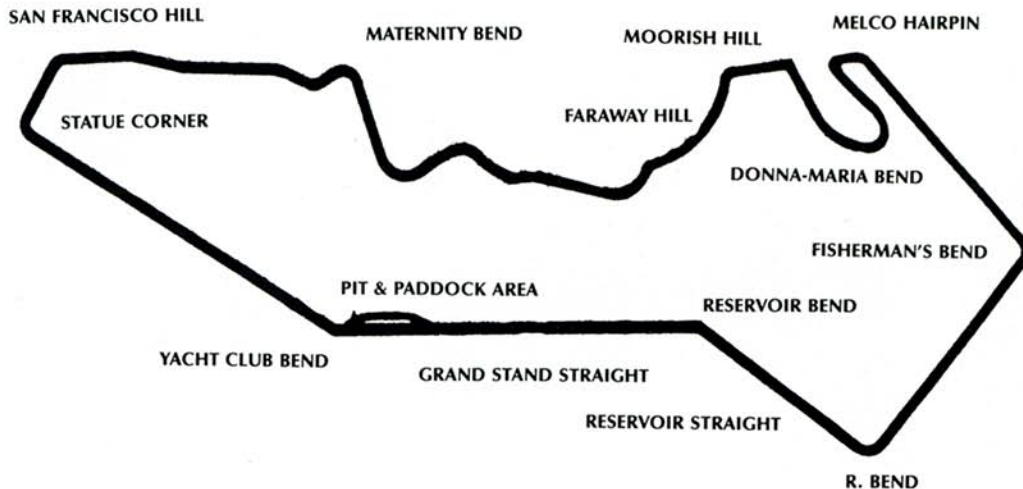


MACAU GRAND PRIX 87

MAGIC IN MACAU



Tuesday, 24th November 1987, flight CX200 Cathay Pacific to Hong Kong. amongst the 300 passengers were Steve Cole, David Field and yours truly, not only representing David Gerald TVR but also the TVR Car Club. With an invitation from the Gentleman Racers of Hong Kong Club, both ourselves with the 420SEAC, fresh from its publicity triumphs on the continent, and the factory contingent with the new so far uncompleted 'S' Turbo, we felt quietly confident of putting up a good show for the "chaps out there".

We arrived at Kaitak Airport at 10am on Wednesday morning to be whisked by Rolls Royce to a jet foil ferry to Macau, by the most charming Suzie Lee, the administration executive with TVR International Limited of Hong Kong, who were sponsoring our race. The TVR challenge cup race, organised by the Gentleman Racers, (don't let the name fool you), of Hong Kong headed by Richard Witts a prominent H.K. Financier, and helped by his merry band including Mark Freeman and Rory Nicholas.

They have now formed a breakaway group from the Classic Car Club, called the Gentleman Racers, they are a collection of aggressive racing enthusiasts and just a look at their list of cars will assure you they are not Sunday afternoon potterers. With 7 x 911 Turbos, 4 x 911 2.7s, 944s, Ferrari, 308 GTB and 328 GTS, Jaguar E-types, BMW M635, Lotus Esprit, Alfa Romeo, added to this impressive line up, was a lone 350i owned by Sammy Li, partner in TVR Hong Kong Limited, and driven for him by local well known racing driver Albert Poon, and of course our own Steve Cole and John Kent.

The lead up to the race was quite hectic. TVR Engineers in the form of Race Manager, Chris Schirle, and top man Dave (gently) Bentley had been in Macau for 7 days unpacking and setting up the 'S' Turbo, as it was still not quite finished when it left the UK. The 420, fresh from its triumphant press week in Belgium, had been repainted by the importers, and they had "forgotten" to sign write the cills and rear end with our company logo. However, the rest of the car had been untouched mechanically so you can imagine the antics to get the car ready for Thursdays first practice. The SEAC went very well finishing with a best time of 2-56-92 the fastest of the day. Even after a slight row with a local brick wall. The time was disputed later by one Kevin S. Wong, who was given best time. Unfortunately, the 'S' had an axle problem and only completed one practice

lap, so Friday saw the 2nd practice day starting off in glorious sunshine, but with a typhoon warning flying from the top of the faraway hill, it did not look well for those who were due out in the afternoon including the "Gentleman Racers". Typhoon Nina started up at the same time as Steve and John left the pit area so the marshalls insisted that everyone went out on wets. The next few minutes saw the fastest tyre changes ever, almost like Franks "Williams-Honda" times!!! Of course the torrential rain suited Steve and the SEAC, and with his extra knowledge of the circuit gained from the previous days practice, Steve returned a best time of just ½ a second slower than the previous super dry day, giving Steve second position on the grid for the race proper.

John (dark Horse) Kent, potted around in the typhoon downpour quite content to get used to the circuit, remember he had only completed one lap the previous day.

Saturday, race day, saw "Nina" wreke havoc – the racing was cancelled and put off until the following Monday. The circuit was littered with trees, awnings, bamboo, sand and anything that was not tied down. Apparently it was the first time a typhoon had been recorded in late November for over 50 years. Although the racing was cancelled, we all sat around hoping but to no avail. So at 5pm, we all packed up and returned to our hotel for an early evening. We did pop out to a flower show at a nearby local hotel – the green house exhibits were unbelievable.

By Sunday, the rain had almost stopped but the wind was still reasonably strong. The organisers had done a wonderful job in clearing the circuit, and the marshalls decided to run the F.3 in one heat only and also the ghia race to leave Monday free for the 21st Motorcycle Grand Prix.

The F.3 was very exciting with Martin Donnelly holding off Jan Lamars.

The ghia and celebrity races were then run, both races having reduced laps forced on them.

Next a reduced lap classic car race won by an MGB, by this time the light was fading and after much pleading with the officials by Richard Witts, Mark Freeman and Steve Cole we finally heard those magic words from Richard – "It's on chaps".

This was the moment we had all longed for. Both Steve and John looked very calm sitting in their respective cars but both admitted afterwards to feeling sick as hell.

The start was worthy of F.1. Steve had a real flyer and left the Porsche standing. Dark horse John Kent, also had a flyer, kept to the rails and went through the field from 11th to 4th within 500 metres. What a boost for all the TVR people, Both Brits and Chinese. Steve kept his lead for the first 6 laps gradually pulling away from everyone except John in the 'S', both drivers lapped the 3 back markers, but Steve was badly held up by a very ungentlemanly Porsche driver – but no excuses from him, as John kept gaining on him with every lap, and finally passed him on the grand straight and that's how they finished, 'S' first – John Kent, 420 SEAC, 2nd – Steve Cole. As a co-owner of the SEAC, I can honestly say that everyone of us was highly delighted with the result, it didn't matter which car won, TVR were first and second.



Steve Cole in SEAC at speed