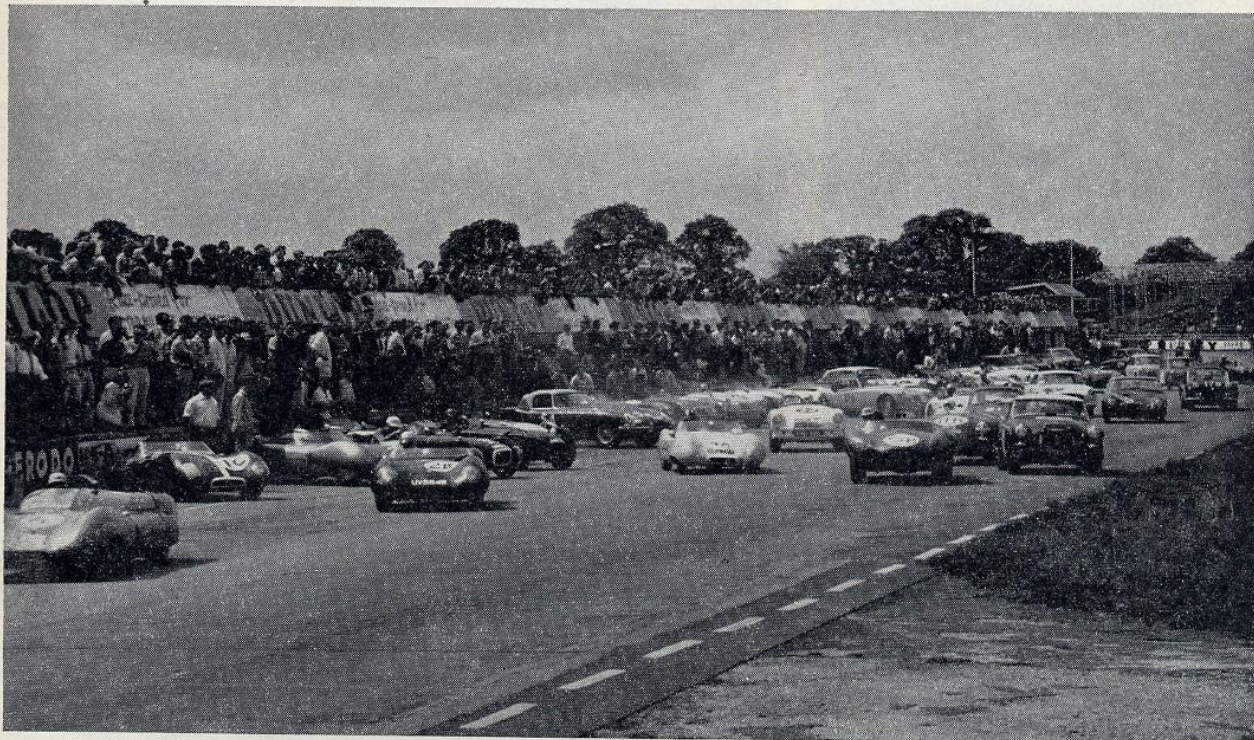


SUCCESS FOR THE SEBRINGS

**Sebring Sprites Victorious in Britain's Longest Motor Race
Another Triumph for the 750 M.C. with Their Annual Classic**

BY MICHAEL KETTLEWELL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PATRICK BENJFIELD



TRAFFIC JAM at the start: The fastest car in each team hustles away from the pits at the start of a six-hour battle.

THE team of Sebring Sprites beat handicapper Charles Bulmer at Silverstone last Saturday when they won the Seven-Fifty Motor Club's six hours relay race by six laps from the Octagon Stable's Austin-Healey 3000s. The Jaguar Drivers' team sent out their fastest cars first to build up a commanding lead, but this was lost for them by the slower cars of the team. They finished third.

A total of 24 teams, ranging from the Fury Team's potent Coventry Climax-engined Lotuses and Lolas on scratch, to the SAABs which received 68 credit laps, were lined up in echelon for the Le Mans start at 1 p.m. Although some drivers anticipated Holly Birkett's flag by a second, the start was good and Mike Beckwith (Lotus Eleven) streaked ahead. Maurice Charles soon passed him and led at the completion of the first lap in his powerful D-type Jaguar. He was followed by Beckwith, Mike Bond (Austin-Healey 3000), Bob Olthoff (M.G.A. "Twin Cam"), B. M. Wetherill (Lotus Eleven), Hugh Braithwaite (Morgan Plus 4), John Thurner (T.V.R.), Mike Johnson (Austin-Healey 3000), F. W. Dodgson (Lotus Eleven), Mike Adlington (Lotus Seven), John Sprinzel (A.-H. Sebring Sprite) and the rest, with Sid Hurrell's SAAB, P. L. Cracknell's Austin 7 and G. B. Toft's Austin special at the rear.

By the second lap, Charles had opened

up a 4 secs. lead from Beckwith, who, in turn, was well ahead of Wetherill's Eleven which had slipped by Bond's Healey. A grand scrap for fourth position was waged between Bond, Olthoff, Braithwaite, Thurner and Adlington. After four laps, the D-type was only three lengths ahead of Beckwith and already the SAAB, Cracknell's Mini and Toft's 750 special had been lapped. The 1,216 c.c. Lotus of Beckwith led on lap five as Charles had spun at Becketts, Wetherill was still third, but Thurner's M.G.-powered T.V.R. now held fourth spot closely followed by Adlington, Olthoff and Dodgson. Due to a locking brake, Braithwaite's Morgan spun and came into the pits to hand the all-

important sash to R. E. Meredith. This marked the first of the many pit stops which are one of the main attractions of this event and entertain the spectators.

Beckwith continued to draw away, and John Whitmore had already lapped the SAAB with his Mini. Thurner's T.V.R. and Olthoff's M.G. were both going wonderfully although the latter smoked somewhat. John Sprinzel's Sprite "lost" a plug, so he handed over to Peter Jackson.

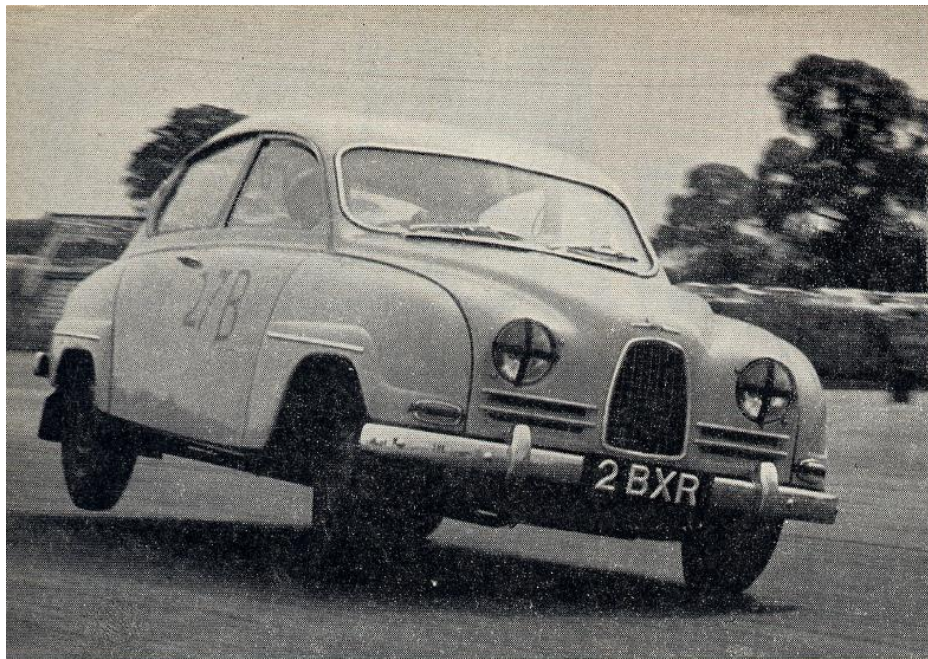
With 14 laps gone, Beckwith stopped with clutch trouble and Peter Dickinson (Lotus Eleven) relieved him. Maurice Charles had regained the lead, motoring in splendid fashion as only one can in a big, hairy sports-racer. Bernie Rodger brought in the Triumph-engined Warwick due to a mistaken pit signal, so Rowland Ham took out the 3½-litre Buick-powered machine. By the 18th lap, Charles had lapped everyone bar the second, third and fourth place men. Bob Olthoff's M.G. had a slight fire at Becketts as the exhaust pipe had scorched the floorboards. He extinguished it and came into the pits, handing over to Dick Crosfield. But Crosfield was spilling fuel as the filler cap was open, so he had to stop five laps later to hand the sash to Vernon Clark.

With half an hour's racing completed, the timekeepers gave the positions which

(Continued on page 230)

Results

1, Team Sebring (John Sprinzel, Chris Williams, Douglas Wilson-Spratt, David Seigle-Morris, Peter Jackson and Ian Walker—Austin-Healey Sebring Sprites), 303 laps. 2, Octagon Stable (Mike Bond and John Gott—Austin-Healey 3000s), 297 laps. 3, Jaguar Drivers (Robin Sturges—"E"-type, Maurice Charles—"D"-type, Eric Brown—XK 120, Don Smith—XK 150S, Peter Sargent—3.4 Mk. 1 and P. J. Woodroffe—3.4 Mk. 2), 295 laps. 4, Moore Minis (Christabel Carlisle and John Whitmore—Austin 7s, John Richard-Aley and Frank Hamlin—Morris Mini-Minors and Andrew Hedges—Austin A40), 295 laps. 5, M.G.C.C., N.W. Centre, 294 laps. 6, A.C. Owners' Club, 293 laps. 7, Fury Team, 292 laps. 8, M.G.C.C., S.E. Centre (Twin Cams), 292 laps. 9, Triumph, 292 laps. 10, Team Club Lotus, 290 laps. 11, Warwick G.T., 288 laps. 12, T.V.R. Grantura, 287 laps. 13, 1172 Formula (London), 287 laps. 14, Mixed Climax, 287 laps. 15, Healeys, 286 laps.



REALLY TRYING! Leon Abbott's SAAB picks up its heels at Woodcote. The effort was short-lived, however, and below the marshals assist the driver from the wrecked car.



"Six Hours"—continued

included one-twelfth of the total handicap. This did not take into account, however, the part of a lap which may have remained incomplete at the exact moment when calculations were made. The Jaguars were ahead, having done 25.3 laps, and second equal were the Sebring Sprites and T.V.R. Granturas at 24.1 laps.

From now on there were pit stops galore. Maurice Charles had by this time lapped everyone as Peter Dickinson, who had been second on the road (i.e., ignoring the handicap), handed over to his wife Brenda (Lola). Thurner's T.V.R., which had been travelling so extraordinarily fast, ran out of petrol and freewheeled slowly to the pits. A runner collected the sash and gave it to John Woolfe who set off in great haste. However, Woolfe was soon in trouble when he lost all his oil and John Brown's Climax-engined T.V.R. replaced him. Elizabeth Jones took over from Mike Johnson in the Healey team.

After looking uncomfortable for several laps, Meredith spun his Morgan at Woodcote, "lost" his engine and finished

SMILES OF VICTORY for the Sebring Sprite team after the race. They took the lead from the Jaguars in the fourth hour.



up facing the oncoming traffic. The sash was brought to the pits and Braithwaite went out again, while the stalled Morgan was manhandled into a more suitable position.

The pipe to the oil pressure gauge on Peter Jackson's Sprite burst, so John Sprinzel went out again. Brenda Dickinson, who had been dicing with Campbell Dawson's Lotus Eleven in her Lola, handed over to Roy Pierpoint who proceeded to lap even faster than the D-type in his 2-litre Lotus Fifteen. Hugh Braithwaite was driving his Morgan really well and had a private dice with the Le Mans Healey, which he overtook. The Morgan then devoured John Rodgers's A.C.-Bristol and Ham's Warwick.

After one hour's racing the Jaguars led with 52.7 laps completed, though the timekeepers listed them last with only 42.7 laps to their credit. By my calculations Maurice Charles had completed 50 laps in the first hour, and adding one-sixth of the Jaguar Drivers' team handicap, 2.7 laps, that makes 52.7 laps. The N.W. Centre M.G.s were second at 50.3 laps and the Sebring Sprites third with 49.5 laps in spite of two unscheduled pit stops.

John Rodgers had now caught the Warwick while Elizabeth Jones had overdrive trouble on her 3000, so she let David Mackay's 100 go out. Sid Hurrell had completed his maximum allowance of 50 laps, therefore Leon Abbott's standard SAAB replaced him, and Braithwaite brought in his Morgan so that Paddy McNally could have a go.

After one-and-a-half hours of brilliant driving Maurice Charles brought in the D-type to hand over to the E-type of Robin Sturgess. These two cars had a joint maximum of 100 laps, so that Sturgess could not do more than about 30 before having to hand over to the slower cars of the team. It was obvious, therefore, that team manager Rodney Crouch's aim was to draw well ahead at the beginning with the D-type, let the E-type do a few laps to complete the 100, then hope that the other Jags. would go well enough to keep the lead.

By 2.30 p.m. the Jaguars led having completed 79 laps and the Sebring Sprites were second with 75.3. The T.V.R.s were in trouble, for both A. Oakes-Richards and John Woolfe were in difficulty one after the other. Bob Olthoff's indecently fast M.G. was back

in the race, and he desperately tried to keep up with Sturgess's E-type, giving an excellent display of hair-raising sideways driving, the tyres now smoking as well as the engine! John Richard-Aley's Mini ground to a halt at Woodcote, sparks flying, with a marker barrel under the front. It was removed and the Mini continued at undiminished speed, only to be called in for inspection, which meant that Andrew Hedges had a go in his A40.

At 3 p.m., the Jaguars, having completed 103.3 laps, were 3.3 ahead of the Sebring Sprites, but Sturgess's run had finished and Don Smith was out in his 3.8-litre XK 150S. Ham's noisy Warwick was called in just after having won a duel with Paddy McNally's Morgan, and Bernie Rodger went out in the Triumph-engined car.

Mike Bond, after two-and-a-half hours of solid racing in David Dixon's big Healey, was at last called in and replaced by John Gott's similar car which was not, however, fitted with the long-range tanks which had allowed Bond to stay out for so long.

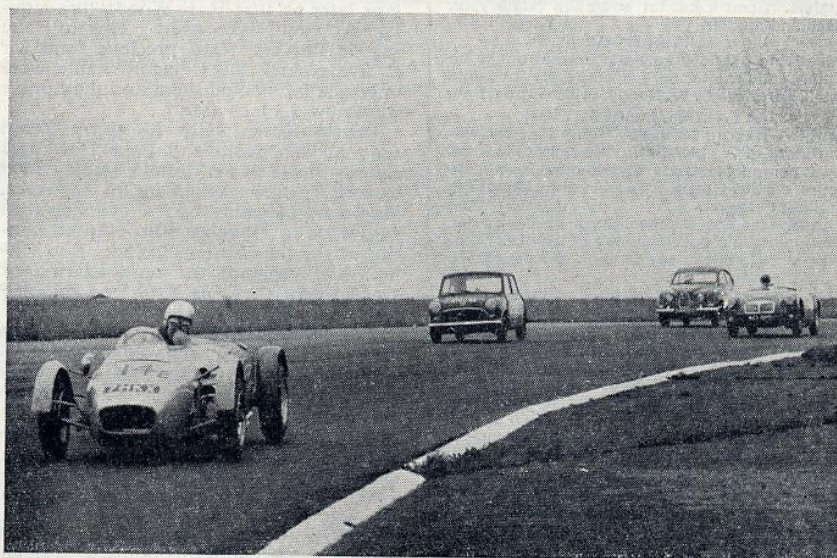
The American Bill Bowman motored into the ditch at Woodcote and scared himself somewhat, as well as leaving a deep scratch along the side of his Ace. He was pushed away and on the next lap went into the paddock for some obscure reason. As this was before the start/finish line, he had lost a lap as well as many seconds while a mechanic had to run from the paddock along the pit straight to G. Dempsey's waiting A.C.

The Sebring Sprites were steadily catching the Jags. At 3.30 p.m. they were 1.9 laps behind having done 125.8, and by four o'clock they had done 151.5 compared with the 152 of the Jaguar drivers. Ian Walker was out for the Sprites in place of David Seigle-Morris and was gaining 5 secs. a lap on the handicap. In fact, he passed the XK 150S with the greatest of ease! Christabel Carlisle, driving for the Moore Minis, was putting up her usual display of spirited motoring.

Leon Abbott was cornering his SAAB on two wheels—the front ones!—at Woodcote, but later on he lost adhesion and went straight on, bending the front of the car a great deal, as well as hurting himself. The sash was brought over to Chris Summers's waiting car while Abbott had to be brought across the



CHANGE-OVER: (Above) John Sprinzel, of the winning team, brings in his Sprite to hand over to Ian Walker. (Below) Maggotts Curve, with Arthur Cooke leading John Handley's Mini, Richard Ide's M.G. and Sid Hurrell's SAAB.



WINNING team in the 750 M.C. Inter-Centre Shield competition.



track on a stretcher to a waiting ambulance. He was taken to hospital, but luckily his injuries were not serious.

By 4.30 p.m., by dint of the prodigious efforts of Ian Walker, the Sebring Sprites were two laps ahead of the Jags. with 177.3 laps chalked up. The Octagon Stable Austin-Healey 3000s were, like last year, steadily creeping up and were now threatening the Jaguars.

Don Smith handed over to Eric Brown's D-type-engined XK 120; however, this car was somewhat slower than anticipated in spite of furious cornering by Brown and he was passed by Sprites, M.G.s, Healey 3000s and things. The Emerson works driver Mike Spence was out for the A.C. team and was having a great time holding off Robin Stelfox's 2,136 c.c. Triumph TR3.

Ian Walker handed over to Chris Williams who continued to increase the lead for the Sebring Sprites. Dick Crossfield's Twin Cam M.G. blew up along the Club Straight so Vernon Clark was sent out to retrieve the sash. Paul Hawkins, driving PMO 200 which John Sprinzel had driven earlier, replaced Williams, while John Richard-Aley

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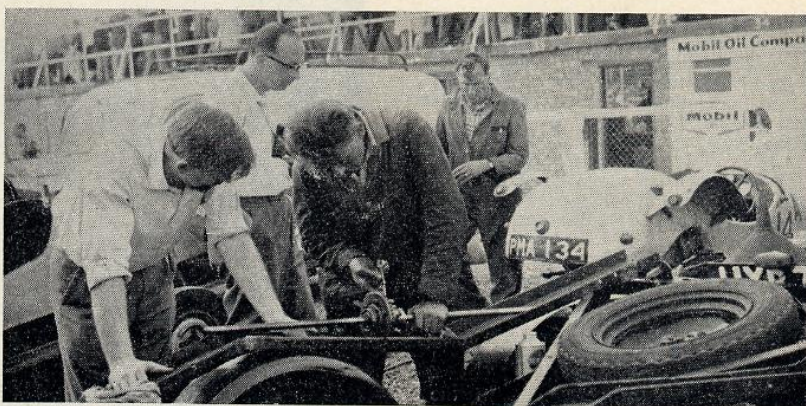
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AUTOBOOKS

RUNNING REPAIRS: D. A. T. Rees's 1172 Special had its differential changed during the race!

replaced New Zealander Frank Hamlin in the Moore Minis team and John Gott handed over to Mike Bond for the Octagon Stable.

Peter Sargent's Jaguar 3.4 replaced Eric Brown's XK 120, but the car was misfiring and he came to the pits a few laps later so that P. J. Woodroffe's similar car could take over. This lost the Jaguar Drivers' team precious time for at five o'clock the Octagon Stable were only one lap behind them and the Sprites were now 3.3 laps ahead.

Laurie Keens spun his Fury Team Lola at Woodcote and Paul Hawkins's cheeky Sprite passed Bond's Healey 3000 to add further excitement to the race. However, Hawkins had a cylinder-head gasket go so Douglas Wilson-Spratt continued for the Sebring Sprites. Bob Olthoff had replaced the nose bearing of the differential of his M.G. and rejoined the race, driving as well as ever.

At 5.30 p.m. the Sprites were 4.7 laps ahead of the Jags, with 227.7 laps completed while the Octagon Healeys were only half a lap behind the Coventry cars. Ian Walker replaced Wilson-Spratt and AUTOSPORT's Paddy McNally, who had earlier been driving for the Morgan team, replaced Chris Summers in the SAAB team. Later, when Meredith's Morgan went off the road once more, just after Copse, there was a cry of "where's McNally!" for they wanted him to go out and retrieve the sash and carry on. Eventually Braithwaite was sent off.

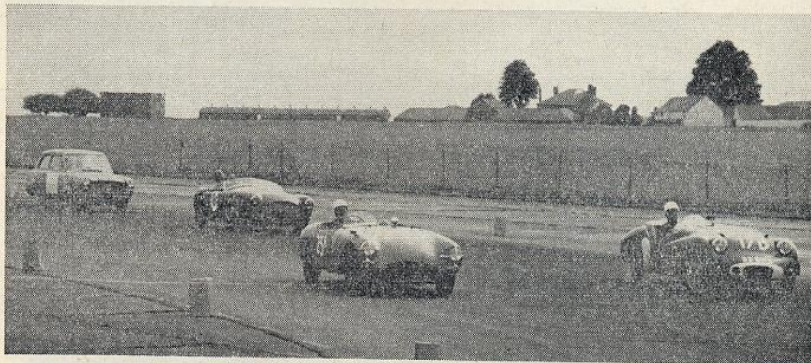
David Seigle-Morris replaced Ian Walker, John Gott from Mike Bond and Peter Sargent, whose 3.4 was now well, from Woodroffe. The Warwicks of

Bernie Rodger and Rowland Ham were often changing for some reason.

At 6 p.m., with one hour to go, the order was: 1, Sebring Sprites, 235.5 laps; 2, Octagon Stable, 248.3; 3, Jaguar Drivers, 247.3; 4, M.G.C.C. (N.W. Centre), 244.7; 5, Fury Team, 244; 6, A.C. Owners' Club and Moore Minis, 243.7. At 6.30 p.m. the Moore Minis were equal fourth with the M.G.s, therefore, with the first three positions fairly certain, interest was focused on the battle for fourth place. M. E. Waterhouse spun his M.G. at Woodcote, came in on the next lap and was replaced by Dick Ide. John Whitmore, out for the Moore Minis, when passed by Ide on the road (ignoring the handicap for a moment), stayed right with him for a while, until power won. A little while later, Whitmore passed Sargent's 3.4 going into Woodcote, much to the delight of the spectators! Thanks to Whitmore's extra-fast motoring and the delays of the M.G. team, Moore Minis were fourth.

The race was now run, and at seven o'clock precisely the flag came down, just as Peter Dickinson crossed the line in his Lotus Eleven. There were two dicey manoeuvres as cars raced across the line and poor Holly Birkett, clerk of the course, was nearly run over!

Douglas Wilson-Spratt came in, after having done the last stint for the Sebring Sprites and following a lap of honour, the team were presented with their garlands by Hazel Chapman. The L.M.B. Shield for the best 750 Formula team in the race was won by Team 26. They were the only 750 Formula team in the race. So ended Britain's longest and most novel motor race!



WOODCOTE: T. Petersen (Triumph), G. Golding (Fairthorpe), G. Dempsey (A.C.) and Andrew Hedges (A40) line up for the corner.