



Silverstone GP – Round 4

We went into Round 4 (the second, and final 2-hour endurance race of the season) with a strong desire for a good result, but equally to finish the race and bag as many points as possible – given the two race results we missed at Oulton Park last month. Managing just 6 laps, when we expected 2 hours of running at Oulton was tough and I had to put those demons to rest.

The forecast promised ambient temperatures of 30 degrees Celsius and we knew that was going to be a struggle for me, equating to cabin temperatures in the 50's (!), but also managing tyre and brake temperatures. I headed out for qualifying at 09:00 with the heavy burden on my mind of the 40 or so guests arriving over the next couple of hours, some of whom had already joined us before the car even turned a wheel, making sure I didn't have another incident that would lead to that difficult conversation that we wouldn't be racing. So, I played it safe and in constant contact with the Team principal (pit to car radio) about making sure I did just enough to secure a class pole, but no more. That gave us the important championship point but didn't have me at the sharp end of the grid, with most class 1 cars ahead of my 9th place starting position – it'd be starting far closer to the mid-pack that I'm used to, which presents its own challenges from a risk perspective, being in the "danger zone" of starting incidences!

The few laps in qualifying validated our concerns about those tyre temperatures, and associated wear and it was only 09:20, with temperatures set to rise significantly by our 14:35 race start.

The schedule afforded us the opportunity to offer a garage tour for our guests, including some group photo's, a short discussion on the race format as well as getting some of our guests' excited kids into the driving seat for some selfies – always a winner, although importantly remembered to pop my fire extinguisher pin back in to ensure none of them set-off a foam party! It was also great to be able to have lunch with our guests on the run up to the race start – it offers a nice distraction from getting too nervous before the main event!



As 24 cars rolled across the start line on the F1 circuit, and the lights went out, I got my head down, tried to be measured and let the class 1 cars drive off so I could get into a rhythm and drive to a pace that we could maintain for the 2-hour stint, without taking too much out of the car. Team manager constantly checking the data points to be able to articulate to me what that pace should be - early indications were around 3 seconds per lap slower than qualifying. The main objective was to not slide the car, as that creates more heat in the tyres, and heat was our enemy today.

Our strategy was to run long (wait until the last moment before taking our first mandatory pitstop, of 3), to see if we could pick up a safety car window in which to pit. As I crossed the line for lap 23 (a solid 1-hour stint), we were discussing whether I came in for the fuel stop when I felt a significant vibration through the car which I assumed was a tyre failure - I limped the car back the 3 miles left of the lap, losing a lot of time but got it back to the pits where the team double stacked the re-fuel and tyre change. It cost us around 75 seconds more than the mandated 240 second pit stop but the main thing was to try to understand whether we could rely on another rear left tyre to last the second hour of the race!



Before we even got into that, we'd been dealt a pitlane drive through penalty for a technical infringement during our stop (ignition restarted with one of the wheels off the vehicle due to the panic on the unscheduled tyre change), so I immediately served the penalty so we could move on psychologically from the whole sorry affair and did a great job of not allowing it to distract us. We focused solely on what we could influence, and that wasn't one.

Goodyear/Dunlop inspected the tyre, which had badly delaminated, took a temperature reading at 110 degrees C (normally we don't see more than 90!) and returned the rim with a new tyre fitted us 😊 But we remained very concerned about the

temperature and whether the replacement we'd put on the car would last the distance - we still had 2 stops so we pitted on lap 29 and lap 33, where the team made a precautionary change of both rear tyres. With our pitstops over, and pitlane window closed, we could start to work out our position and what our strategy was for the last 20 minutes of the race. Suffering with the heat, I was struggling with concentration at times, and it had become a significant test of physical endurance from the fuel stop onwards..

My spirit was significantly lifted when the team principal confirmed over the radio that we were comfortably sitting in the class 2 lead, as other teams had the same tyre issues coupled with our strong and consistent pace, so he spent the next 20 minutes talking me out of battling with a class 1 BMW M3 for 7th overall - I settled for 8th place, the class 1 and fastest lap - meaning, along with the qualifying pole, we'd had a full haul of championship points. Back on the top step for FormEvo Clark Racing and a welcome return to form.

The toughest race of my career from a physical perspective, despite limited wheel to wheel racing, and a huge credit to County Classics Racing for repairing the damage sustained at Oulton Park and turning around a car that ran faultlessly over a 2-hour period in extreme heat. We needed that win as a team and it felt amazing to stand on that F1 podium in front of sponsors and guests knowing we'd won that as a team, bouncing back with unwavering support from our sponsors that I represent, from the hardest event in May to triumph at a very tough event with the determination that motivates us all to go racing. It's a team sport, we all felt that disappointment, but it sure made Sunday's win more meaningful - it's a journey we're on together and I'm feeling very privileged to be the guy in the driver's seat.

What a team and thanks for your belief in me
#thewinningformula



NEXT RACE:

17th September - Snetterton



Oulton Park – Round 3

We rolled out of the pitlane at 08:30 onto a gloriously sunny Oulton Park for free practice, completing 6 timed laps of the circuit before pitting the car, confident we'd got good pace and just waiting for the 09:10 qualifying session to get underway to deliver a result.

I crossed the timing line with nothing ahead of me for the first flying lap of the session, feeling confident and happy in the car but braking hard into Shell Oils (a tightly banked right hand hairpin), I locked up the front axle and ran onto the wet grass, with little runoff I went into the barrier head-on and the force sent be skywards, coming to an abrupt stop with the car up on top of the 5ft barrier. What had just happened? I never put the car into the scenery, well I just had without any assistance from anyone else and that was surely my race day over - with 40 guests arriving...

The marshal first to the scene, once checking I was ok, said "no, no, NO - that was my favourite car of the grid". The medical unit arrived within a couple of minutes and the doctor did a fantastic job of refocusing my thoughts – distraught that I'd destroyed the front of the car, caused a red flag for my competitors and the embarrassment, he said "you're extremely lucky" with a level of seriousness only a doctor (or judge I imagine!) can deliver. Up to that moment, I felt anything other than lucky but I was fine and there's a million outcomes that would have been worse.



I was taken back to the medical centre for mandatory checks and then, as I was discharged, the car was being delivered back to the race team on a low loader and crane.

The team didn't waste any time stripping the front of the car down to assess the damage and to my absolute amazement were talking about being able to turn it around for race 1 at 11:30. It needed radiators, significant panel beating and a lot of gaffer tape... 11:30 came and went and the work was still underway up to race 2 at 17:05 but despite an absolutely herculean effort from our race engineers, too much was deformed in terms of brackets and radiator fixings to be able to feel confident the car would manage a 50 minute race without potentially causing a more serious incident for either myself or our competitors.



The circuit staff, from marshals to medics to the recovery team were amazing, our supporters who made me feel a million percent better about the result and the real stars of the show, our race team. They spent 8 hours in the raging sun on the paddock floor trying to turn the car around for the races - they could have packed up at 09:30 and had some of their bank holiday back but they refused to give up - such is the determination, passion and grit you find in those involved in and around motorsport.

A bad day in the office, but a pivotal moment as a team of sponsors, guests and supporters which has brought us even closer and stress tested the environment. It's the disappointing results that you learn the most from, not the wins and that's true of this weekend. We'll be back out doing what we do at Silverstone on 25 June and our next win, whenever that is, will feel it's even harder thought as a result of today's events - it'll mean more to me and more to us all as one team.

Reviewing the onboard footage and data of the crash and preceding laps, I remain very puzzled about how I managed to out brake myself, speed and braking point/pressure the same as prior free practice laps but the retardation in speed just wasn't the same - in the absence of anything obvious I can only conclude I just didn't leave any margin for variables in tyre pressure, track surface change or the like. Tyres, their interface with the circuit surface and brake temperate will never be precisely the same from one corner to the next - I can't hit the brake pedal with and replicate the exact same force every application, and then modulate the pedal consistently depending on the above variables. We win because we operate at the limit of car and today was a stark reminder about the closer to that you are, the greater the risk. Did I need to be pushing as hard today, maybe not but I think our performance as a team is important - we all want to be winners and if I went racing to simply make up the numbers, I'm not sure we'd have achieved the followers and support we're incredibly lucky to have - and certainly not the results.

Our free practice lap pace was the fastest time set by a Class 2 car on the day, by quite a margin, some consolation we had stonking pace but if the scenario had played out differently, we'd have been on for another overall podium position.. of the 10 races this season, the championship position is determined by your top scoring 9 results - therefore one of our non-starts yesterday potentially costs us nothing, and the other we'll just have to make up with a solid remainder of the seasons. Next time, well come back stronger from this set back 😊



NEXT RACE:

25th June - Silverstone Grand Prix (2HR)



Brands Hatch Indy – Round 2

Another absolute triumph for FormEvo Clark Racing yesterday at a sodden Brands Hatch, surpassing all expectations and well and truly mixing it with the top-class cars.

Qualifying would be the first time on the circuit in the car in this weight, tyre and endurance trim and it was jolly wet but being my home circuit I felt confident and popped in a lap time that surpassed those lap times seen in the earlier practice session (I didn't practice to preserve the car) so with a "banker" in the session I was able to pit twice to allow the team to try a few tweaks – we didn't go faster but didn't need to – securing the class 2 pole position and starting 4th overall...

So we rolled over the starting line on the 2nd row of the grid with more class 1 cars behind than in front of me as the lights went out for my first 2 hour endurance race and boy was it wet!

We had a plan for the timing of our 3 mandatory pits stops, including a refuel, but it's racing so the strategy is always evolving..

The safety car came out just as the pit lane window opened at 20 minutes (lap 19) and used the opportunity to swap from wet to dry tyres, a little early but we felt well worth taking the risk as

the track had started drying out. First 4 or 5 laps were challenging but it wasn't long before I was posting the fastest lap of the race.. I got my head down and worked to a good pace to try to build out a lead. For 8 laps of the race I was the fastest car on the circuit.



Another safety car at lap 44 saw us pit swiftly again to maximise the opportunity to sit on the stand whilst the pack were lapping at a slower pace – we re-joined well down the order but leaving only one stop to go, which needed to include the re-fuel (which you can't do in the safety car window)

On to round 3 at Oulton Park at the end of May - hopefully my neck will have recovered by then!



A 3rd safety car at lap 52, following more drama, gave me a welcome break for 4 laps to compose myself and get my breath back and we ran to lap 65 for a refuel, which had to take place in the garage in a controlled environment, including me jumping out of the car and manning the fire extinguisher. But before we could even commence proceedings, we had to attend to putting out a small fire on my front left brake caliper, caused by an excursion on to the grass the lap before to avoid collision in front. Sitting stationary had caused the remaining grass caught around the brakes to ignite. Dealt with calmly, we got the carefully calculated fuel load in the car and back out of the pitlane in what would have been a perfectly timed stop, had it not been for a spinning car heading out of the pits and getting wedged in the circuit entry lane. Frustratingly it cost us time, and in the meantime a 4th safety car had been deployed for an unrelated incident.

Finally back out with a 40-minute race to the line, my team principal came over the radio in an unusually excited manner "we're on for an overall podium"... game on but needed to keep a clear head and bring the car home..

I was being instructed by the team to drive to a pace which was 1 – 1.5 seconds off what I could achieve, to preserve tyres, minimize risk and ensure we had enough fuel to make it to the end of the race! I was told to let a couple of front running cars past, as they were unlapping themselves and unable to actually catch me for position – a strange sensation but absolutely the right decision as no point in over driving the car and having an incident.

So after 109 laps, with 4 safety cars and 3 pit stops including a complete tyre change, I comfortably had the class win and achieved a frankly astonishing 2nd overall, so just one top class car just 1 lap ahead of me.

It's always a team effort of course, but there's so many variables in an endurance race where strategy can play a much bigger part differentiator than the guy behind the wheel - spurred on by an overwhelming amount of support on the day from our sponsors guests, customers and friends.

It's a real privilege to be able to share the highs of motorsport with so many supporters and thank you to all the sponsors for being motivated to do something different and it seems fitting that we're punching well above our weight on and off the circuit.

Very possibly the greatest single race achievement of my career 😊



NEXT RACE: **End May** **Oulton Park**



Silverstone GP – Round 1

Our first Britcar Trophy race was always going to be a “voyage of discovery”, and despite our initial thoughts to keep the attendance numbers small whilst we all found our feet, we actually hosted over 30 guests in Britcar hospitality - offering our guests the opportunity to get even closer to the action, being paddock side based.

Qualifying in monsoon conditions, on a new race wet tyre, in the new car meant I was immediately thrown in at the deep end! Car felt great, visibility much less so and it was simply a case of negotiating traffic, and plenty of it, with caution – I wanted to do well but felt a bit less pressure given the endurance format of the race where qualifying is perhaps less critical than the sprint racing we’ve be doing. Truly elated to put it on pole position in class 2 and mixing it well up the order in the top class, with a 5 second delta over the next car in class, showing some serious intent.

We used the short break between qualifying and race 1 to get more familiar with the regulations - there’s so many procedures to learn such as; having 3 minutes to get into the car and be out on the circuit before the pitlane closes (and failure to comply meaning you start from the pitlane...), not being able to reverse at all in the pits - car must be pushed backwards into the garage by the team.

We practiced the pitstop procedure, again new to the team which is a timed minimum from pit entry to exit lines and discussed pit speed limit of 40kph – noting severe penalty for speeding of a forced pit stop and 2 seconds per 1 kph over the limit – a car later in the race had a 300 second penalty applied accordingly!



Race 1 remained wet, visibility less of a problem as the standing water had subsided but it was greasy on-line, off-line, everywhere – we'd only made turn 2 before a front running Ginetta turned sideways in the traffic, directly in my path, cars went stage left, right and I tried to predict where he'd end up, not where he was – it was good judgement on this occasion and benefited from the position gained but it certainly added some drama into the mix from the outset. I hung on to the front running cars for a handful of laps but I just couldn't keep with the front running 5 or so cars with more power, aero etc. I settled into a rhythm until suddenly the rear left started breaking away dramatically through right-handers (90% of the corners on the F1 circuit!) so we pitted earlier than planned to see what was going on.. with a 14 second margin to the next car in class. On the stand I was suddenly informed that the rear right wet tyre was toast and the wheel needed replacing, it cost us around 20 seconds but we had the pace and lead to make it worth the risk - it paid off and we cruised home with the class win and 8th overall - chuffed to bits given we've done zero testing in the Britcar configuration specification.

Despite it being bitterly cold, the track dried for race 2, but we'd been issued with a 15 second success penalty, to be added to our pitstop time, for the earlier win – common in all forms of endurance racing apparently – we won the Race 1 by 17 seconds so it was going to be tight if the same scenario played out.. game on!

Having communication with the Team during the race was like having them inside the car, surreal but very comforting. My driving job had just got more complicated – I needed to converse whilst delivering lap times and negotiating traffic, defending and attacking for positions, simultaneously.

I got out-dragged on the rolling start and found myself right in the thick of it by turn 3, going out onto the hanger straight and made a couple of overtakes into the braking zone at an indicated 150mph! exciting stuff, it paid off and we sat in 5th position for a few laps, a couple of safety car periods, the first we capitalized on for our pitstop meant we had a chance of taking the final step on the podium overall – we very nearly finished the race under the safety car which would have assured that outcome but ended up with a 2 lap sprint to the flag, and I got pipped by a top class car for the place – albeit one of the cars ahead was ultimately disqualified for a technical infringement so we were promoted to 3rd overall, despite not getting that champagne and podium experience! Another comfortable class win and lots to celebrate 🥳

A mega result for **FormEvo Clark Racing** .



Reflecting on the day, my thoughts leaving round 1 of our first endurance race event are that it's not got the ultimate hit of adrenaline that the sprint format provides but it's far more of a team effort, with strategy as important (if not more) than my performance. My job was to work with the team principal to provide feedback on conditions, how the car was behaving to supplement those data points, the tyre change in race 1 is a great example. It seems a fitting environment for us to operate in given the markets my sponsors and I serve – Legal Technology, however good, is only going to deliver a successful outcome as part of a wider ecosystem – it's a team effort #legaltech

We go into Brands Hatch round 2 with confidence, but far from complacent – it's a long season and we need to stay on top form, both driving and strategy.

NEXT RACE:

23rd April Brands Hatch Indy