



Words Jamie Photos PSP Images

2014 BTCC SEASON IS

The new BTCC season kicks off at Brands Hatch, with mixed results for the Airwaves Racing Focuses...

The 2014 British Touring Car Championship kicked off with the first three rounds at the world famous Brands Hatch circuit in Kent recently. After a long, hard winter break of testing and development, the teams returned to the track to battle it out for yet another year.

Naturally, our attention and support was heavily drawn towards the three Motorbase-prepared Focuses sporting the *Fast Ford* logo; the Airwaves Racing machines of Fabrizio Giovanardi and Mat Jackson, and newcomer Jack Clarke in his Crabbies Racing car. After some successful development over the winter break, including a revised front end and some hefty aero upgrades, the team was

confident all three cars would put on a good show. Spirits were particularly high in the Airwaves Racing camp as spearheading their campaign is two-time BTCC-winner, Fabrizio Giovanardi, and last year's star driver, Mat Jackson – giving the team one of the most formidable driver line-ups on the grid.

But 2014 is sure to be one of the closest seasons ever. Jackson secured 9th place during qualifying, and Giovanardi – who suffered a throttle issue – could only manage 18th, despite his time being just half-a-second behind the pole sitter's. Jack Clarke ended up starting from 25th, after his Focus suffered

suspension damage.

Race one was full of drama for the Focus boys, sadly none of it good. Jackson made a great start and was climbing his way through the field, reaching 6th before a reckless punt from last year's teammate Aron Smith sent him on to the infield. He did well to recover, but rejoined the race down in 16th, and with a damaged rear wheel. He eventually finished a frustrating 15th.

Giovanardi had a less eventful race, but a slow puncture ended any hopes he had of working his way up the order, finishing just ahead of Mat in P14. Series newboy Jack Clarke proved his talents, however, gaining six places to finish 19th.

The second race saw an early safety car – a common appearance on the tight Indy



The 2014 BTCC season opener at Brands Hatch saw mixed results for the Airwaves Racing Focuses



for in Paddock Hill bend, the Focus was sent into a half spin and off on to the grass. Narrowly avoiding the barriers, Fabrizio was able to rejoin the race, but at the back of the grid and with just too much work to do to earn a points finish.

Jackson pushed hard throughout the race, enduring some good battles along the way, and eventually claimed the team's best result of the weekend with a P7 finish. Clarke also had his best result of the day in race three, finishing 17th.

All in all it was a



Mat Jackson returns to the Airwaves team for 2014...

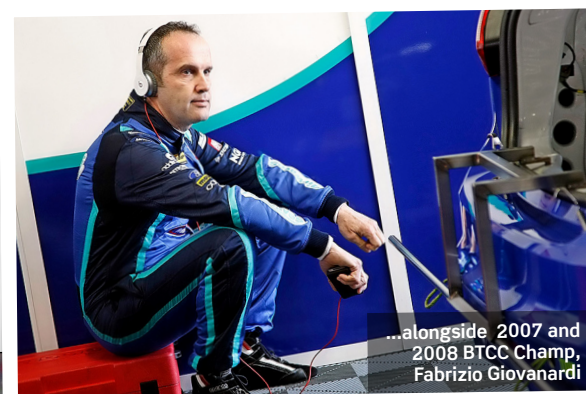
frustrating start to the season for the team, mainly caused by being on the wrong end of other people's incidents, but the

cars and drivers all showed promise. Next up the team head to Donington and are confident of better results next time out...

GO...



Jack Clarke's 'Crabbies' car is the third Focus ST on the grid to wear the Fast Ford logo!



...alongside 2007 and 2008 BTCC Champ, Fabrizio Giovanardi

circuit – and both Giovanardi and Jackson cleverly avoided the incident to make up ground. The two were running in P9 and P10 when the safety car came out, but BMR drivers Smith, Scott, and Goff all illegally overtook Jackson, relegating him to P14 and with little chance of making any progress. Giovanardi finished 9th, Jackson 12th, and Clarke had another strong showing and brought the Crabbies car home in 19th.

After penalties were applied to the BMR cars for the illegal overtakes, the two Airwaves cars started race three in P9 and P12. Giovanardi made a strong start but when the cold rear tyres didn't offer as much grip as he'd hoped

