

Midland Speed Championship – Aintree Sprint

Saturday 26th June 2004

Wet & Dry

I think I prefer Saturday events. After two years of getting up early to compete at the weekends, Saturdays are definitely preferable to Sundays. They mean I can recover with a lie in on Sunday, and I'm much more relaxed going in to the event too.

However, Saturdays always seem to attract worse weather than Sundays. And Aintree backed up my theory. As we arrived at the track, it started raining, and didn't really stop all morning, from 8am right through to 1:45pm. Horrible! The organising team even stopped the 2nd practice runs midway through the running order, to bring the lunch break forwards to 11:45am, just to allow the storm to blow itself out. But it didn't, and when the first timed runs commenced at after lunch, the track was well and truly waterlogged. But strong winds were quickly drying the track out, and by the time we set out for our 2nd and 3rd timed runs, the track had almost dried. Delays during the timed runs, from drivers going off helped the track dry out event more, so no one was complaining as we all queued patiently in the assembly area.

I'd made lots of changes to the Fiesta in the weeks leading up to Aintree. Ferodo DS2500 brake pads front and back, replacing the EBC Greenstuff pads which never really performed from cold; Vibra-Technics engine mountings replacing all the stock items; Front track widened; Modification to the gear linkage to make shifting smoother; and a pair of new Yokohama A032Rs on the front to give me some extra grip. All changes which I'd had no chance to test, so the first practice run consisted of me driving round bedding in the new pads, and familiarising myself with the track. Second practice run was an experience. The windscreen had misted up, and as I drove round I realised that although the wiper was on, at speeds over 80MPH the wiper wasn't actually clearing rain from the screen. Finding the finish line proved harder than I thought. Unscathed, the three timed runs soon came and went, and I gradually got quicker and quicker,

eventually beating my PB from 2003 by over a second, on a dry-ish track, recording a 54.79s on the 3rd and final run. Another 2-3 runs and I'm sure I could have found even more time, but I shan't know until my next visit which won't be for another 12 months.

Result: 1st in class, 37th overall from 129 starters.

My next event is Shelsley Walsh on Saturday 3rd July. My first visit to the hill, and the first time I'll be running on slicks (if the forecast says I can use them). I've bought a set of 19/57R15 Michelin moulded radial slicks in N00 compound, which have a 17% tread pattern, but should give me better grip in the dry than the Yokohama's. I'll have onboard video for Shelsley too, which should make for great viewing. And I'm at Santa Pod the following day, at the Retro Cars show. I'll be on the Retro Cars stand with my Fiesta, representing the best-modified cars in the UK. And hopefully I'll get to run up the ¼ mile strip too, to see if I can better last years best of 14.72 seconds. I suspect with the -ve camber that I may have problems getting the power down, but I'm sure I can have several attempts, and with a burn out or two I should be down in the low 14 bracket.

Graham Blackwell

www.zetecinside.com

Future events:

Shelsley Walsh, July 3rd 2004

Retro Cars Show stand, Santa Pod, July 4th

Harewood, July 11th 2004

Curborough, July 18th 2004

3 Sisters, August 14th 2004

Harewood, August 29th 2004

Loton, September 19th 2004



The rain swept Aintree paddock in the morning.



Classes 1A, B and C, queuing for their 3rd timed runs.



Waiting for the 3rd timed run in the afternoon.



MGA Coupe waiting for the track to be cleared (finished 105th O/A)



FTD winner John Chacksfield's OMS 2000M



Jeanette Hunton with her OMS SF (finished 38th O/A)