

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Fresh home from Goodwood, Gregor Fiskens shares his racing tales](#)

Lead

He's driven at every Goodwood Revival, and undertook both governor and driver duties at last weekend's 74th Members' Meeting. This is racing driver Gregor Fiskens' take on the most recent historic racing extravaganza at the circuit...

"I'm rather tired actually," admits Gregor. "I stayed until the prize-giving on Sunday evening, then drove back to London at dusk alone in my 4½ Litre Bentley. It was lovely – just me, the car, and the headlights illuminating the trees ahead. The roads were empty, so it took just over an hour and a half; it often takes longer in a modern car." That's a statement to which we can truly attest, having completed the same journey in a contemporary counterpart only a few hours earlier, in much heavier traffic.

Governor Gregor



A [trader of high-end collector cars](#) by day, Gregor Fiskens is truly immersed in all the accompanying activities in his spare time, historic racing a prominent case in point. At last weekend's Goodwood Members' Meeting, he not only raced a Ferrari 246 Dino Grand Prix car and an ex-Le Mans Iso A3C Lightweight Competizione, but was also invited to join the event's panel of governors – a role that involves Fiskens providing his expert opinion on how closely it follows the new recipe cooked up by Lord March. We spoke with him the morning after the weekend before.

"There are a number of factors that make it a very different but, in turn, rather complementary meeting to the Revival. It's nice because it's smaller, and it works well because it's very inclusive – members of the public have unlimited access to the paddocks, and there's a great atmosphere between drivers, team members and spectators alike." With attendance over the sold-out, two-day event less than a quarter that of the three-day Goodwood Revival held at the same circuit, proceedings at the reintroduced Member's Meeting carry over an intimate spirit from the original BARC meetings back in the 1950s and '60s – just as Lord March intended.

Another element of diversity



"It works well because of the variety of the races," Fiske continues, clearly still somewhat wired from the weekend. "To be able to run Edwardian racing cars, modern Touring Cars and whole grid of GT40s back-to-back is just extraordinary. It allows some people to enter cars they wouldn't get the chance to run at the Revival - the high-speed demonstrations being a perfect example - so it extends the Goodwood family while adding another element of diversity. The high-downforce cars and the Group 5 cars were a huge success, and to see them in their natural environment at a venue as historically significant as Goodwood, rather than sitting in a museum somewhere, is a real thrill." Few could have felt that thrill more tangibly than Fiske, though. His first race was at the wood-rimmed wheel of a front-engined Ferrari Grand Prix monoposto, the groundbreaking 246 Dino.

"The Dino is owned by a client of mine, and he wanted it to go out and give a good account of itself," says Fiske. Once acclimatised to the rather unconventional Lancia D50-derived gearbox, he soon climbed from fourth to second, and found himself in a riveting three-way battle for the lead. "On the final lap, I pushed a little too hard while trying to get a run on the leader, dropped a wheel off the kerb and spun, managing to go from hero to zero in a couple of seconds. But that's motor racing for you, and the day that I don't have a go is the day I'll hang up my driving gloves." Despite eventually crossing the line in an unrepresentative eighth position, the Scotsman's spirits were anything but dampened. "I was told to go out and have fun with the car and we ended up showing the car was clearly capable of winning that race by setting the fastest lap. If I had the same chance of completing that overtake, I'd go for it again. That's what Goodwood is all about."

Striking the right balance





Fisken was never going to be as competitive in his second race, the Graham Hill Trophy. In a field led from the outset by two new-build Shelby Cobra Daytona Coupés in a class of their own, the Iso A3C Competition Coupé he entered in its original Le Mans spec would be doing battle a lot further down the field. “You have to have a chat with yourself before the race weekend and accept that a good young driver in a brand-new Cobra Daytona Coupé is going to be five seconds a lap faster than you. Bear in mind, though, that at Le Mans in 1965, the fastest of the five Cobra Daytona Coupés entered was only a lap and a half ahead of the sole Bizzarrini over the 24 hours, so I think that puts it into context. You could build a brand-new, lightweight Bizzarrini and give one of the new Daytona coupés a good run for its money. But to be fair, I had a great battle with some other cars from the period such as the DP214 Aston Martin and a lightweight Jaguar E-type, and racing at Goodwood is all about drivers having good, clean scraps all the way up and down the grid.”

So, does Fisken believe the less restrictive entry requirements at the Members’ Meetings – regarding authenticity of individual cars as well as the wider chronological bracket – is beneficial to the historic racing scene? “The point of the Meetings is to offer a more diversified spectacle for true enthusiasts, but we will always need a smattering of good, properly original cars,” he says. Indeed, a significant number of cars in the Ford GT40-only demonstration line-up were brand-new, if not highly faithful recreations – yet it was one of the best-received exhibitions of the whole weekend. Fisken continues: “Going forward, continuous work will need to be done to make sure races are still competitive across the grid, and that will become increasingly difficult as development of the new cars moves further on. That said, if anyone knows how to achieve the right balance, it’s Lord March and his team.”

Heated battles and hot topics



Another hot topic their agenda will be the issue of safety. Many will be aware of several heavy but hopefully non-life-changing accidents over the weekend and, while he believes there is always work to be done, Fisken hopes any improvements will be carefully thought out internally, rather than the result of external sanctions. “The incident in my race was horrifying; in all the years of racing at Goodwood, the millions of laps in period and indeed since, we’ve never seen an accident like that – it was a completely freak occurrence. In every drivers’ briefing at Goodwood, it is reiterated to us that safety is of the utmost priority: the long-term prosperity of these events rests at the feet of the competitors – quite literally – and relies on the driving standards we uphold.”

“Also, you have to remember that although the circuit has seen numerous safety improvements over the years, it’s in largely in its original configuration, and the cars we’re driving are not modern GT3 cars with the latest technology – although measures such as HANS devices are implemented wherever possible. Ultimately, the fact is that all forms of motorsport can be dangerous, but it’s that sense of danger that adds to the dramatic spectacle. Credit must go to the Goodwood team for not only dealing with some challenging situations as safely and quickly as possible, but also keeping the meeting running all the way through until Sunday evening.”

A mesmerising weekend



All things considered, then, does Goodwood governor-driver Gregor consider the event to have been a success? “Certainly,” he tells us. “I was mesmerised by all of the races – there wasn’t a single dull grid. The event gives us great people, top-notch racing, amazing cars, and a wonderful atmosphere both on and off the track – all of that is a by-product of the magic that Lord March provides. There will always be room for tweaks and betterment, but I think the Goodwood events have continuous improvement woven into their very nature, and already I have so much inspiration looking ahead to the Revival in September.” We doubt he’ll be alone in counting down the days.

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Gallery

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