

Curborough race report

Sunday 27th April 2003

Rain, rain, go away

A slightly later than usual start, for the short drive to Curborough, opening the garage door we were greeted by sun shine, so it looked a promising start to the day.

I hadn't been to Curborough for more than 7 years, and whilst flying to Edinburgh during the week, I'd sat on the plane, eyes closed, visualising how I was going to tackle the course. I shouldn't have bothered. I'd completely forgotten how the first corner was actually a long left-hander, and even though the rest of the course was quite close to my recollection, it was still a radical change to the route I'd convinced myself I was going to take.

Changes made to the car during the week were adjustments to the front and rear shock absorbers, to increase their stiffness. The video footage from 3 Sisters shows a lot of pitching from the front of the car, under braking and acceleration. Body roll seems to be kept in check by the rear anti roll bar, so I wound up the adjustment of the shockers to try to stop the car nose diving under hard braking.

I'd also changed the gear linkage to try to prevent accidental selection of 5th gear when I was changing from 2nd to 3rd. A friend had suggested a technique when adjusting the linkage, which would make a difference, and in the garage the change felt like it would work. No time to test it though, the car's not road registered, so I'd have to wait and see at Curborough.

The first practice run in the dry saw me tackle the circuit with a bit of enthusiasm. Unfortunately, as I approached the finishing line, I changed up in to 4th, and ended up selecting 2nd. Yikes!! The engine made a most spectacular noise, and I hit the clutch in double quick time. Pressing the tell tale button on the rev counter wound it right round off the scale at 8000+ rpm. I feared the worse; surely the engine couldn't have survived that much abuse. But it still ticked over, revved when prompted, didn't make any strange noises, and certainly didn't smoke, so I was rejoicing that fact that I'd fitted ARP rod bolts when I rebuilt the engine, definitely worth the money.

So out with the toolkit, and yet another quick change to the gear linkage, and I went out for the 2nd practice run. I managed a 40.87, crossing the line at 77mph, and the 2nd to 5th gear problem had returned, though I decided I was going to have to live with that particular problem.

Whilst queuing for my first timed run, I noticed a few drops of rain on the windscreen, and sure enough, just as Phil Short was setting off ahead of me in his mini, the heavens opened, and I could see people ahead running in all directions, diving for cover. I lined up and set off, and could find no grip at all in 1st or 2nd off the line, so I settled for a slow but steady run in the now torrential rain, and I crossed the line in 46.56s. It was raining so hard; I could hardly see where I was going. As I went down the home straight, I could just make out the chequer boards ahead, so I just kept my foot in, made a clean change from 3rd to 4th, and ploughed across the finish line.

With the rain clouds on the horizon, and an hour or so of sunshine later, I set off on my 2nd and final timed run on a dry circuit. And a good clean start, a rapid change from 1st to 2nd, a 64ft time of 2.85s, and I set off determined to break the 40s barrier. I needn't have worried. No fluffed gear changes and lots of concentration saw 39.39s and 81mph across the line. Excellent! I'd actually made some progress, and the target I'd set myself had been broken.

Result: 2nd in class. Next event is Loton Park on May 10th, our first hill climb!

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