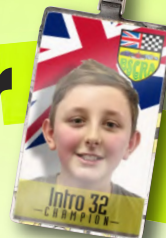


Heart of a Champion

Interview with Aston Offer

BSCRA Intro 32 National Champion

by Ric Woods



If the UK Festival had gone ahead in May, I am absolutely sure that us old codgers would have gathered at some point to indulge in our own annual festival of gloom, bemoaning the lack of young people coming into the hobby and pointing out that "it wasn't like that in our day." Here at Slot Car Magazine, we were

therefore delighted to hear that a twelve-year-old has recently helped himself to a very impressive haul of silverware at the 1/32nd BSCRA Clubmans Nationals, held on the 29th February and 1st March at the Corby facility in the UK. The young man bucking the trend of youthful indifference is Aston Offer. We needed to find out more...

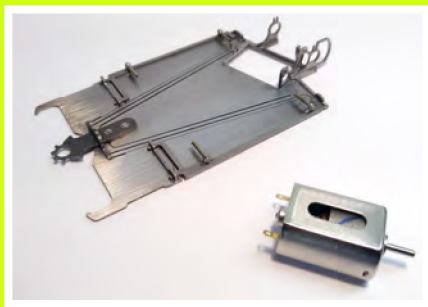
How and when did you get into slot car racing?

My Grandad first took me to Luton Slot Car Club when I was six years old. At the time, the club race night was on a Monday and because of the late finish I could not race regularly. The club did have a Slotstox track that I could race on regularly, as it did not take place on a school night.

You won the 'Intro 32' category. For those of us who aren't familiar with BSCRA rules, please could you tell us about Intro 32 cars?

'Intro 32' is a current BSCRA racing class based on a standard 'Genesis' steel chassis and motor which, together with the remaining running gear, should be able to be assembled for around £65.00. The cars also have to have a fixed pinion and gear ratio.





This class is a great introduction to BSCRA slot racing and does not demand advanced soldering skills, as the chassis comes assembled and the motor can be screwed into position.

You were also a winner in the team race, Top Clubman in F2 and had an unlucky retirement in the saloon race. Quite a day!

I was lucky enough to be partnered with ex-World and National champion James Cleave for the team race, which we won. The cars used for this event were the Intro 32s and this provided some good practice for the main event which followed. James set up my car for the main Clubman's race and despite a worrying moment in the last segment, I was thrilled to lead a Luton 1-2-3 with Chris Stemman and Marc Lyons at the finish. Saturday's racing started well enough with a third place in the F2 competition behind seasoned racers James Cleave and Gavin Wills and the qualifying and heats for the Saloon event went to plan. Unfortunately, a hard impact with a deslotted car on the main straight whilst leading the final broke the guide flag and bent the guide tab that it is mounted on.

Who builds the cars? Are you getting involved with that?

I'm lucky enough to have enough supportive people around me to provide cars, keep them running, and provide valuable advice. I will involve myself more in the preparation as my understanding of the setting up of slot cars develops.

Which club do you belong to?

I am a member of Luton Slot Car Club, which has recently established permanent premises near Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, after many years in Luton. We race BSCRA cars on Wednesday nights and hardbody cars on alternate Fridays. Luckily for me, the track is now only

about five miles from where I live in Potton.

What type of hardbody cars do you race?

We race two classes of hardbody car: sports and saloon. Both classes have to use the standard chassis the car was supplied with, but we allow motor changes (limited to 25,000 revs) and the use of aluminium wheels and racing tyres.

What is your favourite type of racing?

I prefer the BSCRA classes as it was the speed of them that first attracted me.

How did the old guys react when you started beating them? Well, I hope!

Yes. Other racers have been very encouraging and are pleased for my current success. They recognise the need to get new blood into slot racing and do not want to put any young competitors off.

Are you interested in full-size racing?

Not so much, but my racing hero is Ken Block. Coming from the gaming generation it is drift cars and the 'Fast and Furious' films that catch my imagination.

What's the reaction of your friends to your racing success?

I don't make a big thing about it to school friends, although they might see the local Facebook, Twitter or Instagram pages when I am featured.

In slot car racing, we are constantly worried about the

lack of young people coming into it. You, of course, are a notable exception! What do you get out of slot racing that you wouldn't get out of video games, for example?

Slot racing is a huge rush and, as I have found out to my cost, crashing has real time consequences that cannot be solved with a quick push of a reset button. It provides proper competition with between three and seven other racers on the track at the same time and not at the end of an internet connection.

Have you any hopes or ambitions in slot racing?

I certainly want to defend my Intro 32 title next year, and of course, it's unfinished business in Saloon. I would also like to take part in the Main BSCRA Nationals event in May 2021. I am also keen to gain some experience on other club tracks around the country to broaden my knowledge.

There you have it. The attitude is there, so is the speed. We'll be looking out for Aston in the future.

