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No Slow Burn For Colburn

Experienced Clio Cup racer James Colburn returned to the UK Clio Cup at Silverstone with PP Motorsport for his first outing in the championship since a one off appearance for BKR at Thruxton in 2015.

Practice

Friday morning saw the Renault UK Clio Cup competitors take to a soaking wet Silverstone National Circuit and the conditions soon took an early victim. Red flags came out to stop the session on the second lap due a particularly nasty accident for Paul Streather going into turn one, severely damaging his car and requiring him to have a trip for an X-Ray on his ankle.

By the time the cars headed back out on track only half of the allotted time remained. James Colburn quickly got to grips with the conditions and set about circulating with front running drivers in an attempt to gain an advantage by slipstreaming them. As Silverstone National is a short, high speed circuit with long straights, getting any aerodynamic advantage by slipstreaming can make all the difference. James did exactly that and finished the session with the 2nd fastest lap time. Apart from his recent test at Snetterton, he hadn't driven a current Clio Cup car for 18 months. Although he has a reputation as a quick driver, having previously won races in the championship and finished as joint runner up in the 2011 championship, his performance still impressed many people in the paddock.

Friday afternoon saw the cars return to slick tyres and head out onto a dry track. The team and James worked throughout the session to perfect the set up and finished with the 12th fastest lap time just over four tenths of a second off the quickest time. After a de-brief the team would also make more changes to the car before qualifying.

Qualifying

The PP Motorsport awning was a hive of activity on Saturday morning as the team welcomed children and parents from Kids Strut. As well as fundraising for the charity, the team are proud to offer a fun day out for some of the charity's service users. The kids got to see a great day of racing as well as having a tour around the garage, meeting the drivers, watching and learning about the mechanics doing their job and sitting in the cars. For the team, hosting this enthusiastic group of youngsters is one of the highlights of the season.

As the Clio sat in the holding area on wet tyres the drivers and teams were studying the track conditions. It was wet, but with no spray coming from the cars in the previous session, it presented an issue regarding what tyres to choose. With water on the track the slicks would not come up to temperate and would offer no grip. In contrast with not enough water to disperse the wets would overheat to the point of destruction.

James completed a handful of laps on wet tyres before coming in to make the change to slicks. In his first stint he climbed quickly up the order to 3rd before coming back into the pits to have the second pair of slick tyres fitted to the front. With the track drying out it was a case of making the most of the fresh rubber as late in the session as possible whilst ensuring he had a front running driver to provide a slipstream. James finished the session 8th fastest with a lap time just two tenths of a second off pole. Penalties incurred by other drivers promoted the TerraClean Clio to 6th place on the grid for race one.

Race 1

Despite James hoping for rain, the weather had improved in the afternoon. As the lights went out a good getaway, coupled with some great racing, saw James convert his 6th place start to 4th place on the road. The top ten were running nose to tail and bumper to bumper throughout the race with many exciting moments as cars ran three abreast in the braking zones. At mid distance the top three were starting to breakaway, but James managed to close the gap, bringing up the rest of the top ten with him. Behind him pole starting Max Coates was defending hard from Clio veteran Paul Rivett in an attempt to keep his championship bid alive. In the closing stages of the race disaster struck as Coates ran wide, James was forced to take avoiding action. Rivett made the pass, Coates recovered in fifth and James crossed the line sixth.

Although the team saw their shot at a maiden podium finish dashed, it was an extremely strong performance for Colburn's return to the championship.

Race 2

The team were busy Sunday morning as they welcomed guests from Pentagon Renault Lincoln & SJ Scaffolding. Once again title sponsor TerraClean joined the team, this time accompanying special guest, Edd China who you will recognise as Mike Brewer's trusty mechanic from TV series Wheeler Dealers. It was little surprise that he was keen to talk to the mechanics and drivers and learn about our Generation Four Clio racing car.

Also taking place was the prize draw for the "Win with Pentagon" competition which has run all year raising money for Kids Strut. The lucky winners will be joining us for the season finale at Brands Hatch. You can see the draw and learn more about Kids Strut here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHyq3IGLrrg>

Starting from 10th position James made a good start, keeping out of trouble and gaining a place in the process. As the cars dived into Luffield at the end of the first lap contact between cars behind bunched the pack and created a gap behind the TerraClean Clio.

On the third lap the passenger side window shattered, possibly due to being struck by debris. James kept composed and kept going although speaking after the race he said there was a scary moment with some glass around the brake pedal. The other down side was the effect on the aerodynamics of the car with the window missing although the cooling breeze was appreciated on the warm afternoon.

Holding position in 9th the Finesse Motorsport pairing of Paul Streater and Jake Giddings were now breathing down Colburn's neck. On lap 7 Josh Price served a drive through penalty for a jump start promoting James to 8th. The front running pack grew to 15 cars and the final ten laps were completed almost nose to tail. This created a situation where the drivers had to manage slipstreaming, attacking the car in front and defending from the car behind. If an overtake attempt was unsuccessful the punishment would be severe as the pack would stream through any gaps. James had a faultless drive and held station to finish in 8th position.

Summary

It was a strong comeback weekend for James after 18 months away from the Championship. Reflecting on the weekend's results he said he was "Very happy with the performance and results, particularly at a circuit that hasn't treated me well in the past. Big thanks to John and the PP Motorsport team and of

course massive thanks to TerraClean, Pentagon Renault and of course Alloygator for their support this weekend.”

It's no secret that the Brands Hatch GP circuit is one of his favourite places to race and James has claimed wins in the Renault UK Clio Cup there in the past. With his form now proven and as he has no championship battle to worry about, confidence is high going into the season finale.



James Colburn enjoying his return to the Renault UK Clio Cup at Silverstone

