



Avon Tyres British GT Championship
Rounds 13&14, Rockingham, 29&30 September 2007
Race Report

**DOUBLE VICTORY SEALS BRITISH GT CHAMPIONSHIP CROWN FOR
ELLIS & MORTIMER**

Bradley Ellis (Croydon) and Alex Mortimer (Stoneleigh) approached the final rounds of the Avon Tyres British GT Championship some eight points behind in the title fight but the youngest pairing on the grid refused to sit back and accept defeat. A dominant performance saw the Team RPM duo take their second double victory of the year and the coveted championship crown in the process, at Rockingham near Corby, on Sunday 30 September.

The champagne flowed freely in the Team RPM pit after what has been a challenging season en route to the spoils in the pairing's first year in GT3. As the final race weekend dawned, lying third in the standings, Ellis and Mortimer faced the hefty task of making up for a disastrous round 12 at Croft and the eight-point deficit to championship leaders Guy Harrington and Ben de Zille Butler, with 20 points up for grabs.

The nail biting weekend kicked off with a close first qualifying session where Mortimer yo-yoed for pole position with Jason Templeman. Mortimer topped the timesheets on more than one occasion and eventually took third 0.517 seconds behind pole-sitter Templeman in the Lamborghini. Ellis' session started with a little less optimism when he had to pit after just a few laps to take on more fuel, thereby missing the optimum timeframe to set a flying lap, finally settling for seventh.

A solid start by Mortimer for round 13 on Saturday afternoon secured second place by turn one, slotting in behind Templeman with Matt Harris in the Tech 9 Porsche in third. Mortimer stayed within five tenths of the Lamborghini throughout the opening laps, with Harris remaining in close contention, but Mortimer made a move on Templeman down the inside of Tarzan Corner on lap six to take the lead.

Out in front, Mortimer built over a one second margin before the safety car came out on lap eight, closing up the field. When racing resumed on lap 10, Mortimer nailed the restart to pull out a two-second lead by lap 13, with the Lamborghini staying in contention.

Mortimer made for the pits on lap 21 to hand over to Ellis but the lack of a speed lane restrictor on the Viper meant that the Team RPM duo lost out to the Tech 9 Porsche and Tom Ferrier rejoined the race in the lead just ahead of Ellis.

With 22 minutes to go, Ellis was just over one-second behind Ferrier as the leaders began to scythe their way through the back markers. By lap 26, Ellis began to close on the Porsche under braking for Tarzan and continued to pressurise for the following six laps. As the leading pair crossed the line to start lap 34, Ellis looked threatening into turn one and expertly positioned his Viper to take the lead up the inside of Ferrier at Deene Corner.

Ellis edged away from the Porsche to pull out a comfortable three second lead before taking the chequered flag on lap 41 to seal the Team RPM duo's third win of the season and ten valuable points.

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The Aston Martin of Paul Drayson and Jonny Cocker finished fourth, pushing them to the top of the leader table, with Harrington and de Zille Butler failing to score any points. But Ellis and Mortimer's outstanding efforts promoted them to second with just two points separating first and second place in the championship fight.

With the withdrawal of the Lamborghini with gearbox problems, Ellis started the final round of the season on Sunday in sixth but, with Thomas Erdos slow away in the Ascari, Ellis dropped to seventh. Quickly recovering, Ellis took the Team RPM Porsche on lap two, to regain sixth behind Erdos.

The safety car came out at the beginning of lap four but racing resumed on lap six with Ellis just five tenths from the Ascari's rear bumper. Ellis continued to push Erdos and made his move at Deene Corner on lap 10 and by the time the cars crossed the line to start lap 11, Ellis had pulled some eight tenths clear.

Next in the Croydon racer's sights was the number seven RPM Viper over one second up the track, but Ellis caught and passed his teammate on lap 12, again at Deene, to secure fourth. The tension soured as the current championship-leading Aston of Cocker was now just two and a half seconds ahead of Ellis in third.

In a meticulous drive, Ellis chipped away at the Aston's advantage and the pair began to pass the backmarkers while closing on Adam Wilcox in the number 12 Ferrari. Ellis edged ever closer and by lap 19 the Aston's margin was slashed to one second while Allan Simonsen was some 18 seconds ahead in the Ferrari before pitting on lap 24.

Refusing to let up, Ellis maintained the gap to third before Wilcox, Cocker and Ellis all filed into the pits on lap 25. Slick stops by all three teams saw Phil Burton, Paul Drayson and Mortimer rejoin the race in order.

Drama struck on lap 27 when Drayson missed Deene Corner and went off onto the oval circuit, promoting Mortimer to third and igniting the championship battle. With Drayson out of sight, Mortimer pressurised Burton and on lap 28 slipped past the Ferrari for second through Gracelands. By now, Hector Lester's Ferrari had pulled out over a six second lead but Mortimer still had more to give and, with the absence of a car-to-pits radio, just kept on pushing.

Sensing a double victory and the championship crown, Mortimer sliced the gap by over four seconds within three laps. The Viper started lap 34 just three tenths adrift and glued to the Ferrari's bumper, finally sweeping into the lead through Gracelands. With ten minutes to go, Mortimer kept his cool to pull clear of Lester, who was taken on lap 38 by Nick Foster in the sister RPM Viper.

As Mortimer came out of Brook, the Team RPM personnel were waiting on the pitwall to celebrate their maiden British GT Championship crown. Mortimer took the final chequered flag of the season two seconds clear and, with Foster following him home, Team RPM also celebrated their first one-two of the season.

The RPM young guns sealed the Avon Tyres British GT3 crown with four wins, two second-place finishes and two thirds, finishing on 81 points and six points ahead of Drayson and Cocker.

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Their second double victory hailed their first wins since they did it the first time round at Brands Hatch in July. Ellis' home event was the turning point of the season and launched the pair from fifth to lead the championship and in reach of the title.

After the team's tears had dried and the champagne sprayed, Ellis commented: "To seal the British GT3 crown in our maiden season after finishing third in the GTC class last year is sensational. The car was perfect and so were the team.

"I can't express enough thanks to everyone at Team RPM, Robin and Bridget Mortimer, all of the mechanics, my mum, dad and sister, Tiffany, not to mention my fantastic teammate, Alex. It wasn't an easy weekend, but we knew what we had to do when we got here and we did it."

An elated Robin Mortimer, Team RPM principal, said: "A quite unbelievable weekend. When we came here we all feared that it might be too big a mountain to climb but, due to the dogged determination of all the team's drivers and mechanics, we proved that the impossible is achievable. A huge amount of credit must go to the hard working mechanics, who travelled straight from Czechoslovakia to Rockingham after the penultimate round of the FIA European GT3 Championship. I feel hugely proud of being a small part in such a successful racing team and as a small reward for a perfect season's racing we look forward to Brad joining us in Dubai, as a present from the team, for the final round of the FIA European GT3 Championship."

For full race results visit www.msttiming.com and for further information on the 2007 Avon Tyres British GT Championship visit www.britishgt.com