



FEMCA / QUEENSLAND / WORLDS WARM UP MEETING

RACE REPORT.

Practice: It was good to see an increase in competitors from last years nationals attend the second FEMCA 1/5 scale championships being held in conjunction with the Queensland championships and used as the 2007 worlds 1/5 warm up event. It was also good to see one international driver attend the event; Satoshi Takesato from Japan was competing with his FG to ensure 39 drivers competed for the weekend. This will stand him in good stead when he returns for the WC in a few months time at the Brisbane facility. Queensland had 21 drivers enter, South Australia had 5 drivers, New South Wales had 8 drivers, Australian Capital Territory had 2 drivers, and Victoria had 2 drivers to make up the grid.

As the grip came up on the Friday it was obvious that tyres were going to play havoc with some of the inexperienced drivers, and potentially give the experienced drivers even a further edge over the drivers that were just off the pace. The regulars for the past few years that normally are fighting it out for pole started to post regular 21 second laps while the drivers that were steadily improving started to dip into the 22 second bracket. Satoshi started to come to grips with the track, and for his first time here was only 0.5 seconds behind the fastest times being posted.

The PMT and GRP tyres were posting similar lap times in the 30 degree Celsius ambient temperatures, which created a 40 degree track temperature. So now the practice was over it was time to start the serious part of the event.

Qualifying: Round 1 saw some good clean racing with some very quick lap times being posted by all drivers and after the round the top 4 drivers were: Jeff Hamon (RS5) with 28 laps in 10:15.495, Russell Grenenger (FG) with 27 laps in 10:13.237, Rodney Best (FG) 26 laps in 10:00.571 and Colin Grenenger (FG) 26 laps in 10:01.236. A further eight drivers posted 26 laps to ensure the battle for finals positions throughout the weekend will be tight.

Round 2 saw Jeff Hamon a non starter, Rodney Best improved his time to 27 laps in 10:04.427 and moved him in to second position, Russell Grenenger also improved his time to 27 laps in 10:11.143, but this could only keep him in fourth position as John Hamon posted his fastest time in 27 laps 10:06.929. Craig Hawkins also posted a 27 lap time in 10:19.143. No other drivers had yet reached the 27 lap bracket, so this was now the goal to have any chance of making the top four or directly qualifying in to the semi finals.

Round 3 saw four drivers improve their qualifying times within the top ten, Russell Grenenger posted his best time for the weekend with 28 laps in 10:19.138, Rodney Best also posted his best time for the weekend with 27 laps in 10:01.652, Brandon Elliott in his FG also joined the 27 lap pilots with 27 laps in 10:22.171, and Chris Payne with his Contrast managed 26 laps in 10:03.810. It has become quite apparent that reliability after round three will certainly keep the pilots at the pointy end of the field on their toes throughout the remainder of the qualifying rounds. It was also very good to see Satoshi Takesato post his best heat for the weekend in this round with 26 laps in 10:01.645.

Round 4 saw both Jeff and John Hamon pull out of the round for unknown reasons, Russell and Rodney both posted quick 27 lap heats, but did not improve on their previous heat. The movers in the top ten were Brandon Elliot posting a Quick 27 laps in 10:19.018, Steven Burgess with his HARM posted 27 laps in 10:19.568, Mike Stavropolous in his RS5 managed 27 laps in 10:20.752, Kevin Murray in his HARM posted 27 laps in 10:20.929, and Chris Payne rounded out the top ten with his improved time of 27 laps in 10:21.812.

Round 5 was run under lights due to an unforeseen delay earlier in the day, and only saw Rodney Best post a 27 lap heat, which was considerably slower than earlier rounds, this was consistent throughout most of the pilots. It should be noted some competitors that were struggling down the field did manage to improve their qualifying.

Sunday morning saw the last chance for anyone to try and improve their position in Round 6. The tack was slightly slower than the day before with only Craig Hawkins improving his time to 27 laps in 10:17.747 however the top ten remained unchanged and therefore the top four were the young guns, Jeff Hamon, Russell Grenenger followed by the elderly Rodney Best and John Hamon in hot pursuit. The remaining drivers all now had to prepare for the sudden death finals, to try and make it to the main game later in the day.

The even $\frac{1}{4}$ final saw David Murdoch, Harry Herranz, and Phil Taylor all progress to the even $\frac{1}{2}$ final.

The odd $\frac{1}{4}$ final saw Doug Barber, Andrew Herranz, and experienced German driver who now lives in Australia Gunther Seibler also progress in to the odd $\frac{1}{2}$ final.

The hotly contested even $\frac{1}{2}$ final saw the end of our Japanese driver Satoshi Takesato with some inconsistent engine problems. This final was a bit slower than the odd $\frac{1}{2}$ final with only the first two drivers progressing to the main. Both Scott Craig and Brandon Elliott managed to avoid the usual carnage to place them in contention to take the event.

The odd $\frac{1}{2}$ final really turned up the heat as the positions left were up for grabs. The lead and the next three positions continually changed, or had non stop battles to try and keep them to ensure a position in the main final. In the

end Kevin Murray, Colin Grenenger, Greg Collins, and Steven Burgess rose to the challenge and rightfully reached the Main Final.

The Top four practice was held while the scrutineering was carried out to verify the cars were allowed to be run in the final. The only unusual occurrence during this time was the catastrophic failure of Rodney Best's qualifying motor. It was later discovered that the material from the carburettor went through the motor. This placed a lot of pressure for Rodney to change motors and set up the radio within the short time frame allowed.

The main final saw a lot of drivers that have had very little or no experience with refuelling during the race period of 60 minutes and this is an issue that needs to be looked at further for the WC later in the year. The grid had completed the warm up and was set for 60 minutes of high octane spills and thrills. Jeff led in to the first corner, and Rodney drove around Russell after he seemed to be late to take off. John although slightly put off by Russell's slow start drove smart to keep fourth place and avoid the angry pack behind him. The second lap saw John along with a couple of drivers coming from the back come together and placed him back to eighth. Jeff, Rodney and Russell proceeded to put as much space between them and the rest for the next few laps. Lap seven saw Rodney a bit wide in to one corner, which allowed his team mate to cleanly take second spot, this went on until lap 74 when Jeff came in for his fuel stop. Russell took the lead with Rodney moving in to second place. Jeff and his experienced pit crew carried out a pit stop of 86 seconds including his out lap to still remain in third place. This shows that the three lead cars were lapping the field right up to fourth place and setting a fast pace. Lap 79 saw Russell pit and this allowed Rodney to take the lead and Jeff move in to second. Russell's stop took 116 seconds including his out lap which effectively lost him 1.5 laps compared to Jeff in the pit stop alone. Rodney and Russell were sharing pit crews along with Colin Grenenger, so this extra time also contributed to Rodney having to stay out 3 laps more than originally planned, and he ran out of fuel just before the pits on lap 84. The marshal with great haste got his car back to the pits and he effectively only lost 4-5 seconds on the in lap, however the toll on the pit crew was showing with a long 157 second pit stop including his out lap. This effectively lost Rodney over 3 laps in the pits compared to Jeff's benchmark. This highlights how important the pit stop choice for the WC is and should be thoroughly discussed in the near future.

The second half of the final was decided on lap 103 when John had a mechanical failure and forced him to retire. This allowed the fast and consistent Jeff, Russell, and Rodney place themselves in a deserved podium position as long as no unforeseen situations arise in the closing stages. At the sixty minute mark Jeff completed a deserved win with 158 laps in 60:19.039, Russell with 156 laps in 60:01.999, Rodney with 153 laps in 60:23.996, and Scott Craig in a well driven race with 151 laps in 60:11.648. Jeff had a little moment just after he crossed the finish line when he had a mechanical problem, but as they say to finish first, you must first finish and Jeff did that and will be full of confidence at the WC. Russell, Rodney and John will also have confidence for the WC as they know what they need to do to raise the bar for the September event.

All the drivers from this event will return for the WC a lot better prepared and wiser to compete with the dominating European's, British, and Americans and should show that the quality of driver is improving in our region in this scale. If any driver from around the world is still undecided on whether to attend the WC in Brisbane, let me say this to you: the track is fast with good grip, the facility is world class, the weather is always beautiful, the beer is cold, the food is fantastic, and the location is probably as close to paradise as an other 1/5 scale track is in the world with the Gold and Sunshine Coasts only an hour's drive away, and the people are the nicest you will meet.

I hope to see you all in Brisbane to crown the 2007 world champion, and enjoy the company of you all.

Regards,
Rodney Best.

More information's and pictures at: <http://www.5thscaleworlds.com/>

