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MAIDEN VICTORIES FOR THEODORE AND WRIGHT AT CROFT

- James Theodore and Luke Wright secure maiden Formula Renault BARC wins.
- Double podium for Alice Powell to close in on championship leader Mitchell Hale.
- Delight as SWB Motorsport take first championship win.
- Podiums for Josh Webster and Joseph Reilly.

North Yorkshire's Croft circuit saw Hillspeed's James Theodore (Telford) and SWB Motorsport's Luke Wright (Dorset) both secure maiden victories in the 2010 Protyre Formula Renault BARC Championship during rounds five and six on 3rd/4th July.

Theodore, 18, converted one of two pole positions to claim a lights-to-flag victory in round five while teenager Wright, who recently turned 18, took the honours in round six to give SWB Motorsport their first win. An impressive display from Hillspeed's Alice Powell (Chipping Norton) saw the 17-year-old pick up two second places with the final podium spots going to Fortec Motorsport racers Josh Webster (Suffolk) and Joseph Reilly (North London) with third in rounds five and six respectively.

For once Fortec Motorsport's Mitchell Hale (Bristol), 16, did not grace the podium during the action-packed weekend with the teenager just holding onto his championship lead as the series reaches the halfway stage – albeit by a mere five points from second place Powell. Meanwhile Rickmansworth racer James Birch secured the Privateer Cup class wins in both races.

Wright scoops maiden win for SWB...

Having already topped the timesheets at the 2.125-mile circuit during in-season testing earlier this year, it came as little surprise to see Theodore line the start grid at the head of the field for round six. Saturday's qualifying session had seen the Telford teenager secure pole in both races and each time by an impressive margin of well over half a second.

Alongside Theodore lay Wright with Reilly and Powell on row two and the championship leader coming into this weekend Mitchell Hale on row three. After completing the green flag lap behind the championship's Mégane Renaultsport 250 Safety Car, Theodore and the rest of the field waited for the red lights to go out for the start of the 14-lap race.

When they did though it was Wright who made the best start as Theodore stalled, dropping him well down the order and leaving the Dorset teenager to lead the field into the right-handed Clervaux. Powell was also able to capitalise to slide into second with Reilly in third closely followed by Webster and Welch Motorsport's Kourosh Khani (Ealing, London) who had been able to gain a couple of places during the tense opening lap.

Wright wasted little time in developing a lead while behind Webster tried to slip by his team-mate at Tower but was unable to make the move stick and instead fell into the clutches of Khani who was celebrating his 21st birthday this weekend.

By lap five Wright had already carved out a defendable lead of almost three seconds unaware of the battle going on behind him. In it, sixth-place Hale had almost got past Khani through the Complex with the two battling all the way through to Clervaux until the Bristol teenager finally got clear at Tower with Antel Motorsport's Kasper Krogh (Denmark), who hadn't been back in the car since the Silverstone meeting, also slipping by. The battle for fifth, sixth and seventh places was far from over though and it wasn't long before Theodore joined the back of this group after working his way through the field.

Out in front the windy conditions weren't affecting Wright who was looking comfortable as race leader despite Powell's best efforts to close the gap. Reilly was still in third although a spin at the Complex almost but an end to that.

Then a mistake by Mtech's Jake Rattenbury (Glamorgan) at Clervaux saw him spin off and cause the championship's Safety Car to be deployed, neutralising the race and putting an end to Wright's good work. Two laps later racing resumed with Luke slowing the field right down through the left-handed Hairpin before applying the gas to get a clean restart and lead once more.

With the field tightly bunched up it allowed Khani to make ground to move into seventh with Theodore also making a place at the Hairpin with Hale the driver losing out. Wright though knew what he had to do and pressed on setting the fastest lap of the race in the process. Powell also sensed this was her last opportunity to grab the lead and matched the Dorset racer for pace with the two nose-to-tail as they entered the Complex for the final time. Wright ran slightly wide forcing him to go very defensive into the Hairpin and allowing Powell to get a better exit. The two were almost side-by-side as they crossed the line with Wright just taking the chequered flag although by a mere 0.130s.

The battle for third was equally as tense through the Hairpin with Reilly just keeping his team-mate Webster at bay to take the final podium spot with Josh in fourth and Theodore driving superbly to finish fifth.

Birch took the Privateer Cup honours while eighth place for RPD Motorsport's Steven Durrant (Oxford) saw the 19-year-old make a welcome return to the series after recovering from a serious illness.

Theodore secures maiden win in style...

Sunday's earlier round five saw Theodore line the start grid as pole-sitter with Wright to his left and team-mates Reilly and Hale on row two. Rattenbury had also impressed during the day's earlier qualifying session to line up in seventh.

As the lights went out for the start of the race it was Theodore who got away best to lead from a slow starting Wright allowing Reilly to move into second and Powell into third as all the field safely navigated the opening lap. The early stages of the race also saw Webster gain ground to lie in fifth ahead of team-mate Hale.

On the next lap Powell was able to get the better of Reilly to move into second for a Hillspeed one-two although Theodore was already well clear of his team-mate. Changes continued to swap the next lap, this time with Wright braking as late as possible to dart up the inside of Reilly at Tower to take third and dropping Joseph into fourth to lead a three-car Fortec Motorsport train.

By the halfway stage Theodore was looking uncatchable and had already developed more than a five second lead over Powell who was having to be mindful of third-placed Wright filling her mirrors. Meanwhile in the midfield, Krogh was enjoying a great race in sixth after getting passed Hale to split up the Fortec Motorsport train.

Then on lap nine Rattenbury and Khani came together at the chicane causing the Safety Car to be deployed much to the frustration of Theodore who saw his five second plus lead evaporate.

Two laps later racing resumed with Theodore bunching the field up well to get a good restart and lead once more with the race distance extended to 16-laps. Powell and Wright remained in second and third respectively but with the two now much closer. The next lap Wright tried a repeat of his earlier move at Tower but Powell closed the door to hold the place. The same lap though saw Wright and Reilly both lose ground, with Reilly in particular dropping well down the order, after coming together.

Theodore was having no such problems out in front so much so that he continued to push and even set the fastest lap of the race on lap 14. Shortly after he exited the tight Hairpin for the 16th and final time to take the chequered flag for his maiden Formula Renault victory and, being a lights-to-flag win, in some style. Powell finished second to complete a Hillspeed one-two with Webster in third having capitalised from Wright's misfortune. Krogh crossed the line in an

impressive fourth place despite starting ninth with Wright rounding off the top five after squeezing by Hale on the final lap. Birch meanwhile secured the Privateer Cup honours.

Commenting on his maiden win in round five Theodore said: "The car has felt fantastic from the first qualifying session and as such I was confident coming into the race. I got a good start and was looking fairly dominant until the Safety Car came out which was less than ideal for me but I just had to get on with it and concentrate on getting a good restart. Fortunately I did and the car still had plenty to give as I crossed the line for my first win. The windy conditions made the race that little bit tougher but credit to Hillspeed who set up the car so well."

Round six winner Wright said: "It's been an up and down season so far for me so to finally get that first win is awesome. I managed to build up a lead which was undone by the Safety Car but I got a good restart and I'm pleased to making good progress at the championship's halfway stage."

Commenting on her double podium Powell said: "It's been a brilliant weekend for us and the team. I got a good start in round five and was pleased to see the Safety Car come out as it gave me chance to close on James but he was just so quick and I still had to keep an eye on Wright behind me. I had a good tussle with Luke in round six at the end but he was just too strong."

Third place in round five Webster said: "Before the race I was just hoping for a top five finish so I'm really pleased with the podium finish and with my overall race pace."

Reilly, who picked up third place in round six, added: "I really enjoyed the race and the result is a good recovery for us after the first race. I had a good battle with my team-mate Josh and I'm looking forward to the next rounds at Snetterton."

Rounds seven and eight of the 2010 Protyre Formula Renault BARC Championship take place at Norfolk's Snetterton circuit on 31st July/1st August.

2010 Protyre Formula Renault BARC Championship provisional drivers' standings – round 6:

1 Mitchell Hale	GBR	Fortec Motorsport	161 pts
2 Alice Powell	GBR	Hillspeed	156 pts
3 Luke Wright	GBR	SWB Motorsport	118 pts
4 Josh Webster	GBR	Fortec Motorsport	116 pts
5 James Theodore	GBR	Hillspeed	113 pts
6 James Birch (P)	GBR	Driver	88 pts

Privateer Cup – round 6:

1 James Birch	GBR	88 pts
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