



BRDC FORMULA 4 OULTON PARK, APRIL 4-6

# Palmer leads as Oulton wins are shared

Palmer tops F4 points

WILL PALMER EMERGED AS THE championship leader after the first weekend of the BRDC Formula 4 season as three different drivers chalked up victories at Oulton Park.

Palmer drew first blood in a battle with Harrison Newey that looks set to last the season. The two HHC team-mates had been the class of the field in qualifying as they locked out the front row, with Palmer coming out on top. He then converted that advantage into victory in race one and took a podium in the second race where Newey struggled to come through the pack.

"I got a good getaway and then after that I got my head down and managed to build up a good early lead," explained Palmer after race one. "I was just managing the gap after that."

Chris Mealin and Jordan Albert scored their first BRDC F4 victories in the second and third races, with Mealin's win coming in his debut weekend. That triumph suggests Lanau Racing, the team that



Mealin and Haggerty did battle in race two

produced the first two BRDC F4 champions, will lead the fightback to HHC's early season success.

In race one Palmer held on to the lead from pole position while Newey was slow away from second place and lost out to Hillspeed's Sebastian Lanzetti as the pack charged into Old Hall on the opening lap. By the time Newey was able to fight his way back past Lanzetti with a brave move at Hislop, Palmer was already almost four seconds clear at the front, in what was an otherwise uneventful opening race.

However, there was drama before race two even got going as Sisa Ngebulana, in pole position for the reverse-grid contest, spun on the parade lap. "I was just trying to warm up my tyres too much," he admitted afterwards.

Mealin inherited pole and pulled away from the grid with Ciaran Haggerty giving close pursuit.

Their battle lasted all race long but Mealin held on for the win, with Ecurie Ecosse-backed young driver Haggerty's second place delighting his mentor Dario Franchitti in parc ferme. Starting in P8, Palmer had played a blinding first lap, leaping up to fourth, and he later passed Tom Jackson to claim the final podium spot.

SWR driver Albert came in at the start and spent the rest of the race chasing the fastest lap to secure pole for race three, which he achieved to line up ahead of Newey as both drivers eyed a maiden series win. Albert led away from the start of the finale but came under pressure from Newey as the pack approached Shell.

The ensuing moves left Newey pointing the wrong way and furious, labeling it "a very dirty manoeuvre and should never have been done", while Albert insisted there had been no contact.

Haggerty gave a spirited chase of Albert but the Scot spun through Deer Leap towards the end of the race, gifting second to Mealin. He then dropped his car on the grass at Cascades on the final lap, promoting Mealin's Lanau team-mate Rodrigo Fonseca to the podium, and tumbled to seventh.

Palmer claimed a muted fifth, behind Tom Jackson, and holds a slender five-point advantage over Lanau's Mealin.

The consistent Jackson, fourth in race one and fifth in race two, is third but all three will have to watch for a resurgent Newey looking to make up for points lost this time out.

● Alex Kalinauckas

## RESULTS

**RACE 1** 1 Will Palmer, 12 laps in 19m21.509s; 2 Harrison Newey, +4.815s; 3 Sebastian Lanzetti; 4 Tom Jackson; 5 Jack Bartholomew; 6 Ciaran Haggerty. **RACE 2** 1 Chris Mealin, 12 laps in 19m21.321s; 2 Haggerty, +0.592s; 3 Palmer; 4 Bartholomew; 5 Jackson; 6 Newey. **RACE 3** 1 Jordan Albert, 12 laps in 19m23.875s; 2 Mealin, +7.882s; 3 Rodrigo Fonseca; 4 Jackson; 5 Palmer; 6 Bartholomew. **POINTS** 1 Palmer, 74; 2 Mealin, 69; 3 Jackson, 58; 4 Newey, 56; 5 Haggerty, 54; 6 Bartholomew, 54.



Newey bagged a podium



Smart Albert won finale