

National Ministox Club

2017 Season Review

We come to that time of year when we reflect upon the season and what it's been. Yes, it been turbulent - we've had dummies and teddies out of the pram, handbags at dawn, rants, the lot and that just the parents!

The season started with some disgruntled teams unhappy with the changes imposed upon us by the ORCi over car construction. We must realise that the ORCi is our governing body. I understand that people don't like change, none of us do if it affects us, but it's a fact and we just have to get on with it. The problem that we see is the same across all formulas; F1 and F2 are currently going through a similar situation in that some teams want things to change because they feel that others may have an advantage, and those that have that specific item resist it but want someone else's advantage to be removed.

The committee has come under fire this year, me included, but just remember that you are free to have a go. We are all volunteers and are giving up our time for the good of others. It doesn't give me or the others any pleasure at all to punish a child, nor do we want the hassle that comes with it but it's our job to police the rules, after all it's often the parents that have created the problem anyway. So please bear this in mind when apportioning blame, that it's not the committee that have let the driver down but the person(s) that have created the car/engine or goaded the driver to act. We the adults are the figureheads that the kids look up to and follow, so if we cannot behave then what chance do the drivers have?

An area that we all need to be aware of is the Internet and Social media, whilst this is a great form of communication and is indeed changing the face of the world that we live, it's also a monster as every single comment that we make is open to scrutiny or can be taken interpreted incorrectly from a plethora of people, often who don't know or understand the full facts but are given the opportunity to have an opinion. Don't forget that promoters, ORCi, spectators all read these comments.

Whilst trawling the internet I came across a famous saying that made me smile....

"Criticism is often voicing one's own failings".

What you must remember is that as a committee we have lots of areas that must be addressed in order that the club can survive, like it or not we live in a society that is plagued with rules, regulations, and bureaucracy, some of which I agree and some that I don't but nevertheless still have to comply with. This year will be particularly difficult with new legislation coming into force on items that you would not consider a sport to have, but we do. Data protection, child protection and risk assessments are just



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examples of what we now need to be doing as a club which in itself is a massive job to undertake, non-compliance and we open ourselves up to risk of putting the whole club in jeopardy. Whilst most people are only interested in their own situation, the BoC have the job of representing every one of you. Yes, I really do get the idea that you all want to win and will do what you can to achieve that goal and feel aggrieved when something doesn't go your way. We all fully understand that, but you are equally aggrieved when you think someone else has an advantage that they shouldn't have whether that be an on-track incident, a grey area in the rule book or a blatant breaking of rules, and then we get those parents wanting justice on the other team. What we as a BoC want is that every driver has the belief that they can go out and stand a chance of getting a top 10, a podium or even winning, and that is a far greater achievement if its gained through merit and not through who has the biggest cheque book. There will always be those that have more time and want to put more effort in and that should be commended, but let's not forget that this is children racing, not parents and it's supposed to be about them and having fun along the way.

Let's get back to the positive for which there is plenty. We have a new National Champion who has broken the record books in being the youngest ever driver in the formula to hold that accolade. Jack Witts stepped up to the challenge at only 11 years of age and in his second year of racing took the honours at Buxton. We have a new World of Shale Champion when Lewis Evans took the title at Belle Vue; Jenson Brickley won the Venray Open; Rebecca Smith won the Northampton Championship; Reach for the Stars was won by Tom Birchenough; the American Connections was won by Gilen Bullock; Roger Stansfield wins the Yorkshire Shield; Finn Sargent won our very first annual trophy of the year at Stoke when he won the Kev Sutton and the list goes on. What's interesting is that all these winners are new names on the silverware. Then we have the other points to remember which make smiles and memories when Lucy Shaw takes her first ever win, Sharlotte Lewis making it into the top 10, Ella McAfee gets her first podium, these are all the things that are good about the sport so it not just the winning.

Last, but certainly not least, we cannot forget Charlie Guinchard who despite ending his time early still had a great season winning numerous races and showing his skill, which resulted in him retaining the Race Master award.

We raced at 51 meetings this season which has been a mammoth task for all teams and everyone should be commended for this. One driver, Lewis Evans, raced at every single meeting last year, which again is some achievement, his brother Tyrone would have also managed it if Lewis hadn't tried to kill him on his pushbike! Following feedback from yourselves we have tried to reduce that number for next season to 45. However, it's not quite as simple as you think because which tracks do you drop? Promoters are linked to more than one track so dropping one can influence others. We have gained a new guest track this season at Aldershot, which will hopefully have the same effect as Great Yarmouth last season as we have already gained a new driver as a result of visiting that track. So hopefully Aldershot will reap the same rewards and make the club a true National formula. In addition to that and because of negotiation we have also gained Mildenhall, a fantastic little track that should suit the National Ministox, and we've even negotiated a race weekend so something to look forward too.

There have been 17 driver retirements throughout last year which I believed would have had a significant impact on the formula in general. However, I'm pleased to say that I was wrong, and we already have 12 new drivers for the new season and I'm sure a few more in the pipeline, which just goes to show that the formula is flourishing. This season will see just 4 drivers retire through age, so we are potentially in for the best couple of years with regards to numbers.

So, we bid farewell to, Brandon Winter #7, Catherine Harris #8, Ella McAfee #17, Gilen Bullock #101, Kyle Gray #124, Jamie Gwin #145, Charlie Guinchard #183, Kayleigh Cannel #204, Noah Medway #251, Molly Robson #267, Declan Cavanagh #291, Jackson Whitehead #330, Mitchell Driver #418, Nigel De Kock #525, Chloe Serpell #613, Dani Parker #630 & Finn Sargent# 798; I wish every one of them the very best in whatever route they choose. Whilst some may progress into other formulas and indeed have already with Charlie Guinchard, Kyle Gray and Finn Sargent all making the step into 'Formula 1' and Catherine Harris joining the 'V8 Hot Stox', others may choose to concentrate on alternative pursuits, but all now have the accolade of 'been there, done that'. We also need to remember that this is the time in life when school exams need to be focused on, as these have the opportunity to shape and influence the rest of their lives, so racing may well have to take a back step.

Meetings have had an average driver attendance of 26 at tarmac and 21 at shale. The highest attended tarmac venue was Buxton with 35 cars for the National Championship. The highest attended shale track was Kings Lynn with 26 cars. The lowest attended shale track was Belle Vue with a disappointing 14 cars, but this was following a heavy weekend so to some degree was expected. Yes, there have been some issues at certain tracks that need to be resolved but we also need the commitment from the teams to make that happen.

What we also need to remember is the fans who want a show as without these we have no tracks and ultimately no racing, so we need to aim for a situation where everyone is happy and entertained. We are stock cars and contact is part of that, but we also need to balance that with driver safety.

If we are to continue to promote the sport then we need to address these anomalies, it's not just a case of saying well we won't race at that venue because it has implications on others, as promoters are businessmen and have investment in multiple tracks. We need to continue to work with the promoters as they in return need to work with us, bridges need to be strengthened and some need to be rebuilt. Your 2018 BoC, again headed by myself, will be working very hard to take the formula forward and ensure that it's still here for generations to come.

However, the drivers are the stars of the show and it should be all about them - some race to win, others race with the intention of trying to get a top 10. Every single driver goes out to have a good time and the smiles say it all. Disappointment is part of racing and it can go wrong for anyone, but sadness means we have something very wrong!

So, all that's left to say is, hope you had a great Christmas and New Year and let's look to a very positive 2018 season.

See you all at the awards night on the 20th January when we can celebrate the fantastic achievements of our young drivers.

Finally, the most memorable moments of the season for me are the massive water fight that went on at Northampton when I think everyone got soaked which really shows what fun times are had at the meetings and that wasn't even on track but the lasting one must be Molly Robson pushing her own car off the track at Birmingham, now that's what I call Girl Power!

Andy Barnard
NMSC Chairman