

Short but sweet...

I was delighted to be given a last minute chance to jump back into a Lotus Evora (albeit a GT4 rather than its big brother, the GTE) and have another run in the Britcar 24hr at Silverstone with Cor Euser's very experienced team. I was joining Scotland's Alastair McKinnon and Americans Jim Brodie and Hal Prewitt - this was Jim's 63rd 24-hour race giving a collective experience of over 100 such races between us!



Friday's qualifying session was used to give each driver a brief feel for the car and track and to complete the requisite number of laps. Cor also jumped in to make sure he was qualified and helped us to capture Class 3 pole. Even more encouragingly, the night session turned wet shortly after the start and showed the car to be extremely competitive in such conditions - Cor reporting that I was the second quickest overall in the wet despite having done less than ten laps in the car!

As we lined up on the grid, hopes were riding high that a trouble-free drive could yield a very strong result.

Alastair started well, holding second in class and running in a pack of cars as the Class 1 leaders sprinted away. However, after just seven laps disaster struck as the front right suspension ball joint failed on the way into the Maggotts-Becketts complex and Alastair reacted superbly to maintain control and avoid a huge crash. He limped round and the team did an incredible job

to get the car going again in around forty minutes, albeit now down in 32nd place with a huge gap to the cars in front.

Despite initial concerns about not having had time to properly re-align the wheels, the car was handling beautifully as firstly Alastair and then Hal and Jim put in some strong, consistent stints to slowly reel in the field. By the time I jumped in, night had well and truly fallen and we had reclaimed a few places to be 28th overall but still firmly last in class.

I was told I would be doing a double stint, so I needed to look after the tyres - advice I naturally replied positively to in the pits and promptly ignored once behind the wheel... The car felt fabulous and the corner lights were so good that I could clearly see each corner apex and push hard immediately. The laps times quickly fell into a 2.18-2.20 range which I was able to maintain consistently for the next three hours, generally third fastest overall (to the Mosler and GT3 Ginetta) and a good 10 seconds or more quicker than the majority of the field. An early safety car enabled me to extend the run by making a quick splash-and-dash pit stop, but the tyres held up superbly - although they were literally down to the threads by the end! (The chief mechanic giving me something of a confused / "you nutter" look when commenting that I had managed another 2.18 on them moments before pitting...)

I was hoping that I'd done enough to pull us back into contention with the pack, but a small round of applause as I was welcomed back into the garage revealed that we'd climbed from 28th to 12th overall and 4th in class, just two laps off class third! Very pleasing!!

Alastair picked up the baton and kept up the strong momentum into the early hours, followed by Hal towards the half way point of the race. By this stage we were back up to an incredible 6th overall and 2nd in class, whilst steadily reeling the class leader in. Unfortunately though as Hal was on his in-lap he felt the paddle-shift gearbox beginning to refuse to select and by the time he reached the pits we were left with a box of neutrals. A thorough inspection revealed it was the internal selector mechanism which would require a full gear box change - a matter of many hours on this road-car variant. And so it was with much regret that the shutter doors came down and our heroic fight-back came to nought, the sight of a stationary Lotus just a little too familiar....

It was great to be back on track again and have a good run. Failures like this, whilst always disappointing, are part of what make endurance racing so hard. It was also lovely to catch up with a few fans (you all know who you are!!) Fingers crossed I will be back out on track again soon...



“Err .. Did I bring the wrong outfit..?”