroadracing.org



Higgins – round 1 winner



Sian Brooks, Dunlop Performance of the Day winner



Dan Jackson opened his winning account at last in round 2

Championship note:

The Moto GP Support Race will regrettably no longer take place. We are however delighted to announce that round 12 of the series will now take place in support of the MCE British Superbike Championship Finale at Brand Hatch Indy Circuit on 7th 8th and 9th October. Our Championship race will take place mid afternoon on Sunday 9th during the live TV feed and will be screened on British Eurosport. Qualifying will take place Friday and Saturday. Special thanks goes to MSVR for giving us this wonderful opportunity. Further details to follow.