

The rain threatened but a dry track waited for Andover racer Dawn Boyd at Oulton Park bank holiday Monday.

Round 2 of the Dunlop Great & British Mini Challenge saw Dawn racing her 'new look' Mini Cooper in the next 2 races of the season.

Practise on Saturday morning went well. As Dawn had been to the track once last season it helped her find her way round the Island Circuit. With some much welcomed help and instruction from her mechanic and her sponsor, Dawn was soon on the pace. Qualifying that afternoon saw her gain 10th place on the grid, which meant she was on course for her goal of single figures results. Little did she know what lay ahead.

Race 1 on Monday morning was a standing start and she was hot on the heels of the pack of minis as they screeched their way round the first corner, there was carnage already as several cars spun off and rejoined in various locations. The race was full of incidents as several cars tussled for position, Dawn fought her way around all the debris and had her own fight for survival in a pack of 4 cars. Dawn caught her main rival and they exchanged places twice but she was blocked several times by weaving to hold position, a 15 minute race was not quite enough to catch him and Dawn found herself still fighting for room as the chequered flag came out. "With so many cars pushing too hard that they had so many accidents, it was difficult to know where you were in the order," reports Dawn who was delighted to find herself in 5th position, her best result yet! However she was disappointed that the person doing the blocking ended up in 3rd, "it could have been my first podium".

Race 2 is the big one, 30 minutes long with a rolling start, something of a rarity in club racing but a scenario Dawn is getting used to. "I was determined to fight hard this time" said Dawn. 2 laps of the track to warm up behind the safety car and as the lights went racing was underway. The packed grid of both the higher speed S class cars and the Club class all fought for positions as the first corner loomed again, this time everyone got round safely. The cars snaked their way through cascades curve and chased down the straight to the lakeside hairpin, this was going to be a long fight. This longer race gives time to spread the pack and gradually the S class cars catch the clubs and Dawn was caught as she entered a chicane, it was an "S Club sandwich!" one on the right, which she gave room for but then another appeared on the left where there was no space and they hit, luckily Dawn was unscathed but the wheel got knocked so the steering was now a bit shaky. Dawn was back hard on the power again and continued her tussle with the same racer from earlier in the day but this time they exchanged places so often she was behind him again as they crossed the finish line. This time the result was 8th, still single figures!

The next round is at the awesome Spa Francorchamps in Belgium on 16th June, and Dawn is fired up to continue her rise up the leaderboard, she currently stands in 9th place in class and 15th out of 37, not a bad start to her first full season!

Further details can be found at www.minichallenge.co.uk and at www.dawnontrack.co.uk