

Team Gigglespin 2022

Driver

Co-Drivers

Pit Crew



James Marsden



Chris Abel



James Ayre



Michael Whitting



Brian Aguis



Thomas Tanti

Double Trouble in Portugal

It's been three years since our last adventures in Portugal and it was time to get back into the action.

First it is the Graf Adventure Series. A four day winch event comprising of special stages that vary from difficult to downright insanity.

We are out here with our new car 'Mistress'. This Ultra 4 racer is not designed for winch challenge but the team have made several modifications including fitting a rear winch and we are super confident we can make it.

It all started with two night-stages on the Wednesday night and we got off to a flyer, hitting the fastest times in both stages, but a five minute penalty for hitting a tape drops us to 8th. It's not the start we wanted.

The next day we are greeted by heavy rain and temperatures in single figures as we head out for eight hours of racing across ten special stages. Thankfully the weather gods have a



The team are in high spirits and ready to get started.

change of heart and after getting drenched on the drive to the site, blue skies appeared and the Sun was soon beating down once again.

We are on good form in the stages and take a few stage wins with my co-driver Chris Abel working hard to run the winch lines as Mistress shows us what she can do. But a further 20 minutes of penalties see us still floundering down the table in 7th position. We need to up our game!

Day 3 sees us returning to the amazing river stages that Graf are famous for. Huge rocks, dried out river beds and pools of water, in vast, technical stages. It is time to start showing these guys what this car can do and we lay down fastest time after fastest time with zero penalties.

Only one more day of battle to go and we can feel we are catching the leaders.



Taking Mistress for a swim.

But first we have two more night stages, as midnight approaches we take to the hills. Our Lazer lights blaze into the darkness as our Maxxis tyres hunt for grip on the Portuguese rocks. We need not worry as we put down fast times, winning one stage and coming second on the other.

The next day we wake to find the scores are up, and we are back in the game! We have blazed up to 3rd place, only a few seconds behind second place and five minutes behind a flying Helder da Rocha.

Day 4

It's a new site for the Graf and when we arrive we find a heavily forested site littered with giant boulders. It looked more like a giant's playground! It was staggeringly beautiful and full of hate. Our first stage was insane with four cliff faces to winch and tight technical areas through shallow rooted trees. We started well but it soon turned to hell after an error put us on our roof and we left the stage with a DNF and three penalties! It's an absolute disaster. We consolidate and gather our thoughts and in the next stages we lay down good times. In the fourth stage we just can't get finished



Mistress loves the rocks at Graf.

in time and take yet another DNF. This is a bad day and a getting worse! We soldier on and take two fastest times but in our penultimate stage reverse gear decides it doesn't want to play any more and as we enter the final stage we know another DNF is looming. Its not a good day for the team.

But we did get to watch our great friends Helder da Rocha and Flavio Gnomes lay down a master class. They were the only team to clear the final stage and by doing so sealed a well deserved victory.



Massive rocks, stunning scenery, that is why we love Portugal!

The prize giving at Graf is always fantastic and we were there with our team, Brian and Thomas from Malta. Co-driver Chris Abel and myself, enjoying a superb feast to celebrate this fine event. Then it was prize giving. The last day had killed our chances of winning but we hit the podium with a 3rd place in 44 class and 4th overall. It's not the result we wanted but sometimes you have to roll with it and there is no time to waste as we have to get Mistress ready for King of Portugal which is only four days away.

King of Portugal 2022

Car preparation for most events takes weeks to complete, but we only had four days to get Mistress battle ready for King of Portugal, the final event and the Jewel in the crown of the 2022 European Ultra 4 Championship.

Chris Abel flew home after co-driving at Graf and Michael Whitting flew in on the Monday to bolster the team and help with the preparation. So a team of four bent to the task of changing gearboxes, differentials, removing rear winches, changing air intakes and straightening this girls battered body panels. Thomas and Brian, alongside myself and James, worked late into the evenings and started early to be sure that everything was just right.

Then on Wednesday morning we left the workshops of 'By Toucas' and Flavio Gnomes headed to Vimioso and King of Portugal!

We arrived to find an already packed stadium where 65 teams would be based for the next three



King of Portugal is a race like no other.

days of intense Ultra 4 race action. James Ayre flew in late that evening to join me as co-driver. The plan was simple, get out in front and stay there.

First up was the prologue. An 8km super stage that is fast, furious and with plenty of big jumps. Emmanuel Costa set the pace and we left the line nearly last in our class. Mistress was incredible, the thunder of her LS7 7 litre V8 engine, beefy Spidertrax axles and monster Fox shocks soaked up the punishing course with style. We crossed the line in a cloud of dust, park her and rush back to find out if we have done enough?

We have smashed it. Half a second faster than our nemesis Emmanuel Costa. It's the perfect start to our campaign.



JT rock is one of the most formidable trails and Mistress cleared each time with ease.

Day 2, the Sun is shining and promising high temps of up to 27° Celsius. It's going to be a long day with five 38km laps and with three super tough special stages to contend with around the course.

We have the honour of leading out the field and we roar to the line, 650 horse power surging us on into the Portuguese terrain, 190km to go.

Everything was going well for the first 36km and we had pulled out an eight minute lead over the chasing pack. "James, I have lost throttle response" I say over the radio as Mistress rolls to the side of the track. It's a bitter blow when everything is going so well. But we never surrender and as I pull her apart looking for the fault, James is already sprinting to the pits to get parts. An hour later and a new throttle body fitted we are back on track and hauling. But two laps later it comes to a halt again as the transfer case decides it does not want to stay attached to the gearbox. So, with only three of five laps completed we had to retire with heavy hearts. Back in the pits the guys soon tear down Mistress and start making the repairs so we can be ready for the final day.



Jim suited and booted and ready for action.

Day 3 and the scores are not good. After the disastrous previous day we are languishing down in 29th position. But we also know we have a pace that few can match and I can't wait to get started.

The cars leave the line in 30 second intervals and we have five 27 km laps ahead of us, but this time it gets real serious with the monstrous dinosaur eggs and two special zones to test our skills. It's



650 horse power and Maxxis tyres eating up the Portuguese rocks.



Devils gate is full of hate.

going to be a tough day. We leave the line and Mistress feels fantastic! It's not long before we are carving through the field and making fast decisive overtakes on quality opposition. At the dinosaur eggs we have already caught cars in the top ten but cannot find the bypass line and have to sit in traffic wasting 20 valuable minutes. Once again Mistress delivers and we pass another four cars on the massive boulders. We cross the line to finish lap one and we have made up 18 places! It's a great start and we power into the dust clouds. On lap two we pass another four cars in the first 5 km in the slower technical rocks. For the next four laps Mistress delivers and we keep up a continuous pace.



Kick it hard! Mistress cruises through the rock gardens.

We reach the finish line and cross it in physical third place, having passed everyone with the exception of the Ruel brothers and Emmanuel Costa. It's a great result and only leaves us to ponder what would have been, if we had not had the problems that we did.

The prize ceremony at King of Portugal is exceptional. With over a thousand people in attendance, the local town pulls out all the stops, providing food, wine and entertainment. Who knew bagpipes were a Portuguese invention!

The scores are announced and we are 7th overall for the event which is a great comeback after starting the final day in 29th position.

But the prize giving is not over, this race is the Championship decider for Ultra 4 European Championship. "In second place in the Championship, Jim Marsden and Gigglespin Racing!" ...what a shock, what a surprise and what a team. The months of hard work have paid off, but sadly we can not celebrate for long as we have to leave at 4am to catch a ferry back to the UK.

So its a huge **Thank you** to our team at home and at the race track. They are Staci Reeson, James Ayre, Helder da Rocha, Chris Abel, Michael Whitting, Thomas Tanti, Brian Aguis, Jack and Tom Saunders and the James's. Then it's a huge shout out to our sponsors and partners that work so hard behind the scenes to make this all happen.

Now it's time to strip down, rebuild and get ready for a new season and new adventures!



Third place at Graf left us wondering what could have been.



2nd place in the Ultra 4 European Championship! That is why we work hard!

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