

# **THE 2012 M.S.R.A. SEASON'S TOP TEN DRIVERS**

## **1. Matt Trasler #335**

*One of the fastest, fiercest and motivated drivers in the M.S.R.A absolutely stole the show in 2012.*

Matt Trasler was a dominant force at the beginning of 2012, making ten out of the first eleven Finals. His dominance faded slightly during the second third of the year, but you still couldn't write him out of any race. Matt seemed to take advantage of opportunities that arose across the season with ease, including five Final victories. Matt managed to remain consistent as well as fast to take his first Points title in 2012. Finishing as joint top Qualifier for the Quarter-Finals helped to focus Matt on a title he hasn't yet won. After winning his Quarter, Matt now faced the tricky inside lane of his very own track in the Semi-Final. He put up a good fight, but finished second, putting him out on lane 4 for his third Midland Final appearance. Matt was unbelievably competitive in the Midland Final, leading the way for 39 laps. Bad luck made an appearance though, as he got tangled up with Aaron Tressler with only six laps to go, costing him the victory. Matt was very consistent throughout 2012, which is how the Points title is won. I can almost guarantee that Matt will already been hoping for another consistent showing, to help defend his Silver, when the 2013 season gets underway.

## **2. Nigel Shaw #260**

*Nigel Shaw had a brilliant season in 2012.*

By no means was it his greatest year to date, but there was definitely something special surrounding him this year. Starting the season with a dip down to Red helped to propel him towards the top of the Points with high scoring meetings. Nigel started making Finals and finished consistently, which helped to put the pressure on early Points leader Matt Trasler. And after being behind Matt by over 80 points, Nigel started to compress that gap, meeting by meeting. With only six meetings left to run, Nigel was only twelve points off the lead pace, but things started to go bad for him. His car was suddenly off the pace and the lead that he had whittled down had now been opened up and out of reach. After topping the Qualifying Rounds early on, Nigel won his Quarter and his Semi to put him in pole position for the Midland Final. A slow start in the race itself cost him a little, but he was never out of contention. And after 44 laps, he made his move and took the lead away from long-time leader Matt Trasler. As the dust settled on the 2012 Midland Final, Nigel had become the first driver ever to win it six times, making 2012 a season, most certainly, to remember.

### **3. Aaron Tressler #259**

*After finishing 2011 at the highest peak, Aaron Tressler headed into 2012 with lots of confidence, but more expectation on his shoulders.*

2012 started pretty miserably for Aaron, as he finished the first Grading Period down in eighth position and firmly in the shade of rival Evan. Aaron quickly re-grouped himself through the second Grading Period though, to push his way back into the top three, outscoring all but three drivers. Aaron stayed in third position for the rest of the season, making 2012 the second season in which Aaron has been a feature inside the top three. Aaron drove well in the Midland Final, but luck robbed him of a defense of his title. A complete contrast to the Junior Championship Final, where Aaron led all the way and dominated the chasing pack. Aaron also finished as the highest Junior, earning him those Silver stripes to display on his roof for the fourth consecutive year. 2013 will be an important season for Aaron. He will surely be determined to fight to regain his Gold roof and he will be looking to equal the number of Junior titles of four.

### **4. Elliott Shaw #488**

*Elliott Shaw didn't have the greatest season of racing in 2012.*

His car was never at a winning pace and he was constantly playing catch-up to the rest of the field. Despite all of this though, Elliott drove pretty well to secure a Superstar grade by the season's close. Perhaps Elliott's greatest moment in 2012 was the Semi-Final race, in which he out-drove his car to put himself in contention to take his second Midland Championship. The Midland Final was another highlight this year for Elliott, as he showed his ability on the track to take a well-earned second place finish, despite being in last position towards the end of the race. Across the 2012 season, Elliott only made six Finals; only one of which saw him take to the podium, making his Points total all the more credible. After a fairly disappointing season by his standards, Elliott finished outside of the top three in the Points for the first time in seven years, making for a pretty unsuccessful defence of his Silver. No doubt that Elliott will be looking to get back to the top of his game and be a more prominent figure when the 2013 season rolls around.

## **5. Craig Taylor**

**#137**

*Craig Taylor's return to racing couldn't have gone much better in 2012.*

After losing his Red grade at the start of the year, Craig quickly progressed into winning Finals, taking home three in the first two Grading Periods alone. His speed at the start of the year was incredible to see, but around the halfway mark, his results started to fade a little. He was still competitive, but it seemed that he had lost the sheer speed he had in the previous Grading Periods. Craig had cruel luck in the Quarter-Final, after not qualifying the re-run in which he had previously qualified. Craig still had a highly respectable season of racing in 2012, narrowly missing out on regaining a Superstar grade. Craig was one of the more competitive drivers of 2012 and it was great to see him back to racing at the top level once again. If 2012 showed us anything then it certainly showed that he is still one of the best drivers the M.S.R.A. currently has.

## **6. Martin Hulcoop**

**#85**

*After a season of limited appearances in 2011, Martin Hulcoop made his mark at the start of 2012.*

After slipping down to Blue at the beginning, Martin progressed through the grades, becoming a Red after the third Grading Period. Martin took home an incredibly classy Final win at the first R.S. Promotions meeting of 2012 and he wasn't far off making it two wins, just over a month later. A steady Quarter-Final lined Martin up in lane 5 for the Semi-Final. Martin drove well in the Semi-Final to make his first Midland Final in seven years; made all the more special considering he was the only driver to have qualified for the Midland Final from an outer lane. And if you thought Martin drove well in the Semi, his drive in the Midland Final completely overshadowed it. Martin drove superbly well in the Midland Final to secure another top three finish against a tough line-up. And Martin eventually rounded off 2012 as a Blue top, meaning his quest for another Gold should get off to a flier in 2013.

## **7. Evan Foster**

**#107**

*The M.S.R.A. got a shock when the first Grading List of 2012 showed Evan Foster sitting in second position in the Points as a Superstar for his very first time.*

But he earned it with some fantastic performances in the early part of the season. Throughout the whole of 2012, Evan was putting up a real fight to Aaron, as he wanted to prove once and for all that he is a driver to be taken seriously. And everyone was in for a treat, as the battle to be the best Junior panned out across the entire season. Evan participated in some spectacular Finals and made the podium countless times. Evan really improved his racing skill in 2012, but there are still signs of inexperience in his racing. He deserved all that he achieved in 2012 though, and he can only learn from his mistakes and turn them into victories. Seeing as 2013 will be Evan's last season as a Junior, I expect that he will be out to win the Junior Championship at all costs, to ensure his name finally gets etched into the history books as a Junior Champion, before it's too late.

## **8. Chris Radley**

**#464**

*2012 started well for Chris and he was as close as you can be to gaining a Superstar grade for his first time; only missing out on race wins.*

His car is supremely quick on every track but the results never really came strong for him after the first Grading Period. A relatively poor second Grading Period allowed his points to be hauled in and, by February, Chris had dropped all the way down to the Blues. Doing this seemed to help him a lot, as he shot back up into the Reds where he became even more competitive. 2012 saw Chris make his third Midland Final appearance after an eventful Semi-Final night. The Midland Final itself saw Chris secure a solid fourth place finish, which is pretty remarkable considering the lane he was in. Chris ended 2012 on the highest note possible; topping the Grand Prix Points Championship, taking that advantage to win the Grand Prix Final as well as securing the Supreme Champion Final too. Chris' 2012 season was full of good and bad; the bad is something which only he can rectify in the seasons to follow. 2012 was a promising season for Chris and he should be looking to improve on it when the new season comes around.

## **9. Sharon Welsh #203**

*Sharon started 2012 in the same way in which she finished 2011; highly competitive.*

A blast through the grades after the first Grading Period was well earned and she didn't lift off the pace too much over the following months. Sharon was constantly nipping at the heels of the Red graded drivers from December onwards. And after months of consistent scoring, she finished the season as a Red. Every year we seem to see Sharon come alive towards the latter part of the season and 2012 was no exception. It was this burst of life which propelled Sharon into regaining her Red grade for the start of 2013. Sharon impressed, yet again, in the Ladies' Final, taking her second consecutive title victory in a well fought race. Sharon is a driver who you can never really write off and her success can sometimes catch people off guard. Sharon drove well in 2012 and I'm already looking forward to seeing how she performs in the 2013 season.

## **10. Johnathon Walmsley #22**

*Johnno had a fantastic debut season of racing in 2012.*

I can't recall anyone having a better first year in the M.S.R.A. for a good few years. He managed to take home a brilliant Novice of the Year victory and end the season as Grand National Champion. Granted, he didn't have the most difficult races, but you have to remember that we're talking about a novice driver here. He seemed to be at ease with his machinery and the speed at which he picked up the art of racing was highly impressive. There were plenty of times in 2012 that Johnno out-performed his car and beat drivers with more experience. Heading into 2013, the sky must be the limit really and Johnno should be looking at grabbing a Blue roof come next season's close.