

Volkswagen DRIVER

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ROAD TESTS • HERITAGE • SPORT • TUNING • TECHNOLOGY • DIY



GTI INTERNATIONAL SHOW REPORT



**21-PAGE
PHOTO REPORT
PLUS FULL RESULTS**



MOTORSPORT VW Racing Cup round-up



MODIFIED CAR APS/MRC-tuned Polo GTI



MOTORSPORT AmD/Milltek Golf at Croft



Polo *power!*

Justin Nimmo is exploring all the options for performance-tuning the Polo GTI 1.8T...

HAVING RECENTLY parted with a modified Skoda Fabia, in autumn 2010 I started looking around for a VW hot hatch. I wanted to keep it in the Volkswagen Group range because of my long-standing relationship with APS at Brackley.

Nathan Sammons of APS and I go a long way back to when he was a trainee technician with Geoff Everett at AmD in Oddington in Oxfordshire, and I've had numerous VW Group cars tuned by Nathan and the guys at APS in recent years.

I was attracted to the Polo GTI with the 1.8-litre 20-valve turbo engine; although it's the baby of the VW range, it's a nice-looking car, with a lot of tuning potential. I soon found there weren't too many about, and they were strong money. Eventually,

though, I bought this 2008 model from a non-franchised dealer in Hampshire.

Within weeks I had it up at APS for a Stage 1 engine management re-map and a Pipercross free-flow panel filter. I soon followed that with the addition of a set of Eibach Fast Road springs. Even with these limited mods, the car was very quick and I could see that it had a lot more potential.

It wasn't long before I was back at APS, having VW motorsport lower wishbone bushes installed and these dramatically improved the initial turn-in of the car. I then fitted a SEAT PD160 intake pipe to the air filter (twice the size of the original one) and APS then installed a Forge turbo intake pipe to continue the now improved flow to the airbox into the turbocharger. At the same time, they fitted a Forge

uprated diverter valve, with the appropriate green spring, to correspond with the increase in boost.

I ran the vehicle for a few months and was very pleased with the new-found performance, although under hard acceleration there was far too much engine movement. The next visit to APS was for the installation of a SuperPro engine mount, which reduces the engine movement within its mountings. I also had SuperPro front anti-roll bar bushes installed.

At this point I made the decision to head towards a Stage 2 upgrade, which meant expensive hardware bolt-ons. So back I went to APS for a full Milltek Sport turbo-back exhaust, complete with hi-flow sports cat. Wow – it went even better, and sounded great, but now it didn't stop so well...

So, next, I sourced a set of 312 mm discs, callipers and carriers from an Audi TT and had them stripped and painted in Porsche red. APS fitted them, along with new VAG discs and Brembo Fast Road pads. The braking was much improved, at the front, such that the car now nose-dived to a stop so, looking for better-balanced braking, front to rear, I investigated the options for an upgrade to the rear brakes. The 256 mm rear discs, callipers and carriers from an Anniversary Mk 4 Golf GTI were stripped and re-painted in Porsche red, and fitted by APS, along with the new vented VAG discs and Brembo Fast Road pads. The

whole system was flushed through and race-quality brake fluid installed. Now it stops in a much more balanced manner.

I had read some articles about Polo GTIs with intercooler mods, as the standard side-mounted intercooler was struggling to keep the intake temperatures down, so I decided on the SEAT Sport front-mounted intercooler, bought new from a SEAT dealer in Northern Ireland, and installed by APS using a heavily-modified Forge Motorsport fitting kit and Samco silicone hoses. →



Specification

Engine: 1.8-litre 20-valve turbo, with PD160 intake to Pipercross panel filter, Forge turbo intake pipe, Forge recirculating diverter valve with green spring, crankcase breather to filter not back into airbox, Milltek Sport turbo-back exhaust with sports cat, SEAT Sport intercooler with modified Forge fitting kit.

Standard power output is 150 PS @ 5800 rpm, 220 Nm @ 1950-4500 rpm. Re-mapped by MRC Tuning to 233 PS @ 5250 rpm and 360 Nm @ 3750 rpm.

Suspension: Eibach springs, standard dampers, VW Motorsport wishbone bushes.

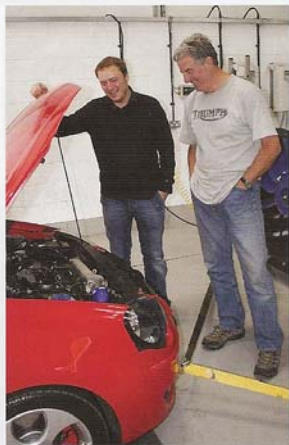
Brakes: Front: Audi TT 312 mm calliper carriers, new VAG discs, Brembo Fast Road pads. Rear: 256 mm callipers and carriers from Golf GTI Anniversary, new VAG vented discs, Brembo pads, race-quality brake fluid.

Exterior: Colour-coded sills, black mirror housings, honeycomb lower grille set, 'R' badges, gloss black B-pillar panels.

Interior: Dash cubby box, carpet set to order, black with red stitching to match all the GTI red stitching, NewSouth boost gauge.



'I WAS ATTRACTED TO THE POLO GTI AND, ALTHOUGH IT'S THE BABY OF THE VW RANGE, IT'S A NICE-LOOKING CAR, WITH A LOT OF TUNING POTENTIAL...'



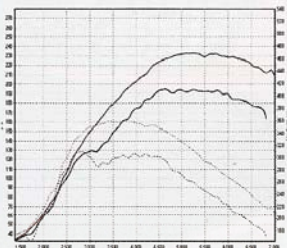
Unfortunately, by this time, Gary Hawkins was no longer available to do the Stage 2 re-map so Ed at APS spoke with MRC Tuning at Banbury who agreed to re-map the car to match the hardware, with a live rolling-road re-map session by Mihnea Cotet, using their high-tech Cartec dynamometer.

Bearing in mind that the car had already been re-mapped, MRC's skillful tuning managed to improve the power output further still, from 195 PS and 310 Nm to 233 PS and 360 Nm, with much smoother power and torque curves, and it now pulls very cleanly and strongly throughout the rev range.

Externally, I wanted the car to resemble the VW 'R' range, so I had the mirror housings painted gloss black, and fitted 'R' badges at the front and rear, along with a honeycomb lower grille set and gloss black B-pillar covers.

I felt that, although VW never produced an 'R' version of the 9N3 Polo, my car, with its current performance – realistically capable of near to 150 mph and a 0-60 time in the high-5 to low 6-second bracket – when finished will truly be badged correctly, yet still appear relatively standard and understated externally.

The next job will be to further improve the suspension, using either uprated Koni dampers to match the Eibach springs or a set of KW coilovers, V1 or V2, but first I want to get a bit more use out of the standard dampers, as the car has only done 15,000 miles. Not having driven on a race track before, I am planning to go to the Volkswagen Driver track day at Castle Combe on July 16, where Ed Jackson of APS has promised to take me around the circuit in the Polo and it's an experience I'm looking forward to. 🇩🇪



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