



Race Report

Croft: 20th/21st May 2006

Drivers: Paul Dobbing.
Tim Hartland.
Dennis Moore
Massimo Vignali (The Stig)

Pit Crew: Pete Shaw.
Dave Robinson.
Peter Robinson

Sponsors:

Weather:
Saturday – Overcast with Light Rain.
Sunday – Torrential Rain

Track:
Wet
Flooded

This was the second/third Race of the 2006 Uniroyal Fun Cup series and only the second time the series had been held at Croft. It had attracted a grid of 23 cars, with a few of these new to the series this year. The Track at Croft has changed little since we were there in 2002 (racing the Ginetta); the race was held on the Full circuit. It was unbelievably wet weather the whole weekend except for Sunday morning, proving that Great Britain is the only place where you can get sunburnt, drowned and die of frostbite all in the same day.

The usual drivers, Tim & Massimo were joined by Dennis Moore, (ex Formula Ford and mid life crisis racer) for the weekend. Tim was under orders to be at his mum's 60th party on Sunday, or face the lash, so Paul was drafted for the Sunday driving.

Testing

Friday was spent setting up the car prior to the 3-hour test session which was due to start later on in the afternoon. Testing was carried out in the dry, so learning the track was fairly straight forward, but Croft has hidden depths when it comes to gripping its bumpy surface, the car crying out for a limited slip diff (and another 100bhp). We also need to find someone that can buff/shave the tyres as we are losing over a second a lap, which in this series is a lifetime. These were not needed this weekend though, as come the race, we'd need a periscope and sonar: And possibly Dame Ellen herself.

The Race

The pre race nerves were showing on Tim's face (don't laugh Massimo, it's your turn tomorrow), as he prepared himself for his first Fun Cup start. We needn't have worried though, as despite the rain and 18th Place out of the hat, he managed to keep it all together; miraculously avoiding those with an exuberance of speed over talent. If Tim's baptism of fire wasn't enough, Dennis had to drive the car for the first time in the wet and a race is not really the place you'd actually choose to do that. He'd be the first to admit that he was breaking himself in gently. "So long as he's breaking himself and not my beautiful car....." Pete was alleged to have said later. To be fair we had a fairly uneventful race, trying hard but seemingly plodding along, just picking up places as the weather improved.

We eventually finished a very creditable 7th; with not a scratch or broken splitter on the car. Even though Tim was driving: Marvellous!

Sunday promised to be a beautiful day, everyone waking up to gorgeous sunshine, a fine prescription for recovering from a free beer & hog roast party the night before, in the Fun Cup tent or as someone said "The Paul Rose Experience". The only thing that didn't recover, despite the lovely morning, was the pig.

The weather, however, soon returned to its former anger and by lunchtime, we were plunged into a very grey wet depression. That didn't stop the racing, though. Massimo got off to a cautious start on a grid reversed from yesterday's finish positions. Squeezed out at the first corner he clawed back the lost places, getting back on the pace very quickly and by the change over we were in 8th place. Then Dennis was then let loose again, literally, as in the worsening conditions he lost it (the car, not mentally- though that's a matter of opinion) through the first part of the Jim Clark esses, spinning more times in one go than Jim did in his whole life. We know 'cos it's on the 'on board' camera. Watch out for the TV show girls and boys and as the camera has a microphone, it'll be on after the watershed too. If that wasn't enough Dennis overtook a car under waved yellows, so we had a stop go penalty. I'm not surprised, as with the visibility down to a few feet behind another car, you have no chance of seeing any flags. At least at Spa they use lights too. Paul took the final stint and set off into the river. Within a couple of laps Team Hyside were stranded in the middle of the back straight it was that wet! Paul spent more time driving sideways than going in a straight line, the car steadfastly refusing to stay on the circuit. If a car could sulk in such weather, it was nearly succeeding. Thankfully the chequered flag came out and I swear the car sighed in relief, along with Pete. That we managed to finish in 10th was amazing. That we again finished without any damage whatsoever was a testament to the drivers. Nice one.

Thanks to Rosie and the team for a fabulous event and even bigger thanks for the support by Dave and Pete Jnr - Roll on Spa.

Food for thought – Luck favours the prepared Team!

Lastly, a quick word to our sponsors - Where the hell are you?

PAUL DOBBING
WHIRLYBIRD AUTOSPORT