

Clews' Development Diary

Richard Clews finished third overall in last year's MSA Asphalt Championship and was really looking forward to having another attack in 2017 when news filtered through that the series was to be rested for a year. With no championship to contest, Clews' plans were left up in the air. He didn't want to have a wasted season so instead, he has opted to spend 2017 developing and upgrading his car in preparation for an attack on next year's Asphalt series...

Clews' B13 specification Subaru was already a force to be reckoned with before he started upgrading his mount. His 2016 results, when he finished no lower than eighth and as high as second at Asphalt Championship events, proved that. However, the Coventry based driver wanted to make it even better!

"With no championship this year, I've taken the opportunity to make some sensible improvements to the car," Clews told Pacenotes. "I've made two big upgrades - I've moved from Ohlins to EXE-TC dampers and I bought a Samsonas sequential gearbox from Clark Motorsport. It's like having a new car!"

Clews has spent the first six months of this year tweaking the car setup, ensuring it's right ahead of his first rally with the new gear. Working with Geoff Jones Motorsport, who originally built and runs the car, he has carried out four test sessions with the new suspension and gearbox.

"The gearbox is so easy to operate and is such a fantastic modification that cars in the B13 class can have," Clews said. "It has helped to make a huge improvement. OK, you don't need a lot of practice to learn how a sequential works but it's still quite a big change. It's not rocket science - you just pull a lever to change gear but you still need time to get used to it and make sure the flat shift setup is right."

He added: "We're all going out for the craic and the sequential adds to that. You just leave your foot flat on the floor and pull a big lever. It's like a

Playstation game - it's great!"

Most of Clews' development time has been spent fine-tuning the new EXE-TC suspension. It is 4-way adjustable, allowing both low and high speed compression adjustment. There's rebound adjustment too and it has a hydraulic bump stop as well as adjustable top mounts.

"I think the modern era of damping and gearboxes are bridging the gap a little bit to the latest machinery," Clews said. "I managed to beat some R5s and WRCs last year so if you can get somewhere near to them in a Subaru with a few upgraded parts, it makes it much more affordable."

"Going down the WRC route is too expensive and even an R5 car is £200k, or £150k for a second-hand one. Instead, you can take a home-made Group N car and make it into something great just by changing to EXE-TC suspension and a Samsonas sequential gearbox."

Clews pointed out that when Mark Higgins was in the British Rally Championship in a Subaru, he was using EXE-TC suspension. However, Clews' car is lighter as a B13 compared to the Higgins Group N Subaru so quite a bit of time was spent in adjusting the suspension to suit.

"All of the testing has been about getting the balance of the car right and making sure the suspension is set correctly for a lighter car," Clews said. "We've worked closely with EXE-TC to make sure that what we've got works with the weight of the car and they've

done a great job. On a bumpy road, it's exceptional!"

With all the new enhancements, is the Coventry driver eyeing up the MSA Asphalt title in 2018?

"No, because you can't beat modern World Rally Cars or R5 cars," Clews admitted. "They are the next financial step up so I'd like to be the fastest of what I call the 'affordable cars'."

He continued: "My engine was built by Graham Sweet to what he calls B13 spec. It still has the original head gasket arrangement but does have a head stud kit and Graham's special pistons and rods, a VF36 turbo and whatever other tricks he has up his sleeve. It's not his top specification engine by any means - he still builds a lot of full World Rally Car engines - it's more of an entry level Rally engine but where do you draw the line?"

"It's all about doing what's affordable and what I've got is a very nice package. It's the best car I've ever had. It goes well, stops well and isn't difficult to drive. Top five results are the aim so that's what I'm hoping to achieve next year."

Clews has won his class in the MSA Asphalt Championship a total of 10 times so he can expect to add more trophies to his cabinet when the series returns. In the meantime, he plans to enter three tarmac rallies this year, starting with the Harry Flatters Rally at the end of July. Keep up with his progress by logging on to his new website at www.richardclews.co.uk!



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SUSPENSION

EXE-TC GROUP N 4-WAY ADJUSTABLE

- Low and high speed compression, rebound and hydraulic bump stop
- 51mm inverted struts with 2.5" springs
- Adjustable front top mounts, camber inserts in clevis brackets.

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SAMSONAS 6 SPEED SEQUENTIAL DOG ENGAGEMENT KIT

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