

NEWS BULLETIN 2016 – No. 3

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Saving tyres helps Spires

As the only single car team in the championship and with Thruxton being the fastest circuit of the season, where slipstreaming another car provides a real advantage, qualifying was always going to be a tactical affair. Add in the abrasive track surface and tyre management would always prove a factor.

Anton had not raced at Thruxton for six years, with his last outing at the Hampshire circuit being in single seaters when he scored a race win in the Autosport Young Guns Championship. It would also be his first time racing there in a front-wheel drive car.

Saturday

With a quick shower of rain just before qualifying was due to start all of the teams were left with a difficult decision as to which tyres to choose. Confident the shower would pass and the track would dry, Anton remained on slicks whilst other teams opted for wets. As the session got underway on a drying track, those on wets returned to the pits to re-fit slick tyres.

As expected the multi car teams worked a strategy to alternate their lead drivers to provide an aerodynamic tow to each other, all Anton could do was to latch on the back of a train of cars and hope they did not try to spoil his lap time. After a few laps and with a quick call into the pits for a fresh pair of front tyres, the team waited to release the car to join a train of drivers topping the time sheets. After re-joining the track, a few flying laps later, Anton had secured 7th position for both races and with other drivers not improving their times Anton could sit in the pits for the remainder of the session to preserve his tyres for the races.

As always there were tenths of a second difference between the cars, with the usual experienced Clio veterans leading the pack. For race one Anton would line up on the grid alongside long time Clio front runner Paul Rivett with the target being to keep it clean on the first lap, use the tow to keep with the front guys and see what he could do from there.

“We need to get a clean weekend under our belts, keep out of trouble and get a couple of good results to reflect the pace that we have and reward this positive qualifying session” said Anton.

Race 1

The Clio Cup started the day's racing action in front of a record crowd. As the lights went out Anton made a great start and gained a couple of places to establish himself in 5th position amongst the leading pack of cars. The pole sitter and former BTCC driver Mike Bushell found himself shuffled to 7th in the early stages and was in a battle swapping places with Anton until the safety car was deployed due to a heavy accident at the back of the leading group. At the restart Lee Pattison started falling down the order from 3rd to 5th and just as Anton was starting to close the gap on him the red flags came out for another accident and ended the race. It was a fantastic race for the team, our pace was good and finishing 6th amongst some of the more well established teams and drivers is exactly where we wanted to be. As with Donington Park it was a shame that the red flags cut short the challenge to gain another place.

Race 2

Our confidence was high heading into the live televised race and once again the Terraclean Clio lined up 7th on the grid. Another great start and some classy overtaking saw Anton gain two places on the first lap. In a heart stopping moment at mid distance 2nd position Paul Rivett lost the back end and spun onto the grass, the still out of control Clio then spun back onto the circuit across the front

of Anton. His experience showed as he picked his point, kept his foot down and moved up into 4th position. With the top three breaking away Anton had no slipstream to find and the train of cars behind moved closer and closer taking advantage of the aerodynamic tow. On the last lap Clío veteran Lee Pattison exploited the extra speed to take 4th. Anton held off the rest of the back to finish a season best of 5th.

Following the race the car was one of three cars chosen by the scrutineers to be inspected to ensure that it complied with the technical regulations, as a result the team were still working hard late on Sunday afternoon to remove and refit the gearbox, after allowing the clutch and flywheel to be inspected and passed. Only then could we head for home.

Summary

Our performance over the weekend certainly did not go unnoticed as any of you watching the live ITV television coverage would have noticed, Anton received many compliments from the live ITV commentary team during the race.

After a strong weekend performance and two good race finishes at Thruxton, Anton now lies 10th overall in the championship standings, the team are also very happy that we're now achieving and in places exceeding our pre-season targets.

The next round of the 2016 Renault UK Clío Cup takes place at Oulton Park, Cheshire on 4th/5th June.



The Renault UK Clío Cup pack tries to chase down Anton Spires at Thruxton Circuit.

