

Round 3 Report & Results



JOHNSTON HITS THE TOP SPOT!

Round 3 of the 2007 European Drift Championship travels to Knockhill in Scotland.

Knockhill holds a special place in all the drivers' hearts both on and off the track. The perfect setting for the penultimate round of the 2007 championship.

The EDC section of Knockhill starts from just before the start line, accelerating to over 100MPH then sideways into the blind Seat curves. The drivers would then have to make a high speed switchback from right to left whilst being careful not to take the tight line which initially looks to be the safer line. A second transition is made into Scotsman corner.

Scotsman looks like a simple task but Chief Judge Hiroki Furuse stated that for maximum points, the rear wheels of the car must touch the outside curbing before entering the corner. This maximises the speed around the corner and makes the transition from Seat curves to Scotsman Corner very technical.

The day began with a licensing session. Drivers new to the championship would try to prove themselves worthy of licensed EDC driver status where a total of 7 hopefuls attacked the hill. Each driver showed great talent but only 3 drivers were able to impress the judges sufficiently to earn their EDC Licenses.

Dermott McCullagh , Daniel Eyles, Shane Lynch.

The practice session for all licensed drivers old and new would follow. The championship regulars all looked on form at this stage. Mark Johnston set the pace in at this stage with Mark Luney and Brett Castle also looking very promising.

Just as Qualifying was to begin, the heavens opened unexpectedly. This came with no warning to the drivers and gave them very little time to adapt and showed in the qualifying results. Mark Johnston, who was looking like he would take the top qualifying position, struggled under the different conditions and could only make 12th.

Ben Broke Smith was the man to qualify top of the pack with a 95 point run out of a maximum 100. The Driftworks Chaser showed on signs of struggle under the new conditions. The biggest surprise from qualifying came from Mark Buckle. He managed to place the DCY Skyline into 3rd position which is his best result by far.

Qualifying results:

Number	Name	Max
6	Ben Broke-Smith	95
3	Mark Luney	94
26	Mark Buckle	94
4	Brett Castle	93
18	Declan Hicks	92
8	Maciej Polody	90
23	James Grimsey	90
33	Peter Barber	89
1	Phil Morrison	89
32	Chris Parry	88
15	Ian Harrison	88
13	Mark Johnston	84
17	Niall Gunn	84
4L	Daniel Eyles	82
31	Alan McCord	82
14	Tony Green	80
36	Paul Conlan	76
5L	Shane Lynch	75
19	Kieran Cameron	74
24	Mark Coyne	72

3L	Dermott McCullagh	0
5	Tim Marshall	0
9	Steve Evans	0

The conditions remained changeable throughout which made it the most difficult qualifying session this year, for both drivers and judges.

The Tsuisou twin battles continuously managed to surprise everyone. The first battle would be between Top Qualifier Ben Broke Smith and Tony Green who just managed to scrape into 16th position after difficulties in the qualifying session. An easy win was expected for Broke Smith but it wasn't to be as he made an uncharacteristic spin in the first run. "Bon Bon" tried to apply the pressure to salvage the battle but pushed himself too far and spun again allowing the Whifbitz RX7 of Green into the Top 8.

2006 Champion Phil Morrison has had a relatively disappointing season so far, struggling to get to grips with his Driftworks R32 Skyline. The trend continued when a spin gave the WGT Auto Developments RX7 of Peter Barber the victory.

Championship Leader Brett Castle had horrendous luck at Knockhill in 2006 when his car suffered mechanical problems in practice and had to retire. His Abbey Motorsport prepared car had no problems this year but his bad luck remained. The constantly changing conditions from dry to wet caught out Castle and spun in the second leg despite having held a 8/2 advantage in the first run. Niall Gunn who day started pretty badly in practice was getting better and better as the day progressed and claimed his spot in the top 8.

Declan Hicks showed superb form during qualifying and practice but was outdone by Mark Johnston who found a sudden return to form. A very close and intense battle ended with the Weston Performance Silvia victorious.

The SVA Imports 350Z was looking very fast all day. Mark Luney had not put a wheel wrong through qualifying and managed a second place. Alan McCord put up a good fight as the underdog and forced the battle into sudden death. The SVA imports Z has so much traction it struggles to maintain the drift when running against a slightly slower opponent. This showed in the 4th leg and a slight mistake by Luney gave McCord the win.

James Grimsey in the GBH Motorsport 180SX kept his cool whilst Chris "Paz" Parry struggled in the wetter conditions. Paz's AE86 lacks power and so needs to carry maximum momentum around the corners to maintain speed and be competitive but the wet track made this difficult.

Mark Buckle continued on his good form by beating newly licensed Daniel Eyles. Eyles in the Japspeed R33 impressed everyone in his EDC debut but lady luck smiled on the only man on the grid who wanted it to rain more...

Round 2 winner Maciej Polody was once again in attendance all the way from Poland. He comfortably held off the challenge of Ian Harrison who spun in the first run and handed Polody his seat in the top 8 battles.

Into the Top 8, starting with Barber vs. Green. This was settled in the first run with a spin by Barber. Both men considered themselves lucky to have made the top 8, but Tony Green's luck was to continue.

Mark Johnston's return to form was confirmed with 2 further flawless runs against Niall Gunn. 2 spins by Gunn put an end to his day and gave Johnston the second spot in the semi finals.

Alan McCord suffered mechanical failure meaning that James Grimsey would progress to the semi finals.

Mark Buckle and Maciej Polody had to go into 2 sudden death rounds to determine a winner. Each time the leading car would take the advantage with the chasing car unable to match the pace set. The 6th and final battle resulted in a double spin ending 6 gruelling with Mark Buckle the victor.

Semi final 1 was the battle between the Whifbitz RX7 of Tony Green and the Weston Performance Silvia of Mark Johnston. These two drivers are great friends and have been waiting for an opportunity to battle it out between them. A spin by Green in the first leg allowed a 10/0 advantage to Johnston. The second leg saw Green trying to apply the pressure to force a mistake out of Johnston but resulted in a mistake by himself. Johnston found himself in an EDC final for the second time this year.

James Grimsey in the GBH Motorsport 180SX and Mark Buckle with his DCY R32 Skyline were both amazed by their progress. Neither driver had made it to a semi final before and the pressure was certainly getting to them both. Mark Buckle kept himself composed whilst James Grimsey spun out in both runs.

3rd place decider was between Tony Green and James Grimsey. Another close battle saw the advantage first go to Green 7/3 but Grimsey was able to turn the battle around to force a sudden death situation. After an intensely close 3rd and 4th leg, Grimsey came out on top and claimed the bottom step of the podium.

The final would be between round 1 winner Mark Johnston and Mark Buckle who had never made a final in the past. The wet conditions really seemed to suit the DCY Skyline and

Buckle and he didn't fail to keep the crowds entertained as he and Johnston completed the first run with a 5/5 run. With no advantage gained in the first run, it would be all or nothing for the drivers. Buckle finally let the pressure get to him and spun the second run handing a second victory in 2007 to Mark Johnston.

A truly exiting and memorable round at Knockhill completely turned the championship table upside down. All those towards the top of the table struggled and allowed the rest of the field to catch up. With only 1 round remaining a total of 6 drivers could still take the championship. The action will be unmissable for the final round at North Weald on 19th August where the 2007 Champion will be crowned.