



Photo By: John Retter

Racing my Healeys on the Famous Circuits in Europe

- Donington
- Brands Hatch
- Silverstone
- Zandvoort
- Spa Francorchamps
- Nürburgring

When the snow at last started to melt over here in Sweden last March I had the same feeling as every spring; WOW – Racing season is here again!!

It is hard to describe but sort of a combination of fear and excitement. Very uplifting. The ongoing realization of my dream is going to continue. At least for another year. Racing my Healeys together with the big boys on the big circuits. Against absolutely fantastic historic race cars like Aston Martin DB:s, Jaguar C-, D and E-types, Cobras

◀ Nils-Fredrik Nyblæus rounds a corner at speed during a race at Donington. The day ended well as Nyblæus' two Healeys each took a second place trophy. This one is his 1955 100M.

By: Nils-Fredrik Nyblæus



Photo By: John Retter

Nils-Fredrik Nyblæus takes a break during his busy racing schedule last summer.

including Daytonas, Ferraris, GT 40s, Maseratis, Frazer-Nash, Cooper, Lotus, Porsche, HMW and many more. All seriously beautiful and values that have become unreal.

A good friend of mine once told me that it is perfectly all right for hobbies to be costly but I have to ask myself sometimes if there must not be a limit? Or not.....? Time is long but life is short. And as John Lennon once put it; Life is what's happening to you while you're busy doing other things. I do not count anymore because then I easily feel sick. At least the value of the cars have increased a lot lately. And it makes you feel really good just looking at their beauty or working on them. It is a real treat for one's soul.

The toughest part is just before the start of a race. Then I go into my bubble. It could be a full hour before the race, or even more. I am unspeakable. Nervous. Insecure. Concentrated. Focused. In my mind I go through all braking points, gear changes,



Photo By: Peter Gunnars

The starting grid of Spa Six Hours looking up at Les Combes. 108 cars on the grid is a myriad especially with all the people running around fixing things in the last moment.

turning in points and revs at the start. Have I checked everything: fuel, tyre pressure, oil, coolant, spinners, windscreen, brake pads, ARB, camera, mirrors? Is everything sufficiently tightened? It is a strange feeling considering that all this is just for fun. A game for grown ups. Wrong! If that's what you all thought. Sure it is fun but it is also a competition. It is unavoidable but as soon as you are out there

it becomes a serious competition. It is a fight man to man (women are scarce out there so far, unfortunately, but hopefully this will improve soon). One has to perform as good as possible. It is really exhausting but very fun at the same time. And scary. But a lot of excitement. Sometimes I ask myself why I put myself through this and then I do not mean the risk for an accident but the extra pressure that comes with the

racing. When the alternative might be reading a good novel in a hammock. I guess it is the excitement and the opportunity to produce under pressure. To see what you are able to achieve and what the car is able to handle, as close to the limit as possible without going over it. By the way, novels were also never my thing really.

Went to Donington in the UK already

in April to practice. Had planned to go ice racing in the winter but the ice was not strong enough. My first race for the season was also going to take place at Donington so some practice there would probably do me good. My wife Nina came along, as she almost always does. She likes meeting all the people and the friendly atmosphere in and around the paddock. As it turned out she also liked the Healey on the

track. This was a so called track day when lots of different race cars were let out on the track including cars with instructors and passengers. My Austin Healey 3000 YOP999 also has a passenger seat.

Late in the afternoon something really funny happened. Jeremy Welch, who looks after my Healeys and also often co-drives YOP with me when he is not

2016 was a very successful racing season. A few things could have gone better but all things considered it was very rewarding.



Photo By: Matt White



▲ Overtaking an Aston Martin Project Car DP 214 at Silverstone Classic.

◀ Photos from top: [Photos By John Retter]

• The whole crew just after finishing Spa Six Hours in the Sinke car - drivers to the left and Rinus Sinke in red fleece.

• Nina and I focusing before the race.

• Sheared off clean as a whistle.



Results of the 2016 Campaign:

Donington Festival, UK:

100M, 60 min, 2nd in class
3000, 90 min, 2nd in class

Kinnekekulle Ring, Sweden:

3000, 17+17 min 2nd/, 3rd in class

Karlskoga, Sweden:

3000, 15 min, DNF

Brands Hatch, UK:

3000, 50 min, 3rd in class

Silverstone Classic, UK:

100M, 60 min, 6th in class
3000, 50 min, 2nd in class

Nürburgring, Germany:

3000, 65 min, 3rd in class

Zandvoort, Netherlands:

3000, 90 min, DNF

Spa Francorchamps, Belgium:

100M, 60 min, 2nd in class
3000, 90 min, 4th in class

Spa Six Hours, Belgium:

3000, 360 min, 13th in class



Photo By: Robert Peterson

▲ Front wheel lift at Gelleråsen, Karlskoga, Sweden.

◀ Donington Historic Festival- Remember what I told you - don't brake to much!



Photo By: John Retter

driving his own 3000, took one of his mechanics out for a few laps in the passenger seat. The guy came in somewhat pale but with a really big smile on his face. Then I got this spontaneous idea. Nina, who comes along to most of the races and who really likes driving in general, maybe she would appreciate to go on the track in a real, and I mean real, race Healey. I knew she would never accept to go with me, unless driving herself, because she thinks I will overdo it. She is probably right there. So I asked Jeremy to ask Nina to come along with him for a few laps. I warned him that she would probably turn the offer down for at least five times but that he should continue and try to persuade her. After having turned it down five times Martyn Corfield pushed a helmet on her head and said "do it" and she finally said yes. Martyn also gave Nina the advice "just put your hands in your lap and try to follow with the car". Relax and don't struggle against. You are in safe hands. So out they went. Jeremy increased the speed gradually and after a few laps they

were riding at full racing speed. Doing well over 200 km/h on the straight and taking every corner on the curbs. The Healey was sideways all the time. When they finally came into the pits Nina's first words, still belted in YOP, were: -" This was really fun. Now I want my own race Healey!". Since I am a gentleman (!!?) I immediately gave her my 100M.

So that was that. We packed our things and went to the hotel. Later, at the end of our dinner, Nina looked at me and said: -"What color do you think I should have on my racing overall"? Hmmmm. A few days later however she had come to the conclusion that one maniac in the family was enough. "But next year at the track day of Donington I am going to drive with my own instructor". We'll see. I hope she is right. One or two maniacs does not really matter when at our age. The children have there own lives since long. That is at least my opinion. We will see.

Some weeks later the racing at Donington Historic Festival went pretty well. The only misdemeanor was a 360 spin with my 100M in Woodcote Trophy qualifying. The track was wet after rain during the night and I missed my braking at

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McLeans and ended up with both left wheels outside the track on the wet grass. I lost it within a fraction of a second and the rear end came around and we were spinning across the entire track to the other side and on to the grass there. Slippery to say the least. I stepped on the brakes hard while spinning and finally the car stopped 2 feet from the armco. Thank you to whoever was looking after me. I was also driving YOP in the GTSCC series (GT and Sports Car Cup). A really good start of the season: 2nd in class with both cars.

Two weeks later we raced at Kinnekulle Ring in Sweden where I had not been for a few years. YOP was shipped to Gothenburg where I picked it up before the race. I struggled with to long differential for this short and twisty track. Unfortunately the other one was left in England. Otherwise YOP worked like a clock.

This is more than you can say about the next race, Velodromloppet Grand Prix at Karlskoga in Sweden two weeks after Brands. We pulled YOP back to Sweden on a trailer after our motor home. I went there to practice an evening before the week of the race. This race has been a bit up or down over the years. My first race there with YOP I was lucky and on the podium. The second I had a real fight with Joakim Glaes in his green Austin Healey 3000. We both come into the Ejes hairpin wheel to wheel and nobody wanted to brake. This is what I was talking about in the beginning of this article. I was on the inside and finally we had to brake but it was too late. I could not turn in time so when he finally turned I was on his inside. He saw me just before we were about to crash so he turned back but his front right suspension gave up completely because of the extra pressure and I could easily turn back and get away. The following year I screwed up in the first bend. I was fighting for position just after the start with Claes Andersson, a really fast ex rally driver, in his blue 3000. Among us were some GT-40s, an E-type and two Corvette prototypes. I went on the outside and I used some extra asphalt added to the track for this curve but could not get the car back inside the lines until it was too late.

My left rear wheel went into a hole and I heard a big BOOM. This resulted in a bent rear axle, a cracked hub, a damaged wheel and a bent rear wing. This year I was doing quite well (5th overall I think?) when after 7 laps a Lotus Elan spun just in front of me in Paddock Bend and on his outside was Claes in the blue 3000. Claes was just about to turn into the pits for a drive thru penalty for starting before the flag dropped. Anyway, this resulted in an extraordinary situation and I had to go into second gear which I missed. Instead my left hand went to far left and I heard it loud and clear when I tried to engage the reverse! I have a stop which should prevent this from happening but the stop had popped open. Finally I got it into second and we continued in a good position. On the last lap however, coming out of the Old Hairpin with only 300 m to go to the finish line, I was pushing hard and when I engaged into third gear I just heard I terrible noise like brrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrtschsch. I rolled off and that was that. The gearbox had failed. Almost all teeth were gone. Jeremy called it driver abuse and he was probably right. If only the stop had stayed in place.

The next race was in just two weeks in England but luckily we were to go to a wedding there already a week later so we took the motor home with YOP on the trailer and delivered it in Yoxall to Denis Welch Motors i.e. Jeremy the same day as the Brexit vote was finalized. The wedding was fantastic. Mike Thorne, a famous and very successful Healey race driver was marrying Sarah Bennett-Baggs, another excellent race driver. The wedding was in Bristol and as some of you may know, Bristol is a real Healey intense area so we had a lot of fun. It was a really racing oriented wedding. The priest used over 50 racing terms in her speech in the church!

The following weekend we were racing at the Brands Hatch GP circuit in the Superprix. It is a fantastic circuit with a beautiful backside going up into the woods and a long straight there with a bridge under which your almost have to duck your head while going under it in 200+ km/h. The bottom part of the bridge is padded! We did well and



Photo By: Robert Peterson

Driver change at Spa Six Hours.

were 5th overall and 3rd in class. And YOP again worked like a clock with the new gearbox.

Three weeks later we went to Silverstone Classic. The organizer claims it to be the largest historic race happening in the world. It IS fantastic! It is difficult to get the entry accepted but I had done it in the 100M five times before and in YOP three times. The grids are just fantastic but competition is fierce. Here something really nice happened. Our youngest daughter Gabriella (no 4), came along from Sweden with her boyfriend Mattias. On Saturday night at 8 pm, in the middle of my "race into the dusk", sitting on the tribute, he proposed to her. Yes you read it correctly, he proposed! And she said yes! We were very happy about this. As you may suspect he is quite interested in fast cars but has just traded in his Porsche for an Audi Q5 to be able to house the baby carriage. I guess we have all gone through the same phase in life! 6th with the 100M and 2nd with YOP.

Nürburgring in Germany is another well known circuit. One of my crazy ambitions is to take a new scalp every year in the means of racing on a circuit I have never been to before. This year the turn had come to Nürburgring in Germany. I had planned to go there already last year but it was prevented by YOP having an accident at the Silverstone Classic. Anyway; new scalps last year were Zandvoort in the Netherlands and Portimao in Portugal. Nina took a break from racing and instead I was accompanied by Per-Gunnar Johansson, known to most as PG. PG is not only the chair



Photo By: John Retter

Getting inside an E-type low drag coupe at Druids, Brands Hatch.



Photo By: Rinus Sinke

Getting ready to go racing at the Circuit De Spa Francorchamps.

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Photo By: P.G. Johansson

Nurburgring early Sunday morning.

man of the Austin Healey Club of Sweden since 11 years but he also races a green 3000! And he is a very good friend of mine. We drove down from Sweden in the motor home and had a fabulous time. YOP came from England with DWR. In their truck was also the Jaguar E-type Low Drag Coupe in which Julian Thomas won the European Jaguar Challenge last year. The circuit was very exciting and meticulously kept and the environment was breathing racing history. In particular we enjoyed the Piston Head Restaurant. Not bad for a first time: 3rd in class.

Zandvoort in the Netherlands was next. It is also closer than the UK but because of a timing conflict with Ninas bridge competition we opted for Ryan Air. Zandvoort is a spectacular circuit of 4,3 km in the middle of the sand dunes and I really mean the sand dunes. Spectators are standing on the dunes looking down onto the circuit. Looking the other way they have the Atlantic only 250 m away. The track itself is challenging. It is not as wide as the current GP (Formula1) tracks and runoff areas are smaller. It is closer to the Armco. But it is quick and a good circuit for the big Healey. I did really well in the start and was the first Healey. Managed to climb a few positions on the first lap but after three laps I saw the temperature coming up a bit high. Since I had really pushed I thought maybe if I lowered

the rev a bit it would help. WRONG! We had to stop and unfortunately I shot the engine at this point. A failing water pump, leaking head gasket and one damaged piston as a result of overheating. What you learn is that when the engine is hesitating you should stop immediately, no matter what position you are in, if you want to save the engine. The rebuilt engine was running on the dyno just after new years.

Still left of the original plan for 2016 was Spa Francorchamps. Woodcote Trophy in my 100M, Masters Gentleman Drivers in YOP and Spa Six Hours together with my Dutch friend Jaap Sinke in his fathers 3000. Since YOP was "hospitalized" Jeremy was very kind to offer me to drive KVS (his own 3000 - "The Beast"). So we did. Fantastic Healey. The track was extremely wet on Sunday morning because of heavy rain the night before and I am sorry to say that because of me we only managed to catch 4th in class. But close in my mind was a heavy crash involving another Healey on the last lap of the 6 Hours the night before. There was oil on the track. The Woodcote Trophy race went well with the 100M and we managed the entire 60 minutes without any incidents and ended up 2nd in class. I drove with Martyn Corfield who did not come to start in his Frazer Nash Le Mans Replica. But back to the Six Hours Race. It is really something. 108 cars on

the grid. We were in the famous yellow 3000 with two green stripes. You recognize it from the Scaletric (Nimco) model or actually the other way around. The Nimco model is a copy of the car we were to drive. We also had a third driver, Jan Bart Deenik. We qualified no 36 of 108. Already after 15 minutes Jaap had to come in to the pits with a cracked manifold. After 18 minutes of welding we were racing again but as you might understand loosing 18 minutes in the beginning of the race put us down to position 93. We were doing one stint each of just under 2 hours and it was a long struggle. It is important to be consistent, to try to avoid any accidents and of course to make the car last. I'll tell you, 2 hours of driving at top speed is really demanding and especially if you are at the age of 65. Anyway, we finished where we started,



Sandcasted 2 inch SU's ... simply beautiful.

position no 35, after a lot of overtaking during the last 5 hours. We were also the fastest Healey.

The Healey is a wonderful car to race. Some call it the little Cobra. I am happy with my racing in 2016 even if it included both ups and downs. Plus one new scalp. But now the focus is on 2017. Where shall we go? What will be this year's new scalp? Barcelona? Hungary Ring? Magny-Cours? Monza? Someday I hope to come and race with you in the United States. Just send me an invitation. 