

Midland Speed Championship – Lady Grosvenor Trophy Sprint

Saturday 14th August 2004

Finding the limits

3 Sisters is probably the tightest and most technical of all the tracks that I've been to in the past two years. And with a Kart race meeting the weekend before, the tarmac circuit was oozing two stroke oil, making practice very tricky after the overnight rain. The track soon dried out though, and with Sun shine and a light breeze, competitors quickly got in to the groove. First practice was torrid for the single seaters though, as many quickly found the limit on the entrance to Lunar, with spin after spin in to the infield.

In Sports Libre it was just myself and Les Proctor fighting for honours. There was also a 2.0 16V Vauxhall Corsa entered in the class, but it was the drivers first ever sprint, and he'd elected to run in ModProds instead. The owner had problems with scrutineering though, as the car was neither taxed nor MOT'd, and nor did he have a Log Book. But the scrutineers let him compete, as the car appeared to comply with the Blue Book in all the right areas.

Before the event I'd swapped the Michelins round (front to rear), as having competed on two events on the new tyres, I wanted to even out the wear. So on the first practice the car was quite loose. On the second practice run I started to improve, and was just 2 seconds off Les's fastest time, which was very pleasing. He couldn't understand why he was four seconds off his normal pace though, and we decided it was because he wasn't really trying, so I'd have to push even harder to give him some more competition.

Fifteen minutes after recording my first timed run before lunch, the PA system announced a re-run for myself and Les, due to

problems with the timing gear (here we go again). So I went back out again and set my quickest time of 50.79s. Les also continued to improve all afternoon.

After a 45 minute lunch break, on the 2nd timed run I tried to drive a bit smoother, hoping to improve, and was in fact rewarded with a slower time. However Les pulled out a further 2 seconds on me, and happy with a 2nd in class I loaded the car on the trailer, collected my license (upgrade signature number 2) and set off for the journey home.

I've wired an Electret microphone in to the on-board video recorder, and the sound quality is much better on the video playback. The distortion has gone completely. The mic picks up all the sounds that I can hear, and the footage sounds great when played back loud through PC speakers. I've written a new page for the website, www.zetecinside.com/xr2/incarcamera.html which shows the installation of the camera, and the recorder. The footage from Saturday shows where I can make up more time, so on my next visit I reckon I should be able to knock another second or two off my time.

My gearing isn't right for 3 Sisters. I'm in second gear off the line, then up in to 3rd and down in to 2nd again for the hairpin left. I then stay in 2nd all the way round until I clear Lunar, where I'm row through the box and up in to 5th before the end of Conrod straight. It's catch 22. Do I make lots of gear changes, and lose time, or stay in gear and take her to the rev limiter? I opted for the latter.

Two photographic companies were in attendance. www.dsimages.co.uk took some great photographs of the Fiesta. These and pictures of all the other competitors can be seen on-line by visiting their web site and looking at the Lady Grosvenor Sprint album. From the photo's I can see that the XR2 is diving at the front when I change direction/brake, so I'll fit the stiffer 300lb springs to the front dampers to try to get her

back on to an even keel. She's not under steering, but she is leaning rather too much due to the extra grip from the Michelins, and the front actually hopped if I turned in with too much speed.

And I've also learnt that driving steadily and smoothly is not rewarded with a quick time. I really have to take the bull by the horns if I want to go quickly, and this just proves I'm getting the lines right. I also need to brake less, and carry more speed in to the corners, and I could do with some extra horsepower, which will come next year with the new engine. That's the reason for the upgrade signatures on the race license.

So a 2nd in class, and another 20 points in the Mid Speed championships, giving me a total of 152.35 points, and I can now start dropping scores (only the best 8 count). Two MidSpeed rounds remain, and its looking like I need two more 1sts in class to retain the Sports Libre title. I'll keep trying my hardest to record good results. It'd be nice to win the title for a second year.

Graham Blackwell
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Next event:
Harewood Hillclimb, Sunday August 29th 2004

Results to date:

April 4	Three Sisters Sprint	2nd	20.0
April 25	Curborough Sprint	2nd	20.0
May 29	MIRA Sprint	3rd	15.45
June 6	Curborough Sprint	1st	-----
June 26	Aintree Sprint	1st	20.0
July 3	Shelsley Walsh Hillclimb	3rd	15.9
July 11	Harewood Hillclimb	2nd	20.0
July 18	Curborough Sprint	1st	21.0
Aug 14	3 Sisters	2nd	20.0
		Total	152.35



Les Proctor's rapid 1800cc OMS (twin Kawasaki engine) race car.



Westfield owners discussing strategy for the afternoon runs.