



Darvill Racing
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 Monday 19th April 2010

Back at the Bol d'Or - The Event

Well a week has passed since we left for the Bol d'Or and I think that we have all just about caught-up with sleep. What a weekend....

Thursday 8th April

I took the morning flight to Gatwick where I met-up with half of the Team and also Steve from Small Red Gorilla Photography; we duly jumped into the van and began a very slow drive to Dover. Traffic was free moving and we made good



time so we used the opportunity to stop at a Supermarket to stock-up on provisions. The rest of the Team arrived a little later and we grouped together and made our way to the terminal.

What a cracking day, the sun was shining and the Dover Straight was like a mill-pond. We now had a couple of hours to discuss the weekend's events and also catch-up.

We landed at Dunquerque at 18:00hrs (19:00hrs local time), and began the slow journey south... I am not going to furnish you with the mundane details of the AutoRoute escapades except to say we arrived at Magny Cours at 02:00hrs, a long journey, time for some sleep.

Friday 9th April



Up early to get onto site, we signed-on and received our passes and pit allocation and made our way down to the pits. This was the first time that any of us had been to Magny Cours and first impressions were that it is well looked after and properly maintained.

We had free practice at 10:00hrs (local) and this was also to be the first time that the bike had been ridden since 1985... no pressure then!





The first free practice went extremely well, both riders were in total awe of the chassis, suspension and brakes, on paper the bike doesn't work, it has a much longer wheelbase, it's a good deal taller, leading brakes and is very heavy however, Peter Darvill knew what he was doing, the bike turned quicker and sharper than its counterparts, it could out-brake the opposition and the centre of gravity was spot-on.... It works!!! We were

using the last configuration of the RSC engine with 750cc barrels and pistons which gave us a displacement of approximately 880cc, this meant that between 5k and 7k the bike had a horrible flat-spot on the power curve so to get the bike 'singing' we had to keep the machine up on the cams (incidentally the curve from 7k-11k is a straight-line), so as long as the 'boys' kept the machine in the top-rev range they were able to get the best from her.

We made some changes to the suspension and then rested until second free practice in the afternoon.

With the new suspension settings we were able to push harder, plus the 'boys' were learning the track, everything was looking good with lap times coming down and confidence growing until the last 30 minutes when Rob didn't complete his flying lap. We had to wait for the bike and Rob to be recovered, most importantly Rob was fine. It transpires that on the far side of the course coming out of a bend the bike began to lock-up, Rob grabbed at the Clutch lever in an attempt to stop the seizure and protect the bike... things were not looking good!

We noticed that the magnesium crankcase cover was cracked and when we removed it we discovered that the 30yr old rotor had begun to delaminate as it expanded with the heat, it then grabbed the stator and seized the crankshaft and also friction-welded the rotor to the end of the crank. It took 3hrs of hard but careful work to cut the rotor from the shaft (the pictures say it all), but luck was on our side, the engine turned-over, Rob had saved it in time.... Phew....



We used our spare 'production' generator, case, stator and rotor, swapped the rectifier for a road version and fired her up... It worked....

With the tension now abated we prepped the bike for the warm-up in the morning and settled-down for some rest (I couldn't sleep however, too much going on!).

Saturday 10th April

Warm-up went well, the bike was running quicker (now that there wasn't a rotor gripping the stator), both riders were gaining confidence and the times continued to drop. We finished warm-up fourteenth quickest (14th) for which we were very proud of, to put this into perspective the other RSC engines out in the field were putting up to 60Hp more than us at the back wheel, this demonstrates the potential of the chassis, suspension and brakes that Mr Darvill designed....!

Qualifying was held in 4 sessions (two per rider), and things were becoming a lot more focused and the lap times were now serious, Both Rob and Chris were straight on the pace, learning that the bike could out brake and out turn the opposition which allowed them to make up considerable time on the other machines given that we were being left standing on the straights. We had a really good session and out of the 51 qualifiers we managed to secure the twenty-ninth spot (29th).

We had a lot of visitors after qualification, not only were there interested parties to see Darvill Racing back again, but our competitors were shocked that we were doing so well and with the engine configuration they were struggling to accept our placing (cue the grins and knowing looks from the Team).

Time was ticking-by before race one, my nerves were at an all-time high (I really have never felt so stressed with the weight of expectation), the Le Mans start is almost upon us... Gulp...!





Race One – Night Start....

Rob was taking the first stint, I took the honours to assist with the start... and what a way to start a race, nothing compares you for it, I have been on the grid numerous times, yes nerves are there but you have your Team around you and there is a general 'buzz' of people, machines and activity. Not with the Le Mans start... The bike does its sighting lap, warm-up lap and then comes to rest by your starting position, the rider disembarks



and makes their way across the track, the crowd is going bananas with noise levels to match, the 5 minutes warning sign goes-up, a massive cheer erupts... The 1 minutes sign goes up, the crowd respond in unison then SILENCE... this is really strange, you can hear a 'pin-drop'... the 30 second sign is raised... roars from the crowd and then... SILENCE... how did I feel, well it was indescribable, I have never felt anything like this, awesome....

And the flag drops and were off.....

We discovered that in addition to all of the enhancements that Peter had designed into the bike all those years ago, the height of the bike also gave us an advantage... because the lights are that much higher than the competition we had a greater beam-spread enabling us to see farther and therefore rider faster... With this added benefit we were able to push hard throughout the first race to give us a 15th place, a phenomenal result...

We checked the bike over when she returned to the pits, removed the wheels (for a tire change) and left her for the night, no maintenance required and more importantly no remedial work needed...!

Sunday 11th April

With confidence high we prepped the bike for the second race, we were a little concerned that we wouldn't be able to match the result from the previous evening given that this was a daylight race and the 'Big Boys' would be looking to make up for the slower laps. We ran in the warm-up just to make sure that everything was tight, instructions from me to scrub the tyres in, well a new set of Avon's and a warm track = lowered lap times, we discovered that we could push harder with a full tank (the suspension seems to prefer this) so the boys 'dialled-in'.

Nerves were still evident at the Le Mans start, however we learnt from the previous night and I knew where to stand and how to present the bike in order for Chris to maximise on the start. He got away very well, however we soon dropped to 19th (as expected) but then continued to hold our position. We then





dug-deep and held our position even after a rider change. The bike performed flawlessly and we began to slowly climb up the leader board?

Endurance Racing is all about completed laps and being there at the end, we noticed a number of withdrawals and problems with our competitors, we kept our heads-down and continued to 'rattle-off' the laps..

So where did we finish, well in the Top Ten of course, seriously though,

we finished tenth (10th) which exceeded all expectations, we also were congratulated by our peers and raised a number of eyebrows in the process. We beat far more experienced Teams, Teams with spare bikes and 18tonne support vehicles, WHAT AN ACHIEVEMENT...!

Summary

It proves that the Team works and the bike is capable, I have already commissioned the engine to return to its normal 998cc configuration to ensure that we can compete and be within reach of the top 5 next year.

The Phase One Team (Russell included) all came to congratulate us, in the last 15 minutes we were all over them and I am confident that we can compete with them going forward. It was heart warming to realise that we have the potential to make a serious attempt at podium finishes at European Classic Endurance events...

I would like to thank everyone involved (Team included) for making this happen, we have been successfully Road Racing for some time, but to make the leap back to Endurance Racing has been a major step and without our Sponsors and Supporters it would never have been realised.





Next Steps:

We are taking the bike to the Thundersprint before she is stripped and rebuilt back to her RSC Works set-up, this will give us the chance to enjoy ourselves before the other race programmes force us to refocus on the domestic diary.

We have been invited to Cartagena in September (DECCLA Round) for the 6hr race; we will now be looking to find the funding to bridge the gap in our race funds, The Phase One team will also be there and we would love the chance to show them what we can do.



If you are interested in getting involved please drop me a line (details below) the shortfall isn't great and anything you can do will help us to get there.

As Steve McQueen wisely said "Everything else is just waiting!"

More updates on our local races soon....!

Yours Sincerely,

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