

Hirstglen test and tune day, a newbie's story.

Four of our new club members had their baptism in dirt last weekend, John Keen had organised a test and tune day at Hirstglen to give the Datto's a shakedown and invited four of our latest members along to show them the ropes.



*Tony Kabel in action with myself in ~~the~~ **the bad***

These guys are all apprentices/technicians with Keema Automotive Group that have won the use of a prepared Hyundai Excel in some entry level events. This started nearly 3 years ago when Keema decided to purchase the Excel for our apprentices to practise learning their trade on and to supplement the normal TAFE training that the guys were receiving. The deal made with the guys was if they put the time in to completely overhaul the car Keema would sponsor 4 of them to enter some entry level events. The prize included driving suits, helmets, club membership (to the BSCC of course), CAMS licences, driver training session, the car and all relevant safety gear, entry fees and all the required parts. The car is a 1998 Hyundai Excel 3 door twin cam, and the guys have fully rebuilt the motor by hand including the head and match porting etc, the transmission was fully overhauled and syncros replaced and hand lapped, power steering pump overhauled, brake system rebuilt, suspension replaced with up-rated springs and shocks and many more things including making their own harness bar and strut brace. At the completion of the build Master Technicians Darren Utratny and Andrew Rogers both set an extremely difficult written exam for all of the staff who participated in the build to complete with the best four results getting the nod to have a go in the Excel. The winners were Duncan Bradshaw, Brad Pankhurst, Marko Jonjic and Steve (Scuba) Shaw. These guys

all then got invited to Hirstglen by John to get some training in driving fast on the dirt. Tony Kabel and Luke Page were the instructors for the Saturday with Annette Dragona and Alan Brown helping out on the Sunday by sitting in the left seat and giving advice and helping to refine the newly acquired skills.



The Excel waiting to start



Preevent briefing from Luke Page.

The day started out with Tony and Luke giving them all a briefing and some basic advice on what to expect from a front wheel drive car on the dirt, the guys then went and completed doco and scrutineering which the car passed with flying colours (good work guys). We then strapped them into the Excel and Tony Kabel took them for their first ever ride on a stage, I am not sure what they expected but the smiles on the faces when they returned to the pits and the numerous expletives trying to explain how quick Tony and the Excel are on a stage sure told an interesting story. It appears Tony has lost none of his pace over the recent years of retirement from competition, and still enjoys jumping cars sideways at over 130kph approaching the near hairpin turn at the end of the front straight. Once they all got two laps of terror from Tony they got behind the wheel themselves with Tony in the silly seat (sorry seat). Duncan was first out and had a clean first lap but managed to have a good spin on the second and give himself a bit of a scare. Next up was Marko who learnt the hard way that when Tony says accelerate you need to respond straight away and managed to have a monumental loose in front of his fellow team mates, he did prove that you can both understeer and oversteer in the same incident which took some talent, anyway no major damage done and the guys some service crew practise refitting the inner guards. Scuba and Brad also managed moments of there own but not as spectacular and out of site.

Luke then got into the navigators seat and took the guys for more laps and then proceeded to take them for some rides with himself driving, the guys got to experience a totally different driving style to Tony s and got to see that there is more then one way to skin a cat. They all reported that one was a faster then the other but that needs to remain our secret. The guys then spent the afternoon lapping and practising there dirt driving skills. The day went very fast and it was soon time to leave, I think the comment of the day was from Brad who has been building very fast drag cars for a long time I have been kidding myself drag racing, this is so much fun . The other comment that keeps being made is I had no idea how fast an Excel is on dirt .

On the Sunday only Duncan returned so he was very pleased not having to share the car with the others, Annette went out for his first session in the Excel and came back very impressed with his

ability and skill, Alan Brown then took him for a run in the Baleno which added to Duncan's experience levels, Alan then jumped into the Excel and rode for quite a few laps with Duncan giving him even more advice on how to get the most out of his driving. By mid-morning Duncan was driving that well and fast enough that we got him to take potential sponsors and guests for rides in the Excel, all of whom got out very impressed with his speed and smoothness. Sunday ended all too soon for us as we had finally run out of tyres so we packed up and headed home.



Duncan taking Tony for a run



Our professional Instructor Tony Kabel

The competition debut is Saturday 17th night at the Willowbank dirt sprints, if you are free please come along and cheer on our newest members.

The building of this car has been a great experience and we would really like to thank our sponsors and supporters for all of their help in getting us to this stage. The team has received help from the following companies and teams-

All Trades Qld-Supplied all of the personal safety gear.

Keema Automotive Group-Supplied the car, the work time, the parts and the money.

Luke Page-Supplied the tyres and wheels and most importantly his time for the training day.

Mild to Wild exhaust-Supplied the exhaust system for the Excel.

Trailers by Chris-Helped out with tyres for the guys for the first event.

Ship Shape Ships (John Keen)-Subsidised the entry fees for Hirstglen.

Tony Kabel-Supplying a roll cage (yet to be fitted) and his time to help the guys learn.

Hyundai Australia-Supplied a set of wheels for the car, and continuing parts assistance.

Ben from Peter Wiles Stripes-For all of the sign writing on the car.

Jamie at GSA suspension-Helping out with the shocks, springs and advice and price (the car landed really well even sideways at 130kph)