

NEWS BULLETIN 2016 – No. 4

9th June

A Sticky Weekend at Oulton Park for PP Motorsport

Practice & Qualifying

After a strong debut at the Cheshire circuit last year, in the Michelin Clio Cup Race Series, expectations were high for the weekend.

Anton was running mid pack in the first practice session despite running old tyres, whilst a number of other teams opted for fresh rubber. Our pace improved in the second session however our lap times still placed us mid pack. Following practice the car's dampers were changed overnight after a small fault was diagnosed with them; any further adjustments to the car after replacement of the dampers would wait until after qualifying.

Conditions for Saturday qualifying were uncomfortable with 19°C air temperature and 72% humidity. As the large field of Renault UK Clio Cup competitors went out onto track the key to a quick time would be finding some clear space on circuit, unlike the previous round at Thruxton where you look to get the advance on a slipstream from another car. During the busy session Anton pushed hard, but in the hot conditions the car didn't quite handle exactly as Anton would have liked. At the end of the session he'd qualified 16th for race 1 and 15th for race 2. Once de-briefed the team were able to make a set up change to improve pace for the race.

Race 1

With the forecast thunderstorm failing to appear track temperature for race one peaked at 42°C and although temperatures were similar to those experienced at Thruxton, at Oulton Park the car is required to behave very differently. The fast sweeping nature of Thruxton requires the car to be stable and planted whereas the tight corners at Oulton requires the rear of the car to move around. The high temperatures made the slick tyres super sticky and the rear of the Clio was very reluctant to slide.

As the lights went out Anton made a good start and settled into the race superbly so that by end of lap 2 he was up to 12th position and running ahead of the former British GT Champion, Jake Giddings. Battling away with his rivals it looked like a top ten finish was achievable, however in the closing stages of the race the tyres started to overheat in the incredibly warm conditions resulting in Anton losing positions so he ultimately crossed the line in 14th place.

Race 2

Sunday was another scorching hot day and for the live televised race the TerraClean Clio would be carrying the onboard ITV4 camera. Oulton Park always attracts an enormous crowd each year and this year was no exception. As the cars lined up on the grid and the race got underway, starting from 15th Anton found himself again fighting in the middle of the pack, trading places in the early stage of the race with Rory Green. By half distance, despite the car showing some battle scars on the front bumper, Anton was still pushing hard and busy squabbling away, now fighting away with George Jackson & Josh Price. Having been pushed wide coming out of a corner on the penultimate lap Anton was picked off by Ollie Pidgley and eventually crossed the finish line in 17th.

Summary

Not only a tough weekend on the track but problems off circuit including illness, faulty paddock vehicles and no mobile phone signal meant the whole team were working extra hard to please the fans and sponsors. All of this was rounded off by the team transporter suffering an air leak just outside Stoke at 9.30pm on Sunday

night resulting in the parking brake locking on stranding the truck on a dual carriageway. A thoroughly exhausted team eventually returned to Lincoln in the early hours of Monday morning.

As ever the team have still managed to take away some positives from the weekend and have proved they can still put on a show when the odds are stacked against them. Our focus now turns to Croft on 18th/19th June where Anton will be looking to fight his way back into the top ten in the driver's championship.



PP Motorsport's Anton Spires battles away in front of the huge Oulton Park crowd.

