“For a 700 PS car it is surprisingly friendly to drive”

01/08/2019 We caught up with six-time Olympic champion in track cycling Sir Chris Hoy last weekend at the Spa 24h, where he was competing in our one-off ‘Porsche Motorsport GT2 Supersportscar Weekend’.

Earlier this month you got the opportunity to compete in the fiercely competitive Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup championship at Silverstone. Was it a special experience?

To get the chance to race at Silverstone on the Grand Prix weekend in front of a full audience was a bit of a bucket list moment for me. In terms of the racing, it’s such a high standard with some of the best drivers in the world, so I was delighted to be just 2.7 seconds off pole in qualifying.

Have you had to acclimatise yourself to the GT2 RS Clubsport after racing the highly focused Supercup GT3 Cup car?

There's a significant difference between the Cup car and the GT2 RS Clubsport. The Clubsport is essentially a road car that has been converted into a track car, so there are a lot more similarities between that and the road car.

There's a huge amount more power [in the Clubsport] for a start. In a straight line it is absolutely awesome. And there's also a lot less grip; the car moves around a bit more, although it is more progressive as there is less aero.

The braking is also ABS assisted, so you can just smash the pedal [in the Clubsport] and it takes care of it for you, where in the Cup car you have to be more precise and delicate — it's a trickier car to get the best out of.

Focusing simply on pure driving pleasure, which 911 have you had more fun driving: the GT2 RS Clubsport or the Supercup GT3 Cup car?

I think the Clubsport. I’ve driven some fast cars — LMP2s and GT3s — but there’s nothing quite like that surge; the initial straight-line pace you get when the turbos kick in. It is absolutely awesome and puts a smile on your face. Racing around Spa with 700 PS under your right foot is quite an experience.

Although, equally, the Cup car is so precise and direct. Everything you do it responds to immediately. But for a Gentleman or Amateur driver, the Clubsport is a huge amount of fun.

We noticed that you drove to Spa in a GT2 RS. Are there any similarities you can draw between the road

car and the Clubsport variant?

You'd be surprised how similar the Clubsport is to the GT2 RS road car, because underneath all the bodywork, it is essentially a standard GT2 RS, which just goes to show how impressive a product it is.

I mean, this weekend is the first time the Clubsport has been out on track competitively and they look fantastic, go really well and are great fun to drive — it's a really sorted package.

Have any of the factory drivers given you any hints or tips on how to get the most out of the GT2 RS Clubsport?

Having chatted to Marco [Holzer], who is one of the development drivers, he was saying that you actually want to drive with the traction control and the ABS on. He said "honestly, that's the way I set my lap time, with the traction control on — it's not intrusive — it will catch you if the boost comes in and you have too much lock on, but it doesn't intrude when you don't want it to".

He also said to be aware that it is heavier than the Cup car and to make the most of the power. Slow in and fast out is the mantra.

In terms of the atmosphere in the paddock, have you noticed a difference between Supercup and the more 'AM' focused GT2 RS Clubsport series?

It's a really nice and relaxed atmosphere here [at Spa] — everyone is friendly and chatting. I think it's because the cars are new and it's the start of something special — you know, this is a significant weekend, to be part of the first GT2 race is really exciting.

Having said that, it always starts off being all relaxed and fun, but when those lights go out it will be every man for himself.

Where does Spa-Francorchamps place on your list of all-time favourite circuits?

I think if you ask any racing driver that's been here, 95 per cent of them would have it in their top three circuits.

For me it has to be right up there as one of the best circuits in the world. It's the history, the atmosphere, the challenge of the circuit. It's got everything — it's fast, flowing and rewarding, and has corners that take a huge amount of nerve and bravery.

Every time you arrive here and drive down the old pit straight down towards Eau Rouge it takes your breath away. It's special.

What races or championships would you like to compete in that you haven't managed to already?

I'd love to do the 24 Hours Nürburgring and I would love to go back to Le Mans. I thought Le Mans would be a 'do it once, tick the box and move on' kind of thing, but once you've competed there you want to go back and apply the knowledge and the experience you've gained.

I'd also love to do Bathurst 12 Hours and I'd love to do ... anything, really. I just love motorsport; I love racing. It's an exciting challenge to get into a new car at a new circuit and to have to push yourself to try and find new limits. So yeah, anything.

Have you enjoyed your time here at the GT2 Supersportscar Weekend?

I've thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience. It's been fantastic to be here for the 24h race weekend; to be a beneficiary of all the atmosphere that's here is great. But to be part of such a historic moment, the first time the GT2 RS Clubsport has been on track, is an honour.

The cars are genuinely brilliant to drive and really good fun. Quick in a straight line, easy to hustle, easy to get to grips with and for a 700 PS car it is surprisingly friendly to drive. And in terms of the racing, I'm pleased with the results. I felt I got stuck in, did the best I could, and gave the car back in one piece, which is the number one priority.

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