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Tandy ran at Brands

HAWKINS

EDREY

Fortec brought in Rowland at Rockingham

New F4 Mygales hit the track

Top teams JTR, Fortec and Carlin shake down MSA Formula cars

LEADING BRITISH SINGLE-seater teams JTR, Fortec and Carlin shook down their Mygale-built MSA Formula cars last week.

All three teams have responded positively to the championship's new FIA F4-specification car after testing for the first time at Brands Hatch and Rockingham.

The first batch of 15 cars was delivered to customers last month, with teams beginning to test with the French-built chassis and Ford EcoBoost engine.

World karting champion Lando Norris and team-mates Colton Herta and Petru Florescu all sampled Carlin's car, and its MSA Formula team manager Martin Knapman said first impressions were good.

"Mygale has built a very good car," said Knapman. "We spent three days at Rockingham ironing

out any early handling issues the drivers may have had. The car, as you'd expect from a junior single-seater, has a low level of downforce which produces less grip. So the car moves around a bit, which is good for the category as it allows the drivers to learn significantly."

Formula Renault 3.5 race winner Oliver Rowland helped the Fortec squad begin its testing schedule, with top karters Daniel Ticktum – who has also tested for BRDC Formula 4 team Lanar Racing – and Racing Steps Foundation-backed Josh Smith in attendance.

Rowland praised the speed of the car as well as its ability to handle well in fast corners.

"I've been quite surprised at just how quick the car is," he said. "It slides through corners, such as Pif-Paf at Rockingham, quite similarly to the old [Tatuus-built]

BARC Renault car, without snapping on you like the more modern two-litre Renault can do. It gave me a good feel of mechanical grip. I was really pleased with the Hankook tyres. They were able to last a long time.

"Mygale and Ford need to work on a couple of early issues which we've encountered, but the car will produce good junior racing, which we've needed in this country."

JTR's new signing James Pull drove the car for the first time at Rockingham after team boss and Porsche factory driver Nick Tandy shook down the car at Brands.

"The car has a good amount of torque thanks to the turbo," said Tandy, whose team ran the last three British Formula Ford champions. "The cars will still be moving around on the limit, which is exactly what we wanted."

SCOTT MITCHELL
FEATURES
EDITOR

scott.mitchell@
haymarket.com
@ScottMitchell89



LAST WEEK WAS IMPORTANT

for MSA Formula. The biggest question mark over the series was whether French constructor Mygale could turn around the first batch of 15 chassis for the start of 2015.

It seems to have met that target. The likes of Arden International are in the process of prepping for their first runs, but champion British Formula Ford team JTR and international single-seater powerhouses Carlin and Fortec Motorsport have stolen a march on their rivals already.

Tests at Brands Hatch and Rockingham gave that trio of teams a chance to get an early feel for their FIA F4 racers. Granted, cold conditions and basic installation requirements probably limited meaningful running, but any laps completed are mileage in the bank.

Unsurprisingly, JTR boss Nick Tandy opted to shake down his team's car, while Formula Renault 3.5 race winner Oliver Rowland joined the Porsche factory driver in swapping his usual mount for the most junior of single-seater racers when he tested Fortec's machine at Rockingham.

Tentative feedback was the order of the day but it's another step in the right direction for the new series. It's rival, BRDC Formula 4, is more or less matching it in terms of drivers confirmed thus far, and also bagged a title sponsor in Duo as well.

That suggests that the two categories are, at this stage at least, satisfying the demand of their young audience. But we're still only halfway to strong grids for each, and different people are telling different stories of woe on either side. Ultimately, we're weeks away from a clearer picture.



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