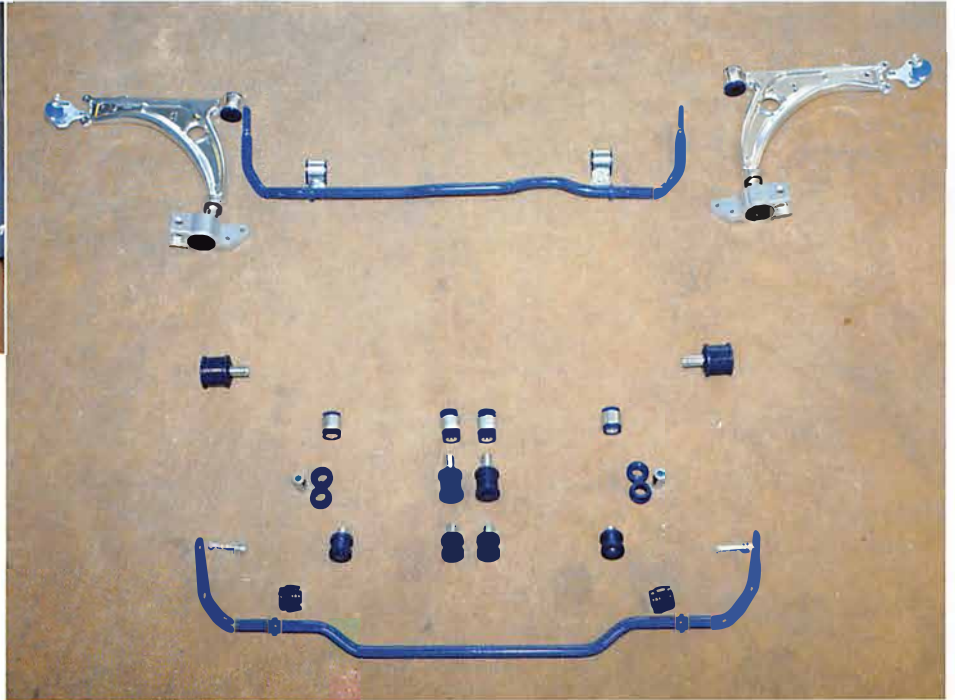


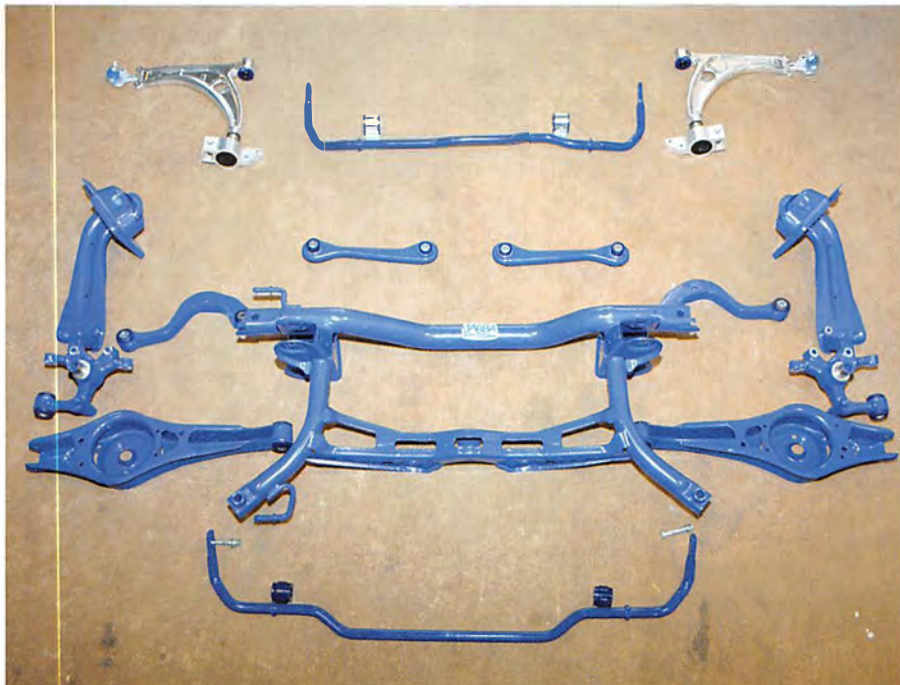


Australian chassis guru SuperPro has just upped the handling ante for Mk5 Golf owners everywhere with its comprehensive upgrade kit that walks the fine line between road refinement and race readiness. We stopped by the tuning palace of JabbaSport to see one being fitted to a truly sorted road car...

Words: Jarkle Pics: Paul Cowland



JACK OF ALL TRADES



SuperPro's latest chassis kit is aimed at those Mk5 Golf owners seeking improved handling and road holding from their cars without the need to compromise on everyday drivability and comfort. The need to balance these two ideals prompted SuperPro to come up with its latest suspension additions to the ever-popular Mk5 Golf range, specifically its complete Handling Kit. Developed primarily as an upgrade for road-going cars, the kit has since been fitted (with minor alterations) to Golfs competing in the Production GTi Championship, demonstrating both its multi-faceted nature and its suitability to both road and track cars. Indeed, the kit has been so successful when fitted to Golf race cars that it's been specified as a control component within the series, meaning that all Mk5s competing will have to run it from the beginning of the 2016 season.

The Handling Kit's real skill (aside from the night-and-day difference it can make to a Golf Mk5's composure, turn in and poise) is that it can equally serve as a foundation for those seeking to take their cars further still; i.e the





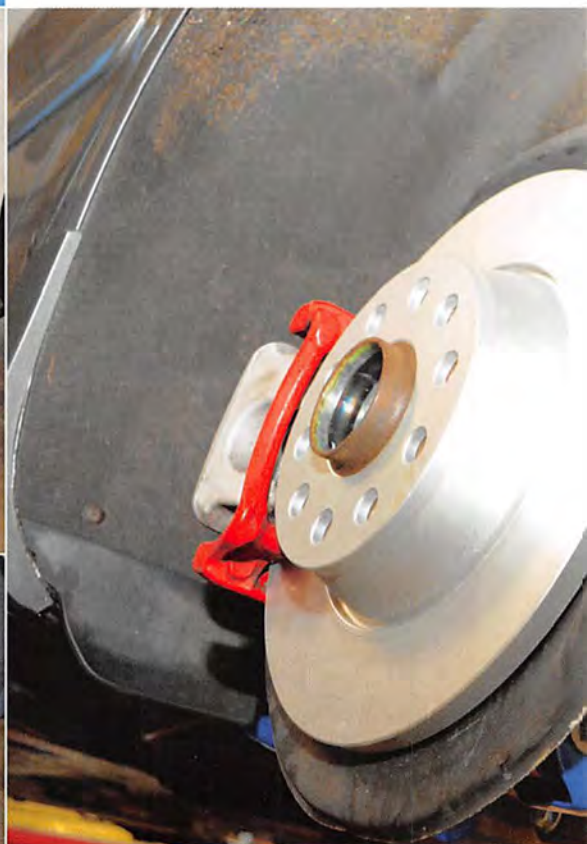
It's easy to see here just how comprehensive the SuperPro Handling Kit is and what's involved in getting the whole lot fitted. The difference it makes to the Mk5's chassis is incredible, both on the road and the track

jump from road car and part-time race car, to full-on race car with a valid MoT and full HMRC accreditation. One man who knows more than most about making Golfs stop, go and handle in a manner that their manufacturer would never have thought possible is Rob Sadler, the organiser of the massively popular Production GTi Championship and the owner of the Mk5 you see here.

"My Golf already had a fairly capable fast road setup before this and it certainly handled better than it did in factory form, but the SuperPro Handling Kit looked to be the best way of taking the car to the next level without rendering it a chore to drive on the way to and from the track," explains Rob. "Taking it to JabbaSport and getting the team there to fit the kit was very much a no-brainer, their work speaks for itself."

JabbaSport shouldn't need any introduction to those of you with one eye on VW tuning and racing in this country. There really isn't much it doesn't know about making Wolfsburg tin stick to the road (and track) like gum to a trainer. Rob's decision to entrust his Mk5 to JabbaSport was a good one then, but it became an even wiser move when the work was delegated to Luke Schlewitz, the son of JabbaSport owners Brian and Carole, an expert technician and proven Golf pilot to boot.

The kit itself boasts a complete set of SuperPro's progressive suspension bushes (more on these later), adjustable front and rear Roll Control anti-roll bars, adjustable alloy front lower control arms with modified ball-joints, and perhaps most significantly of all, redesigned bush housings. These have been reworked in order to remove one of the OE Golf's weaker links: its voided bushes. Voided bushes feature recesses on either side of the pivot point that promote comfort and compliant ride quality over rough, pot-holed surfaces. Ideal for road-going



Golfs. sure, but not great for any car that will be driven in a spirited or competitive fashion. The Handling Kit can transform the cornering prowess of any Mk5, offering huge scope to adjust key parameters like castor and camber, and all without leaving a 'crashy' or uncompromising ride.

Installing any complete suspension kit, particularly one with as much emphasis on lower arms and bushes as SuperPro's, is an involved process. One of the primary reasons for this is their location underneath the car – a position which forces bushes, lower arms, balljoints and the like to bear the brunt of the UK's patchy roads and challenging weather conditions. This means that it doesn't take long for even the toughest of mechanical parts to become caked in salt, road grime and other detritus, and this in turn contributes to the extended fitting process required. Fortunately JabbaSport has a solution in the form of its Labour Exchange Service, a deal which allows customers opting for the SuperPro Handling Kit to have their remaining OEM components swapped for good-as-new equivalents at the same time.

"There are a fair few factory components that remain in situ and work with the new SuperPro parts," explains Luke. "Our exchange service basically allows the customer to have an as-new set of OE components fitted at the same time as the SuperPro Handling Kit – all they have to do is agree to leave the old, surplus parts with us on an exchange basis."

The old parts are then treated to a comprehensive media blasting session, a process which leaves them looking as clean and shiny as the day they were first bolted into place, to be ready for the next Golf Mk5 to come through JabbaSport's doors. There's no requirement to do this and the SuperPro Handling Kit will fit just as well with the OE parts left as they were, but there's equally no doubting

that going the extra mile (as Rob opted to do) makes fitment simpler and swifter, and results in a more complete and pleasing look overall. It's also worth noting that there's a significant labour saving to be had by choosing this option, so it's well worth considering.

Fitting the SuperPro kit is undoubtedly one of those jobs that really needs a four-post ramp, certainly if you want to avoid spending the day lying under your Golf muttering at dirt-covered bolts! Luke began the fitment process by creating enough clearance around the suspension setup, removing all four wheels and the complete exhaust system, then loosening both the front and rear subframe assemblies. These must be removed in order for the adjustable alloy (and therefore considerably lighter) SuperPro control arms to go on the front of the car, and the Roll Control ARB to be slotted into place at the rear.

When Luke had the front arms off the car and on the workbench, several things were plain to see: that the design of the OE bushes was unsuited to performance motoring (look closely at the pictures at the amount 'play' there is around the pivot point), and that fitting one of the previously mentioned SuperPro alloy components with a grimy, factory lower arm would be tantamount to petrolhead treason. Rob's decision to plump for JabbaSport's exchange programme was certainly a good one and the workshop team wasted no time in sending his old, surplus-to-requirement parts to the blasting cabinet.

The new alloy control arms differ from their OE equivalents in a number of key design ways, the most significant being that they do away with the need for voided bushes and instead come with a new SuperPro polyurethane bush. Not only do these feature the firm's specially formulated progressive resilience material which boasts extremely impressive resilience to the forces



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“SUPERPRO’S HANDLING KIT COMPRISES A BRILLIANT SET OF PARTS THAT HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED TO WORK TOGETHER IN PERFECT HARMONY”

associated with competitive driving, they also have a relocated pivot point, with the bush itself now pierced in a deliberately off-centre position. This seemingly minor alteration actually has a huge effect on handling balance and results in castor settings that are ideally suited to fast road and track work, and which would have been impossible to achieve with the OE bushes. The arms also feature a modified ball-joint, an alteration which serves to increase the range of camber adjustment available and which makes achieving optimised settings far easier to achieve, and an extended pin which allows the angle of the wishbone to be toggled, helping to reduce the car’s roll centre.

The polyurethane construction of all SuperPro bushes means that they’re impervious to the effects of petrochemicals, sunlight, water and salt, and extremely resistant to both abrasion and heat. SuperPro’s uniquely formulated polyurethane bushes have all been extensively tested to ensure their suitability for both road and track, meaning that cars fitted with a SuperPro Handling Kit won’t suffer from increased Noise Vibration or Harshness (NVH), something that certainly cannot be said for some of its rivals.

The signature blue found on all SuperPro products serves as both a mark of their quality, and underlines the amount of research that goes into each and every product. Put simply, SuperPro has no need of a motorsport-focussed

range denoted by a different colour, as all of its products are equally at home on the road or track.

Tackling the rear of the car was a straightforward process thanks to Rob’s decision to replace the whole of his Golf’s lower suspension setup in its entirety, plus a complete set of brand-new nuts, bolts and washers, because, hey, if a job’s worth doing then it’s worth doing well. The rear subframe assembly was treated to a full set of trick SuperPro components, including bushes and the completely adjustable Roll Control ARBs, the latter a key part of the of the Handling Kit and very much responsible for the greater degree of adjustability at the rear of the car.

Rob had already decided that he wanted to take his Golf further down the dedicated, road-legal track car route than most would deem necessary, so he opted to fit a smattering of other choice upgrades at the same time. This explains both the Mintex brakes and the stunningly engineered Bilstein Clubsport coilovers, the latter more commonly found under the arches of Nürburgring-smashing VLN race cars. Capable, certainly, but perhaps a tad too extreme for most road-going Golfs. A set of B16 uprights would be almost as capable and unquestionably better-suited to tackling real world road conditions. Rob’s Golf was also fitted

with a brand-new set of Toyo R888 tyres, then carefully aligned using the time-honoured (and still professionally favoured) string technique.

The proof is very much in the pudding with suspension upgrades like this, and boy has SuperPro delivered! It’s all-too-clear just how well designed and engineered everything is, how simply it all fits together and how easy it is to integrate with the remaining OE kit. Its performance benefits are beyond doubt, something that Rob’s only too happy to reiterate: “SuperPro’s Handling Kit comprises a brilliant set of parts that have been developed to work together in perfect harmony. Granted, I have taken things further than most by fitting specialised Bilstein suspension and new brakes, but the difference made by the SuperPro kit is still sensational. It’s compliant enough to use on the way to the track, and focussed enough to be truly involving on it.”

SuperPro’s Golf Handling Kit is the product of a remarkable evolutionary process, one which has resulted in one of the most complete off-the-shelf chassis upgrades available for the evergreen Mk5. Suitable for both road and track cars, the kit promises to redefine what’s expected of a well setup Golf, and all without forcing the owner sacrifice every usability ●