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GT4 CHAMPIONS – THE TEAM BEHIND CHAMPIONSHIP VICTORY

Academy Motorsport's Mustang team have been exemplary all season long. We take a close look at what's involved in preparing a winning car, and the people who do the work behind the scenes

BY NICKY SPENCER PHOTOS BY LINDA JONES

While our coverage of the 2022 British GT Championship naturally focused on the cars and drivers, there was a common thread running through each one of our race reports. Throughout the

season we remarked on the consistency and precise accuracy of the Academy Motorsport pit and garage team who executed each of their roles flawlessly.

It takes a team of sixteen people to prepare and run a pair of race-winning GT4 cars. For race weekends which include testing on Thursday, a core group of two will arrive at the circuit with the team transporter on Wednesday afternoon to unload and set up. From Thursday morning a full complement will be with the cars through testing, practice, qualifying and race day.

ACADEMY WORKSHOP

After each outing the cars are returned to the workshop where they are stripped and inspected. Components that have completed

their predetermined miles or hours are changed for new. The cars are repainted and any accident damage is repaired prior to being put on the 'flat pack' to have their suspension setup configured for the upcoming event.

There can be some very long days and nights during this phase of preparation when Larry Nicoll-Jones and Del Batchelor ensure that the cars are prepared and presented at their best with every on-track possibility considered and covered off.

PRE-RACE

At the track, each car has a pit mechanic who oversees all work carried out on the car over the course of the weekend, and works with his race engineer to ensure the

ACADEMY MOTORSPORT RACE WEEKEND STAFF

TEAM PRINCIPAL: Andrew Hunt
TEAM MANAGER: Andrew Hunt
TEAM COORDINATOR: Nicky Spencer
RACE WEEK STAFF:
DRIVER: Nicky Spencer
DRIVER: Nicky Spencer

TEAM 41

Engineer: Nicky Spencer
Driver: Nicky Spencer
Driver: Nicky Spencer
Team Manager: Nicky Spencer

TEAM 42

Engineer: Nicky Spencer
Driver: Nicky Spencer
Driver: Nicky Spencer
Team Manager: Nicky Spencer



correct adjustments are made according to the setup worked out between the engineer and the driver. Each car also has a team of three further mechanics whose role is to undertake these changes as well as general maintenance and inspection tasks on the car.

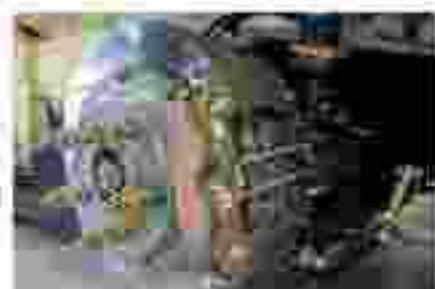
For testing, practice, qualifying and race the four mechanics on each car will undertake brake inspections and a nut-and-bolt check to ensure all the major suspension components and fixings are tight and within specification. They will also re-fuel the car with the right amount required by the race engineer for the next track session. Depending upon the outcome of the previous session, suspension geometry setup changes may be required, in which case the #1 will work with his team to 'file push' the car and increase the ride height, corner, bumper and roll bar settings.

The #1 mechanic will brief his crew on the strategy created by the race engineer as to when pit stops are likely to take place and what the workload in those pit stops will be. Depending on the duration of the race it could be just driver and tyres or driver, tyres and fuel. The crew will be fully

suited in fireproofs, helmets and goggles for race pit stops. The race engineers will have worked out the ideal pit stop scenario within the bounds of the regulations and also determined when or if it is feasible to benefit from a timely safety car.

RACE

Pit stops are carefully practised and the tyre technicians included so that the #1 can act as car controller. In an endurance race the pit stop procedure will also include refuelling which must be done with the drivers out of the car and undertaken by two of the crew with a designated team foreman. Once complete, the driver and tyre change can commence as normal. GT3 and GT4 cars generally execute their stops at different times but the pit line can get very crowded during a safety car intervention so Academy practice two-car, double-stack stops. They also have some proven pitlane tactics like using refuel dump tanks rather than their refuelling rig to eliminate the risk of the tower not reaching the car when there is congestion. The team is always ready deploy classic tactics to reposition the car if required.



FORDS IN MOTORSPORT



POST-RACE

The car may be repaired for 'top-of-the-line' class scrutineering after the race when it will be met by the #1 mechanic and a couple of his team to produce fuel samples and any other scrutineering checks required. While this is going on all other cars remain under Parc Ferme conditions (no touching) within their garage to be inspected as required prior to the official result being announced.

ACADEMY TEAM MANAGER, ANDREW DEAN

Andrew, who has a long history of race team management in BTCC (Focus and Focus), and GTB endurance (Aston Martin and Mustang), oversees all track-side activities.

In his own words: "Prior to each outing as Team Manager I will have a discussion with the race engineers to discuss their run plan and work programme. This gives me the opportunity to contribute any ideas I may have and ensure that what we propose to do falls within the regulations. I also work with the race engineers to communicate this

plan to the #1 mechanic on each car and the drivers to ensure that everybody knows what is going on and what the expectations are for each session.

"After each track session I will sit down with the race engineers and understand their analysis of the data and driver feedback. Having previously been a race engineer myself, it is useful for me to be able to understand the direction we are taking the car based on the feedback and data. The driver's need to be aware of the timings for the next track session, and where they need to be and when. There are various pieces of advice to understand driver's weight forms, determining who will qualify first, who will start the race for each car, all of which needs to be fed in to the series organisers. Additionally, any communication received by the team from series officials and the Race Director via race radio comes to me and I need to cascade that information to our team members.

"Prior to each race, I need to ensure that everybody is fully conversant with the

strategy and that the race engineers have no issues with the car. During the pit stops, my role remains the same: team observation and ensuring compliance with the regulations. Should any work be required outside of that normally undertaken within a pit stop I will ultimately make the decision as to whether that work is done on the pit apron or in the garage."

2024

We can expect to see Academy Motorsport back in the British GT Championship with new 5050 model 5.0 GTA Mustangs. Plans for racing in Europe are firing up, as is an aspiration for GT3 now that Ford and Multimatic have announced their intentions for that class. [111](#)

2024 BRITISH GT CHAMPIONSHIP BEGINS

28 MARCH – 1 APRIL – Oulton Park