



## GH Mcs. Santon Enduro 2024

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**Photos: Narna Media, CWH Media, Anthony Ridge & Paul Flack**

On Sunday 25 February Diss MCC ran the extremely popular Santon Enduro in Thetford Forest. Despite weeks of heavy rain the forest showed no signs of the many floods that we've experienced even in this dry side of the country.

The top riders from East Anglia were all set to do battle for this, the first round of the 2024 GH Mcs./Husqvarna ACUE Championship. However, the full house of 200 entries included riders from around the country and all eyes would be on Steve Holcombe, 2023 World Enduro Champion out for the first time on the 250 Red Moto Honda.

The event started at 9:00am and almost immediately the championship riders were at the first special test.

However, the drama began before the test got underway and the organisers rapidly had to abort timing of the first championship test to resolve a technical issue and get ready to time the remaining classes. They would still face three tests later in the event.

With everything reset, the experts were soon into the test and Adam Reeve, 450 Kawasaki set the early pace with a 2 minute 50 test. He was closely followed by Brett Pocock 250 Dirt Store Fantic, just 0.75 seconds back. Ben Zeale 125 Mundell KTM was 0.6 second back in third with David Rushton 450 AR KTM and Diss clubman, Ross Taylor 250 Ridge Racing Yamaha was in fifth.

In the expert vets Matt Pope 250 Kawasaki showed his form with a clear first test win from Tim Warnes also on a 250 Kawasaki with James Jackman rounding out the top three.

In the very popular clubman class Rees Jones 125 ET James Youth Enduro Team GASGAS, the youngest rider at the event, showed tremendous speed in his first timecard enduro setting the fastest clubman test time with 2 minute 59. He is the son of Ed Jones a former national enduro star and former winner of the Muntjac Enduro. The second youngest rider Kit Szabo, 250 Sherwood Roofing KTM was 1.6 seconds behind with Diss clubman Jake Ward 300 Husqvarna a fine third.



**Steve Holcombe in action – Santon 2024 Championship winner**

Christian Drane 450 GASGAS topped the clubman vets class from Diss clubman Scott Chaplin, 350 GASGAS and Philip Waldron, 250 Yamaha.

Finally in the well supported Clubman Supervets, the second largest class at the event, 2023 ACUE champion, John Hilton 300 Fab-Weld KTM started as he left 2023 with a dominant first test. He was some 6.4 seconds clear of another Diss clubman, Mark Chapman 250 KTM with Darren Osborne 125 Yamaha in third a mere 0.29 seconds back. The eventual winner was Michael Ridge 250 Ridge Racing Yamaha in fourth.

At just after 10:00am test racing finally began for the championship class. As the top riders blasted through the sandy terrain it was Steve Holcombe who took the first timed test win with 2 minutes 30. In second, out for the first time on a 450 RWT MPM Kawasaki was 2023 ACUE motocross and enduro champion Luke Parker, just 2.2 seconds behind Holcombe and a second faster than his second test in 2023. Former British Enduro Champion Alex Snow, 350 Alex Snow Off Road GASGAS was third, a further 1.3 seconds back. Ben Cole 450 GH Husqvarna was fourth, 2.5 seconds down on Snow with 2023 ACUE enduro runner up Ben Clark 300 Beta in fifth a further 2.5 seconds back.



**Luke Parker best East Anglian in the championship class – 3<sup>rd</sup> overall**



**Ben Zeale – expert winner**

In the strong expert class Zeale managed to scream the 125 KTM to the top spot just 0.36 seconds clear of Reeve with Pocock again in third, some 2.7 seconds back. Sam Boyd 200 Beta UK slotted in fourth just 0.09 seconds behind Pocock with Taylor again slotting into fifth. However, after their two tests Reeve was fastest overall a second ahead of Zeale with Pocock, Boyd and Taylor rounding out the top five.

In the expert vets it was a repeat of the first test with Pope, Warnes and Jackman again taking the top three places and maintaining their positions after their two tests.

In the clubman class Rees Jones was again the star, with a test time of 2 minutes 55 which would have placed him fifth in the expert class. Jake Ward managed to move up to second, some seven seconds back with Kit Szabo third a further 1.5 seconds behind. Overall test times saw Jones some ten seconds clear of Szabo with Ward two seconds back in third.

Drane again dominated the clubman vets with Waldron taking second and Chaplin third. Chaplin's faster first test meant he held on to second, three seconds ahead of Waldron.

Hilton was again fastest of the Clubman Supervets from Chapman who was only 1.7 seconds back and Ridge set the third fastest time a second behind Chapman. Event sponsor Gav Hockey was fourth fastest on his second run. Hilton was 8 seconds clear of Chapman after their two tests with Ridge moving up to third 2.5 seconds behind Chapman.

The championship class faced two back to back tests on lap three. Holcombe was again at the top of the heap from Parker, who was just over two seconds back from Snow, Cole and Clark. As the test became ever more challenging Holcombe again dominated the third test, this time some 6 seconds clear of Parker, with Snow again slotting in to third. Aaron Gordon 450 ORE Yamaha was fourth fastest with Shaun Southgate, motocross star on his 450 GH Yamaha fifth, Clark in sixth and Cole in seventh. Fourth to seventh place were separated by a mere 0.7 seconds, it was that tight.



**Rees Jones clubman winner**

After the three tests it was Holcombe 10 seconds ahead of Parker with Snow in third, four seconds back. Ben Cole held on to fourth just 3 seconds ahead of Clark but the championship class still had 3 laps of the course to ride and the final lap would be the challenge with a mere 22 minute allowance for the final 11.2 mile lap. The first four riders were due at 13:12 and all eyes were on the time clocks. As the seconds ticked by there was no sound from the trees and it wasn't until 13:13.50 that Ben Clark emerged from the trees closely followed by Parker. They had both lost a minute, could anyone beat them? Cole was next into the time control but he'd lost two. Almost immediately behind him was Holcombe at around 13:14.30 – comfortably in on his minute and a few seconds later Snow also appeared. Both riders would be the only ones to clean this final very challenging lap.

Of the riders losing a minute, Parker was best slotting into third place with Clark moving up to fourth. Gordon and Charlie Chater 250 ORE Yamaha were the only other riders to only lose only one minute so finished fifth and sixth.

Holcombe was clearly pleased with his first competitive ride on the Red Moto Honda and was heading off to Italy after the event to continue pre-season testing. He relished the ultra-tight final lap. Snow, who only rides occasionally again rose to the challenge of the final lap and was pleased with his result. Parker was relieved to finish on his first competitive ride on the Kawasaki. He usually excels on the first test of the day, but as that wasn't timed he didn't gain the advantage. He also aggravated an old knee injury on the going, so was thankful to finish and be best of the East Anglian riders. Ben Clark, despite not getting the test times he would have liked was fastest East Anglian on the final lap which gained him fourth from Cole who had a small crash on the final lap but was still fastest of the riders losing two minutes.

The other rider to note was our youngest entrant, Rees Jones, who not only proved fastest on the tests on his 125 GASGAS but also was one of only six clubmen to clean the final lap.

Diss club riders were well represented in the results with Adam Durkin taking the last championship point in fifteenth in the ultra-fast championship class. Ross Taylor finished eleventh in the expert class, the final lap seeing him lose three minutes. Jake Ward finished second in the clubman class, a great start to his 2024 season. Scott Chaplin also finished second in the clubman vets and Mark Chapman finished third in the clubman supervets.

On behalf of Diss MCC I'd like to thank everyone who helped to setup, run and clear up, our first event of 2024. Special thanks of course go to Andy Waters and the team that do so much work to overcome the many logistical challenges we face to run forest events. Finally, our very grateful thanks go to Forest England, GH Motorcycles and G & B Finch for their sponsorship and to our first aid team, Raynet and 4x4 response. Don't forget our next forest event, The Muntjac which will form the final round of the 2024 ACUE Enduro championship and will run on 17 November.

Richard Snowden



Steve Holcombe with his 2024 steed – 250 Red Moto Honda



Matt Pope expert vet winner



Christian Drane Clubman vet winner



Best Clubman Supervet Michael Ridge