

PROJECTS

SHARE THE UPS AND DOWNS OF THE GOOF+ TEAM AS THEY STRIVE FOR PROJECT-CAR HEAVEN



Sezza's Lupo GTI

NAME:

Mrs H-J

FROM:

West Kent

AGE:

Old enough to know better

CURRENT STAPLE DIET:

Cadbury's Creme Eggs – yes I know it's not Easter yet!

RECENT REVELATIONS:

Rain+slippery track=carnage!

DRIVES:

Reliable Lupo GTI as a daily ride, remapped 1.6-litre 16v engine, currently running 143.6bhp, 132.5lb ft@3378rpm

Unreliable 1998 Fiat Coupe LE 20v turbo

WISH LIST:

Winter tyres... any ideas?

Email me: sarah@kelsey.co.uk

CURRENTLY GETTING DEAFENED BY:

Katy B 'On a Mission' album

BIG UPS!

Nick Rice at Motorsport Vision (to book your trackday see: www.clubmsv.com or Tel: 0843 453 3000), Shaun Hollamby at AmD Tuning (www.amdtuning.com, Tel: 01708 861827), James 'Jimbo' Wallace for the awesome track action shots, hubby Rob for help on the day



Sezza's Lupo GTI



I ALWAYS SAID ONCE THE POWER, BRAKES AND SUSPENSION UPGRADES WERE COMPLETE ON THE LUPO GTI I'D TAKE IT ON A TRACKDAY. BUT WAS THE SET-UP SPOT ON OR COULD THE CAR BE FURTHER IMPROVED?

TRACKDAYS: YOU'VE GOTTA LOVE 'EM. FOR STARTERS YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHO ELSE WILL BE SHARING YOUR TRACK SPACE WITH YOU SO UNDOUBTEDLY THERE'LL ALWAYS BE A MIXTURE

OF DRIVERS FROM THE SLOW MOVERS TO THE GUMBALL RALLY-STYLE NUTTERS IN A WHOLE VARIETY OF METAL. But there's always one thing you can never control. The weather. The week beginning Monday 21st February started off with oodles of sunshine until trackday Wednesday of course, when heavy rain descended on Brands Hatch in bucketfuls. Great.

Although I've now shaken off my novice trackday participant status after two previous sessions in the Loop at Brands Hatch, I still find it handy to have an instructor jump in for a few familiarisation laps and give advice on the best racing line to take in the conditions. Well with

standing water out on track and no let up from the heavens, thankfully I had already reserved my passenger's place for VW Golf British Touring Car supremo/race manager, Shaun Hollamby. And, I had plans for us to do driver swapsies during the afternoon so that I could gauge his opinion on the Loop's upgrades and, of course, get his verdict on my track driving skills!

After a seamless trackday briefing from racing instructor Jamie who emphasised that the yellow and red striped 'slippery surface' flag would become all too familiar today, it was time for a few sighting laps of the Indy Circuit itself and a chance to see what sort of cars would be out during the afternoon. As well as a handful of MINI Challenge Cooper Ss, my time would be spent with stripped out racers, a whole host of rear-wheel drive Jap material, Porsches, Radicals and other sports cars with the Loop being only one of a few daily driver road cars. On finding myself a free pit lane



Racing instructor Jamie gave a rundown of track etiquette. Gold stars were given to all who listened



Once sighting laps were over, Shaun checked tyre pressures and fitted the tow hook to the front. Obviously this wouldn't be needed...!

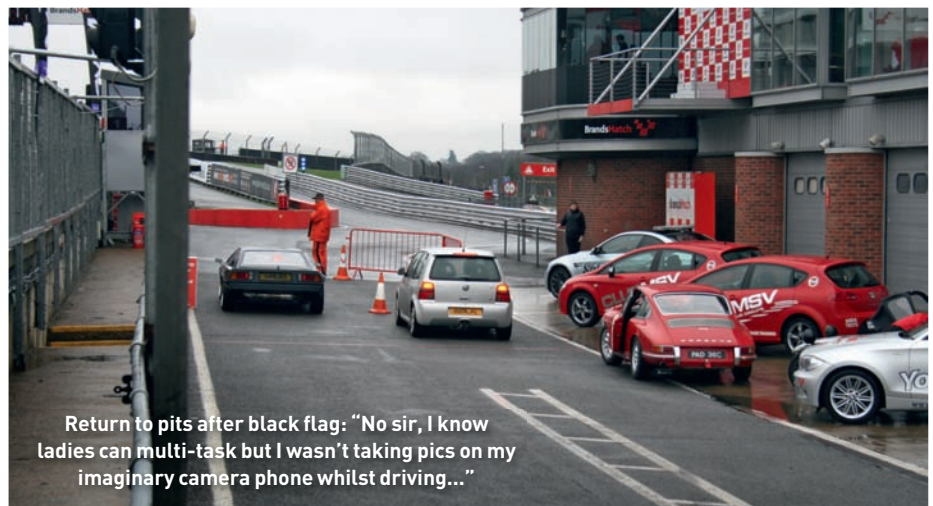


garage, we checked tyre pressures, oil and water levels and fitted the tow hook to the front before taking to the circuit for real.

Lid on and strapped in, the marshals waved me onto the track. But unfortunately my first lap out didn't exactly go according to plan. Within 10 seconds of being on the hallowed Tarmac I saw the black flags... and yes, indeed, the marshal at the top of Druids was indicating this was meant for me. It's a weird feeling being black flagged as it's as if you're being sent to the headmaster for a right rollocking. Thankfully on returning to the pit lane it turned out that a dictaphone in the car was mistaken for a camera phone and dictaphone-gate was quickly nipped in the bud...

Wacky races

As the sideways rain continued to blast its way across the circuit, there were inevitably some casualties. Everyone felt sorry for >>>



Return to pits after black flag: "No sir, I know ladies can multi-task but I wasn't taking pics on my imaginary camera phone whilst driving..."



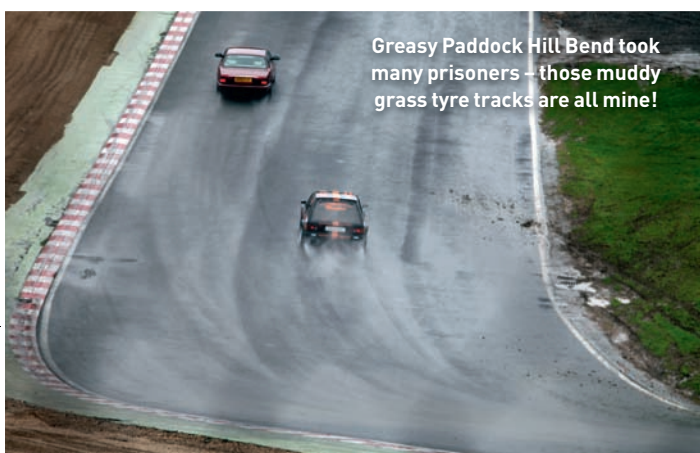
the guy who spun his rare Renault Clio V6 Sport at the end of the pit lane straight and damaged the rear quarter, but he was by no means the only one. It was yellow flags aplenty throughout the afternoon as the very slippery conditions took everyone by surprise – including me. I had never turned a wheel on a wet trackday before and the Loop was behaving like a fiesty unpredictable tearaway. Not only was I tackling armfuls of oversteer going into Paddock Hill Bend, the infamous first right hander, but immediately after equal measures of understeer which was completely unsettling the car. This was definitely not how the Loop behaved when it was standard... Before I could even try and tame the Loop's wild ways it bit me first and

caught me completely off guard. It happened in the same place as many other participants that day; powering down the pit lane straight clocking up nearly a ton before braking hard for the right-hander into Paddock Hill Bend, the Loop decided it fancied a bit of sideways off-roading action all along the right-hand edge of the bend. As the car was bouncing across the mud and grass with huge handfuls of the stuff being deposited in every crevice, all I could think of was 'in a minute it's going to dig in and roll...' before my foot stomped on the brake pedal HARD and everything came to an abrupt halt. Thankfully this incident didn't shake me up and there was no damage to the Loop, so after another return to the pits for a 'briefing' (and a change of pants), I was

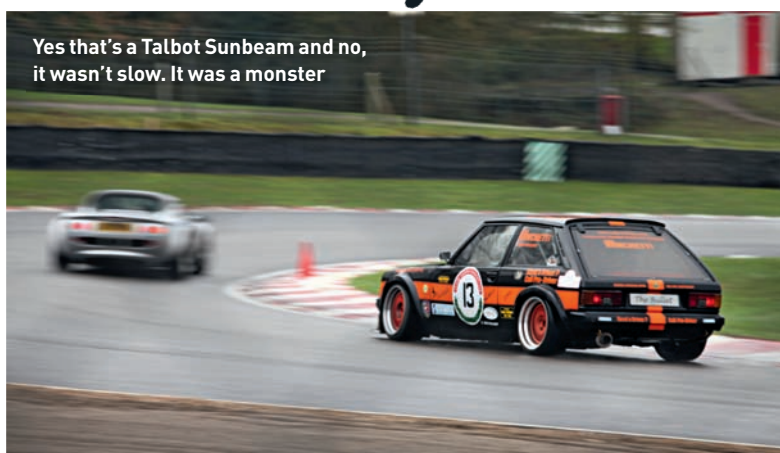
allowed to get back out there for some more sideways activity.

As the afternoon session continued the weather deteriorated some more, but it didn't seem to dampen the mood of the drivers. However, what it did require was a high level of concentration out on track, because at nearly every bend there was a marshal waving a yellow flag indicating that someone had come off the track or spun and you were heading in their direction. Rear-wheel drives suffered a lot – a classic Porsche 911 spun several times in front of me in one of those heart-in-the-mouth moments but the person who probably had the worst brown trouser moment was the driver of a Mazda RX-7 who found his hotspot at Graham Hill Bend. After >>>





Greasy Paddock Hill Bend took many prisoners – those muddy grass tyre tracks are all mine!



Yes that's a Talbot Sunbeam and no, it wasn't slow. It was a monster



THE KNOWLEDGE

Sezza's Lupo GTI

ENGINE:

1.6 16v with custom AmD remap, K&N panel filter, Bastuck cat-back stainless steel performance exhaust system

TRANSMISSION:

Five-speed manual

BRAKES:

Tarox F2000 grooved discs all round with Black Diamond Predator pads, Goodridge braided brake hoses and Tarox RoadRace brake fluid

SUSPENSION:

Bilstein B8 sport dampers all round, Eibach Pro-Kit springs (lowered by 30mm), Powerflex bushes, Awesome-GTI rear anti-roll bar

WHEELS & TYRES:

Winter: 15in original Bathurst rims fitted to Semperit Speedlife 195/50/15 tyres. Summer: 16in ATS Motorsports with black centres and a diamond cut lip, fitted to 195/40/16 Toyo Proxes T1Rs

INTERIOR:

Original grey check cloth interior, grey door cards and red seatbelts, GTI floor mats

EXTERIOR:

Standard bodywork, 'Cambridge' rear lights, GTI red rim to grille, red inserts to VW badge



pirouetting on the grass there for a while, on another lap he returned to the fateful area only to lose it and become stranded in the middle of the track, facing oncoming traffic.

Exit ARB

As the Loop continued to play up, Shaun stepped in to take the wheel and tame the car's back end. It turned out the aftermarket rear anti-roll bar attached to the rear beam was causing no end of issues in the conditions and had stiffened up the rear too much. There was only one answer: remove it completely. In fact back in the pitlane garage after borrowing some tools, it was easier just to loosen it off and once adjusted what a difference it then made to future laps. Interestingly I learnt that if the track was dry the ARB probably wouldn't have been a problem...

One bugbear I remember I had during my last Brands Hatch trackday in the standard Loop was how quickly the brakes went off. And a spongy brake pedal is perfect for spoiling the fun since it means a trip back to the pits to allow the car to cool down before attacking the track again full frontal. Keeping this in mind, one of the early mods completed on the Loop was a full Tarox brake upgrade with grooved discs and road/race pads, plus Goodridge braided brake lines and race-spec brake fluid. For me, the transformation this time around

out on track was immense. A heavy right foot on the brake shaved the speed off swiftly for Paddock Hill Bend and especially Druids, but it was only after a long period out on track that Shaun and I noticed on the downhill to Graham Hill Bend the pedal becoming less firm indicating the start of brake fade. To combat this, a bigger brake upgrade all round would be on Shaun's immediate shopping list.

Before I knew it the three hours of track session were up. It's amazing what adrenaline can do to the body; I was mentally and physically exhausted – but having one-to-one tuition from a 2010 BTCC driver was an opportunity I was not going to miss! The conditions I had to drive in were abysmal and if I were being totally honest, stressful too, but I've walked away with a better understanding of how to tackle a slippery Brands Indy Circuit in the future. And if you are intrigued to see what Shaun thought of the day, check out the Q&A interview. **GOLF**

If you'd like to experience the thrills of taking your VAG out on track, book your session online now at: www.clubmsv.com. No guarantees that a BTCC driver will be available for trackday instruction though!



➔ Shaun Hollamby's review of the Lupo GTI

Q: So Shaun. You've done a fair few laps in the Loop now, so what do you think?

A: "Very good to be honest, I've got to say it was quite quick as a road car – we went past quite a few Porsches – we shouldn't be as we're in a 1.6 Lupo! It'd be great if it had a close ratio gearbox because at the moment we're only using third and fourth, it's a revvy engine so it would make masses of difference. The Lupo has quite a lot of power understeer, but it has a tendency to have turn in oversteer which is probably due to the back being a bit too stiff due to the anti-roll bar. And the car could do with more camber all round."

Q: Apart from upgrading to a close ratio gearbox, are there any other upgrades you would suggest?

A: "In the long term bigger brakes, coilovers, adjustable top mounts and cambers but obviously these are quite major things. In the short term I'd work to try and get rid of the power understeer which we can do by adjusting or removing the rear anti-roll bar. I don't think it needs any more power because it's all relative to how much weight the car has – it's light anyway so actually it's remapped 144bhp goes a long way. There's no point in having lots of horsepower if you can't drive and there's a few out there on track who can't drive today."

Q: Once we disconnected the rear anti-roll bar, how did you find the Lupo GTI drove then?

A: "I think we made the car a lot better just by doing this as it made the back more stable and it became more planted so you could concentrate on turning rather than trying to control the car before you started turning in."

Q: How did you think I did on the trackday?

A: "I thought your driving improved massively over the day to be honest, much smoother and calmer with your inputs to the throttle, brake, clutch and steering. I saw a big improvement and felt you were more confident as the day went on as well."

Q: Is there any areas where I could improve on my driving?

A: "Having spatial awareness out on track is so important like looking ahead to see who's where much earlier on; you had a tendency to get in front of someone and then pull back in front – they might have just changed gear and you could clip them. A lot of it is experience and looking ahead on the circuit. With the brakes try and come off them smoothly so it doesn't upset the car's weight."

➔ Next time...

Time for the Loop to have a freshen up in every way! All will be revealed...