

CAPITA SYMONDS

PRESS RELEASE:

Howden Teenager Takes Top Three Autotest Result!

Fifteen year-old Alex James, a Hymers College student, took his rally prepared Nissan Micra across the Pennines to win a podium place in the recent Under 17 Motor Club Northwest Autotest held in Blackburn.

The Autotest formed part of a Young drivers initiative organised by the Blackburn with Darwen's Casualty Reduction Team, in partnership with Capita Symonds and the Under 17 Motor Club Northwest. The event allowed drivers aged fourteen and upwards to take part and those who were less experienced not only had the chance to learn new skills but the chance to drive in a fully prepared rally car.

Despite his tender years James, from Spaldington, Nr Howden, fell into the more experienced category as his skill at the wheel of his F1000 class Nissan Micra showed. At the finish, having secured third place in the standings James was full of praise for the event saying " Its been good fun, I've really enjoyed competing in the Autotest and would definitely like to do so again. I think Autotests are great thing to do, even if you're an experienced driver, there's so much you can learn."

A number of representatives from Yorkshire based Motor Clubs were in attendance as part of a fact finding mission with a view to organising similar events on the east side of the Pennines.

Blackburn with Darwen Road Safety Officer Steve Johnson who played a major role in organising the event said "Driver experience days are available up and down the country, but their primary focus is in providing thrills and experiences rather than developing the driver's skills and improving their safety attitudes. This was a fun event with a serious side and people taking part went away with a wealth of experience, hints, tips and knowledge to help make them safer drivers in the future."

Steve was particularly keen to point out the advantages to the youngsters who took part saying "Events like this give the fourteen year-olds a three-year head start whereby they can learn valuable driving skills and responsibility before venturing onto the roads for the first time."

Driving Standards Agency (DSA) Fleet Driver Trainer Stephen Rhodes echoed that view saying "From a driving instructors perspective I think it is a fantastic opportunity for young people to be able to start to learn the true nature of driving a car. Having good sound knowledge and understanding of theoretical virtues is important to promoting safe driving for life. The theory element is an excellent way to promote knowledge & understanding, attitudes & beliefs and to develop a coping strategy to help deal with issues that may occur on a day-to-day basis. The practical element has its own true value making life easier for the developing teenager when ready with provisional entitlement to grasp the true concept of learning to drive on today's busy roads in a safe Eco friendly manner. The DSA prides itself on Safe Driving for Life and the Pre Driver package prepares and equips young people with the right skill sets to be able to carry out this message from an early age and in my opinion can only contribute towards safer roads for the future."

Graham Campbell, Casualty Reduction Manager for Capita Symonds, Blackburn with Darwen

Council's road safety partner, said "We have run practical driving courses for over 130 young people below driving age this year and they have a tremendous impact on their values and attitudes surrounding driving. Now, through a unique partnership with our local motorsport club, we can provide a low cost introduction to motor sport in a safe, controlled environment. Safety, not speed, is the primary concern at all motor sport events and by getting involved in motorsport early, young people can gain valuable driving experience and learn safety lessons to keep their racing on the track, not on our roads."

Nineteen year-old Hazel Johnson who learnt to drive at a young age, is now a regular competitor in the Formula 1000 Rally series and she appreciates the advantages the course offers to those with motorsport aspirations. She said "The courses contributed to giving me the knowledge and understanding of what is safe on the road and what should be kept to the track; which now is something I try to focus on when conducting motorsport presentation in schools for Go Motorsport."

The next Master Class Event takes place on Saturday 27th August 2011 from 1pm until 6pm. For an application form or more information please contact:

The Casualty Reduction Team on:
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Please contact Steve Johnson 01254 273523 (Mobile 07919 298 799) for more information.

About Capita Symonds

Capita Symonds is one of the UK's largest and most diverse multidisciplinary consultancies operating in the building design, civil engineering, environment, management and transport sectors. With over 4,000 staff in over 60 UK and international offices we offer an unrivalled scope of services and a unique blend of professional and technical skills to schemes of all types and complexities.

About Accrington Motor Sport Club:

Accrington Motor Sport Club was set up by a group of Accrington Residents actively involved in Motor Sport for over 30 years. It currently has over 50 members many in the Blackburn area and concentrates its activity in Autotests, Autosolo, Road and Stage Rallying. It is involved in organising 6 events per year including 3 events at Blackburn with Darwen services.

Under 17 Motor Club Northwest

The motor club has been set up by a group of Motorsport and Road Safety Driving instructors to work together as a not for profit organisation to give young drivers and riders the opportunity to learn the skills before starting on the road. Working with other Northwest motor clubs these skills can be built on to make a safer driver.

See; www.u17mc-northwest.org.uk/