



180!

Drop a 490 bhp Touring Car motor into a Sierra Cosworth and you end up with this. Certainly not for the faint hearted.

Dart players are seriously sad aren't they? They get very excited when somebody records 180. Pah! Real excitement is when John Luscombe records 180 in his Sierra Cosworth, because that's a genuine 180 miles per hour or three miles a minute. That's no pub talk figure either, I was sitting beside him when he did it and we know the speedo actually reads on the low side. We had a two mile straight to play with and the car was pulling maximum revs at 7000 rpm, off the clock at 170 mph and still accelerating. By this time we were running out of tarmac.

That'll be fast then — the fastest I've ever been without starting my journey at Heathrow. In fact the actual top speed has been worked out at a massive 186.9 mph at 7500 rpm but that doesn't work quite so well as the title to this feature.

It's probably best not to even ask how many it gets to the gallon at that sort of speed.

I suppose the warning signs were there. I knew the car was fitted with what was basically a 1988 British Touring Car spec engine said to produce at least 490 bhp. We had also heard it warming up on the other side of the circuit and it sounded mean. We followed it around the track to pick a suitable location and it suddenly squatted down and accelerated becoming a speck on the horizon in the blink of an eye. A bit like the Starship Enterprise at warp speed. In earth terms that's 0-60 in about four seconds and 100-150 is even quicker.

I suppose the obvious questions are how and why? So I'll start at the beginning. As soon as John read the reports of the new Sierra Cosworth he knew he had to have one. "I thought it was a chance to get something really hairy," he remembers, "As far as I was concerned this was going to become a classic like the Lotus Cortina." The only problem was finding a dealer who would take him seriously and allow a test drive. In the end it was Brooklyn Ford (01527 405045) and he placed his order in August 1986 collecting it the following month. Since then he's clocked up just over 65,000 miles.

To start with he used it as his company car and the wife even used to do the shopping with it and collect the kids from school. Then it all started with an innocent chip. A few years later John was well impressed with the RS500s in the British Touring Car Championship with the likes of Andy Rouse, Steve Soper, Tim Harvey and Graham Goode. He currently owns a standard RS500 with just 7000 miles on the clock, worth at least £20,000. But that wasn't enough, he wanted the pure power that the race cars had to play with and he was in a position to afford it too.

By this time the Cosworth was no longer used as an everyday car, but spent most of its life on the track, although still in standard spec apart from the chip. He remembers his first track outing at Donington Park. "It was a bit embarrassing really. I was leading the field on the first lap when the pace car pulled off and I

