

A couple of TT leg ends

Off cloud nine after a couple of rotations around the TT course and back to earth with a bump. This racing report if I am not careful could end up like a book. A chapter by me, Rob Stig, Tim, Julie, Tony, Janet, Helen, I'd never get it out to you avid fans before the Southern 100. So much to tell you all, but you also have stories to tell us. Where you were or what you were doing that historic day that Oscar growled past your point on the course or were listening eagerly to the radio on the Isle of Man or throughout the world. I always read the last chapter first of a book so here goes.

Final Chapter: 06.06.12 Everest to be descended safely RACE DAY

Oh so nervous, nearly drove the entire pit crew of Tim, Tony, Stig, Rob crazy that morning. Things not moving quickly enough in my eyes. Organised in everyone else's. Weather awful, delay, delay. New schedules constantly being issued from race control, rumours flying around paddock. So glad to see a friendly face Denise Hill with her little girl and son, a quick walk around to the chip van and being a normal person then back again to base camp. A relaxing massage by Josie back at base camp. THEN. Race brought forward! Quick phone calls to dad at Sandycote who then did a high speed dash to make it to the grandstand on a little Honda 125, wonder where I get it from. Then another to Janet. After a little consultation with an experienced couple of drivers the decision was made to leave "slicks" on. Wet patches, Glen Helen section, Hair Pin and Water Works. So the team took the splendid Oscar up to the technical area leaving Rob and myself to get ready... the 1000 yard stare.. the race face..... do a couple more laps in our heads.....drink our rehydrating drinks and glucose supplements...ugh... but they work.

After hugs and reassuring words the team closed ranks in the holding area allowing myself and Rob to focus on Oscar and the task in hand. Pushed out of that area onto glencrutchery road I can only describe as how those ancient gladiator must have felt facing lions in the arena. The noise, the light, the faces, the colours, the other competitors, the machines, the heat from the tarmac. The final preparations the kiss before popping on the helmet, gloves.... Oh that left hand glove is still annoying me where is my old one stig. "Here". Someone starts their machine my heart starts pounding in my chest, every time they blip the throttle. A whistle blows and next thing is the line of competitors starts to move forward, no going back now. People appear in my side view family, friends, sponsors and then "start it up then"..... Tim takes the throttle, a familiar grip on my shoulder from Stig and fist shake with Rob and the final chapter begins.

The arch way and the pressurised tap from the starter and off. Go Oscar Go..... No No NO not today so many people want this today. Oscar just behave yourself please... but no right from the start something was wrong. The carbs not firing right going through St Nininans. New back tyre take great care, full of fuel. No 5th gear, slipping clutch even though new plates and a cable. The concentration is massive thinking several corners in front of where you are, gearing, braking, watching for marshal's flags. Remembering everything you have ever been told. Then those words from the clerk of the course come into your ears "beware of wallabies around the Sulby area", marshals with flags stationary and waved and a fellow competitor slowing down in front, hands up lots of pointing going on. My head was blown up for sure! When the other unit pulled off the course we followed them and then switched off the engine. Thankfully Dickie Gale the other passenger had the sense to say into my visor "Is there anything wrong with you Debs" No "get back out there gal its us not you". Next thing we are back onto the track and off we go again. Oh god keep calm no red mist". No red mist..... Coming into the hairpin I thought if I shake my head the team at the pits watching the clock and looking on the internet times will know something is wrong and not worry if we break down. The rest of that lap came and went and when we were coming into the grandstand on lap two I couldn't work

out how the top TT boys of Dave & Patrick and the other great guys had not overtaken us. Due to our speed and unscheduled stop. Was it lap one or two or three and then like an explosion going through St Ninians the crowds of people went crazy shouting, waving, flags, beer cans, programmes, signs, teddies, cameras flashing, marshals going wild right around the course. Fans young and old . For the first time in the fortnight I could see peoples familiar faces also I could see other competitors on the side of the track spurring us on. Laurel Bank, Ballaugh Bridge, Parliament Square. Error going through Glen Duff area, a little too close to the greenery... concentrate. Through parliament square knowing that special friends there were willing us on, I admit I took my left hand off and punched the air to wave and acknowledge their support. Up the mountain for that final time... oh Oscar come on please hold together don't let all these people down now, Rob keep pushing and hang on tight fella. The will of all you fans and people I am absolutely convinced got us up and over that mountain and down the other side. The feeling was one of utter relief and contentment and at piece crossing that line. We had done it. and a new understanding (the Isle of Man mountain course will give and it will take away when it wants, this time it gave to us). Finally pulling up into Parc Ferme was so pleasing all the team they were there, this victory was for them, all the hours they had spent looking after Oscar, Rob and myself. They kept sending us out each practice and race saying "go there and back and don't forget the milk". Well guess what we had the last laugh because a strategically place pint of milk was presented to Stig and Tim just in front of the photographers, tv crews, family, friends, sponsors, my goodness how does Mr McGuinness deal with this. Whisked off down the paddock to base camp and the celebrations began prepared by Janet and the team. Champagne, party poppers, flowers, speeches, and Ice-cream. It was crazy for quite some time lots of young fans and future racers and the next generation of winners. Family and friends hugs and laughter. Good job we have ears because the smiles would be at the back of our heads.

Qualification Monday 04/06/12

We were told two laps of qualification, so had fuelled up for such. Only after going through technical scruteneering was told one lap due to a Subaru lap. Not ideal... to try and find 20 secs in a single lap from a standing start. I felt we could do it if we were smooth; Rob was going to work a few corners where I was lacking confidence. We were going to give it our best no matter what. The tension could be felt amongst the team they knew how much it meant. I have to say at this point I have great respect for any member of a team, which includes partners or next of kin who stand there and watch the heels and back of people they love disappear out of sight for 20 minutes plus. Your thoughts, and feelings and actions deserve a chapter by them selves. Everyone deals with it differently, off to the beer tent, off to the grandstand balcony area, off to the camp, off to the race office but all back onto the wall to see us go through every time. Oscar firing well, then oh no waved yellow flags and two sidecars on the left hand wall at the waterworks..... back off again be safe, marshals and paramedics doing their jobs, green flag Go Oscar go this could be your last lap over the mountain this year, two small birds hit the fairing at the end of the mountain mile and bounced over robs head. Error at the bungalow missed the gearing, come on Oscar. Lap was short flagged coming out of governors dip and then into parc femme. Technical scruteneer Willy Clucas, Stig, Tim, Tony saying you have done it you have done it! But until I physically saw it in writing I didn't dare to believe it.. I felt it could be taken away. We needed 20 secs and we made it by 30. Total and utter relief and joy.

Practice week up to race day 26th May 2012

Base camp Everest was made possible by Kevin and Lloyd who had marked the area with a heart and kisses. Julie set about her gardening skills mowing the lawn and the beautiful pot plants and solar lights. Stig obtained some matting and large pieces of wood, Dave Redmayne loaned us his son's race van as he is fighting in Afghanistan

the Lunt family loaned us their motor home. Work benches, ice boxes, tool kits, all moved in. An area reserved for the team photographer Derek. Hospitality tent set up only 4ft high, due to winds; well people end up on their knees coming out of it any way. Debbie Trueman and John Turton were volunteers and set about building the picnic table and chairs. Tony and Stig went off to the super market. Rob and myself went to sign on and then go and put our equipment through technical scruteneering. And go to a riders briefing. Leaving us to go to the newcomers briefing and the bus trips around the circuit with ACU representative's drivers and passengers in separate buses. We had Roy Hanks at the front giving valuable information about the most important corners and special features. Being the only woman I had to go to the little girl's room of course at the Sulby Glen, but I wasn't on my own thankfully.

Now to get Oscar ready for his big day, Tim Stig, Tony took charge and Oscar sailed through Technical area. One small problem putting the fairing on put all sorted and Oscar was sitting at the front of the newcomer's line. When we walked into pit lane after the umpteenth time of going to the loo, I felt totally out of place. All these people all these professional teams, our heroes, what the hell are you doing here woman? Then to be told we were second out behind Roy Hanks the only thing I could think of was don't loose him cos he'll be gone and all the rest will be following your lines. ... oh pressure..... Time to put the lid down and go and get to hell out of here and be free. No time to think of anything else but concentrate.... then back to the pits and stop. Helmet off and a drink and catch our breath. Our plan was to definitely get another lap in and then this would take the pressure off if bad weather or problems latter in the week. Turned round to Rob and his grin was massive said the words "ready" and a nod and back out we went. Sun was horrendous coming into Ashlar drive and again at Greeba Bridge but being local you know the bad areas. Watching the onboard footage and doing laps in the van, car, and bus don't prepare you for the bumps in the unexpected areas. You hear that Ginger Hall to Ramsey is bumpy "let it flow, stay in the centre, relax your hands, " but believe me the bump on the straight from Begarrow bottom and Sulby Straight and Mayhill and Governors Dip exit leave their mark.

Monday nights lap was torrid coming over the mountain wrong gearing and carbs had flooded at Ballaugh Bridge and were we were going to pull off at the Brandywell only to meet a sea of wave yellow flags some unfortunate team had taken to the scenic route over the edge. So pushed on thinking they don't need to be dealing with us

Tuesday practice was really good being to build confidence and 4 sidecars going into the first bridge on the mountain mile certainly brought a smile to my face. The chase was on over the mountain and upon exiting the 33rd I was working on a strategy of if the newcomer in front, goes inside on the first corner I am going outside and then nail the exit, this happened put the result was then disaster the throttle cable snaps. End of Practice. Lie down in the grass in-case I kick something or swear at a helpful person or a keen photographer captures a gesture of utter frustration. Thanks to the marshals at Keppel and an unfortunate incident involving "Team Past it" a red flag was shown and the words from race control any competitors who can start their machine may proceed after the red bibbed marshal in convoy. Didn't need telling twice cos it would have been midnight before we would have got back from there with the cones situation and the team having to come from Ramsey. So a push and a tootle down the Creg we went and a pick up and back to the pits in the back of the van. Tuesday night and into Wednesday the team worked away sleeping on the floor of the awning and the back of vans. Some very young fans one in particular called Corry called to give Oscar a hug but he was already off and in the lime light at technical scruteneering. Last minute preparations done and stepped onto the tarmac at the pits to hear ping pong "Due to inclement weather ,manx mist.Tonight's sessions has been cancelled". Oh bother ! and other words cannot put in print due to young fans. Back to base camp and get changed. But one little fan was in tears and inconsolable all he wanted to see

was Oscar go from the start. After a few wise words and a hug and a promise of my favourite hat normal order was resumed. Time for the adults to have a proper meal and a beer and a dance at the beer tent. Thank goodness the videos have not been released yet....xxx

Thursday practice was another which was not incident free. John Holden leaping into the middle of the road at Douglas road corner Kirk Michael was enough for us to back off and tootle around a unit which was upside down and the crew on the ground and marshals in attendance. Expecting a red flag to pop up at any time. But two laps under the belt and looking for another gear going up the mountain we managed the two laps. So sighting lap and three done but we were a session down. And a lap. Now we were going to have to work really hard on the Friday night.

Forgettable Friday

First lap and everything was flowing things were standing clear, unit handling well, felt good. The second lap was flying; this was going to be possible. Need to concentrate you are only at Sulby along way to go yet..... ping..... what's that ...exhaust spring.. no no bang clunk... just about to go into the bumpy section of Kerrow Moor 1 split second decision. Stop; pull over safety first find out what's wrong. Climb off, Rob looks, I look, then disaster, the huge nut which blocks off the exhaust was missing. No chance, retirement the only option..... Gnats with fangs out there boys and girls, some lovely folks though with a tool kit, so fairing dismantled before the team came to pick us up. Thanks once again to the marshals for their encouragement and words that they think we are insane. I'll never forget as long as I live my first words to stig "did we do it on lap 1 stig" "No just missed it". The journey up the thol t y will and the stop at the top the cones weren't out seemed like hours. Then the phone rings and it's the clark of the course. The words" I am sorry to say that you have not qualified for tomorrows race Debbie you have missed it by 20 secs..... "Then my phone call to a devastated father. I know so many of you felt the huge disappointment like Rob and myself and the Team. Your messages were just what we needed to pick ourselves up, dust ourselves down and rebuild. So whilst Race 1 of TT 2012 was taking place Oscar and I had a little word and so it was to be.

Quick Stories Review

Ice-cream: – Adult language for Carling

Male shopping excursions: Send a woman, as men seem to find pop up TT Pit watering holes between the Paddock and Shoprite for next year. Taking 4 hours for a pack of buns and the milk...

Why an Australian hat with Phillip Island on? Some of the first marshals to come to Ballascarey were from Phillip Island and its Stigs lucky hat but also my cousin Fiona and her family are were following TT 2012 on the internet from Australia.

Professional help: Thanks to Cath for her physio on the chest and shoulder. Nothing like taking my clothes off in public in a filled paddock area. No longer the shy type.....x

French rocket fuel: Our paddock neighbours were very nice French sidecar crews of the famous Francois Leblond/Jonathan Huet also Patric Geffray / Francky Foutt and all their supporters and fans all with different TT stories to go home with. Can recommend a little of the red stuff.....

Night Terrors: Message to self don't hang leathers up in the van for half asleep night security staff Tony to fight with when he wakes up...

Food Packages: Red Cross food packages from David Mahon, Angela Katz, Cal Brown, Heather Paisley and Anthea Mathewman, the team certainly survived with your provisions.

Mud City: Oh that terrible horrid smell by the end of the fortnight and the rain, must build a floor to keep Oscar out of the mud next year.

Big teams help little teams and vice versa: Thanks to John Holden for the big nut that helped us qualify on the Monday. Speedy recovery to you John.

How to pay for parts or work: A little bit of welding was required due to Mayhill bumps on the fairing bracket, thanks to Tony Baker and the method of payments by red wine.

Team Photographer: The professional photographer Derek thanks for keeping the little piece of black stuff safe for a year. By the way DCD images folks.... stunning plus the big softy knows how to make the girls cry.....

Pig tails & clogs: Mad Sunday what blonde pigtails and clogs can do for a woman..... Note again to self 11 months to grow hair.

Media coverage footage: Enjoy

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNORCVGwBAc>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=blNvZP3ASvg>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jG1bodtRkFI>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBNjGmt4wm8>

1st Chapter

None of this epic journey would have been possible without Rob. He truly is a great passenger and it's been a great honour to make history with you. Also credit has to go last year to Stig and Rob and myself for pushing on to get those final signatures to get the TT Licenses. The Team also of Julie, Janet and Tony travelling with us to the UK sleeping in flooded tents, wrecked awnings, travelling overnight and into work the next day. Picking up the pieces after we had crashed or blown engines. Thanks to old and new sponsors for believing in us and being part of this journey.

Health and finances permitting let's do this all over again in TT 2013, 100mph lap here we come..... if the Mountain wants us to.

See you on the 9th July Southern 100 Billown Circuit or in the UK at a race meeting near you. Till then live your dream .. you too can have a grin from ear to ear.