

INSIGHT: TRACKDAY TROPHY

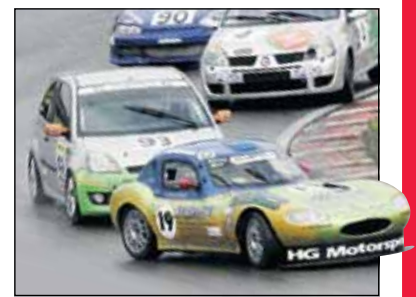
Photos: Gary Hawkins and Mick Walker



The Trackday Team Trophy is a hit



The Trackday Trophy caters for drivers new to the sport



Battles take place through the grid

GOING RACING

The easy way

By opening up a niche in the marketplace, the MSV Trackday Trophy has hit a rich vein of entrants

BY ROB LADBROOK
RACING EDITOR



Trackdays have turned into big business in the UK. People can turn up at almost any circuit in the country for a blast in their road or race car during any month of the year.

Trackdays also have much more of a purpose than generating a circuit's revenue. They are an ideal feeder to bring new people into motorsport. They allow drivers to experience the thrill of driving on a live circuit in a controlled and safe environment. But racing is a different prospect and until now many trackday enthusiasts have struggled to muster the courage, or the budget, to enter the more cut-throat world of a competitive paddock.

MotorSport Vision's two new classes, the Trackday Trophy and the Team Trophy, have been launched with the aim of making racing easier and more accessible and feed more people into British motorsport. It tries to bridge the gap between the simple lapping sessions offered by trackdays and competitive motorsport.

Both series have developed a lot since the inaugural event last year. The Trackday Trophy is a production saloon series aimed at novices only. Since it began last year the series has grown exponentially. The first race at Brands Hatch last March attracted 22 cars. In the three races that followed that the grid remained steadily in the low 20s. This year the series started at Snetterton with 40 cars.

Organisers have also been forced to schedule extra races to cater for demand and both of the remaining fixtures at Oulton Park on October 22 and Brands Hatch in November are close to capacity entries.

The series is the brainchild of Alex Baker, who is the manager of MotorSport Vision's

Alex Baker is behind the new series



Category is open to novices

trackday arm, Club MSV. Baker says: "We have almost 10,000 drivers sign on with us at Club MSV events each year, but we also noticed that it's a big jump for those drivers to move into racing.

"We did a lot of research within our customer pool and determined that many found the jump intimidating and only for the more dedicated drivers. We wanted to create a direct route for our drivers to try their hand at racing and prove to them that the sport can be accessible.

"The Trackday Trophy has been a huge success, it's surpassed all our expectations. Through Club MSV we can help novices get their race licences, give them technical advice on their cars and get them onto the grid."

The Trackday Trophy runs to a class format that segregates cars according to their power-to-weight ratio. Cars with power outputs between 125 and 200bhp-per-tonne slot into four different classes while modifications are restricted to control costs. Baker says the wide scope of the technical rules are a strength of the series.

"When we devised the regulations we noticed that many drivers had cars they have developed themselves with no specific set of regulations in mind," he says. "Therefore there's a lot of cars out there that meet MSA

guidelines, but don't suit any one series. We

wanted the Trackday Trophy to encompass as many types of car as possible so by dividing the classes by power band we can accept a greater variety. Also by capping the classes at 200bhp it places the pace of the series at a great level for novices and also stops people spending loads of money on expensive engine upgrades."

Drivers can take part in the Trackday Trophy until they are no longer eligible to show a novice cross on their car. That gives each driver a maximum of six races in the class. But the problem then arose that many drivers didn't want to graduate from the series so early.

MSV introduced the Team Trophy event this year to solve that problem. The series follows the same blueprint as the Trackday Trophy, but has the novice element removed so drivers can contest unlimited rounds.

The first Team Trophy race was earlier this year and ran with 15 cars, but that number almost doubled in time for the most recent race at Donington Park in August.

"We devised the Trackday Trophy as the bottom rung of the ladder and introduced the Team Trophy as a natural progression on from that," adds Baker. "Because the Trackday series has a limited lifespan we chose to create a more senior series because a lot of drivers enjoyed the non-pressure environment we provided."

Although the Team Trophy isn't aimed at novices, it's not intended for professional drivers either. The series' market is geared directly toward the clubman racer. Rounds take place with qualifying and a 45-minute race on the



Different classes fill the grid

same day, much like the Trackday Trophy, and the races are open to one or two driver teams to enable racers to split the cost. Eligible cars must be produced after 1994, which means the series won't poach machines from MSV's Mk2 Golf GTi or Production BMW classes.

"The series will never be aimed at professional drivers," says Baker. "The Team Trophy particularly needs to be geared towards casual racers because we don't want professional teams of drivers coming in looking for extra mileage and upsetting the balance.

"Neither series is designed to be a stepping stone to British Touring Cars. It is simply a fun series aimed at drivers either looking to share their car with a mate or find their feet in competitive motorsport."

Team support is allowed in both series and a number of established outfits have started running cars in the categories to help train newcomers. Bubble and Kick Racing is run by Porsche racer Nico Ferrari. The squad travels to every Trackday and Team Trophy round to both run cars and offer free technical support to anybody in the paddock that needs it.

Ferrari says: "Because they are one day events it means that qualifying and the races are often quite close together and if an amateur has a mechanical failure or a problem it's tough for them to fix it in a short time frame. That's why we stepped in. We'll help anyone with anything from corner weights to a full engine swap. Because the series has such a range of cars it's impossible for us to carry many spares, but we have a good range at every round. We're keen to

MORE INFO

MSV Trackday/Team Trophy

■ **Where is it?** The Trackday Trophy series has a round left at Oulton Park (Oct 22). The Team Trophy has races at Oulton and Brands Hatch Indy (November 12)

■ **How much track time is there?** Both series run a single 30-minute qualifying session and one 45-minute race. Trackday Trophy races typically take place on the Saturday with Team events on Sunday if they run at the same meeting

■ **What cars can compete?** Both series are open to any saloon or sports cars complying with MSA technical regulations and running between 125 and 200bhp per tonne. Team Trophy cars must be produced post 1994

■ **How much does it cost?** A typical entry fee is £325 and there is no charge to register for the series

■ **Where can I find out more?** Visit trackdaytrophy.co.uk, team-trophy.co.uk or clubmsv.com

share our knowledge and experience with these drivers and add an extra element to the learning curve. It also gives experience of cars we wouldn't normally run."

The future of both classes looks bright, and MSV has found a niche. Baker adds that championship status is out of the question to retain both series' casual approach to racing, but says that there's more avenues to explore. "There's more mileage in this style of racing," he says. "At the moment, though, we're getting a real kick out of what we have, which is genuinely feeding more drivers into British motorsport." ■