

NEWS BULLETIN 2016 – No. 2

25th April 2016

Anton Aspires To Greater Things

Donington Park marked the 25th anniversary of the 1st ever UK Clio Cup race and the grid of 24 cars was the largest number of entrants since 2013.

Thursday saw two test sessions scheduled for the Clios, with the team confident of their single lap pace after the opening rounds at Brands Hatch, they opted to simulate race distances during the sessions. After some minor set-up changes, the 2nd session saw Anton was running mid table, exactly where the team wanted him to be, particularly as race simulation means he was carrying more fuel and had greater tyre wear than other team who were simulating qualifying or single lap runs.

On Friday we hosted the first meeting of the PP Motorsport Lincolnshire Business Network at the Lincoln Golf Centre, with local sponsors introduced to the team and given the opportunity to present their business to the group. A buffet lunch was followed by a Q&A session with the team. The meeting also acted as an open forum in which sponsors could discuss ideas and areas for improvement directly with the team. Our lucky raffle winner (Gary from Pentagon Renault Lincoln) won a ride in our UK Clio Cup Car, a session behind the wheel of our Michelin Clio Cup Series car with tuition from Anton and a team issue polo shirt. We are already planning our next sponsors meeting.

Saturday

On a dry track, for the early part of the qualifying session, Anton had posted the 4th quickest time, so halfway through the session a quick pit visit saw a new set of Dunlop slick tyres fitted to the front. However the second half of the session proved frustrating, with traffic preventing a clear lap and he was bumped down the order in the dying seconds. The times set would see Anton and the car line up 15th for race 1 and 11th for race 2 although yet again there were only tenths of seconds separating the field. Team sponsor Terraclean arrived and the team held a meet and greet session with Anton and fellow Terraclean backed driver and 2 times former BTCC champion Colin Turkington.

Race 1

The first Clio Cup encounter provided some fantastic racing and for the spectators was perhaps the highlight of the weekend. With cars spinning on the green flag lap it set the tone for the race. On the 1st lap of the race cars were leaving the tarmac in all directions, including two going off at the Old Hairpin and another two off at the Craner Curves, one of which having rolled, required the race to be red flagged. With the remaining cars reformed on the grid Anton, shaking with adrenaline, described the first lap as “carnage” after managing to narrowly avoid collecting a spinning car down the Craner Curves.

At the restart (over 12 minutes), the spectacular racing continued. As the pack came into the Old Hairpin on lap 2, Josh Price lost control, rebounded off Anton and slid into the gravel. Anton managed to gather things up and running 12th his pace improved with every lap. Having picked his way through a train of cars he closed the gap to the next group and with just over 3 minutes to go he was 9th, he then managed to grab 8th from Daniel Rowbottom. Unfortunately another incident with a car rolling brought about more red flags and ended the race. With the final result being declared on the lap prior it put Anton back to 9th. This solid top ten finish, which was the pre-season goal, was a good result, but there are always thoughts of what could have been, as the pace was continually picking up in the closing stages of the race.

Race 2

Starting 11th, Anton lost a couple of places in the frantic first corner dash, but quickly got up to 12th and was running at the back of the train of cars lead by former Clio Champion and BTCC driver Mike Bushell. With some drivers making mistakes and a drive through penalty for another, Anton quickly moved up to 10th. After making a move and gaining a further place coming into the chicane at the end of lap 11, Anton was hit and pushed into the gravel at the final corner. Entering the gravel sideways the wheels dug in and the Clio stood on two wheels at a near 45 degree angle, luckily falling back on all four wheels. The driver at fault was reprimanded by the clerk of the course following the race but it did not change the fact that Anton and the team were deprived of a second top ten points finish.

Summary

Despite the unfortunate circumstances in the closing stages of qualifying and the race two retirement, the top ten result we were aiming for has set the tone for the rest of the season. Some speedy repairs will soon see the car on display at the County Wheels car show at Woodhall Spa and then at the Lincolnshire Digital Awards, both of which offer us excellent networking opportunities.

Our focus now moves on towards the UK's fastest circuit at Thruxton, Hampshire. With the test day already completed in wet conditions the team will jump straight into the action with qualifying on Saturday and two televised races on Sunday.



The PP Motorsport prepared car of Anton Spires leads Josh Price down the Craner Curves.

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