



Race Report

Donington Park: March 26th 2004

Drivers: Paul Dobbing.
Tim Hartland.
Chris Fellows.

Pit Crew: Pete Shaw.
Dave Robinson.
Jon Fellows.

Sponsors: Fellows Burt Dalton & Associates Ltd.

Weather: Dry and Overcast

Track: Dry

This was the first Race of the 2004 Uniroyal Team Challenge season and had attracted a grid of 20 cars, with a few of these new to the series this year. The Track at Donington had recently been resurfaced which made for an interesting race, this being held on the National circuit which cuts out the Melbourne loop. We arrived on Thursday night to ensure that we secured our allotted Garage for race day while attending the Test Day held on the Friday. A cold night was spent at the circuit in Paul's Camper, while being rocked to sleep by the passing aircraft on the approach to the East Midlands Airport.

Testing

The Series organisers had booked a one-hour exclusive Test session, which started at 1230. This allowed us to get Chris and Tim out in the Car for some practice in the UTC Car without having to contend with some of the other faster cars that were at the circuit for the test day. Tim went out first and straight away noticed that the car was not handling to well and he came straight back in to the pits. Tim went back out and did another lap but was convinced that something was wrong, Chris then took the car out to try to analyse and confirm the problem. On Chris's return to the pits Pete noticed that the tracking of the rear wheels appeared to have excessive toe out, this was not good; especially when Paul and Pete had spent quite a while manufacturing some jigs and setting up the geometry of the car. The Car was brought into the Garage and the alignment jigs fitted, low and behold the rear track was toeing out, by approximately 15mm. The error had been made because the tracking had been done with the weight off the wheels, in doing so meant that the rear wheels had toe in when in droop. Quick adjustments were made and the Car returned to the circuit to enable Chris and Tim to finish off the remaining 30 minutes of the test session with a car that handled, as it should. A much important lesson had been learnt. The Car was recovered and prepared for the next day with no problems.

Qualifying

The one-hour qualifying session started promptly at 1030. Paul went out first to complete his mandatory three laps and to warm-up the car ready for Tim and Chris; this was to allow them to get as much track time as they could to get use to the car. On the second lap Paul put in a fast lap time of 1:28:785, this was to stand as the fastest qualifying time and put us on pole position. Chris went out after Paul and soon settled into a good rhythm and after twenty minutes or so we called him into the pits for the change over, with a fastest lap time of 1:30:268. Tim went out last and soon began to find his rhythm and started to put in

quicker and quicker lap times. Tim returned to the pits after twenty minutes and a fastest lap time of 1:34:605; this was a commendable effort as Tim had not raced cars before this event and has had little chance to get used to the VW. He reported a slight misfire, so Paul took over to try and diagnose the problem; this was timed to perfection because as soon as Paul left the Pit Lane the chequered flag came out. Paul returned to confirm the misfire and thought it felt ignition based, a quick investigation with the engine running could not locate the source of the problem.

An Omex Shift Light system had been fitted to the car during the winter lay off, this couples up to the coil and displays an incremental warning light to the driver to avoid over revving the engine; this was disconnected for the race, just in case. We also fitted another Ignition Module to the car to allow a quick swap, just in case this was causing the problem. The Car was then refuelled and checked over before the race with no more problems.

The Race

Although we had put in the fastest Qualifying time it does not give us Pole position on the starting grid, in this series starting grid positions are pull out of the hat. The 'Sorting hat' placed us in sixth position on the grid, this meant a third row starting position along side the Uniroyal Sky TV Camera car, fame at last!

Paul was to start the race with Chris out second and Tim bringing up the rear. Paul readied and attempted to start the car, but something was wrong, the car would not fire up. Pete had the bonnet up and quickly changed over the ignition module plug onto the spare ignition module, Paul selected the start button and the VW burst into life. Talk about prior planning, what a good decision it was to fit a spare module, someone must have been watching over us this weekend!

The race got under way and Paul made a reasonable start off the grid, after the first corner Paul had managed to worm his way into fifth place and after the first lap was into fourth. Lap after lap Paul chipped away at the leaders and after the Safety Car had been out for a few laps, Paul managed to take the lead. The lead changed between Paul and Car 128 (Chad Racing) lap by lap all the way through the first session, what an exciting race it was turning out to be. That was until yet again the Safety Car came out.

Paul came in when the Fuel board came out after the first 40 minutes, but we had calculated to double stint on the fuel, so Paul and Chris swapped over and off he went. The driver change had gone a little slower than anticipated, we need to practice these as we were a little slower than some of the other teams; Chris joined the race in fourth place. He soon settled into the race, keeping up a good pace with the leaders. Chris moved up a place when Car 128, who was in third, spun off the track into the gravel. Now Chris was in third and attempted to keep up with the front runners, this was a great effort as the first two cars belonged to seasoned Uniroyal Team Challenge drivers of Car 111 (PL Motorsport) and Car 106 (Cuisine de France).

Another forty minutes passed and the mandatory Fuel Window opened again, Chris limped in to the pits on fumes. Chris leapt out of the car and this time, Fuel Can at the ready, we dumped in 30 litres of fuel. Tim was in the car next, strapped in and raring to go, although a little nervous. He joined the track in sixth position and he soon settled into his race with ease. Tim kept his cool and pace and held his position well for some time. He had a minor incident while heading down the Craner Curves, Tim noticed oil on the track but it was too late, he was already travelling side ways, with thought of "the boys will never believe me when I tell them". Miraculously, Tim recovered well, kept the Car on the circuit and headed off back into the race. At the end of his first stint, Tim had knocked 2 seconds off his lap times; he was flying. The Fuel Board came out again at 16:05 and Tim came in for a much needed break. Drivers were changed and 20ltrs of fuel taken on board; we had

hoped to double stint the fuel, but we found that the car was using too much so we had to recalculate.

Paul's second stint saw him joining the circuit on lap 74 in eight place and went out into the race guns blazing. He gradually chipped away at the Cars ahead of him and eventually managed to latch onto Car 128 (Chad Racing) again. The next 20 minutes or so saw them battling away, they were working very well together and their lap times were decreasing every lap; by Lap 83, Nigel Greensall in Car 128 had achieved the fastest lap at 1:28:102, with Paul just a few hundredths of a second behind. Unfortunately, a few laps later Car 128 (Chad Racing) was to pull into the Pits with a door flapping open and a few more laps later for a new nearside rear wheel stud. Paul carried on and by Lap 96 managed to achieve the fastest lap of the race at 1:27:442, which became the lap record.

The Fuel window opened again at 16:45 and Paul came into the Pits for Fuel and Driver change with Chris, sitting in sixth position. The pitstop passed without incident and Chris was off on his merry way back into the affray, joining the race in sixth position: Driver changes were improving. Chris quickly settled into the race again and started to chip away at the lead of the next car. This did not take to long and Chris had gained another place in the race and into fifth we went. Keeping the pressure on, Chris bangs away at his lap times, improving all the time. His fastest lap of the race came on lap 112 with a recorded lap time of 1:28:882 and making ground on the fourth place car.

The last Driver change and refuel came up at 17:25, so Chris came into the pits for fuel and hand over to Tim. Chris dived out of the car, literally; the car was refuelled and Tim strapped in and sent on his way. He rejoined the race in fifth position and confidence high. Tim put in a valiant effort and managed to get his fastest lap in this last session, this came in at lap 134 with a time of 1:31:905. Tim fought hard but experience won in the end and Tim lost the battle and position to Car 131 (JPR-1) and dropped into sixth place. The chequered flag came out at 18:06 after 4 hours of racing Tim brought the team home in a very respectable sixth place. A hearty well done to all in the team, it was a great team effort and our best finish yet in this series.

I would like to take the opportunity to especially thank Dave Robinson and Jon Fellows for their assistance in the pits and Helen and Anne for supplying the team with tea and buns.

Race Statistics

<u>Fastest Lap Times</u>			
	Paul	Tim	Chris
Qualifying	1:28:785	1:34:605	1:30:268
Race	1:27:442 *	1:31:905	1:28:882
<u>Laps Raced</u>			
	50	48	49

*Lap Record

The next race is at Silverstone on the National Circuit on May 3rd, 2004. This is Bank Holiday Monday and will be another 4hr race, we all hope to see you there.

PETE SHAW
WHIRLYBIRD AUTOSPORT