**Race Report Pau Historic 21/22 May**

With the memories of a fantastic few days of racing, excitement and glamour of Monaco still fresh in our minds, the Formula Junior family made its way to Pau to join up with the other Formula Junior contestants for the Pau Historic with its unique atmosphere and challenging street circuit.

After the glorious weather of Monaco would we be so lucky in Pau? The forecast looked promising but Sunday showed a possibility of rain. The Paddock was a hive of activity from Thursday afternoon as the cars started to arrive and some serious fettling was seen to be happening especially with the cars from Monaco, in readiness for the challenge ahead. Good to see Chris Drake’s Terrier back on four wheels and John Arnold’s Elva on the move again with a new diff.

With Pau following Monaco by just a week the opportunity to race was not to be missed by many of our overseas drivers so it was interesting to see that out of an entry of 29 we had 7 antipodeans, 12 Europeans and 10 of us from the U.K. A truly international gathering of FJ drivers and cars with 10 coming on from Monaco.

Friday arrived with hot sunny weather for the formalities of scrutineering with the ever present Grant sorting out the vagaries of French interpretation of our regulations, and drivers briefing. Talk in the paddock was of the threat of heavy rain on the Sunday … but of course this is Pau!

Friday night was a really nice evening in the Restaurant Au Fin Gourmet, in the Park close to the paddock, at La Gare Hairpin. The funicular was working on the way down, but we had to walk back up: very good for us!!

It had all been arranged by our Promotor host, Laurent Vallery-Masson, just for FJ, and sponsored by the Mayor of Pau, and almost all drivers who were staying within the Town attended with wives or friends.

Excellent food and service, a good pre-race atmosphere, enjoyed by all. The tables ended up with nationalities, Australians (who included CAMS’ Paul Hamilton, to whom much credit for his part in the Australian Sector of the Jubilee, with BT 6 racer Tony Simmons, on extended Tour post Monaco), the terrific New Zealanders who formed the biggest table, although poor Michael Sexton, unwell, had to miss, while Mair joined the Dutch and Justin the Italians !! very tribal!

Duncan said a few words and thanked organisers and Penny for her work in sorting tickets, tables and guests.

Saturday dawned hot and sunny as predicted with temperatures climbing to over 30C. Free practice was at 10am and the cars assembled in the collecting area. Danielle Salodini was absent in a bid to save his engine as was Philippe Bonny. The start was delayed by 30 mins due to an earlier accident and temperatures in the cars got really hot.

At last the green flag was waved and off they went, except Bill Hemming in the ex-Anthony Goddard Tojerio who stalled on the grid but after a good push from the visiting Australians, Tony Simmonds, Max and others, was soon chasing the pack.

Pierre Tonetti, Manfredo and Bruno soon showed their pace at the front with Chris Drake and John Chisholm leading the front engines. Several cars came in for minor tweaks, Pierre tyre pressures, Bruno clutch adjustment and some for a rest! The session ended without incident with Pierre, Brabham BT6, Manfredo, Lotus 22 and Bruno, Lotus 20 the quickest followed by a flying ‘Drake’ in the Terrier with a time spread from first to last of 1.32 to 1.59.

From the Paddock: Neil Tolich from New Zealand in the Jacko found out in chatting with Mike Gregory in the De Tomaso that their cars had last raced together in Sebring in 1960 and it had taken 55 years for them to race together again in Pau with one car coming over from New Zealand.

Qualifying was due to start at 17.00 but delayed to 18.00 by which time the thermometer had risen to over 30C. Finally, away with Salodini and Bonny this time. Our 3 front runners showed their pace once again but cars started pitting in rapid succession. Several cars had their fastest lap disallowed for crossing the white line from the pits onto the track.

Pit stops for Woodford in the Gemini, Drake in the Terrier, Kinch in the Gemini, Manfredo in the 22, Salodini in the Taraschi, Tolich in the Jacko, JP in the Lola, Chisholm in the Gemini, Wishart in the Cooper, Arnold in the Elva and Bishop-Miller in the Autosport, most for overheating, misfires, sticking throttle and minor concerns but were out again soon.

Then just before the end of the session Kevin Musson in the lovely Dolphin lost a wheel and drive shaft on the back of the circuit resulting in contact with the Armco and the session ended with the red flag. Thankfully Kevin was unhurt but the Dolphin will need some TLC before coming back to race.

So the starting grid for the race was headed by Tonetti 1.313, Manfredo 1.324, JP 1.334, Bruno 1.336, Rowley 1.373 and Drake 1.384.

 Olissoff in the Elfin headed class B1, Wishart E2, Deneve C1, Nursey C2 and Halford A.

From the Paddock: Ian Robinson’s Lola Mk 5 was being raced by Iain Rowley this weekend who last drove the car in 1985 at Thruxton where he came 3rd in the race.

So the scene was set for some close racing through all the classes on Sunday.

Could the weather really change? Well it did, we awoke to heavy rain and temperatures down to 12C. The conditions and other concerns from qualifying had reduced the starting grid from 28 to 23 with Lamplough, Brabham BT2, Sexton, Gemini, Arnold, Elva, Woodford, Gemini, Salodini, Taraschi and Musson not appearing for the start.

Wisely the organisers had decided on a pace car start due to the weather which was worsening as the pack headed out for the green flag lap behind the pace car. Into the first corner, 180 degree right hander and Tonetti leads followed by Manfredo, Bruno, Joao Paulo with Drake in hot pursuit.

By Lap 3 Bruno sneaks past Manfredo, Drake up to 4th and JP, Guarino, Lotus 22, Rowley and Chisholm just a cars length between each other.

Lap 5 Bruno goes wide at first corner, Manfredo through. Further down the field Duncan leads Tolich and Hemming in another close battle. By lap 7 Tony Olissoff is finding the grip of his front wheel drive Elfin in the wet is paying dividends and is hauling in Chisholm.

As the race continues Olissoff passes Chisholm, Drake closes in on Manfredo who is down to only two usable gears, to a cars length and in 3rd behind Bruno. Floris in the Rayberg is nose to tail with Caroline in her Brabham but he just cannot pass. Tonetti and Drake both have a moment at the first corner and Bruno leads. Coming to the last lap and Tonetti is 1 sec behind Bruno and makes his move, while Bruno’s engine briefly stutters, passing him to take the chequered flag by 1.3secs while Drake pounces on Manfredo at the line but just fails to take 3rd by 0.3sec.

JP is a lonely 5th with the jubilant Olissoff in the little 1 litre class B1 Elfin, the giant killer coming in 6th for the Kiwis. Guarino in the 22 making one of his best finishes in 7th.

Great credit to all drivers for an incident free race in atrocious conditions and with leaders lap times some 25secs slower than in the dry.

Everyone went to dry out and await our 2nd race but not before a mini tornado swept through the paddock together with torrential downpour bringing down a hoarding over the track and further delaying the programme schedule. Sensibly the organisers decide to cancel the lunchtime Parade Laps thereby bringing the race programme back to near schedule.

Just after 14.00 with no change in the weather a slightly depleted grid of 19 cars now less Nursey, Herrick, Halford, Kinch and Tolich line up for another rolling start.

Manfredo gets to the first corner ahead of Tonetti followed by Bruno.

On lap 2 Tonetti gets past Manfredo now with a full set of working gears. Bruno is 3rd, JP 4th and Drake 5th. Drake eases past JP on first corner to take 4th, Rowley is 6th with Guarino in hot pursuit. Chisholm is 2nd in front engine being chased by Olissoff again. Wishart leads a tight pack of Caroline, Deneve and Floris-Jan. At the rear an equally exciting quartet of Gregory, Hemming, Bishop-Miller and Duncan race nose to tail.

Deneve passes Caroline and eases away.

Mid race, Tonetti leads with Manfredo inches behind, Bruno dropping back, Drake and JP racing alone, Guarino leads a tight pack of Bonny, Lamplough, Olissoff, Wishart and Chisholm.

Then on Lap 8 Tonetti spins at first corner just avoiding Armco, Manfredo leads again followed by Bruno. Tonetti gets past Bruno and chases Manfredo gaining fast. With 2 mins to go Tonetti makes an over ambitious move to try and pass Manfredo on the start finish straight but hits poor Bill Hemming in the rear and then kissing the Armco but manages to keep going! Race is red flagged for a premature end by one lap.

Race officials issue a result showing Manfredo 1st followed by Tonetti and Bruno as we expected only to reissue within minutes showing Tonetti disqualified and Drake 3rd?

A long wait while it is agreed that our race was governed by FIA regs and not French ones which means that the original result stands, positions decided on lap before red flag is waved.

So finally at 16.30 the final results for the combined two races are issued showing Tonetti first followed by Bruno, Manfredo, Drake, JP, Chisholm, Olissoff, Guarino, Rowley, Wishart, Bonny, Deneve, Caroline, Floris-Jan, Gregory, Duncan, Bishop-Miller and Hemming.

Finally the rain eased and the sun shone to celebrate yet another great weekend of Formula Junior racing and fun which together with Monaco ended a memorable two weeks of everything that is good in Formula Junior.

Final postscript from the Paddock: Race 2 Iain Rowley Flagged for drive through penalty, duly comes in, no one knows why? [although apparently for not showing rain light, although his WAS on!] Drives out loosing 7 places!!

Enjoy your summer racing

Justin Fleming