

Towncross Engineering South Downs Stages 2012

Following another fantastically sunny winter's day there seemed to be smiles almost all round at the end of the eighth Towncross Engineering South Downs Stages. The only exceptions would be those that didn't quite make it to the finish and our sympathies go to them.

Goodwood usually throws up a good close competition and boy was that what we had again, with just one 'moment' potentially making all the difference.

Smiles were certainly on the faces of Mark Spencer and Geoff Skillen who took the first win of their 'comeback' period in their MkII Escort.

First out of the starting blocks were 2009 winners Adrian Brown/Chris Jarman in their powerful MkI Escort who led after the opening double-lap anti-clockwise stage by just 1 sec from Spencer/Skillen, these two well clear of event sponsor Paul King/Lil Miles in another Escort MkII.

Brown took a further 2 seconds from Spencer on the identical SS2 before Mark snatched all three back on the next stage to leave the two of them tied 19 seconds up on King. On the first single lapper of the day, SS4, Adrian took two back but then (as in 2011) threw it all away on SS5 when he stalled his engine whilst rounding the fixed chicane and lost about 35 seconds which dropped him to third place at the lunch halt.

Johnnie Ellis/Dave Green in their Mk4 Fiesta looked as though they would give Dom Worsfold/Steve Chapman in the earlier but indecently quick Mk1 version a run for their money in Class B, posting fourth fastest time, three seconds quicker than Dom on SS1. Sadly they retired immediately after the stage and robbed us of another potentially close battle.

Another pairing to show well in the morning were the son and father team of Ricky and Pat Bartlett in their ex-works F2 Nissan Almera. They ran as high as fourth overall after the first three stages but eventually retired on the first afternoon stage.

Gaining pace throughout the morning was former British Hillclimb champion Roger Moran with Joy Hoyle in their very smart metallic grey MkII Escort 2.5. Eighth after the first stage they rose to fourth by lunchtime.

The final two stages of the morning were popular with drivers and spectators alike having hairpins around the fixed chicane and the end of the pit wall respectively. Top style marks went to the Escorts of Mark Spencer, Roger Moran and Ian Hucklebridge.

Halfway positions were as follows:

1.	Mark Spencer/Geoff Skillen	Ford Escort MkII	17m 12s
2.	Paul King/Lil Miles	Ford Escort MkII	17m 40s
3.	Adrian Brown/Chris Jarman	Ford Escort MkI	17m 47s
4.	Paul Diamond/Steve Cox	Ford Escort MkII	17m 56s
=	Roger Moran/Joy Hoyle	Ford Escort MkII	17m 56s
6	Dom Worsfold/Steve Chapman	Ford Fiesta MkI	17m 59s
7	Ricky Bartlett/Pat Bartlett	Nissan Almera F2	18m 00s
8	Terry Luckings/Russell Burton	Volkswagen Golf GTi	18m 21s
9	Richard Upton/Roland Atkins	Vauxhall Corsa Kit Car	18m 24s
10	Ian Hucklebridge/Gary Johnson	Ford Escort MkII	18m 28s

After lunch the stage direction changed to clockwise and Brown showed that he wasn't giving up by equalling Spencer's time on SS6, but thereafter the local Southsea MC members of Spencer/Skillen gradually drew away from Brown/Jarman on every stage bar SS8 where Brown tied for fastest with the ever improving Moran. Indeed Moran was threatening Paul King/Lil Miles' third place but a quick time from the local Bognor Regis MC crew on the last stage in the dark, 14secs quicker than the hillclimber, secured their place on the bottom step of the podium.

Another battle for fifth place raged throughout the afternoon between the Fiesta boys and last year's victors Paul Diamond/Steve Cox with the two swapping places after each stage. The final verdict went to the Fiesta 1600 by just one second.

In the other classes Ian Barnard/Chris Newton had it all their own way in their Class A Nova and came home in the top ten to boot. Class E was an easy win for the PaulHarvey/BeckyPullen, their Escort Cossie being the only finishers after John Gorton/Andrew Komosa in Andrew's Impreza blew a turbo on the very first stage. Finally the Historic Class went to the very pretty Saab 96 V4 on its first outing in the hands of Hugh and Debby Myers.

The last two stages in the pitch black again proved popular and created an 'electric' atmosphere in the crisp dark clear night. The day was rounded off with the prize giving in the Jackie Stewart Pavilion where event sponsor Paul King presented the awards (apart from his own of course!).

We hope everyone enjoyed themselves and look forward to seeing you all again on Saturday 9th February, 2013.

Final top ten:

1. Mark Spencer/Geoff Skillen	2.4 Ford Escort MkII	36m 53s
2. Adrian Brown/Chris Jarman	2.4 Ford Escort MkI	37m 33s
3. Paul King/Lil Miles	2.0 Ford Escort MkII	37m 46s
4. Roger Moran/Joy Hoyle	2.5 Ford Escort MkII	38m 00s
5. Dom Worsfold/Steve Chapman	1.6 Ford Fiesta MkI	38m 21s
6. Paul Diamond/Steve Cox	2.0 Ford Escort MkII	38m 22s
7. Terry Luckings/Russell Burton	2.0 VW Golf GTi	39m 11s
8. Richard Upton/Roland Atkins	1.6 Vauxhall Corsa Kit Car	39m 19s
9. Iain Gibson/Andrew Gibson	2.0 Honda Civic Type-R	39m 44s
10. Ian Barnard/Chris Newton	1.4 Vauxhall Nova	39m 58s