

## ***CAV GT Joins BMW and Cobra Club S.A. Driver Training Day***

**Venue:** Kyalami, Johannesburg, South Africa  
**Date:** 31 March 2007  
**Driver / Owner:** Johan Hamm  
**Photos:** Ciaran Nunan

Kyalami has a fearsome reputation. For a novice, about to lap it as the first real track experience, in a 500+hp supercar, it certainly led to a sleepless night before.

This after days of setting up CAV chassis no. 106 and rechecking everything, much like on an experimental plane before its first flight.



Entering, scrutineering, briefing and the official procedure was all a daze. Tension and anxiety building all the time I eventually found myself strapped, helmeted, captured in the CAV GT, sitting second in the novice class pitlane line-up. Ready to go with a desert mouth and swamp-slimy hands that would not hold anything steady.

10 Seconds after the red Cobra ahead blurted off the marshal sets me free and the acceleration into mental transformation happens so quick that all awareness of driver discomfort and unease vanished when I registered the 3<sup>rd</sup> gearshift. Hell, this asphalt-scape is sooo wide perfect and smooth, nirvana road.



Diving curving rising and floating my perception into 3 dimensions by the time I passed the Cobra into Sunset right-hander. Hereafter it became a roller-coaster maze where everything happened automatically and what is ahead constantly vanishes behind. The whole sensation is surreal. Main straight arrived and first lap completed without remembering much of the track layout.

Here the instructor snaps me out of the dream and starts directing acceleration, braking and lines of approach and exit. I really concentrate on his shouted commands, gearshifts, checking gauges, whilst negotiating this constantly changing view ahead.

By lap three I became aware of the characteristics of my machine and started sensing for feedback on every portion of the track. At this point you also realize the complexity of this track, how fast your machine propels you, and that there is lotsa opportunity for screwing things up. I stay with my mentor for another two

laps familiarizing the basic layout and just trying to execute his instructions, till this orange Cobra starts becoming prominent in the minimal rear vision. Hmmm we are all novices right??



I comfortably keep a punting Agent Orange behind for two laps whilst managing to hold it all together with adrenalin levels skyhigh. Into Wesbank he makes a ballsy move and takes me accelerating out into the downward Mineshaft. I let him go and stayed behind him for a lap observing whilst the competitive spirit throbs in the old skull. I figured if I could be right on his behind into the main straight I would retake him. The right-hander at the end of the mineshaft is where I braked too late and hard with instructor hitting his valvebounce about the matter. With the weight transfer upon turn-in onto the left rear wheel, it broke loose. The feedback was so clear and the CAV gave its first indication of the ability to mop up a mess. The car just hung the behind out for a while and regained matters without any fuss. The Cobra gained some distance but in the esses ahead it spun out properly. I cruised past and onwards into the main-straight where the flagman signalled the cooldown lap.

1<sup>st</sup> session over. Quiet and reflective. The beast inside digesting its first meal.

The next two sessions was without instructor and I took time familiarising myself with the car through some of the myriad variables Kyalami presents. In your face is the fact that with this track you need many, many laps to possibly comprehend how far you can push and how much you ought not to. As for the car I can become lyrical. I took matters easy, pushing for response on some sections of the track. I felt I had it fairly well under control. It does everything you want it to. Predictable and comfortably manageable to the point that I could smoothly sideways it lightly through some second gear turns. I don't quite know how to describe it other than its just there yet acutely alive. Capable, frightening and smooth. It is sensational to experience and yet, it does not manufacture huge ego boosts because it distinctly accentuates how lacking my ability and experience is.





This babe talks straight.  
The Lagavulin of 4 wheels from which I had one uncivilised gulp straight out the bottle, on my penultimate lap for the day. Before the mainstraight is one sharp lefthander. I came in braking hard, hit turn in point and stomped the accelerator early. It went sideways in a big way. I thought this was the one time I was going to loose it properly. I eased accelerator and it just kept sliding full lock. Shit!!

I abandoned the accelerator completely whereupon it kept sliding a bit more before biting and whipping back into an over correction. I briefly let go of the steering wheel and it pulled straight. I got a big fright. This moment showed what the car is up to under extreme conditions. It held, yet I was shocked at how provocation can become pending disaster in a splitsecond. Be warned; treat your CAV with respect. They don't come with driver aids other than common sense.

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Best lapttime was a humbling 2min23.  
Long way to go and lots to learn.