

Kumho/BMW Championship 2011 Words and photography by Derek Binsted

A fast Snetterton suits rapid Whittaker ...



Garrie Whittaker's rapid E36 M3 Evo is proving too hot to handle as he powered to three more wins at Snetterton and Castle Combe

Bellamy also takes two wins at Norfolk circuit

Round 2 – Snetterton 16th & 17th April

The second round of the Kumho-BMW Championship was held at Snetterton on the newly configured circuit called the 300, which meant this was the first time many of the drivers had seen and raced on the new layout.

Qualifying – Saturday morning saw 21 cars take to the track for a 15 minute qualifying session which comprised of three Class A cars, five in Class B, one in Class C and a massive twelve in Class D. On a dry track times were quick and not surprisingly it was Garrie Whittaker (E36 M3 Evo) who was fastest with a time of 2:06.384, over 3 seconds quicker than Ian Crisp (E36 M3 Evo) with Stephen Pearson (E36 M3 Evo) 3rd. The fastest Class B car was that of Rodger Card (E30 M3) ahead of Mark Smith's 3.0-litre E36 M3. Peter Miller was the lone Class C car and was 13th overall. The top placed Class D car in 9th place was Richard Bacon (E36 318iS) ahead of Paul Bellamy (318iS).

Race 1 – Sunday morning saw the BMWs come out for their first race of the day. Twenty minutes of racing lie ahead. There were also two more cars on the grid who had turned up overnight Colin Wells and Colin Whitmore (both E36 M3 Evo's) and these would start at the back of the grid.

As the red lights went out Whittaker made a fast start to comfortably take the lead with the

chasing pack following. All of the cars made it safely around the first tight hairpin and the race was well and truly underway. Wells and Whitmore were already passing some of the slower cars ahead of them but it was Whittaker who was beginning to pull away from Crisp with Pearson safely in third. Card and Smith were having a duel in Class B with Bellamy and Bacon the leading Class D cars.

Within a few laps Whittaker was now well out of sight and was building up a huge lead. Wells was overtaking many cars and was now up to fourth position. Whitmore unfortunately pulled off with mechanical trouble and took no further part in the race. The biggest battle on track was with the Class D runners; only a handful of seconds covering the whole Class D pack.

The race ended with Whittaker taking the chequered flag to record his third win in a row this season, having won by 26.918 seconds from

Crisp with Wells coming home 3rd! Smith took the Class B honours ahead of Card with Stuart Laws (E36 M3) 3rd. Bellamy finally took the Class D win ahead of Bacon with Matthew Fielding (318iS) in 3rd.

Race 2 – Late in the afternoon the cars came out for race 2. Another 20 minute race with Colin Wells up near the front looking to give Whittaker a run for his money. The race got underway and once again it was a blistering start from Whittaker who streaked into the lead, and it looked like nothing could stop him gaining win number four. Wells had problems and was trailing toward the back of the race leaving Crisp and Pearson to set about trying to catch the very fast Whittaker.

Smith and Card were swapping places lap after lap in Class B with Bellamy and Bacon joined by Karl Skitt (318ti Compact) in a Class D tussle.

The race was giving good entertainment to the spectators watching with lots of overtaking on the new corners – unfortunately when going into Murray's Corner Ralph Kirk (318iS) spun and was nearly hit by Darren Fielding's 318ti Compact resulting in the stranded car of Kirk being deemed to be in a dangerous position on the side of the track so the race was red flagged.

Because 7 laps had been raced the race would not be restarted meaning that Whittaker was declared the race winner for his 4th win in a row. Whittaker had won by a margin of 13.897 seconds from Crisp with Pearson in 3rd. Card took the Class B win ahead of Smith and Laws. Bellamy took the Class D honours ahead of Bacon and Skitt.

The championship now moves onto Castle Combe circuit with Whittaker and Bellamy the joint leaders of the championship with maximum points ahead of Smith and Card. So far this season there has been a total of 27 different drivers competing.



Paul Bellamy is giving Garrie Whittaker a run for his money in the championship, taking 5 Class wins this season

... Whittaker is King of the Castle!



Rodger Card showed there is still life in a well sorted E30 M3 with Class B wins at Castle Combe and Snetterton

Bellamy also secures another class win to share the championship lead

Round 3 – Castle Combe 2nd May

Castle Combe circuit in Wiltshire was the latest venue to host a round of the Kumho-BMW Championship on a bank holiday Monday. This is the first time the Kumho-BMW Championship has visited Castle Combe, with the 30-minute race going out live on Motors TV.

The circuit measures 1.85 miles in length and is very fast and flowing with no gravel traps, lots of grass run-off areas and one or two short run-off's, making it a circuit where you don't want to get it wrong, especially with the TV cameras in attendance...

Qualifying – Bright sunshine and a brisk north-easterly greeted the 26 drivers and their cars who made it to the 15 minute qualifying session, including James Card in his new E46 M3. Garrie Whittaker was again the class of the field in his rapid E36 M3 Evo, taking pole ahead of David Kempton and Ian Crisp, who were both driving similar cars.

The top placed Class B car was Stuart Laws in his E36 M3 who qualified in 6th position. Peter Miller (E36 328i) in the lone Class C car, qualified in 17th place, whilst Paul Bellamy (E36 318is) was the quickest Class D car to qualify a highly creditable ninth on the grid. Evelyne Buanic (E36 M3) had a problem with the Marshall's flagging and went off of the track and ran alongside a tyre barrier which damaged her car but would still race.

Race 1 – As the cars made their way around the track on the warm-up lap the question on everyone's lips was "can anyone stop Whittaker taking another win this season?" As the race

started even the track side commentator said "the speed of Whittaker's car is impressive" as he led the pack into the first right hand corner of the circuit and into a clear lead.

All of the cars made it safely through the corner and the 30 minute race was well and truly underway. Kempton and Crisp were trying to keep up with the Whittaker but this was to no avail as Whittaker steadily pulled away from the chasing pack. Rodger Card (E30 M3) and Laws were having a good scrap in Class B and further down the order a tussling Bellamy and Karl Skitt (E36 318ti Compact) led the Class D cars.

Whittaker was now long gone into the distance and Kempton was now getting the better of Crisp. Kempton's car actually suffered an ABS failure making it a real handful under braking. With only a few minutes of the race left Laws and Darren Fielding's cars looked worse for wear and in fact Stuart Laws had to retire

his E36 M3 from the race. As the chequered flag came out it was another impressive and commanding performance by Whittaker who made it 5 straight wins this campaign, winning by a margin of 24.82 seconds from Kempton with Crisp taking 3rd spot.

Class B honours went to Card ahead of Adrian Gilbert (E36 M3) with Evelyne Buanic 3rd. Miller brought his Class C car home in 16th place overall, while Bellamy made it another Class D win, finishing in 8th place overall, followed by Skitt and Fielding.

Whittaker also posted the fastest lap of the day – 1:13.983.

The championship now moves onto Brands Hatch on the weekend of 14th/15th May with Whittaker and Bellamy leading the points table with neither having dropped any points so far this season. Rodger Card is leading Class B and in 4th position overall.



James Card's E46 M3 should be quick once he gets it fully sorted...

RACE CALENDAR 2011

Round	Date	Venue
6	12/06/2011	CADWELL PARK x 2 Races
7	2-03/07/2011	ROCKINGHAM x 2 Races
8	20/08/2011	OULTON Park x 2 Races
9	10-11/09/2011	PEMBREY x 3 Races
10	01/10/2011	DONINGTON x 1 Race