

NEWS BULLETIN 2016 – No. 1

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Brands Debut for PP Motorsport and Anton Spires

For our first weekend in the 2016 Renault UK Clio Cup the weather provided a perfect start, with sunny conditions on Friday and the first free practice session seeing the top 14 drivers separated by just half a second on the Brands Hatch Indy circuit. With free practice completed and only minor adjustments required, Saturday saw the focus change to qualifying, with the first race of the season also taking place later on in the day.

With ideal conditions for qualifying, finding a clear lap on a busy track was going to be vital, and in doing just that, Anton Spires managed to post the 8th quickest time qualifying for race one of the weekend (just 0.167secs off the pole position time), his second quickest time from qualifying would see him line up 7th for race two on Sunday.

Race One

With light rain falling as cars reached the assembly area we were standing by to fit wets, but with too little rainfall to warrant a change of tyres all drivers headed out onto the damp and greasy track.

Whilst trying to balance engine revs with the gradient of the Brands Hatch start line and launch the turbocharged new generation Clio off the line, Anton unfortunately stalled the car as the lights went out. Having quickly restarted the engine, the chase to catch up with the pack from the back of the field was on.

During the race, two cars went off into the gravel trap at Paddock Hill Bend which necessitated the safety car to be deployed, this allowed Anton to catch the pack further. After four laps behind the safety car the race got back underway with Anton engaged in a dramatic battle with former Michelin Clio Cup Series and MSA Formula racer Ollie Pidgley. With places swapping back and forth between the two drivers, and other competitors being picked off by them, Anton finished 17th. Whilst not the result that the driver or team expected after qualifying, lessons had been learnt for the live televised race on Sunday.

Race Two

Huge crowds as ever assembled for the main raceday, with the team having completed most of their preparations on Saturday afternoon, Sunday morning was busy with off track promotions. With the car on display to the public, the team on hand to help with photographs and answer questions, Anton was kept busy chatting to fans and signing autographs.

As the race got underway it saw Anton in the thick of the action in the early stages. After a few laps the race settled down, but he remained bumper to bumper with George Jackson. As the race wore on, his race one rival Ollie Pidgley made contact with the back of the car at Druids Bend, Anton regained control but the contact cost him time. Towards the closing stages of the race the handling of the car resulted in a loss of pace but he still crossed the line in 12th, however a time penalty for exceeding track limits dropped him to 15th.

Summary

Overall it was a very positive weekend for the team and whilst results were mixed, areas of improvement have been identified and will be worked on at the upcoming test day at Thruxton and also on the Thursday test day ahead of rounds 3 and 4 at Donington Park.

The team have quickly established themselves in the TOCA paddock and over the course of the weekend received a host of compliments from fans, series organizers and fellow competitors about the vehicle livery and the presentation and professionalism of the team. The team worked hard as a whole to engage with the public as building a fan base is critical in this arena.



Anton Spires and the PP Motorsport Renault Clio ready to go at Brands Hatch

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