

RESULTS

Quarter Mile – Power, grip, transmission and low weight is what counts here. And the most powerful, big spec cars won, with the least-jazzed-up coming last. The LSD-equipped Clio and Civic fought in a class of their own, running below 14-seconds, with the Clio victorious by almost half a second. The torque-sluggin' Astra came third, pipping the more powerful, but heavy ST. But the 250bhp Golf was just .07s behind, interestingly. Understandably, the MINI, at least 100-150bhp down, came in last.

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|-----|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1st | K-Tec Racing Clio | 13.57s @ 112mph |
| 2nd | CPL Racing Civic | 13.94s @ 108mph |
| 3rd | Courtenay Sport Astra | 14.50s @ 99mph |
| 4th | GGR Focus ST300 | 14.60s @ 100mph |
| 5th | Morego Golf GTI | 14.67s @ 96mph |
| 6th | Lohen MINi One | 16.46s @ 84mph |

Top Speed – Power, gearing, aerodynamics and whether your car was fit enough determined this one. The Astra, sadly, sat it out and the Golf left before a run, while the Clio ran with a broken wheel bearing (not advisable). But the Civic's outstanding 151.7mph was excellent. And GGR ST gave a storming performance too, with its weight finally aiding its mission. And the Clio's 144.3mph is also rapido. Also, the MINI proved its punch with almost 120mph.

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|----------------------|-------------------|----------|
| 1st | CPL Racing Civic | 151.7mph |
| 2nd | GGR Focus ST300 | 145.5mph |
| 3rd | K-Tec Racing Clio | 144.3mph |
| 4th | Lohen MINi One | 118mph |
| No run Astra or Golf | | |

Sprint handling circuit – Romping to victory was the grippy Civic. Deeply impressive and, with its tail-happy style, big fun. The great surprise was the simple spec Golf, on worn tyres; just half a second adrift. Clever stuff. The heavy Focus and torque-steery VX-R weren't far behind, one dull, the other mental, both with great stoppers. And the MINI, although last, was at home on track, proving power ain't all.

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|-------------|------------------|--------|
| 1st | CPL Racing Civic | 55.71s |
| 2nd | Morego Golf GTI | 56.20s |
| 3rd | GGR Focus ST300 | 56.55s |
| 4th | Courtenay Astra | 56.80s |
| 5th | Lohen MINi One | 57.14s |
| No run Clio | | |

THE PERFORMANCE TUNER VERDICT

It sounds obvious, but with the Civic winning the handling, the top speed and coming second in the quarters, surely it should win? Right? It also scored 9/10, failing really only on looks, average brakes and the fact you have to fit the LSD. But, this transforms the car, and is essential, so... it's a necessary evil, if you want the grippy, tail-happy feel of this car. The supercharger radically alters this Civic, and it's properly quick.

As is the mad track star, the hoody of a Clio – it's a huge pity we couldn't see it in its environment; the track. It's 13.57s quarter mile was ballistic, on this slippery surface, and its top speed also proved its phenomenal punch, and traction.

The MINI has had a solid day in both testers' opinions and the circuit time it recorded was excellent. But, with just 150bhp on offer, no matter how good, or much fun it is, it was always going to struggle against such big hitters. Fun little package.

The Astra and the Focus are very much the same sort of car, just radically different in character. By private prejudice alone, both testers wanted to like the bedroom wall poster orange ST, and have never really liked the Astra's 'shellsuit image.' But this is unfair bias, and the reverse was true. GGR have designed and manufactured a solid package for the ST and the brakes are truly amazing, but the car as a whole did not set either test drivers' souls alight. It's just too darn lardy, and old in feel, despite its youthful looks. Thanks for the Focus's middle age spread Volvo. Bring back lithe, alive, punchy.

In contrast, Vauxhall have breathed new life into the Astra with the VX-Racing brand, and Courtenay have really improved on what is essentially a good hot hatch now. Furious, fast, wild, potent and practical. And the speed it comes on boost, then stops, is outstanding. Solid, wicked hot hatch.

The Golf. What a surprise. Bringing 'just' 250bhp to the party, and with its auto 'DSG gearbox, I admit to not expecting it to set the world on fire. But its laps of the handling circuit were amazing. It was brilliant to drive – mainly because it was easy

to extract a good time (sign of a good car), proving how intelligently it's been modified. And huge, arse-wiggling fun.

Had it had time to post a 145+mph V-max (do-able), and perhaps run to third slot on the quarters (possible, as only 0.17s behind), the GTI would have been the clear winner. If not for those results alone, then for being the simplest, one of the best value and the most practical 'jack of all trades.' The true GTI hallmark.

But, on results alone, the Civic – with its two firsts and one second place in these track-based disciplines – has to be the outright winner today.

Had this been a road test, all this would be a different story, as the diff-equipped, extensively-modified (£8k) Civic is on the edge of extreme, as is the crazy Clio. Conversely, the Golf, Astra and Ford would come into their own as fast road cars. In the end, how you choose to modify your hot hatch is up to one thing – what you plan to do with it. These brilliant hot hatches should inspire a few ideas, so happy tuning.

FINAL LEADER TABLE

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| 1st | CPL Racing Civic |
| 2nd | Morego Golf GTI |
| 3rd | K-Tec Racing Clio |
| 4th | Courtenay Astra |
| 5th | GGR Focus ST300 |
| 6th | Lohen MINi One |

