



Consistency paid off for Jones's Pyro Ascari

FAILING TO KEEP UP WITH THE JONESES

Veteran twins David and Godfrey Jones finally secured the title. By KEVIN TURNER

Sometimes persistence pays off. Twin brothers David and Godfrey Jones have raced in the British GT Championship for years but hadn't quite managed a title success before this season. In 2009, however, with the right set of circumstances, the Ascari-mounted pair finally took the prize.

After two strong seasons, British GT took a downward swing this year. The economic depression hit hard and grids, which had reached the mid-20s in '08 struggled to make it into double figures. Having fewer young hotshoe rivals certainly helped the Joneses, but there was more to their success than that.

Top Renault Clio Cup squad Team

Pyro came in to run the KZ1R and did a great job in its first year of GTs. There were no Ascaris in FIA GT3 and the car soon lost some of its equalisation measures, making it even quicker. It also used the Avon tyres more gently than most of the field, allowing Godfrey and David to run hard all race.

With a more competitive car and a smaller grid, the Jones' aggressive style didn't get them into as many scrapes as in past years either and they consistently picked up points. They were also evenly matched, where many of the other combinations had an obvious weak link, and it all added up to a strong combination.

The twins scored three wins and would have taken the title sooner had it not been for a non-start at Spa, an alternator failure at Rockingham and a gearbox issue at Silverstone.

Despite the smaller field, the GT3 regulations again kept the racing tight and Pyro had several challengers. Five different marques took wins.

At the start of the season, the works Mosler looked like the championship favourite. Single-seater convert Daniel Brown immediately seemed at home, and was the find of the year. He secured

pole at the Oulton Park opener and then took two wins there, sharing with LMP1 racer Stuart Hall.

Thanks to various issues, including complaints from rival teams concerning the strength of the pairing, Brown also drove with historic racer Gregor Fiske and team boss Martin Short during the year, but remained a title contender.

As the equalisation measures taken against the Mosler became more draconian, the team struggled. Brown rose to the challenge, performing brilliantly at a wet Donington Park, but his challenge was finally ended in the courts. The MSA decreed the car was not eligible for GT3 and Brown lost all his points scored from Snetterton (when the car was protested by Pyro) onwards. The team then left the series.

Ferrari stalwart Hector Lester and ABG Motorsport Dodge Viper pairing Aaron Scott/Craig Wilkins then became the Ascari's main rivals. Lester's competitiveness was, as ever, thanks to the efforts of Allan Simonsen. The GT ace was once again the star of the show, charging through the pack after Lester's stints, or giving his paymaster leads when Simonsen started races.

Simonsen took eight GT3 fastest laps

(six overall) in his 12 appearances and the pair topped GT3 three times. Ultimately, though, Lester couldn't quite keep the car up high enough often enough to topple the Jones twins.

Scott and Wilkins certainly had better luck in 2009 than they did last year, and scored wins at Spa and Knockhill. Wilkins was again one of the best amateurs in the series, and Scott was strong in the pro ranks, but the Viper is beginning to look a little long in the tooth. It tended to work its tyres harder than the Ascari and Ferraris, a factor that contributed to them ending up seventh in the table.

Two of the fastest cars in the championship didn't figure in the title race, though for different reasons. RPM brought out the latest-specification Ford GT after missing the opening rounds. Despite restrictions making the car a less formidable machine to the one that blitzed the field in a one-off outing in 2008, the V8 machine was still rapid in the hands of first Michael

Bentwood and then Alex Mortimer.

Unfortunately for RPM, historic racing convert Philip Walker struggled to adapt and was generally off the pace. It was no coincidence that the car's two podiums came in the two two-hour races, where the Ford's fuel tank was large enough to allow Mortimer to drive for longer than the pros in the other cars.

Mtech was the only team to get hold of the new Ferrari 430 Scuderia for '09 and the team worked hard to overcome early reliability problems. Things started to come together at Snetterton, before Matt Griffin stormed through the pack to take second at Donington. The first win for the strong Griffin/Duncan Cameron combination came at Silverstone and they look like potential championship contenders for 2010.

Barwell Motorsport also made its mark as it returned to the series. Gentleman driver Andrew Howard impressed in the Aston Martin DBRS9 he shared with Jamie Smyth, but it was the team's other car that grabbed the

DRIVER RANKINGS

- 1 ALLAN SIMONSEN**
Still the benchmark in the series. Stunning pace in qualifying and the races. Gave the impression he felt he should be elsewhere, which he probably should.
- 2 MATT GRIFFIN**
Once the new Ferrari was working, Griffin became a pacesetter. Finally got a car and co-driver worthy of his talents and thoroughly deserved his first victory.
- 3 DANIEL BROWN**
The find of the season. The teenager was immediately on the pace and it was a travesty the Mosler controversy ended his season. Deserves another chance in British GT.
- 4 AARON SCOTT**
Continued a fine pro-am pairing with Craig Wilkins and fought hard to keep the Viper in title contention. Scott, like Wilkins, was always a tough competitor.
- 5 ADAM WILCOX**
Benefited from improved VRS squad and was often up at the sharp end. He and long-term co-driver Phil Burton are still awaiting that first British GT victory.
- 6 ANDREW HOWARD**
Perhaps a surprise in the top six, but Howard was the most improved driver of the year and scored a pole at Brands Hatch. Needs a more rapid pro co-driver for 2010.

headlines. The G50Z ran in the Invitation Class, but the team kept it strictly to GT3 performance levels (producing 430bhp, instead of the 600-odd that the Zytek engine is capable of). Oliver Bryant, Joe Osborne, Phil Quaife and Leo Machitski all starred in the car, which took three outright wins.

Ginettas dominated in the GT4 class, which barely attracted enough cars to fill the podium. WFR man Jody Firth took the crown, with 11 wins, but the category is in desperate need of entries.

The same could be said of the whole championship. The racing in GT3 was actually better than could have been expected from the small grids, but the new rule changes need to attract a lot more cars if the series is to regain some of its credibility in 2010. ☹



Ferraris figured at front of meagre grid

2009 British GT Championship											
POS	Driver	Team	1/2	3/4	5*/6*	7/8	9/10	11	12	13/14*	Points
1=	David Jones/Godfrey Jones	Team Pyro Ascari KZ1R	2/2	2/DNS	R/2	1/4	1/2	5	7	1/3	87
3	Hector Lester	Rosso Verde Ferrari 430	3/4	4/2	1/7	3/5	2/1	6	6	3/1	86
4	Allan Simonsen	Rosso Verde Ferrari 430	3/4	4/2	1/7	-	2/1	6	6	3/1	76
5=	Aaron Scott/Craig Wilkins	ABG Dodge Viper	6/3	3/1	R/3	4/1	R/6	3	2	4/8	69
7=	Adam Wilcox/Phil Burton	VRS Ferrari 430	DNS/DNS	R/7	2/4	2/2	3/5	R	4	2/2	62
9	Duncan Cameron	Mtech Ferrari 430 Scuderia	4/5	6/8	R/R	R/7	6/3	2	1	5/6	49
10	Daniel Brown	Rollcentre Mosler MT900R	1/1	5/R	4/1	5/8	+	+	-	-	44
11=	Andrew Howard/Jamie Smyth	Barwell Beechdean Aston	7/8	7/4	3/5	-	5/4	-	5	8/4	40
13	Philip Walker	RPM Ford GT	-	DNS/DNS	6/8	6/6	4/7	1	3	7/5	39
14	Gregor Fiske	Rollcentre Mosler MT900R	-	1/3	4/1	5/8	-	-	-	-	36
15=	Matt Griffin	Mtech Ferrari 430 Scuderia	4/5	-	R/R	R/7	-	2	1	-	29
16=	Chris Hyman	Chad Racing Ferrari 430	8/6	8/6	5/6	7/3	R/8	-	R	6/7	29

17 Paul Warren, Chad Racing Ferrari 430, 26; 18 Stuart Hall, Rollcentre Mosler MT900R, 24; 19 Alex Mortimer, RPM Ford GT, 22; 20 Michael Bentwood, RPM Ford GT, 17; 21 Martin Short, Rollcentre Mosler MT900R, 16; 22= Mike Wilds, Mtech Ferrari 430 Scuderia, and Jose Balbani, Chad Racing Ferrari 430, 13; 24 Stephane Daoudi, Rosso Verde Ferrari 430, 10; 25 Mike Edmonds, Mtech Ferrari 430 Scuderia, 7; 26= Eddy Renard/Vincent Vosse, Barwell Motorsport Aston Martin DBRS9, and Tom Alexander/Adrian Willmott, 226 Racing Aston Martin DBRS9, 4. GT4 POINTS: 1 Jody Firth, WFR Ginetta G50, 76; 2 Nigel Moore, WFR Ginetta G50, 67; 3 Ian Stinton, Stark Racing, Ginetta G50, 48; 4= Gary Simms, Rob Austin Racing Ginetta G50, and Hunter Abbott, Rob Austin Racing Ginetta G50/Stark Racing Ginetta G50, 28, etc. Note: Results show finishing positions in GT3, irrespective of overall classification.

KEY TO RACES: Rounds 1/2 Oulton Park, April 11 & 13; 3/4 Spa, May 9-10; 5/6 Rockingham, May 30-31; 7/8 Knockhill, June 13-14; 9/10 Snetterton, July 4-5; 11 Donington Park, July 19; 12 Silverstone International, August 16; 13/14 Brands Hatch Grand Prix, September 19-20. Points system: 10-8-6-5-4-3-2-1 to first 8 eligible entries. Points are halved if fewer than six starters in a class. KEY R-Retired; DNS-Did not start; DQ-Disqualified. *-Races won by Invitation Class Ginetta G50Z, which was ineligible for points. + Brown/Short Mosler was 3rd twice at Snett and retired at Donington, but later excluded from GT3 so lost results.