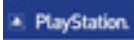


Juniors impress in Ireland



LNT Automotive took to the roads to Kirkistown, Northern Ireland last week. The aim of the two-day event was to introduce Ginetta Junior racing in Ireland and gauge reaction to the 1400cc sportscars.



In speaking to several young racers, it is felt there is a general lack of opportunities to progress for talented, young Karters in Ireland who would like a career in motor racing. Rallying, low-level Formula Ford and stock car racing being the alternatives without having to make the trip across to England.

The PlayStation Ginetta Junior Championship is now in its third successful year in England aimed at 14 to 16 year old racers (although one can turn 17 years old during the season and finish that year).



Organised by Alan McGarity, the LNT Automotive crew took three cars straight from racing at Anglesey, Wales, across to Dublin and up to Kirkistown just South of Belfast. Team LNT driver and 2006 class Le Mans winner Tom Kimber-Smith flew in from racing in Nurburgring Le Mans Series to give instruction and assistance. Two-times Ginetta Senior Champion Stewart Linn was also on hand to offer instruction and guidance and Championship Organiser Jamie Robinson being the third instructor.



LNT Automotive Managing Director Richard Dean also flew in from racing in Nurburgring, and double-race Ginetta Junior winner at Anglesey - Nigel Moore - came along to assist from the perspective of a current Championship racer.

Aside from sampling a Ginetta Junior (and for some the first ever time in a car and negotiating their way around a gearbox), the nine were also competing for the prize of a fully funded race at Brands Hatch in this season's British Championship finale. The winner of this prize would be he or she who is deemed to have performed the best overall both on and off the circuit.



Scott McGarrity, Joel Mulholland and Samantha Thom were amongst the young hopefuls on Wednesday with Stephen Bradley, Stephen Ellis, Brian Loane, Kyle Moore, Callum McQuitty and Chris Smiley all present on the Thursday.



Both days had varying weather, giving drivers the opportunity to sample the G20 GT4 Junior car in both dry and wet conditions!



Initial safety and one-to-one driver assessment sessions led up to 5 x 30 minute instructed sessions with a final session that would be scored on elements such as gear changes, racing line and driving style. Further to on-track performance, a 15-minute Media evaluation rated each driver's ability to handle themselves out of the car - an ever increasingly important attribution to the serious racer.

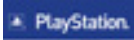


Across the board, everybody was impressed with the Ginetta and commented how the car surpassed expectations.

Juniors impress in Ireland



"It's unbelievable" said Bradley, 16 from Ballymena who until the event had only driven a kart. "I thought it would be like a normal road car - rolling everywhere but it sticks to the track like a kart!" he continued.



"There's some speed in it too. It took me a wee while just to get used to it but I'm having fun! You can get the rear out by mistake, but it's very hard to do - very hard."

Reaction to the possibility of an Irish Ginetta Junior Championship was strong, with suggestions that interest would be high - especially from those who had been karting for a number of years, but wished to race something different that's affordable and without having to travel to England.



One of which is Kyle Moore, aged 13 from Lisburn who races stock cars in a 1.1 engine Fiesta. "There's a lot of karters that I think would like to move to a car like this [Ginetta]" he said. "It's brilliant handling wise - I couldn't fault it and I don't think there'd be as much money involved in [running a] Ginetta than there would be in [running] karts.



"If I had the opportunity, without a doubt I would definitely drive a Ginetta Junior over here - they're that fun to drive."



Chris Smiley, aged 15 clinched the Brands Hatch drive once the scores had been added up. The Stars of Tomorrow - backed karter has been karting for 7 years, but this was the first time he had driven a geared car.



"The standard was very high but Chris had impressed our instructors and performed to an extremely high level in terms of his progression throughout the day and his all-round approach and ability" said Richard Dean. "It has been a very close competition. Everybody here over the two days has shown progression and talent and they should all feel very positive about what they have achieved".



"This event began as an evaluation event, but further to that, I'm glad that we managed to give these young drivers an experience they may not have had otherwise."



The success of the two days may lead to similar events around the United Kingdom - so watch this space in the future. Meanwhile, if you are interested in trying out a Ginetta Junior now, please contact 08452 10 50 50 or email Jamie.Robinson@Ginettacars.com



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High resolution photos available:

Jay.Ashton@TeamLNT.com

For further information about LNT Automotive please contact Jay Ashton, Media Manager:

Jay.Ashton@TeamLNT.com

Team LNT

T: 08452 10 50 50 M: 07919 186291 W: www.Ginettacars.com

Helios 37, Isabella Road, Garforth, Leeds LS25 2DY