

GOLF PRO

"Racing improves the breed" – as has always been said. Without track racing there would probably be no disc brakes as such, developments in tyre technology would have been far slower, and we might even still be driving around in cars powered by side-valve petrol engines! So when we hear of a respected tuning company like Buckingham-based Superchips UK linking up with a major manufacturer in a joint venture in saloon car racing – and with tuning diesel engines at that – it can only be cause for much celebration amongst us die-hard diesel enthusiasts.

Superchips' involvement here is as official tuning partner to Volkswagen Racing UK, whose Volkswagen Racing Cup series has kicked off in exciting fashion during 2004 with an early appearance of a Volkswagen UK entered Golf Mk V GT TDI in Superchips-tuned form – driven by various celebrities and journalists as a 'guest' entry. The fast-growing race series is open to virtually any Volkswagen and has tightly framed regulations on maximum engine power and weight to ensure close and entertaining racing. It is very early days for the racing Golf Mk V, but Superchips has learned much already from its development work, which hopefully will encourage wider adoption of the highly-acclaimed new Golf GT TDI as a basis for next season's racing. With the excellence of the new Golf's chassis, and the massive potential in the new 2.0 TDI engine, there's no real reason why we shouldn't soon see a diesel-powered Superchips car up there with the big boys, like the 3.2 litre MkIV R32, and the 2.8 litre Beetle RSI.

TEE OFF

I was able to sample the considerable spin-off of this racing experience in the form of a Superchips-converted road-



Pure racing pedigree on show.

"Volkswagen's own power and torque figures are notoriously modest and there's little doubt that most 2.0 TDI engines offer something more"

going 2.0 GT TDI. This is an example of the package that adds some extra sparkle to the already brisk performance of the new 2.0 TDI engine that's also fitted to a wide range of new VAG Group models – such as the Touran, the Audi A3, and the new Skoda Octavia. Extra sparkle? Little did I know that this would be something of an understatement!

MODESTY BECOMES

Volkswagen's own power and torque figures are notoriously modest and there's little doubt that most 2.0 TDI engines offer more – much nearer to 150bhp than the factory figure of 140bhp – and in this case as much as 156bhp. But the power and torque curves for the converted car raised my eyebrows considerably when I saw figures of 185bhp and 397Nm (293lb.ft) recorded – taking the outputs to respectively 29 and 23 per cent over specification! When you consider that, at higher speeds, this probably represents an increase of surplus power available for acceleration by as much as 50 per cent, then the way

that the converted car went on the road ought perhaps to have been no surprise! And go it does! At virtually any engine speed there's a seemingly almost inexhaustible supply of "go" that belittles previously favourable impressions of the standard car, (no sluggard itself), into history. Sixth gear becomes a meaningful gear for open-road overtaking and is useable from 50mph upwards as that massive torque comes in from around 1,400rpm onwards with ever-increasing presence. In higher gears – choose any of three in most situations – there's virtually as much performance as anyone would need in sensible motoring, and yet, while it spins freely to 4,500rpm and more, the engine is as docile, and maybe even a touch smoother, than in standard tune. It will trickle through traffic at a touch over 1,000rpm without any unevenness or suggestion of flat spots whilst the slick, fluid, gear-change means that real performance is readily on tap whenever needed, with in-gear maximum of over 40,60, and 90mph in 2nd, 3rd and 4th gears.

WET AND WILD

On a teeming wet day performance figures were out of the question, but this is a seven seconds 0-60mph car without doubt, and with in-gear acceleration figures that would shame many cars of greater capacity and far more distinguished ancestry. But it's not a beast at any time, or in any way, and the admirably set up Golf suspension soaks up road imperfections without murmur or discomfort, whilst handling the extra power with no concerns. But you do need to be aware of the considerably faster speeds that are so easily attainable and be certain to drive with appropriate restraint for both safety – and concern for your driving licence!

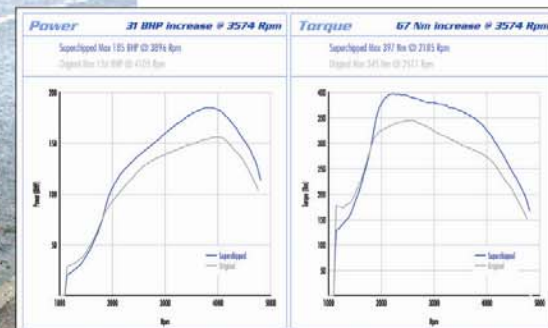
ON THE FAIRWAY

I stepped out of the car wearing a big cheesy grin that the Superchips staff had undoubtedly seen on quite a few faces. It's the overall competence and utter completeness of the car that impresses, with absolutely no compromises of shortcomings in the converted car that



Superchips

World leaders in engine management tuning
Tel: +44 1280 816781 or visit www.superchips.co.uk



Improved handicap: You can see from above that more power now kicks in from below 2000rpm and the sharp increase in torque from 1400rpm covers a 'plateau-like' and more useable range.



Under promised and over delivered. The entire VW range of diesels generally deliver more power and torque than stated.

might throw up any doubts as to the wisdom of the whole exercise. Even driven pretty fast I recorded figures in the low 40mpg range, and certainly in everyday motoring 50mpg plus would be easily attainable – so you certainly aren't going to pay any significant amount in extra fuel used, and many owners of Superchipped cars actually report improved economy!

The other potential major area of concern might be the consequences and mechanical risks of uprating the engine, which are entirely eliminated by the Superchips exclusive warranty that covers anything excluded by that of the manufacturer on account of the

"Even driven pretty fast I recorded figures in the low 40mpg range, and certainly in everyday motoring 50mpg plus would be easily attainable"

conversion – and which has, to date, paid out on an absolutely minimal number of occasions. But that's only what you would expect from a responsible company with vast experience in electronic tuning – something that has been recognised in their selection by Volkswagen UK as its partner on the track!

The Golf GT TDI and most other conversions – see details on www.superchips.co.uk or call 01280 816781 – cost just £511.13 inclusive of fitting and VAT, and come from a range of over 700 conversions offered for both diesels and petrol cars through its network of 77 UK Fitting Centres – see list overleaf.