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moleracing 2017 season – end of season update

Blyton Park Weekend

This was just a fun weekend supporting my local club and allowed me to try different things out as a test session. There was no significant opposition once Glyn Sketchley had crashed and I took FTD on both days.

The Sunday layout caused a major moment that could have ended in disaster when I took a kerb too hard and the rear suspension post collapsed at 130mph some 10 seconds later. So I found myself running past the Armco into the 'wiggler' and only 3 wheels on the ground. It alternated with right front and left rear bouncing off the tarmac. I made no attempt to turn, but came to a successful halt and got a tow back.

I did think this was game over, but the wise experience and guidance of David Hunter, who was driving number 80 and was 80 last month, suggested we tap out the boss – he had 5/16" tap with him - as you do, and whack a bolt in it. So we did, car all safe and sound and we had more runs and improved the time further!



MIRA

I hadn't driven at this venue since 2004, and so although not part of any championship, I thought it would be worth a crack again as I remembered it as a challenging, fast grippy circuit.

A big field, including some over 2 litre class cars. My excuse (racing drivers always have them lined up ready!) is that they had been coming here for many seasons and were regulars!

Anyway, 2nd overall after first practice and then moved into the lead on the next practice with a time some 2 seconds faster than my previous PB. However, when it counted in the first of the 2 timed runs, I ran all four wheels off the track at a point where there was no line marked – you apparently had to imagine where the line would be if it was extended. Alan Mugglestone also fell foul of this and this had an impact on his championship. Then the heavens opened and there was no point in doing the final timed run. I took a 'fun' run and ended up having an 80mph backwards spin as the rear over took the front – just like Blyton!

No photos as cameras are banned due to the test nature of this venue – but the clouds on the way home were exciting



The newly purchased and machined posts arrived back from Nick Skidmore and with time on my hands nowadays, I spent 3 days really accurately setting up the car more like it was in 2016, lower ride height but now with more camber.

Curborough Sprint Course

Earlier in the summer I won the NSCC single lap event at this dedicated Sprint venue, achieving my ambition of a sub 30 second time with a 29.06. This also was not part of any championship – just for fun and the challenge!

I decided to hire the circuit for some practice on the Thursday beforehand and try out some major new suspension settings, plus get some advice from a Curborough expert, Lyndsay Mercer who between him and his son hold some astonishing class records for this venue. This was most illuminating and valuable. Not just 'lines' but approach to the day and how to build yourself up to the run.

A damp first run left me fastest of the 90 odd entries on a 33, this was followed by a 30.5 on second practice, also fastest. A stiffening of the front anti roll bar made the rear end stick better and I posted a 29.36 – but this was now only second fastest time of the meeting.

At lunch the plan was to switch to the best tyres on the lighter wheels and lightweight battery. Analyse data, make a plan, then have a sleep, in preparation for the 1st of two attempts to get sub 29.

Unfortunately, it didn't seem to matter that I had done the run many times in my head to perfection, when it came to it, I was too scrappy, locked up, drove raggedly and ended up slower on a 29.8. The final run saw a slight improvement to end on a 29.50, first in class and 2nd overall. Oh well – another day!



Anglesey Circuit weekend

So, we enter the final round of the 'British' with top 2 litre and final positions still to be decided.

I had gone to the circuit a few days early to explore the island do some photography, but I was not expecting the battering I got from a night in the tent with the incoming storm Ophelia. The rest of the weekend I didn't sleep in the trailer either as the wind picked up further and the security and peace and quiet of the estate car gave an excellent alternative night rest!

A single lap of the national circuit was the plan for the Saturday and the international for the Sunday. I needed to beat Nick both days ideally.

A wet start greeted us on the Saturday, but I decided to get used to the slicks as it was forecast to dry up which it did.

Nick's weekend didn't go to plan when after launching, his car spun and planted itself into the Armco. He was well prepared and put on the new nose and wing assembly and didn't miss anything!



I had a spin on my first qualifying run however and this meant I had to be sensible on my second and only chance to get in the run offs. I managed this in about 10 place, but at least I was in!

The run off started at 3 and was swiftly over with all car completing 2 runs in 25 mins! 5th place result was OK, but John Graham set a new circuit record and many other class records got reset including Bill Gouldthorpe, still driving also in his 80's in the 1600 class!

So, a quick look at the points and scores established that I'd won the 2 litre racing car class in the 2017 British Sprint Championship! Therefore, it was beer time, but not too much as Nick managed a 3rd and had closed the gap and we were now equal on points in the overall title. Tomorrow he had a much lower score to drop than me, so I mentally had resigned myself to slipping to 6th and just having a good evening.

Another day, slightly hungover I confess, another circuit. Right let's give this our best shot!

Good practice, safely qualifying with the first run, but on the second run I backed off as the latest tweaks and drag reduction meant the car was 5mph faster peaking at 141mph and on the rev limit at 9100 for about 5 seconds, so for second timed runs I backed off and treated it as another practice.

I did pull the stops out for the run off though and a PB was achieved on the last run of the year with a 3rd place. Poor Nick had a frustrating day with engine/electrical issues despite changing almost everything, he did not improve his British points tally, so the 2 points I gained today were enough to secure the 5th place in the championship. Result!

So that's it for the season, there is a substantial safety upgrade planned on the major parts of the car, but no power upgrades, but I do have some more tweaks up my sleeve for 2018.

The car will be at Telsonic Ultrasonics in December and I look forward to meeting the principle sponsors of the team then. I have made a new website – same address, www.moleracing.com, so follow winter updates and 2018 progress there!

Steve

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British Sprint Championship 2017 – Final top 12		
Heather Calder	3.5 Gould55 Nicholson McLaren	111
Colin Calder	3.5 Gould55 Nicholson McLaren	105
John Graham	3.5 Gould55B Nicholson McLaren	98
Terry Holmes	3.5 Lola Tegra Judd	90
Steve Miles	2.0 Van Diemen RF96mm17	81
Nick Algar	2.0 DJ Firehawk	78
Simon Bainbridge	2.5 Chrono	77
Graham Porrett	3.5 Lola Tegra Judd	58
Matt Hillam	2.0 SBD Dallara F3 RB01	51
Tony Jarvis,	Dallara F399	58
Grahame Harden	1.0 Jedi	34
Steve Broughton,	SBD Dallara F3 RB01	29

2 Litre Class 2017 Final positions		
Steve Miles,	Van Diemen RF96mm17	420
Nick Algar,	DJ Firehawk	404
Tony Jarvis,	Dallara F399	379
Martin Webb,	Dallara F399	353
Matt Hillam,	SBD Dallara F3 RB01	277
Steve Broughton,	SBD Dallara F3 RB01	265
Dave Cutliff	Van Diemen	45



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