

Reversing and Manoeuvres

9th July 2009

We were praying for good weather following the torrential down pour we experienced last time we ran the event. Our prayers were answered as we had perfect conditions ~ no rain, not too hot and not too cold, just right. We had 9 cars and 10 drivers (yes we had one car share ~ how green was that!)

In the first half the Tutors gave instruction on parallel and reverse bay parking techniques, skills that would be put to the test in the second half. Tutors setting up the second half course were dodging cars travelling round the compound, some at break neck speed, luckily we were wearing hi-vis vests and a good sense of hearing proved to be a distinct advantage.

The group was split into 2 teams for the second half ~ advertised by David on the fliers as 'Ray's wibbly wobbly bit'. Both teams consisted of a mixture of Members, Associates, Visitors and Trainee Tutors.

Team 1 was Phil, Roland, Judith, Cas and Paul.

Team 2 was Jan, Monica, Pat, Ken and John.

The course was simple but challenging as the Tutors found out to their cost later in the evening.

A slalom made up of 5 traffic cones led to the front parking bay, a quick reverse then along a longer stretch of 10 cones to the end of the compound where a reverse park was the order of the day ~ safely parked allowed the next member of the team to start the course. A 10 second penalty was incurred for hitting any cones. By the end of the 3 runs it was clear that Team 2 were setting the benchmark by winning each heat. Both teams were improving on every run with Team 1 recording a final time just over 5 minutes and Team 2 recording a time of 4 minutes and 48 seconds.

There were some very interesting tactics being employed by all the drivers:

Phil ~ had a very relaxed and calm approach to the slalom and parked his car in the bays perfectly ~ textbook execution.

Judith ~ had a good technique but was rather out of breath having to do a 24 hour Le Mans type car change (as her and Roland were car sharing) ~ apparently Judith was distracted on one of her runs by the seat belt alert ~ that will teach her to clunk clip every time.

Cas ~ was like a whippet in her mini-mini car ~ slicing through the slalom like a hot knife through butter, unfortunately she stalled her car on one run.

Roland ~ had a very steady precise approach and was ready for a quick wheel change if he got a puncture with his 12 volt wheel nut gun at the ready ~ he didn't need it.

Paul ~ tried a variety of techniques to improve his time and on one run he threw caution to the wind as he tried to see how many cones he could clip and how much damage he could do to the parking bays. On his last run he did the course in 50 seconds, which was quite respectable.

Jan ~ despite her earlier reservations about doing the slalom, Jan had a very precise approach to the course. Jan took the 1st leg for her team and gave her team the perfect platform to build on.

John ~ had an excellent and sound run, buzzing around the course in his new black and yellow coloured AA Car.

Ken ~ also had a good and precise run, but was intent giving us a quick lesson on converting his treaded tyres to slicks, by leaving most of his rubber on the starting grid.

Pat ~ despite having the longest car on the night (her Peugeot looking and I expect feeling like a limousine), which was a huge disadvantage on the slalom part of the course skilfully manoeuvred her car through the cones not hitting one all night.

Monika ~ the cones held no fear for Monika as she whipped round the course exceeding the speed of sound, or was that her car back firing emitting bellows of black smoke from the exhaust pipe. Seriously another excellent technique throughout giving her teams the perfect anchor leg.

Then came the dreaded time for the Tutors challenge. We tried everything to try and gain an advantage, but we were flouted every way:

- Lewis Hamilton and Jenson Button, blew us out at the last moment preferring to go to a tea dance
- We prayed for rain or divine intervention but this did not materialise
- We tried swapping lanes as we thought team 2's lane was faster than the other one, but they were having nothing of it, lining their vehicles up on the starting line and refusing to budge

So we were left with the only option, that being choosing our team, by skill, experience, temperament and vehicle set up ~ here another blow as one of our Advanced Tutors could not make the drive as he had a bone in his leg and was unable to commit to the stressful challenge ~ then we had a stroke of luck as we only had 5 other tutors to choose from so it was 'Hobson's' even yours truly was selected, what an honour?

The Tutors team was:

John ~ Red Barron in his sleek red Hyundai coupe with lowered suspension, through exhaust, 17" low profile wheels and suspected fuel additives (this could not be proved on the night)

David ~ Speedy Gonzales in his blue 3 Series BMW

Steve ~ Steady Eddie in his silver 1800 cc Vauxhall Vectra

Peter ~ Blue Flash in his brand new blue Ford Fiesta with dual controls and go faster 'L' stripes

Yours truly ~ Black Demon in his borrowed black Vauxhall Astra 1600 cc twin port manual (not only was I borrowing my son's car, but I am used to driving autos)

There was high expectations for the Tutor Team, but we did not share their confidence especially as all our back up plans went up in smoke ~ some of us didn't even get a practise run and time was against us so we couldn't put the tyre warmers on or plug the laptops into our on board computers.

Speedy was our lead off driver, a sight to behold, he manoeuvred his Beemer through the slalom with ease and grace, made light work of the first bay, was approaching the last bay well ahead of the opposition, when suddenly he seemed to slow down ~ I understand that he was running low on fuel and shut the throttle down to preserve what little petrol he had so that he could at least finish the course.

Steady then took to the track eating up the course with ease sophistication and penash. Apparently both Red and Steady had long wheel base cars which put them at a slight disadvantage ~ however Pat's limousine seemed to be even longer! Still Steady did us proud by doing a faultless run

Blue was next up, but he didn't get off to the best of starts as he was still doing his pre-start checks when the marshal told him to go. However undaunted by this, Blue got going, his go faster L stripes kicked in and yet another faultless drive followed

Black was our penultimate driver (remember in a borrowed car ~ won't mention the manual box) By this time most of the cars had finished, so even more eyes was on me. I don't actually remember much about the drive, except for nearly putting my back out doing the reverse park and my son saying that I had clipped a cone.

Red was our anchor leg; his sleek red sports job cruised effortlessly through the cones. Despite his long wheelbase the cones presented no problems and he was soon in the final parking bay bringing the competition to an end.

Team 2 beat us by 10 seconds, my heart sunk thinking that my mistake lost us the win, but apparently another Tutor also clipped a cone. Next year ~ we will be back!!

From the initial feed back drivers and Tutors had a really fun / enjoyable evening. If you would like to join us next year keep your eyes open for the flier and look at the events programme, which is posted on our Web site.

Finally I would like to thank all those that took part and the Marshall's.

Ray Davies

Training Team