



**Avon Tyres British GT Championship
Rounds 11&12, Croft, 8&9 September 2007
Race Report**

DISASTEROUS CROFT DAMAGES ELLIS' CHAMPIONSHIP CHANCES

Croydon's Bradley Ellis and teammate Alex Mortimer (Stoneleigh) approached rounds 11 and 12 of the Avon Tyres British GT Championship at Croft, North Yorkshire, second in the fierce title fight and one point adrift. The Team RPM duo now lie third, eight points behind the leaders, after a penalty saw their round 11 podium finish demoted to fourth and the Viper was taken out and failed to finish round 12. With 20 points up for grabs in the final two rounds at Rockingham, 29&30 September, Ellis and Mortimer have it all left to do.

As the lights turned green for round 11, Mortimer made a good start from sixth to finish lap one in fourth, just over one second behind the sister Viper of Nigel Redwood. Mortimer pushed to within just over half a second of Redwood in the opening laps while David Jones in the Ascari was bearing down from fifth.

Jones managed to slip past Mortimer on the run up to Hawthorn on lap six but the 22-year-old stayed in contention and got the margin down to six tenths in the following laps. Jones quickly reeled in and subsequently took Redwood 15 minutes into the race, allowing Mortimer to follow suit and take fourth the following lap.

Pulling clear of his teammate, Mortimer was left chasing Jones, who was now nearly four seconds ahead in third by lap 13. Mortimer managed to reduce Jones' advantage to three seconds before pitting just before the halfway mark.

With the pitstop melee complete, Ellis emerged third, eight seconds behind Godfrey Jones now driving the second-placed Ascari, with the number three Aston Martin still in the lead. On a charge from fourth was the Christians in Motorsport Ferrari and Allan Simonsen soon began to pressure Ellis. The 20-year-old held his nerve to stave off Simonsen's advances for a good few laps before the Ferrari took third at the final corner with 20 minutes remaining. But three laps later the Ascari went off the circuit, demoting Jones from second to fourth and Ellis to third in the process.

As Simonsen took the Aston for the lead with less than 10 minutes to go, Ellis faced a massive 10 second gap to second-placed Ben de Zille Butler while Jones was on a recovering charge from fourth. Ellis didn't let up his pace and, managing to keep the pressurising Ascari behind him in the remaining six laps, succeeded in slashing the margin to just over three seconds before taking the chequered flag.

Despite Ellis' efforts to take the final podium position, an 11 second penalty for defending his position on exiting the pits demoted the Team RPM duo to fourth. As Sunday's race dawned, the Avon Tyres British GT Championship fight was perilously close with one point between leaders Paul Drayson and Jonny Cocker on 62 points, with Ellis and Mortimer sharing second place alongside Guy Harrington and Ben de Zille Butler.

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A lightening start from fourth for round 12 saw Ellis immediately set about Cocker at the first corner and the pair ran side-by-side through Hawthorne before Ellis took the position at the chicane. It took just the length of the back straight to line up Wilcox before taking the place at Tower, to finish lap one in second.

Ellis comfortably pulled away from Wilcox while Simonsen was over six seconds ahead in the leading Ferrari before the safety car was brought out on lap six, closing up the field. Racing resumed when the safety car went in on lap nine and Ellis again pulled clear of Wilcox.

With Simonsen pulling out a six second gap, Ellis stood over four seconds clear of Wilcox before pitting with 30 minutes to go. Once Mortimer was at the wheel, it was evident that the RPM duo had lost valuable time, mainly due to the Viper not being fitted with a speed lane restrictor.

Lying fifth after the pitstop shuffles, Mortimer formed part of a four-car train fighting for third place and was chasing the much slower car of Phil Burton, who had taken over from Wilcox. Despite posting consistently quicker lap times, Mortimer had to wait until the 50 minute marker to make his move cleanly at the Hairpin on lap 32.

Burton, however, did not relinquish the place easily. As the pair crossed the line to start lap 33, Mortimer stayed on the inside line for Clervaux while Wilcox swerved and, with wheels on the grass, tried to outbrake Mortimer. The Ferrari hit the rear of the Viper entering Clervaux, putting Mortimer in the gravel and out of the race. With a tyre completely off of the rim and extensive damage to the wishbones, dampers and driveshaft, it was impossible for the Viper to continue but Burton rejoined the fray.

The unnecessary incident stopped Ellis and Mortimer from scoring any championship points and wiped the pair from their second place standing in the championship, dropping them to third. "It's pretty difficult to put a positive slant on this weekend, because it's been a disaster," commented Ellis.

"We've been quicker than the Aston Martins all weekend and, despite suffering from similar problems at this circuit, we came out on top in terms of driving performance. It's a shame to have been taken out of Sunday's race, especially by a non-championship fighting car. Now all we can do is our best at Rockingham and fight for the 20 points available."

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