

Britcar Snetterton 18/19th August

Rounds 6 & 7 of the Britcar Production Cup saw us return to sunny Snetterton, in Norfolk. This track has been good to us already this year, seeing us take our debut win in May and so we came into this weekend hoping for a repeat performance. The weekend took a slightly different format to normal with two 90 minute races, one on Saturday and the other on Sunday. I was looking forward to a double header at this track as it suits our car quite well and it has been a track that I have had a lot of success at in the past, so I knew there was potential for a big points haul.



Saturday morning greeted us with blazing sunshine and our day began with a 45 minute test session. There had been some engine upgrades since the last round, that we were hoping would be an improvement but as with most upgrades on racing cars we were experiencing some initial teething problems. Simon did a handful of laps in the car at the beginning of the session but the engine was

misfiring quite badly and he had to return to the pits. The team were quickly able to diagnose it as an electrical problem but unfortunately these are the hardest issues to sort. After a series of changes and laps in and out of the pits, the guys were unable to source the problem in the pit lane and we were forced to return to the truck to do some more intensive investigation.



Qualifying

With qualifying only an hour away the pressure was on to find the problem. The team changed every component on the car that they thought could be an issue and the misfire appeared to be cleared but it was impossible to really know until the car was working under load on the track, so we were all a bit nervous going into qualifying.

Simon began the session and within a lap the misfire had returned. He returned to the pits and I jumped into the car as again the team got their thinking caps on. Even if the team could not fix the misfire, we were both required to do 3 laps in the car to qualify for the race so I still needed to be ready to go onto the circuit, regardless of whether they could fix it or not.



The team's persistence paid off and after disconnecting the dash display inside the car, of all things, they managed to cure the problem! I was good to go and ventured out the pit lane to complete my first laps of the weekend. There were only 15 minutes left of the session and we were dead last on the grid at this point, so I needed to get my act together quickly. Snetterton is quite a long circuit at almost 3 miles, so you only get a few full

laps in 15 minutes but luckily my last one was good enough to put us 2nd in our class and we were back in the game! We all breathed a sigh of relief and concentrated on getting ready for the race, which was scheduled for 4pm.

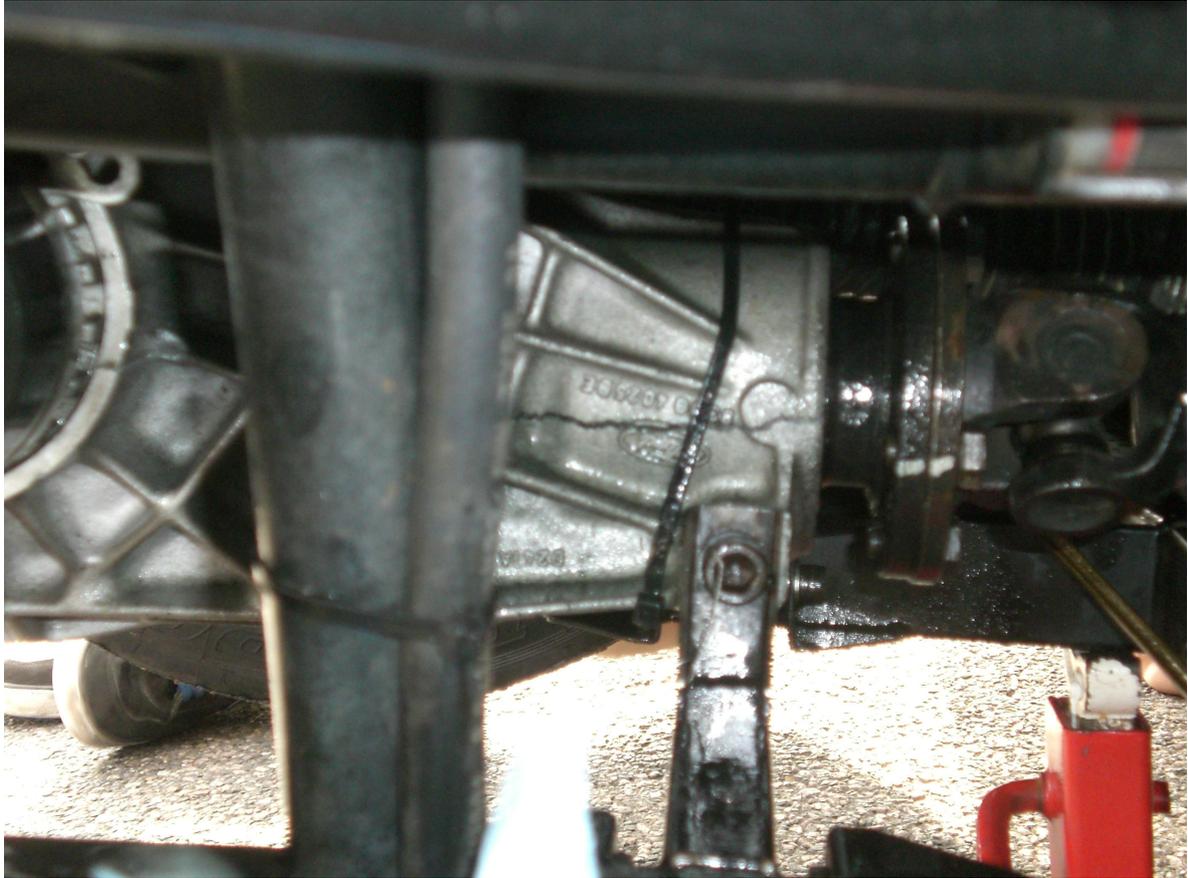
It was a scorching day, with temperatures exceeding 30 degrees C, so as a driver it was important to stay in the shade as much as possible and take on plenty of fluids, as it was sure to be a rather cosy shift in the car that I decided to name the "green house mobile" for the weekend! The air does not really circulate very well in the Ginetta, and with a helmet and fireproofs on, it really does feel like you are sitting in slow cooker! As normal, I was starting the race and we were planning to stop at around half way distance to do the driver change. As had become the norm for the year our main competition was looking to be the HE Racing Honda Civic but we were hopeful that if we could hold onto them for the first half of the race we would have the upper hand in the second half, as their front wheeled drive Civic would begin to make mince meat of it's front tyres in the hot conditions.

Race 1

The race began and I made a good start, to hold my 2nd place. I was in a sandwich between the leading Civic and the chasing Mini in 3rd place for the first lap, so I had to do a mixture of attacking and defending my position. It is important in these long races not to be over aggressive on the opening laps and damage the car, as you need to make it last the distance. The Honda was being quite defensive, so I was happy just to hold my position initially and try to put them under as much pressure as possible without risking the car.

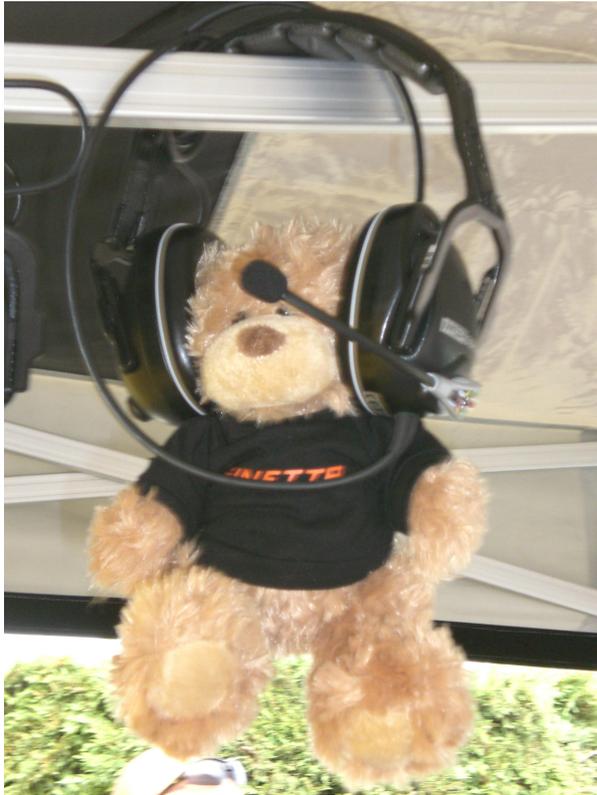


After 10 minutes, we were nose to tail and we were feeling confident. However, a funny noise began to develop from the rear of the car and I started to lose pace. I thought it was the misfire returning again but as the race went on the noise got louder and I started getting a bad vibration. The team told me to keep going - we were still running in 2nd place but the chasing Mini was beginning to close in on me and the noise was getting louder and louder. At around the 30 minute mark, the noise all of a sudden got courser and I lost a lot of power. I decided to pit as it felt like there was something seriously wrong with the drive train and it did not feel like the car was going to make it any further! I stopped in the pits and the team discovered the differential had cracked open and this very disappointingly spelled the end of our race. This was quite an unusual problem but was likely a result of the accident the car had from the previous race weekend, at Oulton Park. The only saving grace from this race was that our main championship rivals in the Honda Civic, also had mechanical issues and retired from the race, so it was not as big a blow to the championship as it could have been.



The main focus was now on getting the car fixed for Sunday mornings qualifying session. Luckily the Ginetta factory were able to deliver a new differential to the circuit later that night and the guys were able to get to work first thing on Sunday morning, where we were hoping for a slightly less eventful day at the office!

Qualifying 2



The forecasters were predicting the hottest day of the year in the South of England for Sunday and it certainly felt like they had got it right, with another bright sunny morning at the circuit. The team worked hard to get the differential changed and get the car back up and running for qualifying at 10am. Simon took the car out first and this time everything seemed to be working just right, as he put us on pole position with a quick lap time! I took the car out for a few laps after but did not push very hard in order to save the car for the race. We did do some fine tuning on the set-up and then finished the session early, confident we had a good race car underneath us for later. We had a rather long wait till the second race at 4:15pm, so there was some time for the team (and our mascot!) to relax after what had been a

frantic morning.

Race 2



4:15pm arrived and it was time to jump back into the green house mobile! I was again starting the race and was feeling determined to salvage one good result from the weekend. We began the warm up lap to the grid and I was focussed on making a good start from pole position. The lights went out and I managed to make a good get-away and hold the lead.

The Honda immediately began harassing me for the lead. The differences in our cars were dramatic over the different sectors of the lap. I was able to pull a gap on them through the technical middle sector that suited our cars superior traction off of the slow corners but they were able to take chunks out of me in the fast corners at the beginning and end of the lap. It made for an interesting battle between us and we were very close for the first 15 minutes of the race but then the Honda driver made a couple of mistakes that allowed me to break free, meaning I did not have to worry about defending and I was able to start pulling away. I got into a rhythm and was able to lap consistently faster than the chasing pack to extend our lead to 14 seconds after 30 minutes. The heat in the car was incredible and it was making it tough to concentrate but I just tried to stay as relaxed as I could and not use any unnecessary energy. After just over 45 minutes in the car, I was quite pleased to hear my call to pit! I had managed to extend our lead to 20 seconds and everything was going to plan, so we just needed to make a reasonable pit-stop and get Simon back into the race without any dramas.



Thankfully we managed this and Simon returned to the track with a handsome lead, thanks to a slow pit stop from the Honda. Simon now just had to stay consistent and out of trouble for the rest of the race and it was ours. It was nervous in the pit lane given the problems we had had already with the car but the team had done a great job and it did not miss a beat all the way to the chequered flag, to take our 3rd win of the season! This was a fantastic way to end a difficult weekend, with everyone showing great spirit to come back from the disappointment of race 1.



Thank you as always to my team and sponsors for your continued support in what is becoming a very exciting season. We have dropped to 3rd in the championship but with two rounds remaining and with drop scores still to be taken into account, it is set to be a very close finish. The final rounds of the Britcar series are held in November and at present I am not sure if I will be contesting these races for budgetary reasons but I am delighted to have been involved in the success of the team so far. For now my focus switches to competing in the Britcar 24hour race next month where I believe, with the teams vast endurance racing experience, we will be one of the major contenders in one of the biggest races on the UK calendar.

Kind regards,

Rory