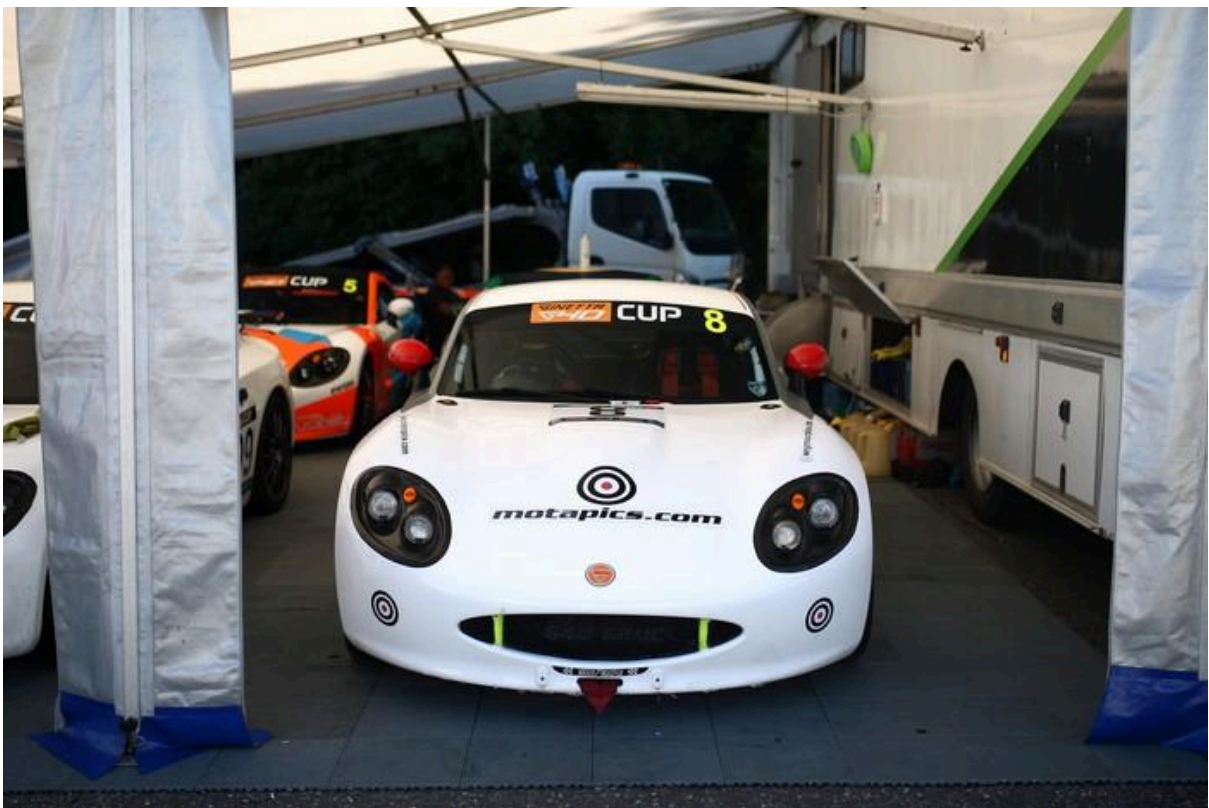


Transition to Motorsport

My story of moving from spectating and trackdays to being a competitor in motorsport.



Posted on [December 7, 2016](#) by [seymark](#)

Transition to Motorsport (1): How it Begins

2,589 total views, 1 views today

This is the first article I intend to write about my transition from road cars and track days to motorsport. I haven't competed in any motor races in my life, but it's something I've always wanted to do, and now appears to be the time to make the move. Here's the story, and in future posts, updates on how I'm getting on.

So what's my experience of cars and motorsport? I've always wanted to get on track but in the 1980s, when I started driving, I didn't seem to have the right contacts and certainly no money. Track days didn't really exist, and karts were just something you found at fairgrounds, and not something you could buy or try out. How things have changed, for the better.

My first experience on track was in Finland in the 1990s when a friend introduced me to his hobby, which was mini racing and karting. I was hooked and soon bought myself a Dino Kart with a 100cc 2-stroke Yamaha engine, from Henri Lahokoski's shop in Tampere. Before I could use the kart more than two times, I moved back to England, and the kart had to go due to other priorities.

Back in England in 2000, my sister bought me a Formula Ford track experience at Donington Park. This was a good one, and lasted the whole day, with a qualifying session around an oval of the Melbourne Hairpin, and then out on circuit for lead-follow laps. I surprised myself by qualifying at the front, so I was setting the pace down through the Kraner Curves, with very little experience of what to do, but loving it.

My next time on track came in 2013 at Lydden Hill, when I had bought a Porsche Cayman 987.1. I had upgraded to faster and faster road cars after my return to England, and I thought the Cayman was the ultimate, most expensive car I would ever buy. I had a great time at Lydden, but... I boiled the brakes, broke a tyre, etc. And there starts another phase of getting hooked... You upgrade the brakes and possibly the engine mapping, and then you think of suspension modifications, and on it goes. Soon you find that it might be better to invest in a more capable road-track car, or just convert something cheap into a track car.

In my case, I found the money (via a bank loan) to buy an even more expensive car, which I thought was the ultimate road and track car, the Porsche 911. Mine was a 997 Gen 2 basic Carrera, purchased from Paragon, close to me in East Sussex. It's a fantastic car and Paragon are brilliant at supporting their customers, helping them with ideas, including advice for track excursions. I took the 911 to Goodwood, Mallory Park and Brands Hatch.

Each time I went on track, I realised that I had to do something to make the 911 track-suitable, like spare wheels and tyres just for track, camber adjustments, anti-roll bar adjustments, upgraded brake fluids, and more. I stopped at doing the "more", like lowering springs, and reluctantly told myself that the 911 was too valuable for me to take on track, and it was never going to be suitable for the tough track driving I was starting to experience.

So I was looking for a solution, went to a hill climb at Firle, saw lots of specialist cars, spoke to a couple of friends about options, and made the decision to change the 911. I wasn't using it much on the road, was nervous of breaking it on track, and it was mostly preserved in the garage. This was not my way to get on track.



The

car I sold to fund a full track car

Posted on [December 31, 2016](#) by [seymark](#)

Transition to Motorsport (2): Buying a Track Car

2,325 total views, 1 views today

I looked at buying or building a track-adapted car several times, including BMW 3 Series Compacts (750 MC championship eligible) and Renault Clio 172s. The price was about £3-5,000 for a built track car, apparently road legal. In my view, the problem with buying a track-prepared car is that you don't know how reliable it is, or how legal it is for MOTs. If I were building a track car, I know I would have to make decisions, and possibly compromises about taking equipment out (such as airbags or electronics) or adding specialist parts that may cause difficulty for a road-going vehicle (such as lowering springs or camber).

I had the Porsche sitting in the garage depreciating slowly, so I decided to switch it for a factory-prepared race car, rather than buying a cheap track car as an extra to the Porsche. I found that the Caterham 7 and the Ginetta G40 were the two main options. I wasn't, initially, considering the race championship options, although both came with that option.

I looked at the Caterham in the factory in Crawley, but I still find them a bit old-fashioned in appearance, and lacking a roof. If I'm spending the amount of money they ask, I want a car that ticks all the boxes, and Caterhams didn't do that for me. I was looking at virtually the same car in the 1980s when I visited the factory in Caterham.

And so to Ginetta, and the G40. I have been watching these cars as they support the British GT Championship, and although they seem a little tail-happy to drive, they are exciting to watch. I liked the strong, tubular chassis and the clamshell hood for efficient access and quick repair of front-end race damage.

I filled in a form on the Ginetta website to enquire about the road-going version of the G40. The response was instant, and by phone from the Commercial Director. They said they can provide a G40 road car, which has a bigger 2.0 litre engine, but why don't I sign up for the racing version, with the 1.8 litre engine? The race package was cheaper but the car is not so powerful. The 2.0 litre road version is also suitable for track, but can't be used for racing.

I decided to go racing, as it was now or never. The GRDC package included car, race licence application and entry into four rounds supporting the British GT Championship. Now that's a quick way into a professional race series if ever there was one. But there's a steep learning curve ahead, as I'll describe in the next posts.



Ginetta G40 GRDC as advertised for sale in 2016 at around £30k including a year of racing

Posted on [March 31, 2017](#) by [seymark](#)

Transition to Motorsport (3): Learning the Ropes

2,496 total views, 1 views today

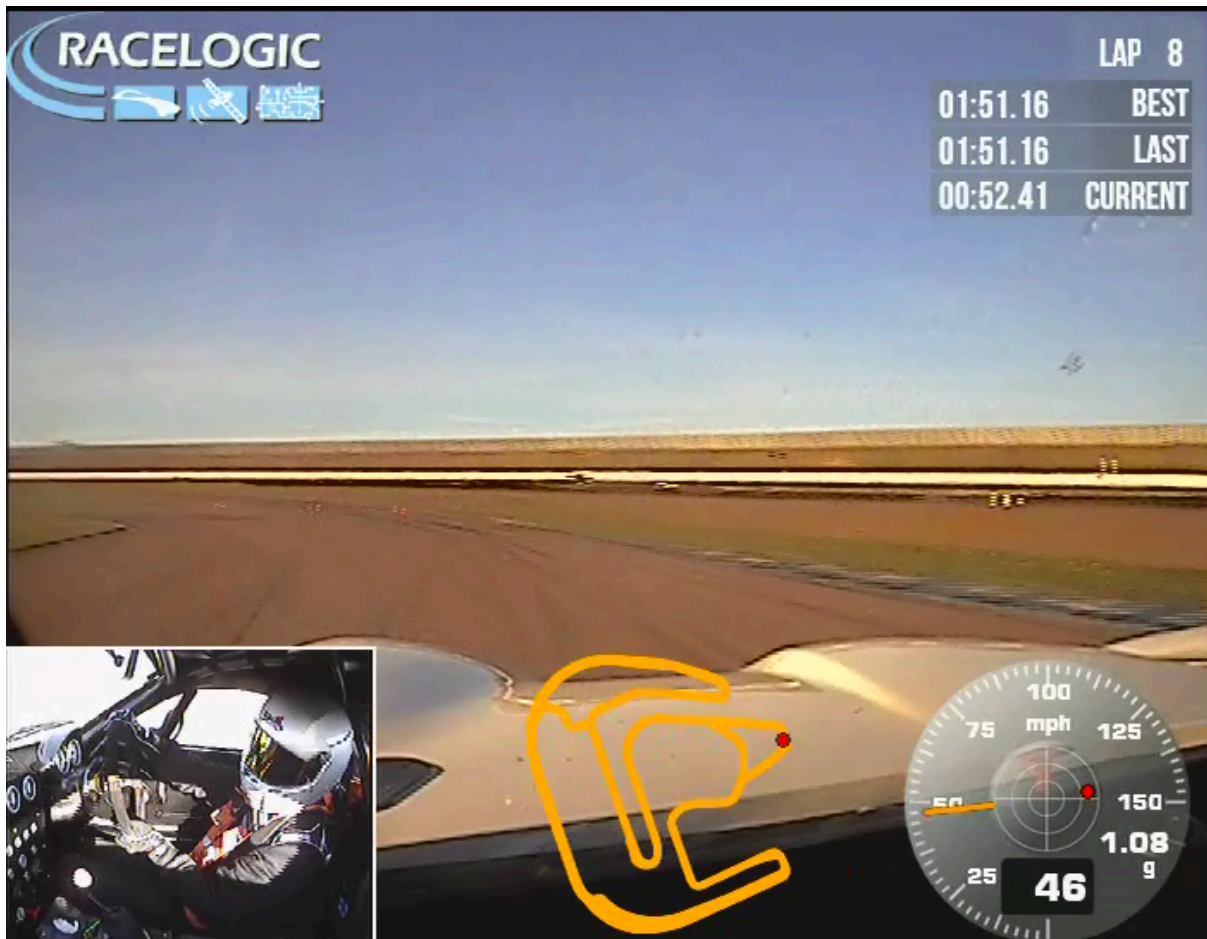
There's a lot to learn, starting with the driving, then onto the maintenance and set-up, and even the media and thinking about sponsorship.

Learning to Drive

Learning to drive fast is best done in a low-powered car with no electronics to cover mistakes. This is just what Ginetta aims at with the G40 and the GRDC championship. So what do electronic controls do? Stop you spinning, primarily, which I found out as soon as I got into a Ginetta on a damp day at Silverstone. I'd only ever spun a car once before, but on the day at Silverstone I must have spun four times at least. My mistakes were either applying power too much and too early, or holding the lock too hard on the exit of a corner. In my 911 and even in my C230 daily driver, the stability management system controls excessive power inputs to the driving wheels so that it's actually difficult to spin.

After six track days in the G40, I'm slowly finding the speed. Taking the racing line and hitting the apexes is not a problem, but maintaining momentum through the corner is my challenge. On a wet day, that's even more difficult, until you learn the limit of grip in your car and your set-up. Even then, there are spins, but you have to show a certain amount of aggression (or assertiveness, as instructors like to call it), so spins and track excursions will happen now and again.

Primarily however, I remember four cornering principles when going around, plus the mantra the MSA teaches you when taking an ARDS race licence: speed is a combination of smoothness, accuracy and consistency.



Set-up

On a car like the G40, you can adjust many parameters that will affect handling. The easy settings are tyre pressures, damper return / bounce, and anti-roll bar stiffness. The latter will have a big effect on your understeer or oversteer and the first two will also affect steer and levels of grip and feel. It's not at all simple, and I have adopted a beginner's approach to fix the anti-roll bars to soft at back and medium front, then just make one setting change per day on the dampers, depending on how slippery the track is. If the track is dry, I'll stiffen the dampers. As for tyre pressures, I'll measure them as soon as I come off track and keep them level all round at the recommended pressure when hot (which is around 28-30 PSI in the G40).

Other settings are best left to the experts, and for that you'll need to pay a team to do some set-up work on your car. I chose Ginetta specialists Fox Motorsports, and they will check through your car and set up the ride height (and corner weighting), cambers, toe-in, and show you how to do spanner checks for faults that develop in the harsh environment of a race track.

Corner weighting and ride height are the first things I would ask a specialist to set up on my car.

Maintenance

Driving a car on the race track will put big demands on all components. I always spend half a day checking over the car after a track day. As well as the spanner check, this also includes washing off any of the track debris and grime from under the car and in the engine bay. There's a lot to write about maintaining the G40, and I have a [separate manual](#) for that.

I also keep a record of the set-up changes that I make during track or post-track maintenance.

Media and Sponsorship

This is not everyone's bag, and I would only recommend taking it seriously if you're intending to make a career out of race-car driving. As an amateur newbie, you won't get sponsorship, except for help and possibly some small financial support from family or friends, or your own business. It won't cover a racing season at all, so you need to fund the car and the track days, plus race entries yourself. In the right championship, you can do this for a reasonable amount, affordable to your budget, such as the GRDC, Caterham Academy or 750 MC's Locost and Trophy series.



Posted on [April 16, 2017](#) by [seymark](#)

Transition to Motorsport (4): Preparing to Race

2,568 total views, 1 views today

One thing I've learned about the motorsport world is that everything is last-minute. I'm not sure yet if that's because of the nature of racing or just because accidents and breakages happen, and this throws everyone's plans out, in a domino effect. Or maybe it's just difficult to finance motorsport, and there are simply not enough people going around to do the work.

So what do you need to prepare for racing? Here's a simple list.

- Get your ARDS test and listen to the part about joining the first race carefully (e.g. signing on, scrutineering, entering the track)! And also learn the part about the starting procedures, as you won't get to practice these (unless you join the GRDC, where they give us a practice).
- Buy your race gear. If you buy as a package in one go, you'll get a discount. You might want to wait a while before buying the HANS device, but make sure you buy a HANS well before the first race, and start to use it on your track days (as it takes practice to adjust to restricted head movement).
- Join a club, such as BARC or 750 MC, as a racing member. This takes about a week, possibly two to come back.
- Get hold of your race schedule for the season and book hotels a few months ahead, near the circuit.
- Think of your graphics / livery and discuss with a wrapping company. Schedule in a date at least a couple of months before the first race.
- Get hold of the race technical regulations and ask a professional motorsport team to set it up for you (e.g. ride heights, corner weighting, roll bar settings). It should take about 4 or 5 hours at around £60 / hour.
- Learn from the team how to do a spanner check. After a few track days, you will certainly have some loose bolts, missing clips and clamps, etc.
- Learn what technicals to check at a track day every time you go out on track, as you will be responsible for these on race day: tyres (set the pressures), fuel (make sure you have enough) and wheels (make sure you have torqued them correctly).
- Watch some races in your series, and learn the corners, holding area and start procedures. Maybe take some video.
- GET AS MUCH TRACK TIME IN THE CAR AS YOU CAN AFFORD

Track time is the key to becoming competitive. Even if your natural ability is not as good as a fellow competitor, you will almost certainly get quicker than them if you spend more time in the car.

ARDS Test

The ARDS (Association of Racing Drivers' Schools) test is the racing licence test sanctioned by the MSA (Motor Sports Association) in the UK. As you progress through motor sport and do more competitions, your licence will also progress through different levels and you will, for example, be allowed to compete outside the UK.

You can take an ARDS test at most race circuits, including the MSV tracks and Silverstone, where I took mine, as arranged by Ginetta. The test is taken over a period of one day at the circuit. Before going, you'll be given an application pack which includes a DVD (called Go Racing) to explain all you need to know about the test. You can also search on Google and download an old copy of the MSA Blue Book (part of the general rules and regulations) to read about the procedures, flags, and so on that are explained in the DVD.

Watch the DVD as many times as you can, and you will absorb all you need to know to pass the theory part of the test. It will also help you with the practical test, as it explains the general principles of speed and of smoothness, accuracy and consistency that the ARDS tester will be looking for.

On the test day itself, you'll do two sections: the written test and the practical test.

The written test normally comes first, after an introduction session and another viewing of the DVD. The test contains about 20 questions in multiple-choice and written-response format (such as writing down which flag is for which track situation). Each candidate in the test room gets a different set of questions, so there can't be any comparing of answers!

The practical test involves a demo run with the instructor, where he shows you the potential speed of the car (normally a front-wheel drive, such as a Clio or Megane) on a race track. I think it's also designed to put you in the right frame of mind, and let you know that you are there to drive fast, and if you're not prepared for that already on the day, you should think about it. These instructors are professional racing drivers, and they can go FAST.

The practical test then involves two instruction sessions of about 15 minutes each, after which you'll sit in-car with the instructor and discuss what he sees you doing wrong (and right) and the areas you should concentrate on, such as not blasting the throttle too early before the apex. These sessions are like a mini instruction day, to point out areas where you might spin or go off the circuit, and to educate you on the principle of going fast and urgently on track, and therefore not becoming a hazard.

The third practical session is the test itself, and the instructor will ask you to do three or four laps without any input from him / her. They are looking for awareness (mirrors – and you should tell them what you see approaching), control and safety, and a minimum speed around the lap. You don't have to set records on the speed, just drive within your fast ability and with urgency. If you spin or exit the circuit by out-braking yourself, you will fail the test.

At the end of the practical test, the instructor will probably tell you in the car if you have passed or failed that part. After this you'll also get the results of your written test. If you pass both, your paper is signed and you can apply for the National B licence.



The 750 Motor Club has a clear process document on how to go racing, here: <http://www.750mc.co.uk/racing.htm>. See also <http://timarnold.com/get-your-race-licence> and <http://www.rebeccaracer.com/ards-first-step-in-to-racing>.

Helmet and HANS

Compared to motorcycle helmets, availability and models of racing helmets are more specific. You must buy a model with an FIA approval, and they normally come in white, silver or black. It's rare that you'll find a helmet with graphics. I've only seen one Bell model with red / white graphics pre-applied. The helmet will also need HANS posts (locking points on the rear of the shell) because all MSA events in the UK now require the driver to use a HANS neck brace.

If you're intending to race, it's best to get accustomed to the HANS device as soon as possible. They are not uncomfortable in my experience, but they do restrict your sideways and rear vision and movement (e.g. for reaching a non-closed passenger door!) because you can't turn your head more than 20 degrees or so, or move your head away from the seat.

You will obviously need the five-point harness in the car to use with the HANS device, and all this takes time to set up when you get in the car, so it's best to get comfortable with doing it every time you go out on circuit.

I chose a Stilo ST5 Composite helmet (the design for lifting the visor is great), with a Schroeder HANS device (seemed the lightest and best value) and a tinted, iridium visor for those low-sun winter afternoons on track. The iridium visors look dark, but from the inside, they are clear and don't restrict light in my opinion (and you can always leave it up when not wanting the sun shade).



Graphics / Livery

I suggest finding a local company that shows pictures of racing cars on its website. There is probably a supplier within 20 miles of you that does this for some race team or other. I was lucky to find Jellyfish Design within two miles, and they do wraps for BTCC and many other race teams. Race cars are mostly wrapped, not painted nowadays, and the design and wrap can cost from £300-500 upwards, including advice on the design. A cheaper option is just to get stickers made up by the same company. You'll need a couple of months to go through the process when it gets close to racing season, so it's best to think about the graphics early if you can. I was caught out by needing factory fixes to the car just when I was planning to send the car to Jellyfish for livery, about a month before the first race, so that was too late.

As it stands, the car looked like this (below) just before the first race. You'll notice that you need number boards and possibly windscreen banners from the series sponsors, and those will need to go on top of your graphics. So that's another reason for starting graphics early. I will now have to work around the number boards or get some new ones.



Mark

Seymour Ginetta G40



Track Time (Track Days to Test Days)

I can't stress enough how important it is to get track time in your race car if you want to get fast, particularly for competition. You may not expect to win, but you will want to give a good account of yourself for your own satisfaction, and end up in the position you think you're worthy of. You will know straight away who is faster and slower than you when you go on track days with fellow competitors. It is possible to move ahead of others purely by putting more driving time into the car.

With the Ginetta G40 GRDC, this is particularly true because all cars are the same and you have a level playing field upon which to work on your driving, and gain familiarity for when the car is on the limit. No matter what anyone says, I think the G40 is a difficult car to drive, but also extremely rewarding when you learn what NOT to do and how to control the car. The only way to learn this is to put more track miles in and keep pushing. That will involve spins, but fewer as time progresses.

Track time is cheapest on public track days, and I have an article on those, here: <http://www.saferoncircuit.com/index.php/12-finding-a-uk-track-day>.

If you're not finding enough time on track, you'll need to put more money into the game unfortunately, and you can go to Test Days, which are eligible for drivers with race licences only. You can find out more about Test Days here: <http://www.msv.com/testing.aspx>. These days are often run in sessions, and normally on weekdays. Your track time will be limited and it's more expensive, so you have to go there with a specific goal in mind, to work on areas of driving, track-learning or set-up.

Posted on [May 13, 2017](#) by [seymark](#)

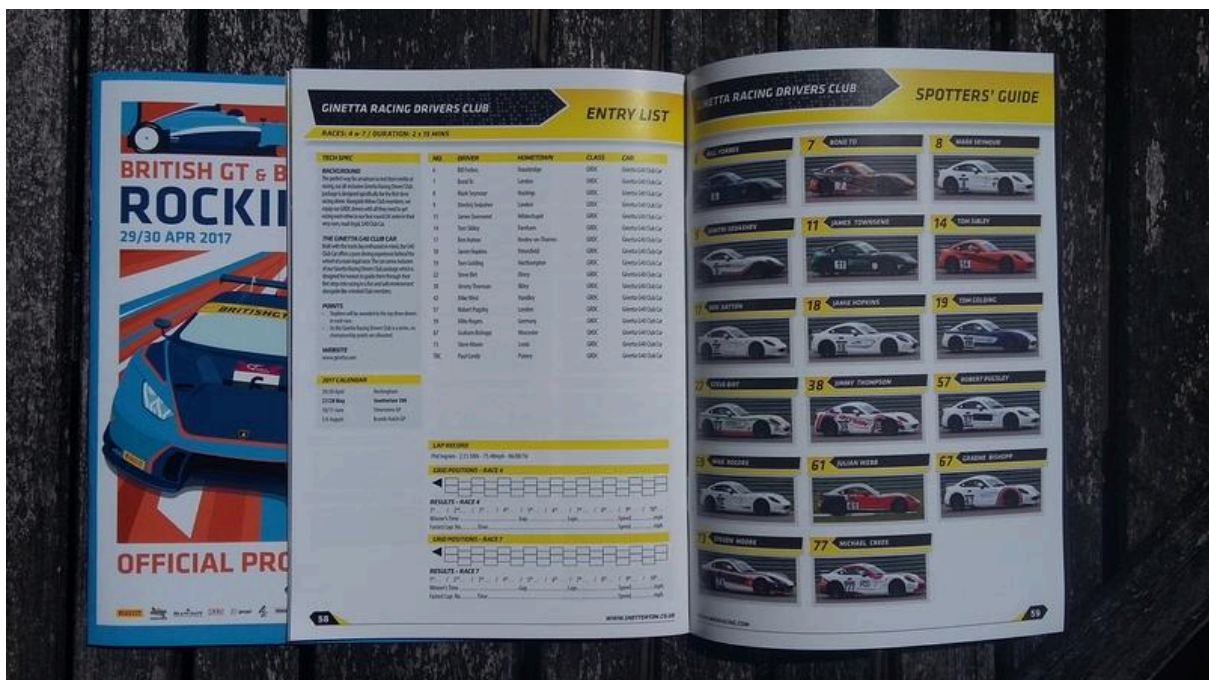
Transition to Motorsport (5): First Race Weekends

2,591 total views, 1 views today

Race weekends take at least three days, or maybe four days if you have to travel more than 100 miles to the track and do the Friday practice. No matter what you wish for when starting in this game, race success in motor racing is dependent on time and money. The more time you put in, the better you'll be, and that takes money: track days, test days, practice days, time off work, tuition, set-up, and repairs if you take more risk while getting faster.

Over the first couple of race weekends, you'll see some drivers improve, others lose interest and others balance expectations. We all do racing for different reasons, and those don't become clear until you really start the competitions. The fast drivers are just the fast drivers up front, and they've probably been carting for years or just have no fear. The ones that improve significantly from track day to first and second race weekends have decided to put more time into practice and tuition, as the lust for not getting overtaken kicks in. Some drivers are perplexed at the level of commitment and money required when everyone else starts to increase the level of seriousness, and they may withdraw from some races. Other drivers become philosophical and realise that they can't increase commitment significantly but will keep trying and be content with the lower end of the results table.

Being at the front takes talent and a no-fear constitution. Being near the front takes time and money commitment. All the rest is a compromise and balance of what you want to get out of motor racing. If you're in it for the kudos, put in more money and time to get higher up. If you're in it for the experience and the thrill, set yourself a budget and concentrate on tactics at the race weekend.





Commitment and race weekend format

I don't participate in the Friday practice, due to budget. It costs twice what a track day does and will be run in sessions for the different classes of race car, so you'll typically get two hours of track time over the day.

To be quick at a race weekend, you probably need the Friday practice however, to tune into the track and conditions, including other drivers, and to find your level of commitment to risk (i.e. how you're feeling and whether you need to change that). If your head is not in the right place for taking risks and being assertive, you won't be as quick as the other drivers. Friday practice will help with this. But it's not essential... I think you can learn to get your head in the right place during Saturday qualifying, although it's a challenge.

On my first race weekend, I had done a track day on the circuit two weeks before, and my first time on race weekend track was qualifying, I got 11th fastest of 18. On my second race weekend, some drivers had improved significantly through tuition, my mood was "beach" not "race track", and I qualified 14th of 17. I can't stress enough the need for commitment, concentration, mood and focus when competing. It's the same in any sport, but particularly the ones where decisions of micro-seconds make a big difference.

Qualifying is normally on the Saturday, with a race or two following later in the day, and another race or two on the Sunday.



Races and tactics

Starts can gain or lose you two or three places compared to qualifying. If you lose places, you'll be chasing slightly slower cars and trying to overtake. This is where things can go wrong for new racers, as you don't know where to make the moves and you try them in the wrong places. In my second race, I lost four places through a spin while overtaking around the outside. It was close to coming off, but in a Ginetta G40, there's a fine line between maintaining speed and grip, and a spin.

Find out from the pros where the overtaking points are on the circuit. They will mostly be obvious, like at the end of a straight, and not into a hairpin after a short straight. Wait until you are at these points, and keep harrying the car in front, to put on pressure. There's a lot more to this than I know about, so I won't write more.

What I can comment on is some basic tactics for novice racers. If you're not feeling the speed (i.e. grip and momentum) you can adopt a no-spin tactic of early braking and turn-in, avoiding the risk of spins but compromising your speed further. In other words, don't chase the speed if you're not feeling it. With novice racing in particular, others will spin in front of you or while trying to overtake, and by keeping them behind you as long as possible, you will gain places. This is not particularly rewarding though, so I would recommend finding the speed and having more fun next time!

Just a little more on starts: it's important to practise how to get off the line and to think about where to position yourself on the first two corners. I'm not accustomed to dropping the clutch, having driven mostly road cars, but it's the only way to get off the line quickly and not burn the clutch. As for position on the first two corners, I stuck to my plan of "inside line if possible", but found that in a bunch of jostling cars, it is possible for others to overtake you around the outside. So, if you do decide to go for the outside, it does work, as speeds are generally lower at the start. There is also a consideration of how much contact you are prepared to risk. If you avoid contact in your mind, as instinct will dictate after years of road driving, you will lose places to others who have a different attitude.



Ending the weekend

Don't forget to get your race licence Upgrade Card signed at race control! The Upgrade Card is in your MSA Blue Book as a rip-out card, and before going to the event, you'll need to stick a passport photo on it and take it along. The organising club will sign your card after a race, so that you can apply for the next level of licence (National A). You can also remove your novice cross after six signatures.

The journey home is slow if you're pulling a trailer and gives you plenty of time to reflect. It's good to think about what you did right, what you did wrong, and most importantly, evaluating why you're doing this, and does it align with why you started in the first place? Are you having fun, and if not, why not?!

My results after two race weekends, and four races:

- Rockingham Quali = P11 of 18
- Rockingham Race 1 = P12 of 18
- Rockingham Race 2 = P14 of 18
- Snetterton Quali = P14 of 17
- Snetterton Race 1 = P11 of 17
- Snetterton Race 2 = P9 of 17
- "Championship" = P13 of 20

I'm happy with that. It equates to where I think I should be, considering my input and speed.





Posted on [August 15, 2017](#) by [seymark](#)

Transition to Motorsport (6): Frustrations, Lessons Learned & Consistency

2,401 total views, 1 views today

By the time the third of four race weekends came along, I was getting disheartened at my lack of pace compared to the other drivers; who used to be the same pace or slower, but who were now quicker. As I've said before, it seems to me that improvement is 80% about time in the car and money available for risking the car in off-track excursions or race incidents. After a ninth and tenth place at the second round at Snetterton, gained by staying out of trouble and not pushing the speed, the third round at Silverstone was a low point. I couldn't find the speed or enthusiasm.

Not finding the speed, and lessons learned

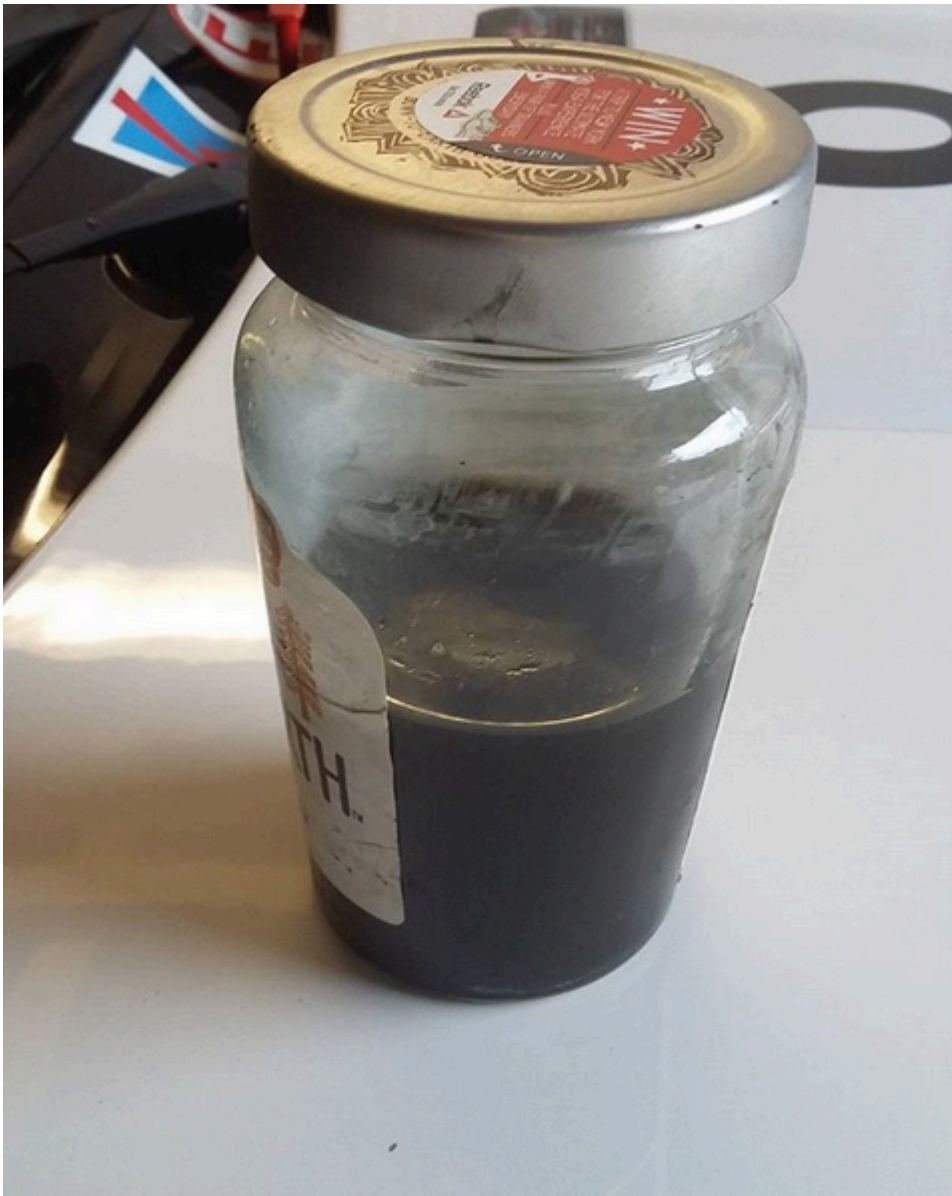
I found the Silverstone GP circuit difficult to learn, as it's so long and so wide, with unknown lines to the newbie. I had only been there for a few laps in the early days (my first ever time in a Ginetta in fact, back in November 2016 and in the wet, so lots of spins), and it showed when I turned up for the race weekend, straight into qualifying with no practice day beforehand.

I also realised after the race weekend that I'd been having trouble stopping, especially going into Luffield, where it's very easy to spin right in front of the British Racing Drivers' Club (BRDC) building! I hadn't changed my brake fluid since getting the car 3,500 miles ago, and I'd been on eight track days and two race weekends since then. That was a rookie mistake, and I found out the difference in stopping power after I changed the fluid for the next outing at Brands hatch GP. I could lean on the brakes later and know that I would slow enough in time for turn-in.

At the Silverstone event I finished near the back in both races, 14th and 13th. I knew I could do better than that, and I learned two valuable lessons:

- Make sure you have at least one practice on the circuit if it's new to you
- Change the brake fluid regularly and get the car set up by a team at least twice during the season

Set-up is important and unfortunately a bit expensive to drivers on a low budget, but should never be ignored. If you don't keep on top of it, you're wasting your time and money for the whole season. The same thing applies to practise at new circuits; you need to spend the money to get time on the circuit, or you're wasting your season.



Consistency and enjoying the experience

For the final race weekend of our four-weekend, eight-race season, we were going to Brands Hatch GP circuit. This is a rarely opened circuit, and most track days are on the shorter Indy loop of the circuit. Consequently, track days are expensive at the GP, in the region of £500. I was in money saving mode as usual, but my girlfriend told me I was wasting my time if I didn't make the most of the season and buy the track day that was coming up. Well, that was good advice, and I did the RMA track day. I loved the circuit, particularly with new brake fluid and better stopping power.



For the final race weekend, I also found a track evening at the Indy circuit and used it to get myself finally under the one-minute lap time by working on a couple of corners. I realised that I had learned a lot during the season, as I was quicker than most cars on the circuit, doing consistent lap times (when traffic allowed) and five seconds quicker on a lap.

I was now feeling more positive and looking forward to the final race weekend. It helped that Brands Hatch GP is such a fantastic circuit to drive when you get into the woods at the back. Hawthorns bend is fast and exciting, and Sheene Curve is exhilarating as you decide how little to back off as you go into the blind crest and ride the kerb.



Final race weekend and championship results

We don't have an official championship in GRDC, and points are not officially counted. However, we all like to count the phantom points and know where we end up, of course.

At the race weekend, I qualified 11th of 15 cars, which is the same result as my first race weekend at Rockingham. The track was wet to start, and drying through the session. Tom Golding, our championship leader, was taking three seconds off each lap as the track dried. I was taking one second. I wasn't sliding and not risking anything. We need to get three timed laps or we can't race, and we'd already been stopped for a quarter of the 20-minute session by spinners.

In both races, I got mugged at the starts as usual, not because of bad starts this time, but because of poor defending on the technical corners on the first laps. I just let competitors go when they make a lunge, and then I lose momentum. Nevertheless, due to others' spins and off-circuit excursions, and a couple of nice overtakes, I regained places and finished 10th in both races.

I finally got myself involved in close racing, over the fast parts of the circuit, where you can carry momentum and make overtakes if you like that kind of speedy flow, as opposed to the technical, diving corners. I avoided damage but got a couple of tyre rubs, which seems normal in racing.



Television coverage

All season, we have been supporting the British GT Championship. For our final weekend, we were lucky enough to be selected as one of the four races in the TV coverage, broadcast first on the British GT YouTube Channel, and then on Motorsport TV. It brought great satisfaction to the end of the season to see our race with full coverage and commentary.

All in all, my first season in motor sport was extremely rewarding and I learned a great deal on a steep learning curve. I finished 10th of 19 in the "championship" and I didn't sustain any major damage or have huge costs for support, track days or tuition. Next year I can concentrate on the tuition to iron out my mistakes and get faster, and do the races I can afford.

GINETTA RDC			
BRANDS HATCH GP, ROUND 8			
1	Tom GOLDING	Ginetta C40	8 Laps
2	Bond TO	Ginetta C40	+ 8.053
3	Tom SIBLEY	Ginetta C40	+ 11.649
4	Jimmy THOMPSON	Ginetta C40	+ 28.180
5	Ben HATTON	Ginetta C40	+ 33.783
6	Dimitri SEDASHEV	Ginetta C40	+ 33.999
7	Bill FORBES	Ginetta C40	+ 42.774
8	Mike WEST	Ginetta C40	+ 42.954
9	Robert PUGSLEY	Ginetta C40	+ 44.357
10	Mark SEYMOUR	Ginetta C40	+ 45.479

1:06:24 / 4:31:16

British GT - Brands Hatch 2017 - Full Show - LIVE



GTWorld

Subscribed



68K

7,039 views

4:53

59:24 / 4:31:16

British GT - Brands Hatch 2017 - Full Show - LIVE



GTWorld

Subscribed



68K

7,039 views

Transition to Motorsport (7): If I Knew Then What I Know Now

2,426 total views, 1 views today

It's now "year 2" in my transition to motorsport. It's been just over one year since I bought my Ginetta G40 and started driving it on a couple of track days. I drove it as a road car to the tracks and drove it on the tracks like a road car, with my motorcycle helmet and a pair of jeans and fleece. I knew then that I had a steep learning curve ahead of me. What I didn't realise was how to manage my budget and get the most out of my time and money before the first races.

I can do it myself

That's what I concluded early on; "I can do this myself". I figured that I'd had some instructors in car with me and didn't get much out of it except confusing messages, so track time on my own was just as valuable. I also figured that the maintenance and set-up is there to learn and implement as with a road car, just with more regular checks. I was right on both counts for a season of learning about motorsport, but if I had known then what I know now... I would have tweaked a few things, saved some time and got more out of the year, although I spent a bit more money.

Rule Number 1: Tuition

As I had always been told, tuition / driver coaching is the best investment you can make. I've now had some proper driver coaching, and learned a huge amount in one day, probably more than I would have learned in ten track standard days.

There are three things to prioritise in this area in my view, as follows:

1. **Get the right tutor for your learning style, and listen carefully** because you only have a couple of hours in the car over a day, and you really need to apply what he or she is telling you quickly. At the end of the day, take the time to write down what you picked up from the day, such as the three main points. You won't learn it all in a day, but you will learn at least one new thing that you need to keep practising.
2. **Get a tutor that you can hear properly**. There's nothing worse than trying to drive on the limit and struggling to hear what a passenger is saying. In my view, if the instructor does not give you an earpiece connected to his microphone, you won't learn anything.
3. Get tutoring on each circuit, not just one. To get as fast as the other guys in your talent range, you'll need one or two tuition sessions on that circuit. Not many corners are the same, even if they are of a similar type (coast to apex, power down through apex, v-shaped, etc.). Each one has a nuance that an instructor can guide you through, and they are slightly different nuances on each corner of each circuit. These finer learning points per circuit will make the difference that you are seeking on a circuit, even if it is just tenths of a second.

Rule Number 2: Team support

If you can concentrate on your driving only, by pulling into the pits and having your car checked and tweaked, you will be quicker. You get your fuel measured out for the number of laps you are doing. You get your tyre pressures adjusted as soon as you come off track. You get your shocks adjusted while you sit in the car. What could be better for helping you think only about the driving and what the instructor has told you? Of course, this is the ideal scenario and we can't afford it all the time, but now and again, if you can afford it alongside the driver coaching / instruction, it's worth its weight in gold.

Setup of the car is also best done by a team on a regular basis. You can still do the basics like oil changes yourself, but you really need a professional team to set up your car geometry and do thorough spanner checks. Things come loose or break on race cars every time you go out, and you won't find them until you spend time looking into every nook and cranny. That's what the race teams do, and it's a lot easier for them because they know what to look for and they have the ramps and tools to make it routine.

Improvements and costs per second

Here's an example of how lap times can improve with tuition and then setup.

I took a day at Snetterton 300 in November where the car was prepared and delivered to track by SVG Motorsport. I also got tuition on the day with Jim Edwards.

Preparations involved full spanner check, new brake discs and pads, free setup (i.e. no longer to GRDC series spec), corner weighting, new Quantum shocks (still one-way but apparently better than the GRDC Protech) and new wheels with Avon ZZR semi-slick tyres. The whole day and set-up cost me £5,000, which is probably the most I've spent in a single day other than buying a new house or a new car. Ouch...

We started the day on the old Michelin PS3 tyres, in the wet, drying to damp by midday. My previous fastest lap was mid 2:27s, on a track day mid year. After about 20 laps of tuition with Jim and the new shocks, my lap times were down to the mid 2:24s. In the afternoon, switching to a few laps on the Avon ZZR, my lap times improved to the mid 2:23s. This is a 4-second improvement over 3 miles, and compared to my race pace from back in May (2:29), a 6-second improvement, i.e. two seconds a mile.

VIDEO: Improved lap, Snetterton 300 at 2:23:94 (FL of the day 2:23:33). I show this lap because it indicates how hard you have to try at a corner like Hamilton. These laps may look slow compared to supercar laps, but considering we only have 135 HP and no electronic management, they are difficult to achieve. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUG5dG4rw6s>



I subsequently did a day in December at Brands Hatch Indy and gained two seconds a lap, from the mid 00:59s to mid 00:57s. At least half of the improvement is down to tuition, putting into practice the two or three points that I picked up from Jim.

VIDEO: Improved laps at Brands Hatch Indy in winter (FL of the day 00:57:60). Paddock Hill Bend on repeat, showing how to keep the speed up (or not) on the dive down to the apex, and how a very slight turn-in too late on the last lap leads to a spin and the gravel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuCjMacyzXQ>



Some conclusions

(1) Tuition with a coach who can teach in a way that suits your learning style is the number one priority, and I should have invested earlier.

(2) You can avoid frustration and spins by proper set-up. It really does help with your stability. I feel quite comfortable with the car moving about, as a Ginetta does when not set up to the optimum, but that seems to be wasting potential, even if it is a good learning practice and part of the reason you want “seat time”.

(3) Spend your money on fewer, quality track days, or a quality track day every other time – where quality means team support and tuition, which may cost you about £1,000.

(4) Avoid too many of those public track days at weekends, they are frustrating and you may spin off as a result. One track day I did recently had 55 cars booked on Brands Hatch Indy. We all know the stories about powerful cars pulling away on the straights but holding you up on the corners...

I spent about £5,000 on my whole season last year on track days, race weekend transport and hotels, DIY maintenance and caution at races to avoid damage.

Next year I'll probably have to double that budget, plus another £5,000 for the setup changes. That's a light budget compared to what I've heard for other drivers in our championship, so how will that work? We'll see...

Posted on [December 10, 2018](#) by [seymark](#)

Transition to Motorsport (8): Money, the Uncomfortable Truth

1,437 total views, 1 views today

The last time I wrote, at the start of the 2018 season, I made the point that you really need team support and tuition to get the most out of motor racing. Well, at the end of the 2018 season, I can say that's still true – but what I didn't realise was how much all this costs.

You can't just take occasional support from a team, you have to commit to a season and basically, let them know how much you'll be spending with them. If you're not spending much, you won't get the setup advice and general support you need for practice and competition..

For example, a race team will know the setups for your type of car at each circuit for the different conditions you'll meet: dry, hot, cold, wet, etc. They won't give you those settings unless you take the team along to the race track with you, as this is their intellectual property, and other drivers are paying more for it. That's all fair enough, but it does leave the lower-budget racer with a problem. You're either fully committed and spending money to take a least one mechanic to every track day, or you're not with a team.

The only solution I can see to this is to find a race mechanic who will do the setup work with you between track days, and come to the occasional day with you. Or, you can learn the setup yourself and put in a lot of hard work to change the settings during a track day, but that really is hard work after you've trailered the car to track and still need to drive the lap times and do the spanner work, and then trailer the car home again, unpack, clean up and prepare for the next track day.

Some smaller teams will sell you just awning space and advice at race weekends, but I see that as an essential minimum if you've already arranged all the driving practice and learning about setups with your friendly race mechanic.

So what does it really cost?

For a season in Ginetta G40 Cup, I believe that most front-runners spend around £50-70k. That gets you storage and preparation of your car, delivery to track days with a mechanic and delivery and support through six race weekends. It also gets you in the region of 10 to 15 track days and tuition, plus consumable parts like tyres and brakes. With that investment in money and time, bearing in mind that most track days are midweek and require a day off work, you'll get in the top ten at race weekends. If you get involved in crashes, which is highly likely, your repair bill may be another £5-10k on top.

Of course, that's just Ginetta G40 Cup racing. There are cheaper championships to enter, which is the subject of my next post.

Posted on [June 6, 2019](#) by [seymark](#)

Transition to Motorsport (9): A Team-supported Race Weekend

2,334 total views, 1 views today

In Transition 7 I talked about the value of team support. In the first race of GRDC 2017, more than half the competitors were racing as individuals. By the second race weekend, two-thirds were running with teams, even though this is not officially permitted by Ginetta. What actually happens is that the team is not allowed to touch the car when it's in the Ginetta park area, which is most of the race weekend. However, before racing, at track and test days, the team can support the driver and get the car tuned in.

There's no doubt that getting team support improved the performance of drivers significantly for subsequent races. A whole group of people that you were on a level with, or quicker than, suddenly jumped in front of you on lap times. I put this down to tuition, car maintenance and getting the driver comfortable with the car by adjusting the settings that are not controlled by the championship. That's motor racing, so you just have to step up to the plate and get on with it.

One of the race winners for G40 Cup 2019, Dan Morris, commented on the podium at Snetterton that, in GRDC with no team support he was not even challenging for a podium, sitting in the middle to rear of the pack. Then, with his first team support at the Donington 2018 round, where GRDC can join G40 Cup, he was challenging for a podium, and is now winning races in 2019.

Plans and reality for my second season

For my second season, I had planned to contest three of the six rounds in Ginetta G40 Cup (formerly GRDC+). This also supports the British GT Championship but you have semi-slick tyres, improved shocks and three races plus qualifying per weekend. It's faster and much more competitive, as everyone is running with a team, and now more experienced in race craft and driving ability. Around the Snetterton 300 track, lap times would drop from 2:22 for a race-winning pace in GRDC to 2:18 in G40 Cup. In 2019, the series moved further into pro sports, with adoption of slick tyres, and the lap times are now down to the 2:14 region.

Contrary to plan, what actually happened in my second season was that I spent to budget, about £10k, but I had to withdraw from all but one of the race weekends (I did Brands Hatch only, missing the planned Snetterton and Spa rounds). I realised after the first testing day with a race team, in February 2018, that I would need to take them along to almost every track day (see below for why), and that was not sustainable. Ginetta were very good about refunding some of my race fees, when I explained that this was looking far more expensive than anticipated, although I did find out after Brands Hatch that they don't award championship points if you only do one round. Frustrating, to say the least, as that's a big motivation for racing drivers.

The reason why you need a team at every track day is, aside from delivery of the car to track, if you can even afford that, they need to get you comfortable with the car. Every driver is different, but in general you want to prevent the car sliding or spinning in the corners, so that you can push to the limit of grip with confidence. This means adjustments to brakes, roll bars, shocks, camber, tyre pressure, and so on. Even if a team knows a type of car, they can't give you a standard set-up per track without you providing feedback as a driver. As they say to you, every driver wants things set up slightly differently. As a developing driver, you get more comfortable with oversteer and can take away some of the understeer that you may have requested, for example ([see this from Scott Mansell on the same subject](#)). For beginners, the whole process of getting comfortable with the car

takes at least the pre-season testing and one or two race weekends, and that means maybe five or six team-supported trackdays and race-weekend tweaks. And then – more track days during the season, at £2k each, and then – more race weekends, at £3k each. As you can see, it gets expensive if you do it this way, and that's without breakdowns or damage. I previously mentioned a figure of £50-70k per season.

What did I achieve at my team-supported race weekend?

My sole 2018 race weekend was a lot of fun, being part of the British GT package and enjoying one of the best race circuits in the world, in the heat of summer. But it was also frustrating to still not be dialled into the car, and paying for on-call mechanics to do rudimentary tasks like refuelling and tyre pressures. Mainly, I got peace of mind about a workshop-home in the paddock and about fixing potential breakdowns and damage, plus some team mates to joke with. The team was running six cars in the same weekend, and there was no point trying to do setup work with my car at this stage, which I fully understand.



I did all the preparation and setup for this race weekend myself, and as I've found out now, my setup was very basic and possibly back to front on shocks. I'd been working on this at a few track days and didn't know how to approach it, mainly altering ride height and keeping on top of the maintenance and brakes, but nothing that added up to helping me feel more comfortable with the car.

Nevertheless, I managed to qualify 17th of 23 around the Brands Hatch GP circuit. This was ahead of several drivers who were doing the full season, and just back from the race week at Spa. In the races I struggled a lot at Surtees bend in particular, slowing way too much because I didn't feel confident with the grip there, and losing places on that long straight down into Hawthorns. However, my race starts and ability to gain and keep positions on the first corners, were much improved. I felt much more comfortable with the bumping and barging that you get in Ginetta racing, and even enjoyed it, only sustaining cosmetic damage.



By the way, my advice on a race start at Brands Hatch: stay on the right at Paddock Hill, even if it costs you a place, as you'll gain or defend well at Druids when you have the run down the inside, not the outside.



If I do G40 Cup again, I'll probably hire an awning and make my on space in the paddock. It would be basic, but with a willing engineer to help, it's better for me, and a lot cheaper. The alternative is an overall cheaper championship where paddock real estate is also easier to come by. But, you still need that engineer to help you, which is the subject of the next journal entry, Transition 10.



Category: Road or Circuit

What's the difference between driving fast on the road and driving on a circuit, and how do you achieve the latter.

Posted on [November 16, 2016](#)

Finding a Track Day

4,379 total views

This article refers to taking your own car onto a UK circuit. You can take any type of road car on the track days linked from this page, as long as you have a UK driving licence. For race cars and race licences, you can book "test days" with a circuit. Also note that on some track days, race cars are not permitted (normally means a car showing a race number), or the day is for novice drivers only.

Personally, I avoid track days that are divided into sessions, either categorised by driver experience or car type (race, road, open wheel, closed wheel) because I've been on days where most of your track time is wiped out by red flags in your session. Sessions is a common format at certain circuits, such as Lydden Hill (by driver experience) and Brands Hatch GP (by car type). On test days, the session format is also common, for reasons of speed differential and open wheels, so you may have no choice. On normal track days, it is comfortable to run road and race cars together because drivers are severely reprimanded or removed if they follow other cars too closely, overtake on the wrong side, or overtake around a corner.

Your first port of call when booking a track day could be trackdays.co.uk, as they have a comprehensive list of all dates for track days, sortable by date, location, price and format. I've noticed that they offer good prices and give a very reliable follow-through, i.e. you won't turn up at the circuit and find you're not booked. They are a broker however, and if their website shows the venue as sold out, it's worth looking further to see if you can still buy the day elsewhere. Companies like Javelin, RMA or Gold Track may have booked the whole circuit for that day. On the day, you either turn up at track and deal with the organising company, and they run the safety briefings, etc., or you deal directly with the circuit.

If you want to book a trackday that is not available on one website, you can go to another website where they may have spaces available. If a trackday is full everywhere, it's often worth calling the organiser to see if you can go on their reserve list. Generally, if anyone pulls out of the day, a space becomes available. Most trackday bookings can be cancelled and refunded within a certain time window of the event.

Personally, I go straight to the circuit website first, such as MSV Trackdays, although that's not for any particular reason (except with MSV you can get a 10% discount off your next purchase after attending two days and getting your discount voucher stamped).

Here are the most common options for purchasing a trackday in the UK:

- [Javelin Trackdays](#) – I've seen them at numerous circuits and have good experience when using them
- [MSV Trackdays](#) – as Motorsport Vision owns most of the major circuits in the UK, they have first call on trackday availability, so always check with them if you can't find the day elsewhere, or go straight to them, as they have a good website and good prices based on demand (like an airline ticket pricing model)

- [Gold Track](#) – A well-developed product, particularly for aspiring racing drivers, where you can get time on some of the rarer circuits. You can also collect track miles and buy packages.
- [RMA Trackdays](#) – Another quality trackday organiser, particularly if you want circuits in mainland Europe such as Spa.
- [Open Track](#) – Similar to Javelin, they buy the track from the owner for a day and sell on the track space, doing their own briefings and customer management.

For Test Days, I would go to:

- <https://shop.msv.com/Calendar/Testing>

If you're a **member of a car club**, that's also an obvious option for finding track days, as the club often books a circuit, or a number of slots at a circuit and makes them available to their members.



Posted on [November 13, 2016](#)

FIA Road Safety Grants Programme

2,669 total views

The FIA (Federation Internationale De L'Automobile), motor sport's worldwide governing body, runs a campaign called **Action for Road Safety**, which it launched to support the UN's Decade of Action for Road Safety.

At many motorsport events you will see promotions and fund raising under this initiative, expressing the message that racing is fun, but it's not safe on the road.

The FIA also offers grants for projects about road safety, which may be developing mobile apps, education films, mentoring programmes, etc. How about the Junior Co-pilot game from Romania, for example:

- *"A project to enhance road safety by inviting kids travelling with their parents to become co-pilots via the Junior Co-Pilot Game. The game uses GPS technologies, is fully synced*

with the car, sending warnings whenever the driver is speeding and when STOP signs or a dangerous curve approach etc. The Co-Pilot Game has all road signs and regulations in a language easily understood by kids.” Source: FIA Road Safety Grant Programme.

If you have an idea for a project to promote road safety, you could apply for a grant to run the project. Why not have a look at the **FIA Road Safety Grant Programme**, the Action for Road Safety and the FIA Foundation websites, and get involved:

- <http://www.roadsafety.fia-grants.com>
- <http://www.fia.com/fia-action-road-safety>
- <https://www.fiafoundation.org/our-work/make-roads-safe>



/ ROAD SAFETY
GRANT PROGRAMME

Category: Uncategorized

Posted on [November 29, 2016](#)

Young Brothers – Risking and Losing on the Road

3,619 total views

I can't help thinking that if these lads had got easier access to motorsport then this tragedy may not have happened. We see plenty of young men and women racing around on the roads, and taking risks for excitement and the pleasure of speed. Condolences to the family and friends of Sam and Shane Nobbs.

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/man-fined-driving-offences-five-9342518>

Category: About

There's no need to risk racing on the road and you'll learn a lot more about yourself by going on track.

Posted on [July 25, 2016](#)[Edit "About"](#)

About

2,708 total views

This website is dedicated to information and resources to encourage fast driving onto racing circuits and off public roads.

I also write an occasional blog about my own experiences of getting onto the circuit and eventually into a race series with Ginetta. See my social media for Ginetta racing here:

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/markseymourace/>
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/MarkSeymourRace>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/markseymourace/>