



Pedders Racing Team Update



Australian Production Car Series – Round 3, Queensland Raceways QLD

02.08.2016



Things that go bang in the night



Usually the drama of a race weekend begins at the race track, not in a paddock with the race truck. With the Pedders 86 having undergone preparations without drama at Motorsports Training Australia, and safely loaded into the Pitmans Trucks classic transporter, it was the truck itself that would bring the drama being bogged, stranded at the country home of our truck driver after a heavy night of rain. It took an excavator to get the truck on the road, and it wouldn't be an easy journey with a dead battery in Dubbo and broken gear linkage needing welding on the side of the road near Gilgandra.



As the crew was in the air, the truck was closing in on its destination, a drama-free final stint seeing the truck and crew finally settle in in the early hours of the morning.



Friday in the sunshine signaled opening practice, and with a late bumpin completed, the Pedders garage was ready, as was #86. Practice 1 saw the 86 off pace with handling needing adjustment, Practice 2 was back in the mix setting times to challenge Class C entries, while in Practice 3 #86 stayed strong but still was not in the zone for the drivers to have complete confidence. The MTA crew would spend the remaining afternoon sun completing spanner checks, minor setup changes, fit LED lights for Saturday's Fight in the Night, then sit back in the passenger seat to join some dedicated volunteer officials for hot laps of the 'paperclip' circuit.



A quiet night had the team ready to go for Practice 4 ahead of a midday qualifier that saw Turpie secure his third Class D pole this season to launch #86 from 14th outright on row seven of the grid for the 2016 Fight in the Night's 300km endurance race.



Lining up on the grid as the northern sun headed towards the horizon, Turpie took to the wheel for race start under lights, driving well with the car feeling good as the laps fell away and the gap widened for his lead. A pit stop complete on lap 32 to see Phillips take over for the continuing battle between the Class D entries, but not all went to plan as the refuel rig didn't connect in properly meaning no fuel was being delivered to #86, making the stop significantly longer in racing terms, returning the 86 to the track in 17th and behind the direct competition.



Not long into Phillips' stint came an intermittent problem only in right hand corners, with power dropping away and losing speed, but the car was strong on the straights and through left hand corners. After great discussion between driver and crew, it was decided to leave Phillips out and maintain the Class lead, with this back in hand and #86 running 11th outright.



Phillips maintained the gap to the opposition Renault until a Safety Car was called within 20 laps of the flag, this giving the Class opposition over half a lap of track made back up to be right on the 86. Off the restart, the 86's intermittent problem had deteriorated to a consistent issue, making it harder to keep the speed of the car and seeing the Renault quickly close in.



It was a battle to keep #86 going, and it was certainly a battle to keep the Renault in the rear vision mirror, and it would be a Class lead until the second to last lap of the race, Phillips blocking the Renault into turn three, out braking the corner, running off and handing the Class lead to the competition. Back on track with a few choice words in frustration and apology, the Renault then experienced the same mistake, going bush and allowing the Pedders 86 to have another go at the Class victory in the final lap.



As Phillips set up for a dive under brakes at turn six, on exit of turn four the car lost power and exiting turn five the three-season old engine let go blowing engine fluids all over the windscreen. Visibility was now limited as the circuit and vehicle lights glared off the mess, Phillips and the crew now only cared about making the finish line. Coasting out of turn six with enough momentum to make the flag in 13th outright and second in Class D, as the call of race finish was confirmed, Phillips immediately pulled the car into pit exit, a flash fire seeing the fire crews in action, dousing the front of #86 with dry chemical and foam to prevent further flammability.



Gutted. After leading Class for 94 of the 96 laps, the team were devastated looking at a mess, with no idea how



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Pedders Racing Operations & PR Managers, CIMA Media,
Kat O'Shaughnessy, 0421 962 571, kat@cimamedia.com.au



bad the damage would be. The efforts of all involved meant there would be no packing up, there would be no going home, rather it would be a big challenge for the new student crew, and it would be a long one.



Making it to parc ferme under its own power, upon release it was time to clean the car and the long process of pulling the engine apart began, the team knowing there was no engine crane available in the paddock. Using initiative and genius, the crew used tie down straps, overhead metal bars, spare tyres, jacks and brute force to remove the engine and begin its deconstruction.



As the crew worked to find the cause of the expiry, phones were running hot as fellow racers and crew completed the ring around to find 86 head gaskets at 9pm in the evening, on a weekend. Success was achieved with great assistance from Daniel, a Queensland local who Crew Chiefed for #86 at this same event back in 2014, using his contacts to source head gaskets. Within an hour, and in an incredibly generous showing, Tony from Coyote Tuning drove an hour each way to personally deliver the gaskets, but there was soon more to be discovered. As the engine strip down continued, the crew found a sheared hydraulic cam adjuster plug on the driver's side, meaning a parts run was needed.



The support was continuing as while the paddock had fallen silent, the lights had been turned off, it was all go in the Pedders garage and true motorsport spirit was alive and well. We had lights and tools from Osborne Motorsport, parts and contact support from Karadimas Motorsport, a bbq dinner cooked by the security team, and phones going off with supporting calls.



Work on the strip down continued with crewmembers on the road to Coyote Tuning to source new sensors as the clock approached midnight. On arrival in Albion, it was a chance to talk to an 86 engine and performance guru, Tony, before the phone rang, the crew now having revealed burns throughout the engine meaning it required a complete rebuild, not possible at the circuit on race weekend. Discussions ensued and Tony agreed to sell an engine committed to be developed for his own performance 86, saying "I can't not sell this to you. I can't know there's a racing 86 that's not able to race."



A boxer engine in the boot, arrival back to Queensland Raceway was after 2am, yet the crew were still awake, still smiling and somehow still enjoying the experience. The day was now 19 hours in, and there was no time to waste as the Motorsports Training Australia crew worked on through the night to check and fit the replacement engine using the same all-manual tools available.



6am. As some slept on the truck floor and in hire cars, the early shift completed the final pieces of the engine puzzle, determined to have #86 on track for Sunday's race day. It was 9:15am, an hour before Series warmup when the 86 burst back into life. It took a complete at-track engine replacement, ECU checking, multiple wiring and bolt checks with fresh eyes but she was back and she was going to race.



Warmup complete and 86 was again going, down on power needing a tune to suit our race setup. An oil change, complete spanner and consumables check, the countdown was on to Race 2's 250km. Lining up from the final places, but back, Turpie again took the start to gain multiple places in the early laps before battling on fully aware of being down on power, handing over #86 to Phillips in a lap 27 pit stop.



Phillips loves to race and back in control, he was committed to making the most of Round 3, pushing the 86 to its lowered limits to fight back through the Classes and onto the rear bumper of the Class D leading Renault. Unable to catch, it was a challenge to inspire the best of the moment and as #86 took the chequered flag second in Class D, 14th outright, it was the sweetest flag the team has seen in quite some time.



The longest day ever needed of a crew on #86, there are no words with strong enough pride to thank and congratulate the dedication, enthusiasm and talent of the young Motorsports Training Australia crew – a credit to the students, their teachers and the educational program provided at the multi-million dollar purpose-built facility.



While the fuel and engine dramas of this season have certainly put a dent in the Class title points for Pedders Racing this year, the mathematical chance for #86 to secure a third Class title remains and we will fight until the final flag falls to achieve the best possible result for our dedicated student and volunteer team, our invaluable sponsors and our enthusiastic fans.



#86 now returns to its Wodonga home for a complete do-over, a vital engine tune, a fuel tank removal and repair after the crew closed the weekend having found a slow fuel leak from a hairline fracture in the tank after three seasons of tough racing. It will be another all-in effort for the volunteer student crew with an almost three



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month break before the season finale. Join us at Sydney Motorsport Park, 11 – 13 November for the final Australian Production Cars Series race of the season, the Sydney 4 Hour alongside the Shannons Nationals Motor Racing Championships.

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