

# COURTENAY on track at DONINGTON

12 months on and we're  
visiting Courtenay Sport's  
Dunlop Production Car team  
on a test day at Donington.

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# COURTENAY GO RACING

Preparing and fine tuning the car in a break between testing.



‘High powered “showroom class” cars keep the costs down and the grid numbers high’



In August last year we went along to a round of the Dunlop Sport Maxx at Brands Hatch, where our friends at Courtenay Sport performed particularly well with their Astra VXR driven by Adrian Churchill. The competition has been renamed the Dunlop Production Trophy for the 2011 season, so we thought we'd pay the team another visit. This time on a Friday test session at Donington Park, Derbyshire.

This year's change of name also brought about changes in the regulations - the largest one being that race-spec slicks have replaced the road legal Dunlop Direzzas used last year. Despite these minor changes the championship is still designed to encourage mildly tuned, high-power 'showroom class' cars, keeping costs down and grid numbers high. Engines must remain standard apart from an exhaust and a custom remap, while bodywork, glass and fuel tank must stay exactly how the factory intended. Another advantage of retaining relatively standard engines is reliability - the ZzoLEH in Courtenay's car is in its third season and has never needed to be rebuilt. The only time the head has



Engines have to remain standard, only upgraded maps and exhausts allowed.



Burning rubber - literally!



‘That’s correct sir, floor mats are an optional extra...’

been removed was to prove to the scrutineer that last year's championship winning car complied with the letter of the law.

There have only been two changes engine-wise from last year. One is the addition of a full Piper 3 inch exhaust system. This helps the Astra breathe more freely and it also frees up a few more bhp. The other is a single mass flywheel that replaces the standard dual mass item used in last year's car.



## >HOW THE WEEKEND UNFOLDED

### Race One

The first race of the weekend took place on Saturday afternoon with Adrian starting from second on the grid. He managed to muscle his way past the Seat of Garry Duckman at the Old Hairpin on lap three and from then on led until the flag with a margin of just 0.754 seconds. Quite an achievement considering he had been suffering from severe brake fade! Kevin George held off Joseph Girling for fifth.

### Race Two

Sunday's first race saw Adrian starting from pole, a position he was only able to hold until Old Hairpin when he slid wide on cold tyres and Duckman forced his way through. Despite applying consistent pressure right to the flag Adrian was unable to regain the lead but finished five seconds ahead of Josh Cook in third. Kevin George took sixth, once again finishing just ahead of Girling.

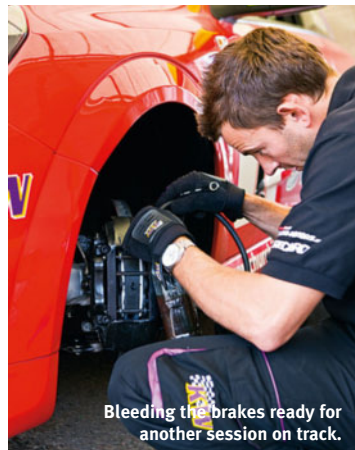
### Race Three

The reversed grid meant that George started from pole but he ran wide, clipping Ryan Bensley in the process. Both retired to the pits soon after.



The chaotic start allowed Adrian to claim first and pull out a slim lead over Duckman's Seat. However as the rain began to fall Duckman fought through at Redgate, taking the lead for a few corners till Adrian regained it at the Craner Curves. It was short-lived

however, as Duckman once again grabbed first at the Schwantz Curve. Duckman managed to maintain his lead all the way to the finish. The eventful weekend means that Adrian is now on 147 points, just 19 more than Duckman in second.



Bleeding the brakes ready for another session on track.



An explosive combination!



Grooved and vented discs with racing pads - essential for race use.



'Oi! Who's nicked my wheels?'

These small changes have seen significant improvements in the car as a whole; as Courtenay Sport MD Jon Shield says, 'The car is only at Stage 2 but it's so light it feels like a Stage 3. In fact it'll destroy a Stage 3 road car!'

The switch to slick control Dunlop tyres has had a profound effect on cornering speeds, grip and the forces the suspension components are subjected to every race weekend. To cope with this the KW coilovers have

The original equipment can be seen beneath racing additions.



been comprehensively strengthened to cope with the additional loads placed upon them, while polybushes are changed very regularly to sharpen handling further still. The dampers themselves are also matched with specially designed springs featuring custom rates and poundages. Another change in the rules has allowed the fitment of Limited Slip Differentials. These help to distribute as much of the car's 290 bhp to the track as possible, and help to increase cornering speeds.

The 345 mm AP racing brake kit that provided such sterling service last year remains and is housed behind the series' control wheels, Team Dynamics Pro Race lightweight 8x18 inch alloys. The same wheels can be ordered direct from Team Dynamics, proving that the cars aren't a million miles from road going VXR's.

The end result of so many OEM components being carried over is that the drivers themselves make the difference between success and failure in races. Adrian Churchill has remained with the team for 2011 to defend his title. He currently leads the championship by 19 points and with just two rounds remaining things are

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'The slick tyres are making us 5-6 seconds a lap quicker!'



Giving it the beans through the bends.

Looking good for a strong finish. As Adrian himself said, 'The difference the tyres make is phenomenal. We're talking 5 - 6 seconds a lap quicker on a hilly circuit like Donington.'

The slick tyres have also made a difference during qualifying as they're past their best after just five laps. Therefore a 'hot lap' has to be ideally eked out on either the second or third attempt, putting further pressure on the drivers. The new tyre regulations also allow the team to run specialist wet weather rubber when required, something which has dramatically increased the pace of the whole grid on wet weather weekends.

Courtenay Sport's success has also inspired others to join the series, with teams like Mardi Gras Motorsport making capitalising on Courtenay's experience and expertise. Last year they ran a Corsa SRI in the Sport Maxx

series for Kevin George - son of the BTCC driver John George. This year the team has opted to run one of Courtenay's Astra VXRs. Kevin won first time out at Snetterton and followed it up with second and fourth places that same weekend. Although results like this underline the Cornishman's natural talent, he says he's not fixated with podium glory just yet. He told us, 'I want to build my race craft, I just love being in the middle of the field and having great races with the other drivers. Thankfully, Courtenay have given me a fantastic car to do just that.'

Courtenay Sport have enjoyed huge success in the Dunlop Production Trophy this year and have provided fantastically close racing. However the 19 point lead Adrian has built up is far from insurmountable. It's all still to play for in the next two rounds at Brands Hatch on 28th/29th August and Croft on 24th/25th September. ○



Fact: Steve Johnson from Archway Motors, near Derby, sold Julian at least one of his Cavaliers back in the '90s.

