

CATERHAM ACADEMY CHAMPIONSHIP

THE DRIVERS BLOG



Name Andy Ebdon (Andy Eb)

Age Let's just say old enough to be Max Verstappen's grandad...

Race Number 54

Occupation Ex RAF engineer, now consulting in defence logistics and Human Factors in Aviation

Reason for joining the Academy Lifelong interest in motorsport. Did a couple of Caterham Driving Experiences and became aware of the Academy and thought if you don't do it now you never will so signed up for the 2014 season - probably yet another mid-life crisis, but what the hell, go for it!

Best Finish 6th at Rockingham (from 16th on the grid - loved it!)

Best thing about the Academy The genuine care, help and guidance is just fantastic. Without the Caterham team alongside I cannot imagine getting to grips with all the new and unfamiliar things that go with motor racing in anywhere near as enjoyable and organised a way. Being part of the Caterham family is a real privilege.

So you must know about Caterham's iconic Sevens even if you haven't been in one. Put racing and Caterham together and you have the perfect recipe for excitement and the biggest adrenaline rush you could imagine. And the Caterham Academy is a really great way to get into the sport. It is a well-honed, carefully managed year long programme that takes you from putting the car together (if you decide to build your own – definitely recommended and well worth making the time, you learn so much about the car), getting a race licence, through track days, to handling and set up, then 2 sprints and 5 races. You learn about the kit you need, how to strap yourself in – not as easy as you might think! – Scrutineering, getting organised (and you do need to be organised!) and loads more stuff you never knew you needed to know.

The races are on proper tracks too, no Mickey Mouse stuff here. Brands Hatch, Donington, Oulton Park, Silverstone etc. My first ever race was at Oulton Park, which some think is the best and hardest track to master in the UK. Not only that, it was raining too! As we waited in the Assembly Area, all kitted up and strapped in waiting to be released onto the track I had butterflies in my stomach the size of fruit-bats. Why was I doing this, I must be mad! Well 15 minutes later I knew exactly why I was doing it. On a wet and slippery track I started well from 12th and made up a good few places, then lost them again as I slid across the grass when braking far too late for the second chicane. But others slid off too as the race went on and at the chequered flag I was 10th – felt like I'd just won the British GP! Marshals were all waving and clapping and a decent crowd doing the same, fantastic! In Parc Ferme everyone was over excited with big smiles and arms aloft. Who won, don't care really, we all did!



As the year progresses you get to know your fellow competitors and the family atmosphere starts to grow. I can genuinely say I have made friends with people I would probably never have come across, and certainly not without the Academy to pull us all together. I certainly cannot imagine having anywhere near as much fun trying to get into motor racing on my own. And the racing is just so close! Trust in the other drivers builds very rapidly, but expect to lose a few wings and get the odd dent as things happen very quickly! Just as well the wings are fibre-glass and easily replaced, they are definitely consumable items!

Of course the Academy year is just the start. After that, and with the same car, albeit with modifications each year, you can move up the series through Roadsport, Tracksport to Supersport. I could not resist carrying on into Roadsport this year and the number of races really steps up. From 2 sprint events and 5 x 15 minute races in the Academy we now have 14 x 20 minute races. The racing is just tremendous with the whole grid starting to concertina up as the mid-field and lower get better. We also get an overseas race weekend, this year to Zandvoort in Holland – a truly awesome track, fast, winding, where some big bravery pills were required. Over about a 2 min lap I was just 1.8 seconds off pole in qualifying, but that put me 15th on the grid – how tight is that!

If you have a desire to race I don't think you can do better than sign up for the Academy. Well organised, well supported, some fantastic people and a real big buzz – what more could you want? Yes it will take up more time than you think and there is certainly no lack of opportunity to spend money, but the rewards are well worth it and as motor sport goes it is relatively cheap. Doesn't matter how old you are either – stop thinking, get doing! Good luck, see you on track.

Andy Ebdon