

Hallett Summer Shootout writeup

Posted by Al Fernandez - 15 Jun 2011 08:33

The Hallett Summer Shootout is a special event within NASA; a mini Championship weekend with three qualifying races to set the grid for main shootout. This year 944Spec cars converged to participate in this shootout for the first time, and in big fashion! Nine cars from three regions included 944Spec National Director Eric Kuhns, the Underground Motorsports aces Chris Blazer and Jeff Knight, RMR's Mike Thul, and Texas drivers Kevin Webb, Phil Fromme, Ryan XX, Todd Covini, and Al Fernandez.

Saturday's racing started with an easy warm-up and qualifying, but the group wasted no time getting down to business with a standing start and some very fast laps during the first qualifying race. Kuhns got a quick lesson in the subtleties of Hallett when making a pass on Fernandez he realized he had put himself in a spot where going off was the only possible outcome. There is just nothing like a home field advantage! Jeff Knight, knowing this track well, capitalized on that to take his first win of the weekend followed by Chris Blazer a scant second behind him.

Race 2 featured an inverted grid based on race 1 results and a rolling start. Kuhns capitalized on the start and the dog eat dog fighting behind him to take his first Hallett win. Fromme, Knight, Fernandez, and Blazer had a four way battle for the entire session until settling into that order.

Hallett has become famous for the racing and for the Saturday night parties and this time didn't disappoint. NASA Texas provided plenty of libations including a very overworked margarita machine while the multiple grills cooked plenty of different treats for the carnivore in all of us. Later in the evening, at apparently just the right time, trays of warm brownies circulated throughout the paddock!

Sunday was down to business again, starting with the third race; another rolling start with the grid set by inverting the results of race 2. This meant the fast guys had to keep proving themselves by having to drive through the field again, and this they did with Fromme taking the win ahead of Knight who posted the fast time for the weekend and new Texas NASA Hallett track record of 1:32.572!

Late in the afternoon the group gridded for the Shootout...except for Covini and Fernandez! Working an incident investigation for another group and believing there was another run group before the 944s were scheduled, these two managed to scramble at the last minute but not quite in time to grid in order and were therefore forced to start from the back. The early pace appeared to be more like a 5 minute sprint than a 45 minute race with Knight taking the early lead, which he would not relinquish in spite of pressure from Fromme with Kuhns just out of striking distance. Late in the race a bobble out of the infamous turn known as "the bitch" gave Kuhns enough momentum to move up into 2nd. Meanwhile, Fernandez moved his way up to 5th on Blazer's back bumper, and an epic battle began. For lap after lap Blazer's "pink pig" and Fernandez's car traded positions and went side by side for half a lap at a time. Eventually the hardware gave up with Fernandez's car overheating, giving Blazer some breathing room until Webb gave chase until the last lap. At the checker it was Knight, Kuhns, and Fromme. After post race tech the group headed to the winner's circle for some pictures with the NASA trophy girls, presentations of awards plaques, as well as some cold champagne!

Congratulations to Jeff Knight, 2011's Summer Shootout winner, and to all of the racers, family, and friends that participated. Hallett is a special track, and the Summer Shootout format pushes this event over the top as a "must do" for any racer. This year's racing and camaraderie in the paddock certainly lived up to the expectations! See you there next year.

Re: Hallett Summer Shootout writeup

Posted by Sterling Doc - 15 Jun 2011 17:28

It was a great time. Everything from the racing to the brownies was great. The margarita machine was fantastic - Linda loved that!

You guys have some real talent down there - worth the tow for the racing!

Re: Hallett Summer Shootout writeup

Posted by jaje - 17 Jun 2011 07:24

Had a great time too and had fun working Tech.
