



# RACING

Two evo project cars take to the track, the M3 GT in pursuit of that elusive 8-minute lap of

# GREEN





the Ring, while our home-built Westfield XI has its sights set on a target all of its own... ➔



## WESTFIELD XI

**S**o, Bovingdon has his holy grail: an eight-minute lap of the Nordschleife in his M3 GT. But this, my friends, this is The Big One. We're heading for the Bedford Autodrome's West Circuit with our home-built Westfield. Our target: to beat the time set in our 'Fast Club' feature (issue 091) by a Ford Focus 1.6.

Pff, I hear you say. Surely the XI should have a Focus for breakfast? Is it not, after all, a racing car, lower than a slammed python, lighter than a packet of whippet-flavoured crisps, and aerodynamically smoothed and honed for the Mulsanne Straight? Not to mention piloted by two driving gods, and devilish handsome with it.

You're right, of course. But there's no denying that it is also fundamentally a 50-year-old design, powered by a 35-year-old engine with a full, throbbing 59bhp, and packing all the cornering

and braking power of a small blancmange.

Remember the episode of *Top Gear* where The Stig drove an Astra diesel around Castle Combe and comprehensively embarrassed the three 'classic supercars' driven by the presenters? I do, and I didn't sleep much last night, worrying about a) all the things that might go wrong, and b) the possibility of the Westy being slower than not only the Focus but also the radio-controlled car that we took along to Fast Club 'just for a laugh'. For the record, the Focus lapped in 1min.43.50, the RC Schumacher Menace GTR in 1min.58.35. We have no idea how fast the XI will go – but we're just about to find out.

Now, truth be told, Tomalin is *evo's* very own Captain Slow, which is why Roger Green, who at least is not a total stranger to an apex, will be doing the driving and I'll be in the passenger seat, clutching the Racelogic VBOX data-logger (and probably anything else that comes to hand). Happily the Westy is at long last fighting fit. Its reconditioned engine (095) is now mated to a rebuilt gearbox (097), the shift action of which

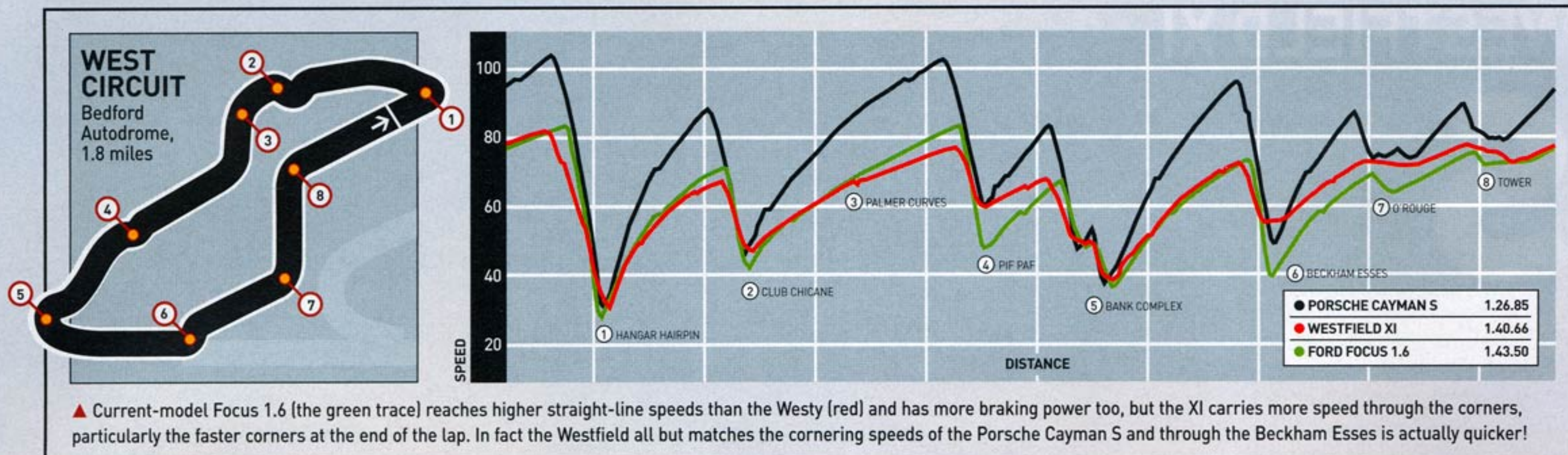
is as sweet as a nut that's been soaked in golden syrup. The engine's still coughing a bit on part-throttle, but Roger tells me this won't be a problem since he'll be 'flat everywhere'. This kind of talk is worrying me. I'm not too keen on being driven flat, anywhere, and especially not in a car I helped build.

But the moment has come. The weather's fine, the tarmac's dry, and we've got the West Circuit to ourselves for 30 minutes. I've told Roger that I'll go out with him for a couple of exploratory laps, but if I want to chicken out of the full-on timed laps I'll let him know and he'll drop me off in the pits. I squeeze into the bucket seat on the passenger side, buckle up, grasp the VBOX and its battery pack tightly, give Rog a confident nod and we accelerate gently onto the circuit for our first sighting lap.

What's pretty soon clear is that Roger's idea of a sighting lap is different to mine. By the second corner, the tail of the XI is getting mobile and by the time we reach the Bank, he's also working the brakes hard, summoning surprisingly impressive



## [Project Cars on Track]



retardation. Through the last few corners he appears to be trying really quite hard, the XI drifting across the kerbs, using every inch of the track (and then some) out of O'Rouge. I shout across: 'Just one more for me, thanks!' and he nods and smiles. When we whoosh out of Tower, the final corner of the lap, with the engine hammering fit to burst and a good few degrees of opposite lock, it dawns on me that Roger is, in fact, going for it. He is, as they say, 'on one'. The bastard.

Oh well, might as well hope it's a good one. Besides, Rog has driven here hundreds of times before. Raced lots of cars too. Good bloke, old Rog. Might as well enjoy the ride. In fact, let's beat that Focus time two-up! 'Whoooah, that's fine, that's fast enough,' I urge him on.

The Westy, I have to say, feels brilliant. Quicker than I'd imagined it would, into the corners and through them, turning in crisply with hardly a hint of understeer, drifting its tail out like it's the most natural thing in the world. At Hangar on the second lap we're virtually broadside, and through the faster corners he hardly seems to turn the wheel at all, the car four-wheel drifting

with the throttle nailed – in fact he tells me later that through O'Rouge and Tower he wasn't lifting at all. Carrying speed, I think it's called. We're certainly carrying plenty as we pass the pits again. I raise a finger at Rog to signal 'one more', but I've no idea if he's seen it, and I quickly have to grab the VBOX again as we slide through the Club Chicane or the Palmer Curves or some other turn.

As we hammer across the finish line at the end of the second lap I thump Roger on the leg. This finally seems to do the trick and we trundle back to the pit lane. Out comes the laptop and we download the data. There, right at the end, the last lap: 1min.40.66. Bloody hell. Not only is the XI virtually three seconds quicker than the Focus, it's only a couple of seconds slower than a BMW 120i. Even more remarkably, back at the office when we overlay the trace with the one for the Cayman S from last month, we find the Westy was actually quicker at one point than the Porsche.

Rog, of course, says there's more to come, once the carbs have been properly set up and, to quote him directly, 'without a passenger who's wincing all the time'. *Tch.* Racing drivers, eh? **PT**



Above: Green and Tomalin download data from VBOX. Right: Green goes for a celebratory lap, mission accomplished