

For those of you who have experienced these events - here's my experience from this year. After blowing my Phoenix engine at Mallory (con rod through block) and no time to sort, we entered my mate's 2L Vx Striker with Kawasaki Carbs... bought in the summer and prepped well.

Overnight ferry to Caen week past Friday and hurtled down in rain soaked convoy to Lyon. Short stint to Digne Les Bains on Sunday... me dead in the passenger seat after serious mixture of catching a bug - no food for 36 hrs sorted it but felt like shit so went to bed at 8pm Sunday and was first up Sunday (a first)

Monday started bright and we started at 23rd. Two awesome days of seriously hard driving - let me assure you Peter upped the pace requirement this year. Though he dropped the average speed stages this year (he still threw in a few dummies for on route scrutineering etc).

Prior to the event, aside usual fettling we had replaced both front wheel bearings after one went pre event, and carried a spare (more on that later).

Monday night the first instance was a Westfield hit a Fiat at a slow speed = result knackered front o/s suspension. Lots of people were collecting points due to the pace but navigation was in my view easier than prior years. Plus a few hard single track, potholed roads on the Monte Rally stages made the cars work hard. We lost some oil from the sump having torn the sump guard off earlier but nothing some JB weld couldn't sort. A special stage (kart track) was changed due to noise issues from the cars so we used Karts. Mid afternoon the Brantz trip started to under read. With no speedo we ensured we caught the car ahead and stuck to them until we were just out of the time control and then wait a minute until after then headed in before approaching ourselves, then floored to catch up again - we found the sensor had twisted itself into the hub and was destroyed... we completed the event using a stop watch only from then on.

Day 2 was a surprise... we had moved from 23rd to 4th :-)))) with the likes of a Brabus Europa, a Caterham and an Elise.

The course had a few timing errors which led to a couple of stages being abandoned from a scoring perspective - on day 3 this helped us\*\*\*

Day 3 was much of the same, though as we were in Italy road conditions improved (less potholes!). I think we were running in 6th place on Wednesday and all morning had a clear run. As some of the other cars ahead had missed stages we knew we were confident for a top three finish that evening. After lunch, I was driving and we were heading up a Col, starting well within the tree line. After approx. 3 Km's I knew something was going wrong and pulled over.... o/s fr bearing was toasted. In 32 minutes we replaced bearing and brake pads (the bearing tore out the pads) and were off again and managed to catch a fair amount of time up - only to realise we had been sent out that morning a minute ahead of time and as a result some of the morning stages we had been a minute early (& collected 10 points for each time). That evening a formal "complaint" was made and somewhere on the scoring Peter the organiser gave us an allowance based on dropping some stages from both day 2 & 3 (see above \*\*\*) and we weren't too heavily penalised... still in the running, still high on the leader board... what could go wrong!

Day 4, Thursday - by this stage we had started to criss cross Italy from north of Florence across to the Eastern coast. Started well and had another good day but had dropped some points after the bearing problem so were now running in the low twenties but with about ten cars all within a few points we knew we could creep up again. All day had a great run on awesome mountains, fast relatively smooth roads, plenty of twisties, warm weather. Penultimate stage was a map section up a mountain and down the other side. I had driven the previous couple of hours and we had made up some serious times, overtaking 6-8 late runners ahead. Marcus jumped in the drivers seat fresh and we blasted off on the final stages for what we were confident would get us within a place of two of a top three class win position.

Steep mountain, twin lane road, great Tarmac, plenty of torque from the Vx and we were off. About 8 Km's up, with dusk approaching in the middle of nowhere a huge bang sounded and we went into a fish tail wobble at about 90 km/h. N/s front wheel wobbled 30 degrees left and right and Marcus managed to pull up before we took to the edge and freefallen! Another bearing went. For the next 2 hours we managed with help from the UK to get AA relay out (poor phone signal, only an 08..... number that didn't work in Italy on the paperwork etc), lit a fire (to keep the wolves away 🐺). Tow truck collected us and took us to a local village. We then headed to the hotel, an hour away by taxi.

On Friday we hired a car, returned to the garage, determined the axles on both sides were probably out of true, found more bearings (amazed at that!), turned the axles to correct them and were off again - only this time it was raining like hell. I led Marcus in the tin top (A/c on, radio on, Marlboro dry ☔) and we decided to head straight to the final MC arriving about an hour before the first cars finished, of course missing all time controls on Friday. When we parked up just south east of Rome, Marcus was sitting in 2 inches of water.

We finished in 25th place, amazingly ahead of some cars that had run without fault throughout.

Awesome event - roads were the best so far from GoME.