

Guild of Motor Endurance Six Hour 2008 – by George Brooks, Findhorn NG Team

Idling around Gerrard's at 7.00am on our way to the paddock, we could tell it was going to be an interesting day; the rain overnight was still lying on the inside of the bend, and with more set for the morning, we were going to have to be very easy on the right foot.

The Guild of Motor Endurance event at Mallory Park required each team to complete a total of 240 laps in 6 hours. Split between two cars and four drivers, with each driver having to do a minimum of 5 laps per hour, the logistics alone would make for a tough day without having the weather to contend with.

Our team for the day, number 3 representing Findhorn Cars, consisted of George Brooks and Johannes van Manen driving car one and Nigel Brooks and Alan Collett driving car two. With a mixture of track experience amongst them, the job of organisation fell to a rather worried looking Sasha Brooks. Car one, a Findhorn NGTC, had proved itself competitive on two previous Guild of Motor Endurance rallies, but had little track pedigree; car two, a Findhorn TCII, was a pre-production prototype for which Mallory Park would be a good proving ground.

We set about preparation and scrutineering in a relaxed manner but all somewhat apprehensive about the wet conditions on the track and the dark clouds gathering, but a good bacon sandwich and cup of coffee calmed the nerves as we went into the drivers briefing. Event organiser Peter Davis took the stage and ran through the complex set of rules to a crowd of rather bemused onlookers; we decided we would be fine unless there was a problem with one of the cars or a red flag, in which case we'd have to do a quick bit of guesswork to figure out how to get through the laps in regulation...

Briefing over and it was time to go. As team 1 were sending the first of their two Leige's onto the track I started the car and prepared for my first ten lap stint and looked up for my co-driver Johannes who was no-where to be seen; eventually he appeared, jumped in the car and we were off with seconds to spare.

Anxious not to make my first lap of the day my last I set off into Gerrard's at a canter, feeling for grip and looking for the line; the track was certainly quite damp especially down the bottom coming into Edwina's, but there had been no real rain since the night so there was a bit of a dry line to be had in places. Getting a feel for the track I pushed on without major incident, save a slight stepping out of the back under braking on the damp coming into Edwina's, then all too quickly we came down the pit straight to see my mother holding out our pit board and in we came for a car change.

As car two went out, the rain that had been threatening all morning finally arrived, not heavily, but enough to wet the whole track and make it very greasy. As we were getting ready for another car change, the red flag went up for a fuel leak from a car causing the Westfield following it to spin off Gerrard's. Fortunately no harm done, but there was a 15 minute delay as the track was washed.

We took the opportunity for a driver change and when the red flag came down, Johannes took to the track for his first session. "Quite greasy around Gerrard's and very slippery coming into Edwina's", I had told him. The words came back into my head as we approached Edwina's at pace, snatching second under braking the back made bid for freedom, Johannes held it and we ended up

with a rather nice, if somewhat unconventional, angle into the chicane; indicators flashing he drove it through and we were back on it.

It wasn't long before the red flag was out again, this time for a Fisher that had hit the tyre wall at pace coming out of the Esses; the slippery conditions were testing even the more seasoned drivers. The rain continued to fall throughout the morning as we persevered, balancing understeer into corners with the threat of lots of oversteer coming out, and despite several more offs from various teams the red flags stayed down and we managed a clean run into lunch for the remaining 60 laps.

Lunch gave some time to take stock on the morning's events over lasagne and chips in the café and a chance to dry off some of our drenched clothing. Thankfully the lunchtime break brought with it a change in the weather and the rain gave way to broken clouds.

Ever one to keep his competitors guessing Peter changed the course for the afternoon session: Edwina's was out and the back straight now went directly into the Esses at speed. Feeling refreshed after the break and optimistic about the weather team spirit was high as we set out in the NGTC for the first of afternoon stints.

The contrast was immediate. Visibility was vastly improved; we were starting to find the grip which we had been lacking all morning; and the lap times were tumbling, but as we continued to push harder we encountered some different challenges. Although the racing line was drying quickly, off line parts of the track remained damp, especially around Gerrard's, making overtaking a potentially hazardous affair; and the higher speeds down the pit straight were putting increased strain on the brakes, which started to fade throughout the afternoon. Despite this the Rover V8 was really starting to perform and it wasn't long before we were consistently sub 1 minute 10 per lap.

Apart from a couple of short delays for red flag incident the team progressed well throughout the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> hours with every driver completing their allotted laps in time and setting out for our final hour, Johannes and I were looking forward to putting in our 20 laps in good time. As we came round The Devil's Elbow and accelerated down the pit straight on lap 3 another red flag appeared for a Westfield that had put a rod through the side of the block further down the straight; a touch of the brakes caused an instant lock up on the oily track, as soon as I was off them and had straightened it was back on the brakes and another lock up to try and slow enough for Gerrard's. Thankfully the TC slowed and we had enough grip to turn in and coast back into the pits under the red flag.

After the 20 minutes under the red flag there was just enough time for the other three drivers to do five laps each before the finish. Johannes and Alan really set out to enjoy them and both posted quick laps, Alan a 1.04 in the TCII and Johannes consistently lapping 1.02 in the NGTC (despite ignoring his co-drivers advice on the line in Shaw's hairpin for an extra second), rounding off a good end to a thoroughly enjoyable 6 hours for all four drivers.

Both cars had been pushed very hard all day and both came out unscathed (save a weeping rocker cover gasket on the NGTC, probably due to consistent overrevving!) testament to their solid engineering and competent design. Thanks Peter for a fantastic event and final thanks to Mum for putting on a brave face as team manager whilst we were on the track.

George Brooks / Findhorn NG