



NASA MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 9 – February 2018

It's been a long time since our last members' newsletter. This is a bit of a catch-up issue, therefore, before we do our best to get back to a more regular schedule during the season.

If there's anything you think we've left out, or any subject you'd like us to cover in future newsletters, please get in touch.

We've timed this issue to come out just before the first round of NASA committee meetings of the year. The League Chairmen's committee, the Scrutineers' committee and the Marshals' and Safety Officers' committee all meet at Walsall on Sunday 18 February, with the meetings starting at 11.00am.

These meetings aren't closed shops; all league and club officials are welcome, so if you're interested in attending, please get in touch with your official league representative. Although we've covered a cross-section of current topics in this newsletter, there's still no substitute for face-to-face information sharing between different clubs and leagues, and these pre-season meetings are maybe the most important of the year with a lot of detailed discussion anticipated on subjects that will affect all clubs and members.

For those who haven't been before, the venue is Metro Inn, Birmingham Road, Walsall, WS5 3AB, close to M6 junction 7.

The remaining Walsall dates for the year are Saturdays; April 14, June 9 and October 13. To help you remember we've included them among the race dates in this year's fixture list!

NASA BOARD CHANGES

At the 2017 NASA AGM, held at Walsall on 26 November, we welcomed on board a new NASA Director, Jason Baker. Jason will already be well known to most of our members, either because of his past involvement with Trent club, his work helping to promote the Stock Hatch class, his position as NASA webmaster, also helping several clubs with their websites, and his appearances as a commentator at various venues.

Keith Matthews stood down after a three year term on the Board and also after the AGM we were sorry to receive Warren Beatty's resignation from the Board. We'd like to thank both Keith and Warren for their contributions to NASA and wish them well in their future activities.

That leaves us with seven directors going into 2018, with their main areas of responsibility being:

Margaret Allen – finance and insurance

Jason Baker – website, marketing and promotion



NASA MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 9 – February 2018

Barbara Harper – membership and licencing
Vernon Mackenzie – technical and scrutineering
Jeffrey Parish – company secretarial and constitutional
Phil Rogers – marshalling and driving standards
Martyn Tinker – safety and risk management

Di Tomkinson continues as the board's secretary but it has been decided not to fill the position of board chairman for the time being.

NASA OFFICIALS

The majority of the NASA senior officials' team were re-elected to their positions at the AGM, but one change is that Emyr "Oily" Evans of South Wales League has replaced Ernie Ashley as Chairman of the League Representatives' Committee (the position generally referred to a "NASA Chairman"). We wish Oily all the best in his new position – he'll be having a busy-ish year as he's also Chairman of the league hosting both National Championship events.

Lynn Thomas continues as NASA vice-chairman with Diane Tomkinson as Association Secretary.

The top marshalling team are unchanged with Dave Bennett as NASA Chief Marshal and Stuart Thomas as his deputy.

We now have three NASA Assistant Scrutineers joining director Vernon Mackenzie to head the scrutineering team; Rob Simmonds and Ady Taylor continue in their positions and are joined by Dave George. There was a fourth scrutineer listed in the AGM paperwork, but he withdrew his nomination before the meeting.

The minutes from the AGM, including reports from the various directors on the activities of their "departments" for the year are available on the NASA website together with past minutes from the various NASA committees.

RULE CHANGES

As we await the update of the NASA technical rule books, which we're sure you all appreciate remains an enormous task, with the emphasis being on getting it right rather than rushing something out, actual rule changes are few and far between. Clarifications affecting certain classes will be published on the NASA website but proposed changes to Class 2 suspensions have been deferred until 2019 pending further discussion.

The one significant change that will affect a high proportion of saloon class competitors is in respect of seat belt mountings. It's no longer permitted for the shoulder straps to be fixed to a car's bodywork; the seat belt fixings must be to the main rollcage structure. Please contact your club or league scrutineers if you need further clarification of this.



NASA MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 9 – February 2018

SAFETY/TRACK CONSTRUCTION BULLETIN

There have been one or two track construction issues raised over the closed season which will be aired at the marshals' and safety officers' meeting on 18 February. The issue that's received the most discussion has been the method of fixing armco barrier to track fence posts. The rule book requires the use of "coach bolts" through the posts to secure the armco but some failures last season revealed the use of non-compliant "coach screws" in some cases. Any club official needing clarification of this distinction should be urged to attend the Walsall meeting, where examples of compliant and non-compliant construction will be shown.

The track construction rules are no longer included in the NASA Members' Handbook – we didn't consider it necessary for every member to carry these rules around in their licence. We'll be getting an updated version of the rules published as a stand-alone document that will be issued to club and league chairmen and safety officers and will be available to download from the NASA website.

AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL

We were delighted that so many of our members were able to join us at the NEC Birmingham during the Autosport International show in January. This year's show saw the biggest ever representation for Autograss at the NEC with, by an unofficial count, 66 Autograss cars either on display or in live action. We'd like to thank, and congratulate, everyone involved in the exceptional standard of presentation of the cars; all the more impressive as we were only able to confirm our attendance with less than a couple of months' notice. Thanks to all who helped promote Autograss at the show, especially the representatives of Autograss Allstars, Ladies' Autograss Racing and UK Autograss Championship who joined us on the stand. Also thanks to the British Autograss Series for organising their own stand to further widen the overall Autograss representation.

NATIONALS 2018

The Directors recently had a meeting with representatives of the South Wales League, who will be hosting both 2018 National Championship events, the "men's" Nationals on August 4/5 and the Ladies' and Juniors' on August 18/19.

The venue, Castle Lloyd Farm at Red Roses, will be familiar to many of you who have attended recent BAS events there, although the layout is different from the 2013 Nationals, with the start now being at the "seaside" end of the track. The league have some new features to add, including grandstand trailers and raised viewing areas, to overcome the lie of the land at the cliff-top venue, together with a big screen for viewing from the trade stand area. At least two television features are being arranged around the events

Promotion of the Nationals is now well under way, with the South Wales League having plenty of suggestions to offer anyone who wants to take advantage of the proximity of the two events to plan a holiday in South West Wales. Keep an eye on the league's Facebook page for all the Nationals news.



NASA MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 9 – February 2018

NATIONALS 2019 ... AND BEYOND

We can confirm the dates for the 2019 National Championships for those who need to plan early; the men's Nationals will be held on 3/4 August and the Ladies' and Juniors' will return to its traditional weekend on 31 August/1 September.

It's widely known, but we don't think we've yet formally announced, that the 2019 Ladies' and Juniors' Nationals will be hosted by the Southern League at Bearley Raceway, near Martock, Somerset. We're delighted to have a National event return to the Southern League for the first time since 1992; the Ladies' and Juniors' Nationals is effectively going "home" as the Southern League staged the first stand-alone running of this meeting, in 1985.

The men's Nationals venue should be revealed soon; the proposed host club has a few details to confirm with their landowners before going public with their plans, but we can let you know that we're anticipating an accessible central UK venue.

Looking forward to the 2020s, we're reconsidering our approach to the selection of Nationals venues. In the past we've invited applications for each year in turn and selected the hosts on the basis of a checklist of criteria; this has often involved us turning down some very high quality applications just because another applicant scored slightly higher. In future we'd like to build-up a multi-year plan so that clubs and leagues willing to hold the Nationals won't be competing directly against each other, but will all get a fair chance to be part of the longer term promotion of NASA's flagship events.

What this means for now is that, if your club or league can see a prospect of holding a Nationals event in the near or medium-term future, please let us know your thoughts so that we can include you in our planning even if we won't be asking for formal presentations.

AUTOGRASS ALLSTARS

We've been following with interest the progress of the Autograss Allstars project which was launched at the 2017 Nationals and gathered impressive momentum over the following months, culminating in a professional studio recording session in Llanelli at the end of November. In case you've missed it (we don't see how anyone could have done!) the project was what initially seemed an ambitious fund-raiser for cancer research, involving many Autograss racers and supporters joining forces to record a charity CD single for Christmas release. Headed by Sue Herdman, Gareth Jones, Lewis Richards, Michaela Dance and Kate Lockwood, the Allstars project has without doubt exceeded all expectations.

We were pleased to be joined by the Allstars on our stand at the NEC, where NASA were able to show our appreciation of this project, deserving of the support of all our members, by donating a fully prepared Class 1 Micra for raffle. Our thanks to Richard Green for the car build and to the many members and Autograss traders who contributed financially or in-kind. Over the NEC weekend alone the Allstars raised £4,405. The show weekend concluded with an unscheduled and emotional live performance by Lewis and Gareth, but the fund raising



NASA MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 9 – February 2018

continues. The Micra draw is planned to take place at the "Scunny shakedown" on 25 February.

If you haven't got involved yet, and if the special presentation CD/DVD/booklet sets haven't yet sold out, you can contact the Allstars through their Facebook page (just search "Autograss Allstars") or place an order online at www.AutograssAllstars.co.uk. As we finish this newsletter the Allstars' three featured songs have been released as downloads on iTunes, and within a few hours have rocketed to well within the top 100!

SOCIAL MEDIA

We hope that most of you will have noticed NASA adopting a higher profile on social media recently, with the established NASA Facebook page being used for more active updates and promotions, while NASA's Twitter account is being brought into play more regularly. We're also grateful for the work being done through other Facebook pages to promote the sport, with the three major NASA-sanctioned championship series, the BAS, the UKAC and the All Ireland series, all now sending out regular updates, previews and promotions, alongside other initiatives such as the Ladies' Autograss Racing page, Russ Thompson's "Grasschat" and, of course, the Allstars.

LEAGUE WINNERS

Every year, after the Nationals, we present trophies to the "Champion Leagues" based on awarding points for all positions in the class finals. Due to the possible influence of post-race scrutineering, the trophies don't get presented officially on the day, and we present them during the NASA AGM in November at Walsall. The 2017 winners were, for the men's Nationals, the West Midland League, with South Wales second and East Anglia and North Yorkshire joint third. We must apologise for a mix-up at the AGM, when the trophy was accidentally presented to frequent past winners North Western, but the shield's found its way to its rightful home with West Midland chairman Tony Griffiths. The Ladies' and Juniors' shield was very closely contested with post-race scrutineering turning the results round; South Wales won by two points from CGTRO with North Yorkshire third.

CONTROLLING COMPLAINTS

We're sure you'll all have noticed, when you received your 2018 NASA licence, that a new section has appeared that will come into play if you ever feel a need to put in a complaint or appeal about an incident or decision at a race meeting.

This is an idea that came to us through the league chairmen's committee who felt that a small minority of drivers were appearing too quick to lodge complaints rather than accept decisions. The new procedure rations everyone to six complaints in the year. If you wish to make a complaint at a meeting you'll have to hand your licence over and one of the six boxes will be signed off by the person delegated by the club or league to do this. The endorsement stays on your licence for the year whether your complaint is upheld or not. Once all six boxes are filled, any further attempts to complain won't be accepted. The idea is that this will make



NASA MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 9 – February 2018

drivers think a bit more whether their complaint is justified and necessary, and it will free up a little bit of time for officials who, at bigger meetings, sometimes feel they're listening to endless protests from the same drivers.

As the procedure was proposed by the league chairmen, and realistically it will often be the chairman at a meeting who'll be responsible for implementing it, we'll be looking for feedback through the chairmen's committee at the end of the year whether it's worked or not.

We've also heard proposals that NASA should consider adopting an MSA-style totting up procedure, endorsing licences for black flag offences with accumulated points earning automatic licence suspensions. The record-keeping that this would entail has meant that we haven't taken this idea any further yet, but it remains on the agenda for discussion we're sure we haven't heard the last of it.

BREATHALYSER UPDATES

As we near the start of the season, we'd remind all club and league officials who have the NASA-issued Dreager 5820 breathalyser units that these are all due for recalibration if this hasn't already been done.

These units were issued with pre-paid cards telling you where to return them for calibration. Unlike the "old" units, which we're not expecting to be still in use, the new machines should only be returned direct to the manufacturer for calibration, not via NASA.

NON-NASA MEETINGS

We had a couple of issues arise over the winter in respect of non-NASA meetings aimed at Autograss cars. We'd like to remind anyone involved in organising such an event that it must be authorised by NASA, including the payment of a fee, as spelled out in the members' handbook, before being advertised to NASA members.

We had particular issues regarding this year's Oval Racing Expo at Arena Essex, which in the past had always been approved for NASA driver participation, but this year the promoter opted not to invite NASA competitors. A few NASA or ex-NASA cars did appear racing with other classes, which is something we don't have a problem with if the cars are clearly running under another organisation's rules, but we were more concerned that some individuals attempted to promote the meeting to NASA members without authority from either NASA or the event promoter. No action's been taken on this occasion, but we don't expect it to happen again!

CLUB MOVE

One change to the familiar order of clubs in the South West is that the Bredon Hill club has, by mutual consent, moved from the Gloucestershire League to the Wiltshire League. Bredon Hill will continue to race at their familiar venue, the Hilltop Raceway at Tirley, near Tewkesbury. The Gloucestershire League, which last year benefited from Penhow club joining



NASA MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 9 – February 2018

the league, continues as a three-club, currently two-track league with Gloucester, Penhow and Forest of Dean, while Bredon Hill join the Stroud, Athelstan and Yate and Sodbury clubs in their new league.

DRIVING STANDARDS

Having made some progress in this respect last season, the continued move to “clean up” some driving standards will continue to be high on NASA’s agenda going into 2018. We’ll be looking for good feedback and attendance at the regular Walsall marshals’ meetings and we’ll be encouraging all club and league chief marshals to deliver “strong” drivers’ briefings at their early season meetings.

We don’t regard this as a marshalling issue alone; our scrutineering team also have a role to play in tidying on-track standards by drawing attention to the correlation between driving standards and car presentation.

DISCIPLINARY CASES

Towards the end of last year, the only cases dealt with by the NASA disciplinary committee were follow-ups to eligibility scrutineering failures at the National Championships and other events.

As a result, the following drivers enter the 2018 season with competition licence suspensions in force, although all will be permitted to hold members’ or mechanics’ licences while suspended from racing:

Michaela Dance – suspended until 1 June 2018
Ashley Farrar – suspended until 1 June 2018
Jason Stoton – suspended until 1 June 2018
Louse Lovatt – suspended until 1 July 2018
Baxter Pargeter – suspended until 1 July 2018
Michael Ryan – suspended until 1 July 2018
Daniel Hobson – suspended until 1 July 2018

NASA is currently discussing with the disciplinary committee a proposal that would involve fixed tariff penalties for breaches of technical rules; the proposals include provision for penalising registered car owners as well as the driver when a car is found to be illegal.

LICENCE NUMBERS

Although all motorsports in the UK and Ireland continue to see a falling number of licenced competitors, NASA completed 2017 with a relatively small drop in membership; end-of season membership in 2017 totalled 4,169 members, which was 96 down on the previous year. The total included 3,172 racing licence holders, the remainder being members’ or mechanics’ licences.



NASA MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 9 – February 2018

One area where licence numbers should grow is mechanics' licences, we'd like to see clubs push the sale of these, both as a means of increasing overall membership and, most importantly, to help ensure that anyone entering restricted areas (such as the pits during racing) is licenced and signed on to be there.

EXPERIMENTAL CARS

We hope to bring you more details soon of experimental cars approved for the 2018 season. The NASA experimental co-ordinator is now Rob Simmonds, so anyone interested in making a proposal for a new experimental car in any class should contact Rob.

FIXTURE LISTS AND NASA LEAFLETS

The 2018 NASA Fixture list booklets were released at the NEC; as usual several thousand of these flew off the NASA stand, and we also sent the majority of clubs home from the show with supplies for their members. We just have a few boxes left, so if any clubs still need copies for your members, please try and collect them at the Walsall meetings on 18 February.

We still have a good stock of NASA promotional leaflets so, if you have any local events coming up where these could be used, please let us know and we'll arrange to get some stock to you.

FUTURE NEWSLETTERS ...

Any comments on this newsletter, or information or issues you'd like covered in our next issue, please get in touch – email jeffrey.parish@national-autograss.co.uk