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Contact: Diane Swintal
dswintal31@yahoo.com
949.439.7871

www.prototypelites.com



SHEARS ENDS BENNETT DOMINATION, ALEXANDER WINS L2

MILLVILLE, NJ JUNE 26 – Jonathan Bennett was the story of the weekend in Lites 1 – right up until the end of the race, as Charlie Shears, with fresher tires on his #21 Inspire Motorsports/US Builders Élan DPO2, got by for his second victory of the season in the Cooper Tires Prototype Lites Championship at the Mazda Festival of Speed Presented by VisitFlorida.com at New Jersey Motorsports Park.

Shears extended his Championship point lead with a patient race behind Bennett, taking the lead from his teammate and boss with two laps to go.

“I got a workout in today!” exclaimed Shears. “The guys up front are competitors, they’re hard runners, but we just had a great car today. We started out late, we weren’t here for the promoter day (on Thursday), so we felt like we were a little bit behind the curve, but the team did a fantastic job bringing me up to speed. We just ran a few laps in qualifying because we knew tires were going to be a factor. That turned out to be a smart move.

“The car was set up just perfectly and I knew where I could pass everybody. I had a little more grip there at the end – John’s a great rabbit and I just hope I don’t have to chase him tomorrow!”

Bennett, at the wheel of the #54 Inspire Motorsports/Composite Resources Élan DPO2, was happy with second place after a race weekend in Monterey last month that saw him plummet in the point standings.

“It was a real tough race,” said Bennett. “I got really lucky with traffic – and traffic was really polite, I appreciate that! I had a fantastic team behind me and I’m proud to be the new owner of Inspire Motorsports!”

The expected battle in Lites 2 between John Weisberg (#75 BERG Racing/Redcom West WR1000) and Lee Alexander (#23 Factory 48 Motorsports West WX10) didn’t develop, as Weisberg’s gearbox woes continued. Alexander expects tomorrow’s Round 6 to be quite different.

It was really tough, I want to thank my crew for keeping this car running in the heat, it was tough out there,” said Alexander. “My crew came over with some ice cubes and put them down my back before the race, but that lasted about half a lap. I think I lost some wheel weights or something, the car was vibrating really badly halfway through the race – I thought my dash was going to fall off and my hands are still shaking!

“I knew John had a mechanical problem, so I just tried to keep it on the track and finish in front of him. I was hoping for a little more of a race with him, but hopefully tomorrow we can get it on!”

Featuring racing between two sports racer prototype classes, Lites 1 and Lites 2, the Cooper Tires Prototype Lites Championship presents a dimension of competition as drivers must be aware of classes with distinctly different speeds as they navigate the race tracks. This is the same challenge faced by the drivers of the American Le Mans Series presented by Tequila Patrón.

Round 6 of the Cooper Tires Prototype Lites Championship season is tomorrow at 10:05 am EDT. The season continues July 9 - 11, with Rounds 7 and 8 held in conjunction with the Larry H. Miller Dealerships Utah Grand Prix at Miller Motorsports Park.

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