

Sunday, April 27, 2014

## DiMeo, Holbrook, and Price Win at Barber Motorsports Park in Round 1

Written by Series Staff

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. - Michael DiMeo, of Toronto, ON, Shea Holbrook, of Groveland, FL, and Brian Price, of Middlesboro, VA took home wins in TC, TCA and TCB respectively in Round 1 of the Pirelli World Challenge at Barber Motorsports Park Presented by RECARO. All three classes featured exciting, pitched battles throughout the 40-minute, 24-lap race.

In TC, DiMeo, in the No. 71 ENJ Excavating/Formcrete/HPD Compass360 Racing Honda Civic Si started from pole and was challenged immediately off of the standing start by Jon Miller, of North Tustin, CA, who started second in the No. 68 Titan Motorsports/Loudbasstard/BeTheMatch.org Cawley Motorsports Honda Civic Si. Miller passed DiMeo into the first turn and opened up a lead, while Jason Saini, of Chicago, IL, in the No. 28 OMP/Motovicity Grid-1 Motorsports Mazda MX-5, quickly moved up into third after starting at the back of the

six-car TC grid. Saini had originally won the pole for the Round 1 race but was found out of compliance during post-qualifying tech inspection, and was moved to the back of the grid.

All three drivers held position for the first 10 minutes of the race. On Lap 8 things changed as Saini closed in on DiMeo and passed for second. At the halfway point of the race, Saini had then closed up on Miller's bumper and an epic battle ensued with Miller protecting the lead and Saini looking to pass. The battle allowed DiMeo to close the gap back up on the two front runners and on Lap 14, DiMeo passed Saini to regain second and close in on the bumper of Miller. With six minutes to go in the race, DiMeo executed a pass on Miller for the lead but soon after was instructed by Race Control to give the position back because of contact. Soon after, Miller retired due to a mechanical issue and DiMeo assumed the lead. Saini fell back to fourth overall with a host of issues, but still ended second in TC.

For DiMeo, the win is his first in his third series start. He also finished third in the final 2013 TC round at Houston. "The start went OK. I kind of screwed up, spun the tires," said DiMeo. "You can't win a race in the first corner so I stayed patient. The Miata (Saini) tracked me down. But it was about patience. Thanks to CTF, we're happy to support them and thanks to all my sponsors here at C360R. I'm very happy to have my first win."

Saini finished second in his return to the championship after a several-year hiatus.

"It was great, we were catching the leader, we felt we had a car to win," said Saini. "But then we had a hub failure, a routine part on the MX-5s. These tires have so much grip that I think it did the hub in. We'll fix it up. I was hanging on for dear life. I had a flat tire, went off, through the gravel twice, and used the brake pedal to hold the hub up."

In third was Adam Poland, of Mt. Vernon, TX, in the No. 11 Eastex Motorsports/Poland Construction Mazda MX-5 after a trouble-free series debut.

In TCA, Holbrook, in the No. 67 Radium/TRUECar/Lucas Oil/Hendrick Honda Honda Civic Si, enjoyed a racelong battle with series debutante Jason Cherry, of Gambrills, Md., in the No. 13 Axpro/Purposeful Architecture Mazda MX-5.

Holbrook and Cherry exchanged the lead several times, as their two different cars excelled in different areas on the circuit. Cherry took the lead on Lap 13 from Holbrook, but was directed by Race Control on lap 14 to give the position back because of contact during the pass. Holbrook then held on for the rest of the way and won by 0.210 of a second to secure her second series victory, after also winning the TC race at Long Beach in 2011. She finished second overall.

"Jason Cherry is a great driver," said Holbrook. "I'm excited to watch him progress. He gave me a hard run. There were parts of the track where I had a better car, and parts where his was better. Not an easy run for me. I'm extremely happy to have my first first at our first event at Barber Motorsports Park! Have to thank all my partners, TRUECar, Lucas Oil, Radium, Women Sports Foundation, Hendrick Honda, and my guys."

Cherry brought the Breathless Performance team, which also competes in the Pirelli World Challenge GT5 and TCB classes, its first podium finish of the season. "I'm happy with the race results," said Cherry. "I came in with very realistic goals. I raced someone with a lot of experience. It was a lot of fun to race Shea."

In third was Jason Wolfe, of Mt. Vernon, Ohio, in the No. 36 Kia Motors America Kia Forte Koup. Wolfe made his series debut this race after competing in open-wheeled USF2000 cars in 2013.

The TCB battle was an intense, seemingly always changing three-way fight between Price, in the No. 51 Unlimited Racing/RP Performance Honda Fit, Tyler Palmer of San Diego, Calif., in the No. 37 MINI of Charleston Racing Mini Cooper and Johan Schwartz, of Denmark, in the No. 12 Garrett/Drive4Diabetes/American Honda Honda Fit, who finished in the top three positions.

Schwartz held the lead from the Motul Pole Position for the first 16 laps, but was consistently threatened by both Price and Palmer behind him. At one point on the run out of Turn 4 and the run to Turn 5, in an exciting side-by-side battle with Palmer for second, Price also unsuccessfully attempted to pass Schwartz. Price did make it past on Lap 17 when he went to Schwartz's outside, and Palmer's inside, at Turns 8 and 9. The pass by Price for the lead netted him the Cadillac CTS-V Move of the Race.

Shortly thereafter Palmer made a move for second on Schwartz to the inside at Turns 15 and 16, even using the grass on the right side of the course through the Turn 15 right-hander, to complete the move. Palmer then began the chase to hunt down Price for the win, but it was to no avail.

Price's win comes in his series debut, and is the first for a Honda Fit in the series since Toronto last year. "It was one heck of a race," said Price. "I tried to keep on the black stuff. There was some TC cars that passed us, but we fought our way through traffic to take it."

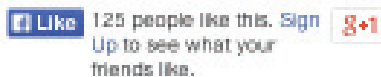
Palmer, who won the last two TCB races in 2013, has his ninth series podium in 10 career starts. "With multi class racing every car has some advantages and disadvantages," said Palmer. "The Mini was better in higher speed turns, the Honda had the straights down. So I was fastest on the back side. The track is awesome. It has a lot of different elevation changes. In the TCB class we're limited on what we can do but it was a fun race."

PJ Groenke of Toronto, ON in the No. 66 Verax.ca/TundraTech/MulliganGold Shea Racing Honda Fit claimed the Optima Best Standing Start, passing five TCB competitors when the lights went out. Groenke ended the race sixth in class.

Chris Sneed, of Pfafftown, NC in the No. 34 Sneed4Speed.com Mini Cooper was awarded the Invisible Glass Clean Pass of the Race for his pass of Andrei Kisel, of North Vancouver, B.C. in the No. 57 Racing.ca/LaptopScreen.com Mini Cooper on Lap 2. Sneed was also awarded the Sunoco Hard Charger Award for the most positions gained during the race with seven; he ended ninth in class.

Based on fastest laps from the Round 1 race, Saini will start on the grid for Round 2 in TC, Holbrook in TCA, and Price in TCB.

Round 2 of the TC, TCA, and TCB 2014 season is scheduled for Sunday, April 27, 5:00 P.M. CDT/6:00 P.M. EDT. Live streaming of the race begins at 4:30 P.M. CDT / 5:30 P.M. EDT.



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