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moleracing 2019 season – End of year update

SBD Motorsport



At the end of the last report I was moving up in the standings from 10th to 8th overall. A good finish in the last two events of the season should secure at least this placing, but there were many dropped scores and late points additions to be factored in from everyone.

Knockhill Race Circuit, Scotland

The whole weekend went surprisingly smoothly. It was also shared with the final of SuperLap Scotland and there were crowds of perhaps 800-1000 lovers of the 'petrol and tyres' watching during the weekend for the nonstop track action of some kind or other.

This undulating circuit was run anticlockwise on Saturday and my first practice run was around 3 secs off a PB, so a good start and this was refined further for second practice. Qualification for top 12 wasn't difficult with only 14 making the long journey north. John Graham drew level with Pete Goulding at the top of the championship, and I was very pleased to push the more powerful Ecoboosts down the grid and I ended 4th with a new PB behind the two V8s of John and Terry, with just Nick ahead of me.



Photo by John Stewart



Drama for Steve Brown, as his car caught fire in the pitlane and was out for the weekend after engine failure – 2nd year running, he doesn't have much luck at Knockhill. Sunset and a beer or two were the order of the evening!



Knockhill Sunday Clockwise layout

This was an eventful day with 2 car blow-ups and a crash! First car on track for the day was Terry who underestimated the grip levels on the very first corner and went off, through the gravel trap and put the V8 nose first into the tyre wall. Events like this don't stop Team TeGra and when the car was brought back, they set about stripping the broken suspension and front wing for a rebuild from the spares. They did this enough to qualify for the runoff.



My 2 litre class mate Nick, had his supercharged 1.3l engine expire as captured here on the right by the excellent motorsport photographer John Stewart.



Photo by John Stewart

John Graham was trying to put himself in overall contention for the championship – but Terry wasn't letting him have it that easy. Having started the day in the wall, Terry took the top spot in the run off for maximum points, followed by John Graham and at 3rd, my best result of the season.

A few not obvious lines pointed out by Nick to me gained some tenths and I was very pleased to break the existing class record set by him last year 3 times for 3 extra points and also keep the Ecoboosts behind me. Graham Blackwell's season came to an end when his engine and turbo 'let go' in spectacular fashion on the main straight.



Photo by John Stewart

Anglesey Weekend

For the final round of the championship I invited a professional race engineer, coach and driver – Alan Mugglestone - to share my car, in a bid to learn what could be done and how to drive faster. I made sure that I had every run fully logged with the onboard datalogger and also videoed for subsequent analysis.

In speed events, as you are against the clock, sharing a car is easy – as long as you can manage the additional heat build-up and stress generally on the car caused by the extra duty cycle. When my fellow competitors saw what I was doing, a paddock sweepstake soon started as to how many runs it would take before I was beaten!



Photo by Kim Broughton

On the Saturday we drove the national circuit and I'm pleased to say that for practice I was fastest overall, including my fellow 2 litres and several V8s, but I did nearly crash in the process and had a 'trouser moment'! I stayed ahead of Alan also for timed runs 1 and 2 and we both qualified for the top 12 run off. It was at this point that Alan moved ahead and nearly took the run off win behind FTD man and 2 litre runner Matt Hillam driving the SBD Dallara. I was in 7th, with a new PB but 1.1 seconds behind Alan. What I hadn't expected, I guess as driving your own car you get used to it and its characteristics, was how much Alan changed the car settings every single run. The predominate characteristic was no 'front end' meaning when you wanted to either turn in or accelerate out from the apex of a corner you had to wait until the front of the car gripped. By the end of the weekend a combination of ride height adjustments, packer gaps in the shock absorbers, roll bar stiffness and some other things totally transformed the car and the ability to get on the power before the car was lined up for the exit phase was staggering. It was a totally different car that I took away from the weekend than the one I arrived with!

Attention to detail was another lesson learned as we went over the whole car at the end of the day, spanner checking everything. Based on the appalling weather forecast for gales and rain overnight we put the wets on for the morning in readiness.

The traditional end of season beers and meal in the Circuit café was good fun, and surprising to see some drivers the following make the start!

It was a wild and windy night in the paddock and everyone had a few bags under their eyes in the morning, the rain didn't really materialise as forecast – just the wind! To play safe we ran a gentle first practice on the wets as Alan was second car away from the line, but quickly switched to slicks and more modifications and maintenance repairs. A rear loose hub was tightened up and this also helped the handling.



Alan sporting a relevant T shirt Photo by Jane Loudon

Timed run 1 and 2 were close to a PB and left me in 6th and Alan in 3rd. The big power of John Grahams V8 on the main straight took him to the overall lead and Matt was second. Valiant Nick Algar who's engine blew in Knockhill at the previous round put a sub standard spare engine in for this weekend to try and squeeze an extra point or two, but that also cried enough and he retired. Terry and Grahams Lola also expired – I think with gearbox issues and as a consequence a few bike engined single seater made the runoff, although Mark Anson's engine declared itself 'hors de combat'!

I had some low oil pressure warnings and the 'on site' spares department of SBD came into its own as we got an extra litre or so in the tank and this cured it for the final runs.



As Alan had qualified faster than me, and for the first time in the weekend I was running first car for the run off and Alan second. When cars are shared, you come off the track and go straight to the holding area adjacent to the start line and swap over and refuel, this was fine for the first run off, but on the second I was so pleased with a PB and a successful end of the season that I drove away from the circuit and slowly back through the main paddock to my trailer – Only to realise when I got back that Alan was 300m away on the start line and all ready to go for his final run jumping up and down wondering what had happened as he saw me disappear into the distance. Luckily, I brought the car back – albeit somewhat hot, and they let Alan run where he put in a stunning performance, some 2.2 seconds faster than me to come 3rd in the run off to my 5th place.

The data I have on how he achieved this is invaluable, and if you want to know what he did, then just go on one of his coaching courses at Blyton held every March – see [TripleMMotorsport website](http://TripleMMotorsport.com). He not only can “talk the talk”, he can “walk the walk”!

A beer and some cheese – see the T shirt and we packed up slowly and then as everyone dashed away at the end of the year, Martin Pickles and I enjoyed a few beverages and a long meal at the local restaurant, reminiscing on a great season. He christened the upper bunk in the van (apologies for my snoring) and we stayed in the restaurant car park before a leisurely drive home the following day!



British Sprint Championship Driver Standings 2019



Several upgrades to the car in the braking department and a full engine refresh are the main points of focus over the winter, but the knowledge gained this weekend, a great handling car and enthusiasm for being shown what it technically capable from the package leaves me wanting to get stuck into 2020 season straight away!

17 events, 6 personal bests a new national class record and 7th overall in the British Championship have meant I've forgotten the crash in May and had a great season. Many thanks to **Telsonic Ultrasonics** and **LAC Conveyors & Automation** for your support and contribution to this success.

Steve

British Sprint Championship 2019 top 12		
John Graham	3.5 Gould55B Nicholson McLaren	104
Pete Goulding	1.6T Mygale FF200	101
Matt Hillam	2.0 SBD Dallara F3 RB01	100
Nick Algar,	1.3T DJ Firehawk	97
Steve Broughton	2.0 SBD Dallara F3 RB01	82
Terry Holmes	3.5 Lola TeGra T 90 Judd	81
Steve Miles	2.0 Van Diemen RF96mm17	78
Graham Blackwell	1.6T Mygale VVTi	71
Colin Calder	3.5 Gould55 Nicholson McLaren	72
Simon Bainbridge	4.2 Chrono V8 TT	57
Heather Calder	3.5 Gould55 Nicholson McLaren	52
John Louden	1.1 Force HC	40

2 Litre Class 2019		
Matt Hillam,	SBD Dallara F3 RB01	433
Steve Broughton,	SBD Dallara F3 RB01	430
Nick Algar,	DJ Firehawk	426
Steve Miles,	Van Diemen RF96mm17	423
Alan Mugglestone	Van Diemen RF96mm17	92
Dave Cutcliff	1.3T Van Diemen DC93M	79



SBD team and myself at the BSC Awards Dinner, Left to right, Steve Miles, Carole Torkington (1600 Bill Gouldthorpe Memorial Trophy winner), Steve Broughton and Matt Hillam (2 Litre trophy winner)

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