Manawatu Car Club Inc Magazine September 2021

MANAWATU CAR CLUB Est. 1947

RACE WITH US!

EDITORSPEAK…

Email: blumoo1959@gmail.com

Last month was a learning month for me. They say you are never too old, and it's true!!

Firstly, I learned that if you realise your competition licence has expired and you have more than 3 days before the event you need it for, DON'T pay the priority fee. Motorsport NZ guarantee they will process all applications in 3 working days, and once they are approved you are good to go. Why so?? Well, I learned you can print off a temporary licence that is good for 3 weeks while you wait for the card to come through from the MNZ office. MNZ 1 Trev's pocket 0.

Next, I learned how to race in the rain at the Feilding Auto Electrical winter series round 3. I have never had the experience before though I had done my fair share of slithering around in the mud on plenty of rallies. Given the predicted weather, it wasn't surprising that the turnout seemed a little down on the previous round, but 15 MX5's still made a bloody good field for my class. We were fortunate that qualifying was in the dry, although the track was still cold and greasy, making it a bit exciting if you were too aggressive on brakes or throttle (the lock up first corner, first lap was a great warning). Seventh off the line in Race 1 and I got a blinding start, then got steadily picked off until I was back where I started!! Reverse grid race next and it was drizzling, so out with the umbrellas, there are disadvantages to open top cars! My moment came when series leader Markku went past me and then I got him back under brakes and around the outside in Turn 1, but then I nearly threw it all away with a massive wobble in front of Jerry exiting Turn 7 onto the front straight. Talk about hero to zero. I was learning that it was waaaayy better to be easy on the throttle regardless of what else was happening. And not to be too late on the brakes. A mid pack finish again. The last race actually started out under threatening skies and a light drizzle but got progressively wetter (and darker) until it was just pouring down. I had a fantastic dice with Matt until I looked in the mirror exiting Turn 7 on the last lap and …. he had gone!! The in-car footage from Markku showed him spearing off into the inside of the corner where he got bogged. Bugger. The final race was definitely an exercise in restraint, it was very, very, slippery!! Check out some great in car footage from Markku below.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uCvcDI6AExQ
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mz24yjMuANg&t=16s
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mz24yjMuANg

I also learned that the incredible V-Force, who were out there all day in the cold and wet, are owed my sincere thanks, along with every other competitor I am sure. You guys and girls are just the best!! I've said it before, and I will say it again, we can't do what we do without you all, so THANK YOU.

I learned plenty from the Night with Kaleb Ngatoa, not least being what a personable, erudite and enthusiastic individual he is. His story from karting to S5000's and a look to the Indy Car future dream made for a great night, and this mature 20-year-old spoke very well under questioning by our own Russell Harris. Although the night was well supported, it's just a pity more of the younger generation of Club members didn't come along to be motivated by what a bit of talent, determination and a decent work ethic can achieve in motorsport.

I also learned that Albert Einstein's famous quote "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results" is absolutely true. I hate to say "I told you so", but remember back a couple of years ago when I took a few shots at Auckland Transport who reckoned that they had the answer to the local road toll, which was lowering the rural speed limits?? Well, guess what? They are now seeking submissions on their latest scheme to lower the road toll, which has steadfastly remained the same over the last 2 years. Their new ploy? Drop the speed limits even further. They are now looking at some rural roads dropping to 60 kph. A totally futile effort and the public buy in is sure to be even less than before if they continue with this train of thought.

And then bloody Lockdown 2.0. Well that totally ruined the month except for ensuring both Colleen and I are at home for the bulk of our lambing. There's nothing nicer than being up to your elbow inside a ewe trying to sort out the tangle of 3 little bleaters all trying to exit at once while the rain drips steadily down your neck and the wind chills everything in sight!! We currently have one inside that has been rescued 3 times, once abandoned by Mum while she had the second one, then picked up by the bloody dog who got into the lambing paddock, and finally rescued from taking a swim in the creek. It clearly identifies as a cat but I'm buggered if I'm going to rescue it another six times!!

I will make just one comment on Covid and the current situation, and that's please do some research for yourselves before coming to any conclusions and don't just swallow what the media is telling you. There is plenty of well documented and substantiated evidence that challenges the current narrative which is creating so much fear in our communities.

Suffice to say it would appear that Round 4 of the FAE Winter Series is in severe jeopardy and that's a real shame as it's been such a fabulous series this year and our sponsors deserve the exposure for their awesome support. Stay tuned to the website or Facebook page for up-to-date information on the forthcoming calendared events. If we can make them happen you can be assured, we will. In the meantime, stay safe, take care of those around you who may be more vulnerable and we will look forward to socialising again in person as soon as possible.

And happy birthday to P1 (Richie) whose significant 0 birthday was shared via Zoom, not quite the planned celebration but the best outcome under the current jail term. The blaze of candles on the cake was quite something to see!!

That's it for another month. Keep the rubber side down.

TW

MCC 2021 CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER **TO BE CONFIRMED SUBJECT TO COVID LEVELS**

Sunday 19th Transpec / GT Oils Manfeild Open Day Round 3

Friday 24th Manfeild Test Day

OCTOBER **HOPEFULLY BACK TO SEMI NORMAL**

Saturday 9th Drift Tutoring – Back Track

Saturday 16th Feilding Auto Electrical Winter Series Round 4 Race Day 1 – Classes to be confirmed

Sunday 17th Feilding Auto Electrical Winter Series Round 4 Race Day 2 – Classes to be confirmed

Sunday 17th Back Track Clubsport Basic event

Friday 22nd OctoberFAST!! Test Day

Saturday 23rd OctoberFAST!! Race Day

Sunday 24th OctoberFAST!! Race Day

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NOVEMBER

Friday 5th Manfeild Test Day

Sunday 7th Transpec / GT Oil Manfeild Open Day Round 4

Friday 12th MG Classic Test Day

Saturday 13th MG Classic Race Day 1

Sunday 14th MG Classic Race Day 2

Saturday 20th ShowVember Drift Battle, Drift Practice & Tutoring

Sunday 28th Back Track Clubsport Basic event

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DECEMBER

Friday 3rd	Manfeild Test Day
Saturday 4th	Mitre 10 MEGA Summer Race Series Round 1
Sunday 5th	Mitre 10 MEGA Summer Race Series Round 1
Saturday 11th	MCC Xmas Party & Feilding Auto Electrical Winter Series Prize Giving

TRACK 'N' YACK

WEDNESDAY 8TH SEPTEMBER – TBC

ROSE AND CROWN

TERRACE END

PALMERSTON NORTH

7.00 PM TO 9.00 PM

SEE YOU THERE FOR A DRINK, FOOD & TALK

HOPEFULLY!!!

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FROM THE PRESIDENTS PEN

Firstly, Happy Father's Day to all of the dads out there. Yep, it is Father's Day as I sit down to finish my bit of the September edition of the MCC Magazine. I actually forgot it was Father's Day for a moment this morning, as we are normally racing on this weekend with the final round of the Feilding Auto Electrical Winter Race Series, but I remembered once I walked into the kitchen and Lydia was making bacon and eggs for breakfast, which is a usual occurrence at our place on a Sunday morning, so you might ask why that jogged my memory, well my gluten free toast was cut into love heart shaped pieces… Today is the day that us dads can do whatever we want to do, within the boundaries set out by our wives of course, so while most of us would like to sit on the couch and watch motorsport, or hibernate to the garage to work on our cars, we do have to put in a bit of effort with regards to the family aye. So I have done that by bouncing on the trampoline with the kids, which was not a great idea after such a hearty breakfast and the fact that I then got an urge to have two ham and cheese toasted sandwiches and two cups of herbal tea not long after… the sloshing inside my stomach could be heard by the spectators to the goings on that were taking place on the tramp… needless to say I am now thinking why in the hell did I have that second cup of tea!

So why are we not racing…Well addressing the elephant in the room, or should that be horse (some of you will get that joke, some won't) the Delta strain of Covid-19 has gotten out into the community… no s&%t!!! What did we expect was going to happen when you let people back into the country that have the virus… duh! Yip we have managed isolation facilities, however I would take out the "managed" part as they are far from this, and yip we have a vaccine, which I have had, not because I thought it would help mitigate the chances of dying if I caught Covid, I thought one of the side effects might have been renewed hair growth on my head, but we still do not know enough about this virus to chance anything at the moment, so why do we continue to play Russian Roulette with it by letting people back in to the country that have it. I blame religion… 😊

So, if you have not caught up with the latest posts on our Facebook page, we have had to postpone the final round of the Feilding Auto Electrical Winter Race Series until the 16th / 17th October 2021. We will be running it over two days because I fear that we will still be in a Level 2 situation by that date, but even if we are not and we see ourselves in Level 1, we will still run it over two days so we all have some assurance that it will definitely happen if we are still in Level 2, the only way it won't happen is if we are back in Level 3 or 4, then we will have to cancel it and the points will stand as per after Round 3.

And of course, we have also had to postpone the Winter Series Prize-giving, which is a real shame as we had a great venue lined up for this event, however we hope to be able to hold it at the same venue in December, which is when we have penciled the Prize-giving in which will be in conjunction with our MCC Xmas Party on the 11th December 2021, so please put that date in your diaries now.

Despite Covid coming and ruining the party, the first part of August saw some great racing on the first two weekends of the month. First up we had Round 3 of FAEWRS, and then we had a Drift and Autocross event. All of the events were once again well attended and everyone had a great time. I got to sit in the

commentary box again with "The Legend" Russell Harris and add my thoughts and opinions to each race, there were a couple of times when the mics went silent as we were in fits of laughter over something that one of us had said, it was certainly a fun day and there was some thrilling racing which only got more thrilling when the weather intervened later in the day.

The Wednesday night after the FAEWRS saw over 50 of us get together for our "A Night with Kaleb Ngatoa". There are not many people in the younger generation that impress me these days, but I cannot speak highly enough of Kaleb, he certainly has a wise old head on very young shoulders, with an extremely polite attitude to match. Couple this with a hard work ethic that is rarely seen in people of his age, and a determination to do well that is not only for his own sake but also for his family name, and you can see why this young man will succeed on the world stage of Motorsport, of which I have no doubt. I cannot wait to see him race around Manfeild: Circuit Chris Amon in a S5000 one day, as that will certainly be a day to remember.

My Son Jack has just said to me, "My leg hurts daddy, I must be getting old"…when I had stopped laughing my arse off I wondered where he had learned that from, and upon reflection I can only blame myself for that one. Yip I turned 50 last week, not so great really as many people have done it before me, but for those that have known me for most of my life were amazed that I got to 30 let alone 50! So while we could not celebrate in the style that I wanted too, we did have a nice catch up with a few people over a Zoom Meeting and I got to blow out the candles twice, thanks to some late comers to the meeting, so all was not lost. When I was asked if I had had a great day, my reply was that "I woke up, which was a great start, and it only got better from there"… Now if I could only get a good deal on Voltaren Emulgel and convince my wife that daily massages for me was written into our marriage certificate, then my life would be complete.

Bugger, I just ate 6 cocktail sausages that I did not really need, but the kids weren't going to eat them so they would have gone to waste… only half an hour to go until lunch and an afternoon nap… good times!

Please continue to stay safe and well, I hope that we can see each other again soon and remember that I am only a phone call away if you feel that this latest lockdown is getting on top of you as life is too precious to do anything else but live it!

Richie

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ROUND 1 SATURDAY 5TH JUNE AND SUNDAY 6TH JUNE

ROUND 2 SUNDAY 4TH JULY

ROUND 3 SUNDAY AUGUST 8TH

ROUND 4 SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 5TH FATHERS DAY

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MANAWATU CAR CLUB
Est. 1947

GRID TORQUE

Mark your diary now. November 12/13/14 are the dates for this year's MG Classic Race Meeting, but why the urgency? Because there's a category that will bring back memories of past eras, it's called Formula Open New Zealand (FONZ) and is open to pre-2015 wings-and-slicks open wheel cars running in their original specification and configuration. That means Formula Super Vee, Formula Ford 2000, Formula Renault, Formula Atlantic and both FT40 and FT50 Toyota Racing Series cars. Around the country cars are coming out of sheds and being prepared for the six-round series that includes rounds at Ruapuna and Teretonga, Manfeild Circuit Chris Amon and the MG Classic have to be the perfect starting point. FONZ was formed two years ago by Kenny Smith and John Tomlin, the cars racing in three different speed groups with strict time breakouts, it's a category with great potential. A real blast from a more recent past...

Good news for Bimmer fans. A new category is being introduced into the popular BMW Race Driver Series. The purpose of the E46 class is a progression for drivers currently competing in the E30 Championship, both the two and four-door E46 models are eligible and will be fitted with controlled components and minimal tuning of the 2.2 litre six-cylinder motor will be allowed. There will also be a control tyre, in this instance the Dunlop 03G

R3. The new BMW Race Driver Series begins at Pukekohe this month with the E46's sharing the same grid as the E30's. It will be an interesting comparison...

More good news for the 86ers. In July the Best Bars Toyota 86 Championship received a major boost with the news of the Tony Quinn Foundation winner's package, last month this year's championship received another major boost with the news that 'The Heart of Racing' would be entering a four-car team. 'The Heart of Racing' burst onto our racing scene in endurance racing last year with an Aston Martin Vantage AMR GT3 driven by Spaniard Alex Riberas and two-time D1NZ drift champion Darren Kelly, the team winning the South Island and New Zealand titles. The Seattle-based (USA) charity organisation supports the Starship Foundation in our country and have established a new academy programme, in conjunction with high profile International Motorsport, the yet to be named selected drivers being mentored by Riberas and Kelly, and run for the full season. Another huge opportunity for our up-and-comers...

Yet another documentary. 2021 is definitely the year of the 'doco'. Being released on the 15th of this month on Netflix, the new documentary is simply entitled SCHUMACHER. It's the life of the seven-time Formula 1 world champion and the first of its kind to have the full support of his family, featuring interviews with his wife Corinna, children Gina and Mick, brother Ralph, manager Sabine Kehm and key players in his racing life at the highest level. Schumi redefined the professional image of a top racing driver in his quest for perfection while fiercely separating the private life with his family, the film tells of both worlds. It's now eight years since the skiing accident, this documentary will be a timely reminder of the best driver of his era. SCHUMACHER...

The auctioneer's hammer keeps falling. In the Land of Oz Lloyd's have held their biggest ever auction with 340 vehicles going on the block including vintage, classic and muscle cars, barn finds, trucks and motorcycles. Because of Australia's latest COVID lockdowns, the 1st August online auction was live screened and took 9 hours to complete! The first three cars presented were a 1928 Buick Special Tourer, a 1955 Cadillac 30 Coupe Deville and a 1939 Cadillac Series 75, the biggest interest and dollars came later in the day. Someone who wanted to stand out from the crowd paid $33,500 for a genuine LHD 1964 Checker Cab. Media mogul Kerry Packer's highly modified (7.0 litre V12, twin turbochargers, 1200 bhp) 1977 Jaguar XJS was destroyed in a fire, from the ashes the car was rebuilt, albeit detuned. It sold for $217,000. The Holden badge is certainly being preserved, a 1988 VL Walkinshaw Group A SS Commodore went for $255,000, a 1990 VN Group A SS that was # 32 of the 302 built for homologation for Group A racing fetched a top bid of $341,000. Two vehicles had Supercar pedigree. Lot 305 was Glen Seton's 1997 championship winning EL Ford Falcon in Ford Credit colours, the spirited bidding went from $206,000 to $520,000 when the hammer fell. Lot 432 was the Perkins Engineering VT Holden Commodore that Russell Ingall campaigned in the 2000 Shell Championship Series where 'The Enforcer' finished 9th in the driver's standings. The 'silver bullet' had the same owner for 17 years and there was no reserve, at $545,000 it was "going, going, gone". The Holden buyers must have slightly fatter wallets...

Horses for courses. Our intrepid racing scribe tested two very different vehicles last month in very different locations. First up Mr Bosselman caught an Air New Zealand flight from PMR to AKL then another to Kerikeri, the purpose was to drive the Audi e-tron GT RS Quattro. It's the company's first all-electric performance car and their new flagship, the now fashionable five-door fastback scores very highly in the styling stakes too, Mr B's comment was "stunning", the slightly flared guards even have a hint of the original Quattro that wowed the world nearly 40 years ago. Day 1 was 200 kilometres driving on Northland roads away from SH1 including the Mangamuka Gorge, that's real quattro country. The overnight stay was in one of the region's swanky luxury lodges. Day 2 was back to the Bay of Island Airport but not to fly home, and the number '200' was to figure again. The Audi e-tron GT RS has 440 kW (590 bhp) of power, up that to 490 (657) in boost mode. For the media people to appreciate the car's acceleration Audi NZ had secured the use of the airport's 1,200-metre-long Runway 33 with the instruction to back-off at 200 km/h, it may have fallen on a few deaf ears! Helmet on, safety belt on, foot brake on, then whoosh - past 100 in 3.3 seconds, 200 in 10.3 and still accelerating hard, backing-off with two-thirds of the runway unused. The e-tron GT RS has taken Audi into the world of electric high performance, Mr B was so impressed that he described it with a four-letter word. Epic. Home here in Palmy there was Mazda's first production EV, the $74,990 MX-30 M Hybrid with rear hinged back doors like the RX8 sports car. A few pluses and a few minuses, best summed by the heading to Mr B's story - "The pluses are really there and it has genuine character, yet it's a tougher car to recommend than it needs to be". The Hybrid certainly has a different kind of Mazda Zoom-Zoom. Sandwiched in-between the two was another breed of beast, the Eclipse Cross VRX PHEV that's Mitsubishi's new petrol/electric compact. Not quite the same in terms of excitement but still deserving of Mr B's assessment for the MotoringNZ newsletter. The evaluation came in the form of a 400-kilometre round trip to the town of Eltham in Taranaki, some would suggest a most unlikely journey's end. But there was good reason, Mr B is something of a cheese connoisseur, the shop at the Eltham cheese factory was the real destination. Great route planner that Mr B…

They kept coming. Last month Mr B was spoiled for choice when it came to drive vehicles, beside the Audi and Mazda there was the new Mercedes 450S 4MATIC that he described as "… a statement of engineering excellence, astounding refinement and unsurpassed technology". The saloon has a 3.0 litre in-line six petrol

engine and the test car had a $250,340 price tag, that's a lot of money but the 450S is obviously a lot of car. Next in the queue was the Renault Koleos Intens, an SUV based on the Nissan X-Trail and a product of the Renault/Nissan/Mitsubishi alliance, much cheaper at $52,990. That was followed by a German best seller in the form of the $68,990 VW Tiguan TSI R-Line AWD, a Sports Utility Vehicle with a 2.0 litre four-cylinder petrol engine under the bonnet. The Tiguan is VWs biggest seller and to meet demand one rolls off the production line every 35 seconds, it's also the most popular VW model in our country. The latest VW Golf GTi was also parked on the Bosselman's forecourt but the latest COVID lockdown meant it had to stay there. There must be times when it's not easy to be subjective in reviewing vehicles for the readers of MotoringNZ…

Our first track hypercar. Last month bothers Matt and Dwayne Carter landed a very fish that weighed in at 970 kilograms. The fish took the form of a Brabham BT62 that will make its race debut in the Round 1 of the South Island Endurance Series at Ruapuna on 4th September. Built by Adelaide-based Brabham Automotive and powered by a 700-horsepower derivative of the Ford Coyote V8 engine, the Carter car is finished in the famous green and gold livery used by Brabham when they won their first F1 grand prix in 1964. Several of the car's race in Europe, but Ruapuna will be the first occasion that a BT62 has raced in the Southern Hemisphere. It's a car that should draw the punters in big numbers...

The successor. Last month Brabham Automotive revealed their car that will compete in the newly created European GT2 series, the Brabham BT63 GT2 that's an evolution of the BT62R, the road version of the track-only BT62. The car's platform and aerodynamic package will be the same, however there are some very significant differences. The Ford V8 based engine will produce 447 kW (600 hp) and the car weigh between 1250 and 1300 kgs compared to the BT62's 522 kW (700 bhp) and 972 kgs, the biggest difference is the price tag that drops from $1.8 million to $650,000. The Brabham will compete against four other homologated GT2 cars - Audi R8 LMS, Porsche 911 RS Clubsport, Lamborghini Huracan Super Trofeo and KTM X-Bow with the two drivers yet-to-be-named. The European GT2 Series also marks the return of the Brabham name as an official constructor.

Tasman Cup re-ignited. The most exciting news from across the ditch is the plans to bring back the historic Tasman Cup Series that gave us such incredible racing in the 1960s and 1970s, firstly with 2½ litre F1/F2 cars then the Formula 5000 thunderships. Since then there has been Tasman Revival Series, but this time it's moving into the 21st century with the new generation S5000s that are proving to be a big hit with fans on the 'other side'. This year the revamped Tasman Cup will be held in Australia over seven races, four at the Supercheap Auto Bathurst International (26-28 November) and three at the Boost Mobile Gold Coast 500 with a prize pool of $50,000. The return of the true Tasman Cup after 46 years has the full support of Motorsport Australia and Motorsport New Zealand, our country could host rounds next year and you can expect every circuit to put their hand up. The most obvious choices would be Pukekohe and Manfeild because of their long association with the Formula 5000 category, but we are well aware that politics are an integral part of our sport, nothing is a given. Manfeild had an envied reputation for its innovative approach to motor racing, how about bidding for a Formula 5000 / S5000 double-header meeting? Dreams are free...

A Tasman history lesson. The younger generation would have no idea just how good motor racing was in this country nearly 70 years ago when world champions raced on our circuits under Formula Libre. Not circuits as we know them today, back then it was on airfield runways/taxiways or roads/streets closed for the occasion. The change came in 1964 with the introduction of the Tasman Formula where the maximum engine capacity was 2½ litres, Bruce McLaren being the first name engraved on the Tasman Cup Other names included Jim Clark, Jackie Stewart and Chris Amon. Permanent circuits at Pukekohe, Levin and Teretonga hosted rounds, but change was in the wind. It became too costly for F1 teams to compete and in 1970 the Tasman Formula was expanded to include Formula 5000 cars, heralding a new era, Graeme Lawrence was crowned champion in a 2.4 litre Ferrari Dino but the writing was on the wall. Driving Formula 5000s Graham McRae won three titles back-to-back (1971/72/73) followed by Englishman Peter Gethin, the final name on the trophy was that of Warwick Brown, the Australian who triumphed in 1975. The formula continued for a short period, for three years beginning in 1976 the four Australian races became the Rothmans International Series and in New Zealand the Peter Stuyvesant Series, Formula Pacific had become the premier open-wheel category. The great Tasman Cup era will never be forgotten, today there's a new generation of cars and a new generation of drivers who are stars in the making. Remember the glory days for what they were...

Even better news. Team BRM who won the inaugural S5000 Australian Drivers Championship with Joey Mawson are very keen to have Mawson and our man Kaleb Ngatoa in their line-up again. Team BRM boss Mark Rundle - "Kaleb is keen to return and we'd obviously love to have an Aussie and a Kiwi in the team both trying to win the Tasman Cup. He's a massive talent and while there are still some things to fall into place, including making sure the Kiwi border is open, given time hopefully that will sort itself out". Amen to that.

The Kelly gang gone. Thirteen years after they arrived on the Australian Supercar scene brothers Todd and Rick Kelly have sold their remaining 50% shareholding in KR-Grove Racing to the Grove Group, the team will be known as Grove Racing from 01 January. The Kellys have retained the engineering side of the business. From when it was set-up in 2001 Kelly Racing didn't operate from city premises, they worked out of barns

on the family farm station near Mildura on the NSW side of the Victorian border. They never achieved the success they probably deserved, the brothers took part in 1,121 Supercar races that brought 118 podiums, Todd scoring 19 wins to Rick's 15. Initially KR raced Holden Commodores, in 2013 with the new 'Car of the Future' regulations they introduced the Nissan Altima, when Nissan Australia ended its Supercar involvement the switch was made to the Ford Mustang last year. The story of Kelly Racing isn't as colourful as that of the famous bush ranger but there was a golden period when Rick and Greg Murphy combined to win the Bathurst 1000 in 2003 and 2004, two years later the brothers finished second in the great race and Rick won the championship for the Holden Special Vehicles Dealer Team. From a New Zealand perspective they gave Andre Heimgartner the opportunity to score his first Supercar win at 'The Bend' this year. No doubt a book will be written about Mildura's humble 'band of brothers', it will be a great read...

One more year. Mitch Evans has extended his contract with the Jaguar Racing Formula E team for another World Series. The Auckland driver joined the squad in 2016 and since then has been on the grid for 63 races that have produced 11 podium finishes, including wins at Rome and Mexico. Mitch Evans has enjoyed close links with Manfeild since he first moved from karting to open-wheel racing. He contested three Formula First races with Sabre Motorsport in the 2007 Winter Series, the following year Evans returned in a Formula Ford to win seven of the 12 races and win the title. He's also raced in the Australian Gold Star Championship, in 2009 he drove in the final two races at Sandown Raceway where he scored a 4th and 1st with Team BRM. Evans returned the following year, winning eight races to Englishman Ben Barker's six but lost the championship by a single point. Back home he won back-to-back Toyota Racing Series in 2010 and 2011, five years later Mitch Evans was competing on the international stage in Formula E which remains his home. Incidentally, it was the same Team BRM that our rising star Kaleb Ngatoa drove for in this year's S5000 Gold Star series. They obviously know talent when they see it...

Not a happy chappy. For a second time in less than four weeks Tony Quinn's bid to acquire a racing circuit was rejected at the 11th hour. First it was the combination of the Queensland Raceway and Lakeside Park circuits, the second was the Taupo Motorsport Park circuit on this side of the Tasman. The outcome was decided at the TMSP Ltd Annual General Meeting when the majority of shareholders voted against selling. In the period leading up to the meeting it appeared likely the sale would proceed, however a late approach from the Taupo Car Club who demanded $450,000 as a condition of the sale, seemingly scuppered it. Ironically the car club hasn't held a meeting at the circuit for the past two years. Like the two Queensland circuits, Taupo becomes a 'what-might-have-been' story with Quinn multi-million-dollar upgrades. One thing has become very obvious, Mr Quinn has a strong desire to host a Supercar Championship round on one of his tracks. Who's next on his shopping list...

Hanging up the leathers. One of the greatest two-wheel racers of all time is retiring at the end of the current MotoGP championship, Valentino Rossi. The 42-year-old Italian legend is in his 26th season of world championship racing that has ranged from 125cc to MotoGP, producing 235 podium finishes with 115 victories and seven world titles in the premier category. Known as 'The Doctor' for his clinical approach to racing, Rossi was the undisputed master of overtaking and his departure will leave a big void in the sport, his equally famous # 46 should be retired as a mark of respect. Valentino Rossi's competitive future is likely to be in GT racing where he has a strong desire to enter the Le Mans 24 Hour, his prowess on four wheels has been clearly demonstrated. In 2006 he privately tested the Ferrari Formula 1 car and immediately posted very fast lap times. To show his versatility, in the same year he came to New Zealand to compete in the World Rally Championship round. Driving a Prodrive prepared Subaru Impreza in the three-day Hamilton-based event, Rossi finished 11th overall with a best stage result of 7th in the Mystery Creek 'Super Special'. Perhaps becoming a father will see another generation of Rossi on the world motorsport stage. Doctor Rossi, very much the people's champion...

Coincidence. On 11th August the MCC held the planned 'Evening With Kaleb Ngatoa', on the same day Kenny Smith celebrated his 80th birthday while in the Land of Oz Chris Pither's wife Georgia celebrated her 40th. Much later in the month Club President Richie Arber reached his half century (50) on the 27th, a birth date he shares with Lyndon Baine Johnson the 36th US President, Mother Teresa and Award-winning actress Tuesday Weld. On that day in 1913 a Swedish engineer applied for the patent of an all-purpose zipper, and in 1995 Tiger Woods won the US Gold Amateur Championship, maybe one day our Richie will leave his mark in world history. Of course, there was no birthday party thanks to the lockdown, but Lydia came up with the perfect solution, family and friends saw the traditional blowing out of the candles via Zoom. A simple and clever solution...

Italian interlopers. During the MCC Motorkhana/Autocross held on the 'back track' on the 15th of last month there was a break in proceedings to allow a few Italian stallions to have a bit of a gallop. The Wellington area Ferrari Owners Club had a day outing to Feilding's Coach House Museum and club secretary Jeff Braid allowed them limited track access for which they were most appreciative. Jeff drove the Mitsy Pajero FVI 'pace car' with its flashing lights and he had cars ranging from 255 to 800 horsepower playing catch-me-if-you-can. When he pulled off the circuit to end the play-time the Ferrari immediately behind the FVI kept going, when questioned why the driver's excuse was "it's what happens on the telly"…

An iconic name returns. It was the poster car of the 1970's and 80's and its name has been revived to honour the 50th Anniversary of its first public showing at the 1971 Geneva Motor Show, the iconic

Lamborghini Countach. Designed in the Italian design house Bertone by Marcello Gandini, the original LP400 had a steel space frame with aluminium body panels, it's engine a 4.0 litre normally aspirated V12 producing 276 kW (370 bhp), zero to 100 km/h took 5.4 seconds and the top speed was 309 km/h (192 mph). The tribute Countach LPI 800-4 has a carbon fibre chassis and bodywork, has a four-wheel-drive hybrid powertrain with a 6.5 litre V12 engine and single electric motor, together they generate 608 kW (815 bhp), zero to 100 km/h takes 2.8 seconds, 200 km/h 8.6 seconds and the top speed is 355 km/h (220 mph). Some might regret that the angular styling and large air scoops that prevented overheating have gone, the lines of the LPI 800-4 are much softer and very much like the car displayed at Geneva. During its 16-year life span there were four versions of the Countach, a total of 1,983 cars left the Sant'Agata factory, released at last month's Monterey Car Week in California the 50th Anniversary Countach will be limited to 112 units with delivery in the first quarter of 2022. They shouldn't take long to sell, if only because of the badge...

Party time. For the Americas Cup and Tokyo Olympic Games people could enjoy taking in the action in 'The Cloud' on Auckland's waterfront, for this year's Repco 1000 there are plans to stage a 'Bathurst Boot Party' at Mt Smart Stadium. It's believed that it will be the biggest off-site event in the history of the great race with fans able to watch the racing on a giant 212 square metre LED screen. General admission (GA) tickets on the stadium's playing field have an 'early bird' price of $25 and one would image the corporate suites will be in big demand. The 2021 Repco 1000 is scheduled for 07 November, the race taking place is reliant on New South Wales getting the state's COVID-19 pandemic under control. That could be a bigger challenge than the Mountain...

In demand # 1. Allan Moffat is best remembered for his heroic deeds driving Fords, Holdens, a Mazda and a Chevrolet during his illustrious career, but there was also a Porsche in his racing life. Australia's Porsche Distributor Alan Hamilton imported a factory Group 4 spec 934 Turbo RSR to contest the 1980 Australian Sports Car Championship but was injured in a serious Formula 5000 crash, he asked Alan Moffat to drive the 550-horsepower car. 'The Moff' won three of the five rounds to claim the title, the car being promptly banned from sports car competition by CAMS! The 934 RSR was the last Porsche factory race car that could be legally road registered, the unrestored Hamilton/Moffat car is for sale. The perfect buy if you're in a hurry to go somewhere...

In demand # 2. Early last month there were stories coming from Australia that Earl Bamber's name was in the frame to replace Jamie Whincup alongside Shane Van Gisbergen at Triple Eight Racing next year, but that was subsequently denied. A week later came word from America that EB was a contender for a seat with Chip Ganassi Racing in their 2022 ISMA/DPi programme, He was seen testing a CGR Cadillac DPi-V.R. at the Road America Circuit, if it does come to fruition Bamber would likely be replacing Kevin Magnussen who is departing to drive the new Peugeot Sport Hypercar in next year's WEC. It could also mean two Kiwi drivers in the CGR sports car squad with Earl Bamber and Scott Dixon...

Very interesting. Dropped from the Alpha Tauri Formula 1 team Alexander Albon became Liam Lawson's team mate in the DEKRA DTM Championship driving the second AF Corse Ferrari 488 GT3 Evo. The young Anglo-Thai driver was seen at last month's Indianapolis Motor Speedway IndyCar round on the road course, spending a great deal of time with Romain Grojean and his Dale Coyne Racing team. Could Albon be reassessing his future? In recent years several Formula 1 drivers have made the transition to Indycars, Alexander Rossi and Max Chilton both drove for the Manor/Marussia team in 2016, two years ago Marcus Ericsson moved from Alfa Romeo and this season has seen ex-Haas driver Romain Grojean making the switch and quickly becoming a front-runner while former Renault and Haas driver Kevin Magnussen replaced the injured Felix Rosenqvist in the Grand Prix of Road America early in the season. IndyCars is definitely an alternate pathway…

The number 22 (particularly on a dayglo orange single seat race car) will always be associated in many minds with the racing career of Graham McRae who passed away last month. This Kiwi legend and qualified engineer started his proper racing career with a self-built sports car, the Maserarri, then after a short affair with a Brabham 1500cc single seater built the McRae TC which dominated the 1968/69 NZ Gold Star Championship, earning him the 1969 Driver to Europe award. McRae contested mainly F2 races while away, then the European F5000 series in both 1970 and 1971. He came home to dominate the Tasman Series, winning in a McLaren M10 in 1971 and a McRae GM1 in 1972 and 1973. 1972 was a very busy year, winning the L&M F5000 series in the US and highlighted probably by an excellent finish in the International Trophy Race in the UK in a combined F1/F5000 field, comfortably keeping up with the Hulme and Revson works McLarens and Graham Hills works Brabham. His results led to several opportunities in 1973 including a shot at Indy where he earned Rookie of the Year, and an F1 start at the British GP (just one of 9 Kiwis to date to have the honour). His slightly abrasive nature, he earned the nickname Cassius for his self-belief, and his age at 32 conspired against him progressing further sadly. His ability as an engineer rivalled that of Bruce McLaren and the GM1 (designed by Les Terry to his specifications) is still an exceptional car, with 14 chassis being built in period. The GM2 design was sold after the first one was built, but Gary McCormack in Australia produced 5 copies raced as Talons, including one our very own Chris Amon used. And of course, there is an even closer local link. The McRae GM3, which morphed into the GM9 Can Am car, is in the Rush Collection and has regular outings. A very real case of what if…

LE MANS 24 HOUR NOTES

C'est le moment de s'amuser. The words translate to 'fun time' and one of the world's greatest motor races incorporated a fun element this year. The support events for the 24 Hours of Le Mans were the Porsche Sprint Challenge, Endurance Racing Legends and LMP3/GT3 Road to Le Mans, there was also the 'Fun Cup' for amateur drivers that was taken just as seriously with two 60-minute practices and a 45-minute qualifying session. The vehicles were 'silhouette' classic VW Beetles with 180 horsepower engines and there were a hundred of them on the grid for the five-hour race that ran from 3.30 to 8.30pm on the eve of the big race! Apparently there's a 'Fun Cup' series in Europe with the other rounds being run on grand prix circuits - very much de moment s'amuser..

One of the great traditions of the Le Mans 24 Hour is the ceremonial finish with the man waving the checker flag standing out on the track itself, it makes for a great photo shot. With 10 minutes remaining Gazoo Racing Toyota pitted the two GR010 Hypercars to orchestrate a one-two finish, the race leading # 7 returned to the track first (which immediately put the # 8 another lap down) and the pair drove in close formation. When 4pm ticked over on the giant Rolex clock there was less than half a lap to run and as they approached the final corner the man with the flag stepped out to the customary position, the Toyota's moved alongside each other with the group of cars behind holding position, it was a special moment for the two Japanese drivers and their co-drivers. What hadn't been realised by officials was that the two leading LMP2 cars were still racing hard chasing the class honours and came around the corner at full speed to be greeted by the much slower pack, one swerved off-line as the man with the flag stepped aside like a Spanish bullfighter, the two chargers crossed

the line split by 0.727 after 24 hours of racing! Great theatre but it could easily have been a Le Mans disaster…

During the race there were more than 22,000 overtakes, not including those in the pit lane. Brendon Hartley set the fastest race lap of 3.27.607 which was an average speed of 236 kilometres an hour, at the other end of the scale the fastest lap of a finishing car was 3.54.746, the LMGTE Am Porsche RSR-19 averaging 209.03 km/h. It's impossible to imagine the concentration required with the speed differences and judgement needed, particularly during the hours of darkness, on a 13.62 kilometre (8.46 mile) long circuit with 38 turns and a straight where the fastest cars approach 340 km/h (211 mph). Definitely not for the faint hearted or club racer…

Almost as famous as the actual race is the undulating six kilometre (3.7 mile) long Mulsanne Straight. In 1988 a Peugeot V6 powered WM-P88 Prototype was officially clocked at 405 km/h (252 mph), the following year two chicanes were installed to lower the speeds. In last month's race Kamui Kobayashi hit 339 km/h (210 mph) in the winning GR0101 Hybrid. That's why the Mulsanne Straight is known as 'motorsport's greatest blast'…

An Argentinian driver shared the winning car for the first time in 67 years. The great José Froilan Gonzalez co-drove a Ferrari 375 Plus to victory in the 1954 race with Frenchman Maurice Trintignant, the second of nine Le Mans wins for the famous Italian team between 1949 and 1962. This year José Maria Lopez joined his burly compatriot on the winner's list, sharing the glory with co-drivers Kamui Kobayashi and Mike Conway after the trio had finished 2nd, 2nd and 3rd in the previous three years…

There was limited atmosphere around the circuit after last year's 'fan-free' race, 50,000 spectators were trackside which was the maximum number allowed and a podium track 'invasion' at the finish was banned. While that's a lot more people than can be accommodated at this country's biggest stadium, it's not a big number for a circuit with a capacity of 235,000 and the biggest grandstand seating 100,000. The bonus for those who attended was being present at the first race of the new Hypercar era, they also witnessed another first when two-time Le Man winner Fernando Alonso led a pre-race parade of Alpine cars driving the marque's Formula 1 car. There's nothing quite like French pride…

RH

AN EVENING WITH KALEB NGATOA

The Feilding Civic Centre Concert Chamber with it tiered theatre seating was the perfect venue for motorsport enthusiasts to hear about the journey so far of the club's latest rising star.

Immediately at ease, Kaleb showed the benefit of graduating from the New Zealand Motorsport Academy and the communication skills that are an important aspect of its curriculum.

In a brief resume of what he discussed, Kaleb began his career in karting 10 years ago, winning the Cadet Class NZ CIK Trophy and later the 100cc Junior Restricted class North Island Sprint Championship. The most prized trophy is the Junior Rotax New Zealand Sprint Championship that he won in 2016 before switching to circuit racing in the club's Winter Series driving in the highly competitive Formula First Cup, a win and 9 podiums combined with consistency secured the series trophy.

The following season saw a step-up to contest the 24 races that comprised the national championship, the career breakthrough came a year later when the Marton teenager was a contender for the title that was decided on the outcome of the final race, fellow club member Callum Crawley won the race and the championship, Kaleb finishing runner-up with six wins and 15 podium finishes.

Formula First was the perfect finishing school to learn race craft and the art of slipstreaming, perhaps surprisingly the next step forward was the very different challenge that came with competing in the 2018/19 Toyota Finance 86 Championship that proved to be very different, driving a racing car where you can't see the wheels! With big fields and evenly matched cars the category is incredibly competitive, picking up a win and four podiums in the 18 races resulted in finishing the series 7th overall from 18 drivers and taking his skill set to another level. During the same season a wiser and smarter Kaleb returned to his circuit racing roots to win the Formula First 1 Hour race at Manfeild.

Like all young drivers there was the dream of Formula 1 which made the step up to Formula Ford the logical progression, again the MCC Winter Series was the perfect place to learn about these more powerful and higher tech cars. There was a first and six podiums with the four rounds offering the best preparation for the 2019/20 New Zealand Championship that brought three podiums in the 13 races. The grids had 20 of our country's best young talent and 7th place was a satisfactory outcome. There were another 5 races in the 2020 Winter Series that produced three podium placings, it was the meeting that brought closure to the first chapters of Kaleb's racing career, the Toyota Racing Series beckoned.

Unfortunately, because of the COVID-19 pandemic the 2021 Castrol TRS was reduced to three rounds and contested solely by New Zealand drivers, however the entrepreneurial Tony Quinn played a master card for

the opening New Zealand Grand Prix at Hampton Downs by creating the "Race of Champions" with an entry that certainly had an international flavour by inviting drivers who had figured strongly on the international stage. Shane Van Gisbergen, Chris Van Der Drift, Andre Heimgartner, Daniel Gaunt and Greg Murphy racing against this country's rising stars headed by Matthew Payne.

The audience heard how Kaleb's natural talent had been spotted by Kenny Smith, but more importantly by Peter 'PJ' Johnson who played such an influential role in the early careers of Scott Dixon and Brendon Hartley. The outcome was that he was able to take part in the series driving a car prepared by the M2 Competition team, testing the car was the first time he had driven a hi-tech 'slicks and wings' single-seater.

There was an excitement to be racing alongside drivers of this calibre who were well known, SVG and Murph were two of his heroes. Kaleb spoke of his liking to race on a wet track and his personal 'lap of the gods' when he claimed a sensational pole position for the Grand Prix in such conditions and finished a strong fourth in the race itself which he described as an incredible experience. His admiration of Van Gisbergen's extraordinary victory was obvious, the two became friends with SVG becoming a mentor who later gave Kaleb driving tuition to further hone his skills.

The big names only raced in the Grand Prix, he was one of the six drivers who contested the full 9-race series, finishing runner-up to Matthew Payne who won five races. There was disappointment at not winning one of the races at his home track, he had to be content with a second and third. The experience of racing in the TRS and the exposure gained opened the door to bigger things, Kaleb's undoubted natural talent led him to head to Adelaide and become the first New Zealand driver to race an S5000 Formula car for Team BRM in the reintroduced Australian Drivers Championship.

The move began a new period in his career, He stayed with the team owner Mark Rundle and his family and was quickly accepted by the team personnel and team mates Joey Mawson and Thomas Randle who both had experience driving the 5.2 litre 560 horsepower cars. Kaleb drove the chassis first used by former Ferrari star Rubens Barrichello, it was red and complete when Kaleb's race number '15' and the decals of supporters J&J Walters Asphalters and Robbie's Automotive in his home town were applied.

Kaleb recalled his first impressions of the most powerful car he had driven, half throttle was like nothing he had driven before, full throttle slammed you right back in the seat, racing it would be a different ball game from what he had experienced and he had never driven on any of the circuits. He had missed the opening round of the championship in Tasmania and Round 2 at Phillip Island was about learning the characteristics of the car in preparation for Sandown Park where his prayers for wet weather were met and he started Race 2 from the front row. Despite the tricky conditions he kept the car under control and took the checker

flag, there was great delight in scoring his first win which secured pole for Race 3 but he also quickly learned the cruel side of the sport. Exiting pit lane a combination of applying too much power and a damp surface spun him into the barrier to become a non-starter! There was second win at Sydney Motorsport Park to end his international debut with three podium finishes in what was a very steep learning curve, he enjoyed S5000 and everything that went with it. Joey Mawson won three races and the championship with Randle third despite scoring only a single win, Kaleb had proved himself at another level after transitioning from one type of racing car to another.

Kaleb was unable to confirm his future plans that are so dependent on controlling COVID-19. He's very keen to do another season in S5000 and Team BRM want him in their driver line-up for a programme that would include racing at Mount Panorama and on the streets of the Gold Coast. Looking longer term his thoughts of Formula 1 are gone and the appeal is racing in America and ultimately in IndyCars.

Very proud of his Maori heritage, Kaleb showed that he's a realist and a young man on a mission to succeed in motor racing irrespective of the level. His career to date has only spanned five years during which time he's built-up an impressive record of achievement, what the future holds nobody knows.

The COVID pandemic rules our lives and Kaleb has a job offer as a 'Uber' driver, not around Marton in an e-car but at Highlands Motorsport Park in Central Otago in a Ferrari 488 GTB with 660 horsepower to speed up the journey. He's on standby waiting for a start day date.

Kaleb Ngatoa is very personable young man - confident, approachable and a wonderful ambassador for motorsport. He also has a rare talent behind the wheel of a racing car and will continue to benefit from the ongoing support of Shane Van Gisbergen and Greg Murphy who both see the potential in a fellow countryman.

Many left in awe, the Manawatu Car Club is honoured to have him as a member…

RH

FEILDING AUTO ELECTRICAL WINTER SERIES - ROUND 3

It's a 'winter' series and that's what the weather gods decided the meeting should have. The day started well enough, by 8am the grey skies were turning blue and the sun was shining, the track being damp from overnight rain. Towards the end of the morning the 'winter' stuff arrived and stayed while the temperature struggled to reach double digits, not the sort of day to be outside but racers are racers and 93 challenged the elements.

The Total Truck Spray Formula First Cup had a 13-car field, the qualifying time sheet being headed by Dylan Grant with a 0.124 margin over Leo Scott, 6/10ths back was Mason Potter while 4th fastest Jensen Bate was a full second off the pace and 1.2 seconds ahead of Toby McCormack and Blake Dowdall who were split by 8/1000ths.

In the first of three Scratch races Grant and Scott had a two second break on the field at the end of the first lap with McCormack, Potter and Bate next, on Lap 2 Potter stopped after exiting the Hairpin and the two second gap had doubled. At half distance Grant was narrowly holding out Scott with six seconds back to McCormack, Bate, Dowdall and Mauro Iglesias who were running in a group. With a lap to run 3/10ths separated the two leaders and Jensen Foster was hassling Iglesias, it was not quite over though as Scott went to the outside of Grant in Turn 7 and crossed the line 0.081 ahead, McCormack was 9 seconds back in third chased by Bate and Dowdall who were split by 7/100ths while Foster got the better of Iglesias by 5/100ths in another tight finish.

Four cars started from pit lane in Race 2 because of rear safety light infringements, there was drama as the red lights went out for Race 2 when Bate's car didn't move from the P6 grid box because of a broken gear linkage, thankfully the field further back were able to take evasive action. This time it was Scott who got

the better of Grant at the start but the pair were unable to make an initial breakaway, being closely followed by Foster, Potter, Dowdall, McCormack and Hayden Lines who retired after three laps. The front runners remained the same until Lap 5 when Grant went wide at Higgins and dropped a place, leaving Scott ahead of Potter, the seven laps ran out with Scott beating Potter to the line by 2.3 seconds with 9/10ths to Grant who had a similar gap over Dowdall, Foster and Iglesias rounding out the first six finishers.

Race 3 again saw Grant and Scott immediately breakaway from the front row to lead by two seconds at the end of Lap 1, this time followed by Dowdall, Bate (gear linkage fixed), McCormack and Potter. On Lap 3 Dowdall displaced Scott from second place, Potter got ahead of Bate and Lines dropped behind Iglesias, two laps later Potter got in front of Grant and the gap between the leading duo was 9/10ths. Into the last of the seven laps the gap was 5/100ths but Dowdall wasn't going to be denied victory, he had the momentum, passed Grant and took the flag by 0.600, Potter was six seconds back in third followed by home by Scott with a big gap to Bate, Iglesias and Lines, all 13 drivers completing the full distance in very difficult conditions with Dowdall's fastest lap 10 seconds slower than Scott's best in Race 1..

The entry in the Max Tarr Electrical Formula Ford Cup increased to six cars for this round, including Ethan Sillay's FF2000, the new names were Bailey Cruse and Kyan Davie who had moved up from the Formula First ranks. The Qualifying surprise was Davie and Hayden Bakkerus beating Sillay's best lap, albeit on a slightly damp track, the leading pair were split by 0.675 with another 2/10ths to the FF2000. Cruse was 2.7 off the fastest time with Keith Millar four seconds further back, Liam Sceats only ran a single lap in the session.

Race 1 saw Davie make the best of pole position to lead Bakkerus and Sillay with Cruse keeping close, Miller and Sceats would have an intense battle further back, next time round Sillay had moved into second place. On Lap 4 he took the lead under braking for Higgins and immediately drew away on the drying track. There were no positional changes at the flag, Sillay winning by 8.9 seconds from Davie with 10 seconds back to Bakkerus, half a minute away the battle between Miller and Sceats continued right to the line with Miller ahead by 3/10ths.

Davie had a lights-to-flag win in Race 2 with the action coming behind the Aucklander. Bakkerus made a great start from Row 2 to take-up the chaser's role followed by Cruse and Sillay who was slow off the line. At the end of Lap 4 Davie led by 7.3 seconds, there was a 4 second gap between Bakkerus and Sillay and another 2.6 back to Cruse. The excitement came on the final lap when Sillay was able to finally get past Bakkerus on the run to the flag, Davie won by 12½ seconds with 2nd and 3rd split by 7/100ths, Cruse was 10 seconds back and Miller a distant fifth, Sceats was a DNS.

Race 3 saw Davie get the jump again, this time Cruse made the best start to assume second place ahead of pole-sitter Sillay and Bakkerus, by the time Lap 4 ended Davie had built up his lead to nearly three seconds. It was race where the only positional change took place on Lap 2 when Sillay overtook Cruse, another lights-to-flag for Davie but it got interesting as the laps counted down with Sillay reeling in the leader, at the line the 3 seconds was down to 0.675! Cruse was 12 seconds down the track in P3 with another five to Bakkerus, this time Sceats got the better of Miller by 35 seconds. Much better racing from the Formula Ford drivers...

The Danny's Auto Services/BT Advisory RS Cup dropped to nine cars for Round 3, a new entry was Evan McCarthy in his MGF. Connor Cleland was back and quickest in Qualifying by 1.1 seconds from Brett Uncles with 6/10ths back to Keith Pfeffer, the fastest seven times were within 3.3 seconds of each other which suggested close racing.

Uncles was quickest out of the blocks in Race 1 and was never headed, he led Cleland, Pfeffer and McCarthy at the end of Lap 1, further back the running order was Rodney Penn, Paul Rodgers, Michael James and Alice Staddon. Pfeffer and Cleland had swapped places next time round, so too Rodgers and Penn. By mid-race Rodgers had advanced to 3rd while Pfeffer dropped back to 6th and Penn was moving forward. Uncles led by 5.4 seconds going into the final lap, Cleland closing that to 3.7 at the flag with Rodgers 8/10ths back in third closely following by Penn, in the race for 5th and 6th Pfeffer beat James over the line by 7/100ths.

McCarthy and Staddon shared the front row for the Reverse Grid run on a wet track. Starting from P3 Nick Fisher led the first two laps while Staddon struggled in the conditions and quickly dropped to the back of the field, Pfeffer moved from P5 to second followed by Cleland, James and Rodgers. By the end of Lap 3 Pfeffer's Alfa Romeo had hit the front by a tenth from Fisher with Cleland a second back and ahead of James and Uncles who was last away. Another 3 kilometres and the gap was 2.2 seconds to Fisher with 8/10ths to Cleland. On the penultimate lap Uncles spun exiting Higgins, Pfeffer going on to cross the line 1.7 ahead of the fast-finishing Cleland with Fisher four seconds back in third, the remainder of the field were strung out with Rodgers and James completing the first six home.

Thirty seconds covered the grid for the Handicap, Staddon having a 10 second start over Fisher and McCarthy, James was on his own at the back. Exiting Turn 7 for the first time Fisher spun and got stranded on the wet infield, causing a Full Course Yellow. The race went green at the end of Lap 3, Staddon spun in the esses and Pfeffer led from Cleland, Rodgers, McCarthy, Uncles and James. On Lap 5 Rodgers also spun exiting Turn 7, Pfeffer's lead was 1.1 seconds and James was charging very hard in the HQ Holden. Cleland set the fastest lap in his bid for victory, he failed by 3/10ths, James stormed home for third, five seconds behind Pfeffer, followed by McCarthey, Rodgers and Uncles. Definitely an eventful race for some.

Only ten cars faced the starter in the Geartech Automotive SF Cup races, qualifying ending with the field covered by less than 8 seconds, the fastest five cars by less than two seconds. Ethan Donohue topped the times

by 0.74 from Kane Anderson, Brendan Uncles, Gareith Stanley and Samantha Stanley were next covered by half a second, Samantha surviving a spin at Turn 1. Dave Burroughs was best of the rest.

The Scratch race saw the order Anderson, G Stanley, Uncles, Donohue, S Stanley, Hillary Ashworth and Dave Burroughs at the end of the first lap and it remained that way for the first half of the race before the action really began. Lap 4 saw Uncles go from 3rd to 1st, further back David Graham was now 5th ahead of S Stanley, another lap and G Stanley was 2nd behind Uncles, Donohue sat 3rd followed by Graham, S Stanley and Ashworth, it was the same order going into the final lap, with the field spread far and wide there was no change as Anderson claimed the chocolate fish but both G Stanley and Graham had laps below the 1.25 breakout which dropped them to the bottom of the official result sheet that showed Anderson the winner by 16.3 seconds from Uncles who was 1.6 ahead of third placed Donohue. S Stanley, Ashworth and Cameron Antrobus headed a group of five cars covered by 3½ seconds

G Stanley and Graham were on the back row for the Reverse Grid, Nick Cummings and Burroughs were on the front row with Antrobus and Ashworth behind them. Graham had a great first lap, leading after starting in P5, Cummings was second followed by Anderson, Burroughs, Donohue and Antrobus. Another lap saw Anderson 2nd and Donohue 3rd as Cummings and Burroughs slipped back into the mid-field, Uncles retiring to the pits. Donohue was on the tail of the leader as Lap 3 ended, in the esses Burroughs spun and 7/10ths split the leading pair, with a lap to run Donohue had pulled back 1/10th and was definitely in with a chance, side-by-side out of Turn 7 and Donohue won the sprint to the flag by 8/100ths, there was 18½ seconds back to Anderson with big gaps to Cummings, Burroughs and Antrobus. In the wet conditions the Stanleys trundled around at the back of the field because of their tyres offering poor grip, lapping in the 1.50's was 16 seconds slower than Donohue's fastest lap of the race which was 9 seconds slower than the 1.25 breakout!

G Stanley, Cummings and Graham were non-starters in the Handicap that saw Burroughs, Ashworth and Antrobus first away, a brave Samantha Stanley was 5 seconds back, 10 seconds to Anderson and another five to Uncles and Donohue. Conditions weren't good and the light was fading. Burroughs stalled when the NZ flag dropped but was P3 at the end of Lap 1 behind Ashworth and Stanley, Antrobus held 4th, followed by Anderson, Donohue and Uncles, Antrobus lost two positions on the next lap. Stanley led at mid-distance by 7/100ths over Donohue who was revelling in the conditions and jumped three places, Burroughs lost three. Donohue took the lead under braking for Turn 1 and it was effectively game over as he drew away from the field, Stanley lost 2nd to Anderson, after 9½ minutes of racing the checker fell with Donohue 12.4 seconds ahead of Anderson with another 4.3 to Stanley, the gap was much bigger to Burroughs and between Ashworth, Uncles and Antrobus - to their credit all six starters finished.

The Coresteel Buildings IB Cup attracted 13 cars to the Feilding circuit, Qualifying ended with all but two cars less than 3.4 seconds off the fastest lap. Driving the ex-Kerry Tong Ford Falcon 'taxi' Luke Bradley set the pace on the damp track to be 0.542 quicker than Nick Stewart with 3/10ths to Greg Browne in P3, Ian Humphrey, Warren Cleland and Jonathan Pierce completed the 'Fast Six', Pierce being 2½ seconds down on Bradley.

Stewart made the better start and led Bradley at the end of Lap 1, Browne was next followed by Humphrey, Pierce, Jeremiah Raine who started on Row 6 and Mathew Elliott. There were no positional changes in the opening three laps, on Lap 4 Humphrey pulled the Falcon XR8 off the track approaching the Hairpin, Daryl Hunter had elevated himself to 4th ahead of Pierce, Ben Stewart and Raine. With a lap to run the leader's margin was 1.6 seconds, Bradley whittled that down to 0.925 at the line, Browne was five seconds back in third and a second ahead of Hunter, Pierce and Ben Stewart completing the top six placegetters.

Humphrey was alone on the front row for the Reverse Grid ahead of Kolin Yannakis, down the back of the grid Stewart had Browne and Bradley immediately ahead. Incredibly Browne had the lead at the end of the first lap and was 1.4 seconds ahead of Raine, the pair trailed by Yannakis, Bradley, Humphrey, Nick Stewart and Cleland. Browne pushed on with fastest lap after fastest lap, Raine became a DNF at the end of lap 2 that saw Stewart and Cleland overtake Humphrey. Cleland spun at Turn 1 and at the mid-point Browne's lead had extended out to 13½ seconds over Bradley, Stewart, Yannakis. Ben Stewart. Humphrey and the recovering Cleland. Nick Stewart took 2nd place off Bradley on Lap 4 and that was the final positional change. Browne maintained his remarkable pace over the final 6 kilometres to beat Nick Stewart by 20.9 seconds with Bradley one second behind, Yannakis brought the Volvo S40 home in 4th with 10 second plus gaps to Ben Stewart and Humphrey who kept Cleland at bay. It was a sublime drive by Browne, his fastest lap was 1.27.778, Bradley's 1.30.107 was second fastest.

After that performance what could Browne achieve in the Handicap six lapper where he gave was given a five second start by Nick Stewart and Bradley and first-man-away Humphrey a 15 second advantage. Humphrey spun the Falcon after exiting Turn 7, re-joining at the tail of the field and 35 seconds in arrears of Cleland who led the first lap from Yannakis, Browne was already up to 3rd ahead of Ben Stewart, Bradley and Nick Stewart. A lap later Browne led by 6 seconds, Nick Stewart was up to 4th as Yannakis dropped to P6, another 3 k's saw Nick Stewart in 2nd and more than 10 seconds behind the flying Honda Integra, next were Ben Stewart, Bradley, Cleland and Yannakis. On Lap 5 Bradley had a lapse with an 'off' at Higgins but only dropped one place, into the final lap Cleland spun the Mazda MX5 fastback coming out of the Hairpin while Browne continued on his merry way to a 14.43 second win over Nick Stewart with Ben Stewart in P3, 2.4 seconds further back. Next to cross the line were Bradley (+27.4 secs), Yannakis (+38.6) and Mathew

Elliott (+69.9), they were difficult conditions that separated the men from the boys...

The field dropped from 17 in Round 2 to 13 cars in the GDM Retails Systems Classic Cup but quality can make up for quantity in this category. Tom Lancaster and his familiar Ford Capri Perana ended the Qualifying session with the fastest time, 0.717 ahead of Brett Tasker with a 2 second plus gap to Bryce Hogg, Scott Pearson was 4.7 off the top time followed by Geoff and Ben Boyden, surprisingly Chris Wall was P9 at + 9.17 in the tricky conditions. Michael Eden didn't take part in the session.

All Classic Cup races are Handicap affairs, in Race 1 Bill Ritchie was the scratch man with Don McIntyre, Layton Hammond and Bill Robson in the 10 second group, Chris Wall and Michael Eden conceded the Ritchie Alfa 40 seconds. Ritchie led the first two laps that ended with McIntyre 2nd followed by Robson, G Boyden, Pearson and Tasker who was 8 seconds from the front. By mid-race Lancaster was up to third after conceding the leader a 25 second start and the field began to bunch up, Lap 4 ended with Lancaster taking over the front running from Ritchie and leading by 1.7 seconds, Pearson was up to 3rd, one more lap and the gallant Ritchie began the slide down the leader board as the faster cars came through, Wall was now in the picture while Eden was P8. The final lap saw Pearson chasing down Lancaster but he fell short, the two Levin drivers split by half a second, Wall crossed the line 5 seconds later for 3rd ahead of Tasker, Eden, McIntyre and G Boyden, the five cars covered by 3.4 seconds.

In Race 2 Layton Hammond, Bill Ritchie and Dave Burroughs had a 25 second start on backmarkers Pierson, Michael Eden and Wall. Burroughs led Lap 1 followed by Hammond, Ritchie, Don McIntyre and Bill Robson who both started 5 seconds behind the leading trio and Geoff Boyden who started at 10 seconds. The order changed on Lap 2 with McIntyre third followed by G Boyden, Wall who was in the last group flagged away, Tasker and Ben Boyden, Hogg retiring the Moffat Falcon. Next time round Hammond led by 4 seconds over Ritchie, Wall jumped two spots to third while Lancaster was in P7. Lap 4 saw Hammond's lead out to 9.7 seconds as the # 33 Ford Anglia scooted away from the pack, Ritchie had a half-spin in the esses and lost 2nd to Wall in the process, Michael Eden was up to 3rd followed by McIntyre, G Boyden and Lancaster. With a lap to run Hammond's lead was 12 seconds over Eden and Burroughs, Wall had dropped to 4th, it was a case of horses for courses and Hammond mastered the wet track to score a comprehensive 14.76 second win over Eden, Burroughs was 2½ seconds back in third after a very well driven race, followed home by McIntyre, G Boyden and Lancaster, Wall had plummeted to P9, 66 seconds behind the victor.

Hogg and McIntyre were non-starters in Race 3, Ritchie had 5 seconds over Sandra Eden and 30 seconds over Michael Eden and Wall. The 6-lap race had five lap leaders before the checker fell, Ritchie led the first from Sandra Eden, B Boyden, Robson, G Boyden and Lancaster, S Eden led the second ahead of B Boyden, Wall, M Eden and Ritchie who had dropped back into the pack. The order was Wall from M Eden next time round followed by Lancaster and S Eden. Lap 4 was the most dramatic of the day, after crossing the start/finish line the Ritchie Alfa Giulia had a high-speed spin, the front of the car just grazing the inside wall in a miracle escape,

two corners later B Boyden skated off exiting the esses, two DNFs. While all that was going on Lancaster took the lead and held it for two laps, behind him were Wall and M Eden, Pearson, G Boyden and S Eden. The leading trio were all over each other going into Turn 1 for the final time and it was game on, Lancaster dropped away and coming out of Turn 7 Wall had the inside line on the run to the flag but crossed the line 0.101 behind M Eden's 'replacement' BMW M3, Lancaster was four seconds adrift in P3 with more than 15 seconds back to Pearson, G Boyden and Burroughs rounding out the first six. Great finish, good race.

The Ernie's Engineering GT Cup field included three Manfeild Muscle Cars to make a healthy 14 car grid, all three MMC's appeared for the first time in the series. Qualifying on the damp track saw Anton Cheetham exploit the benefits of 4WD to secure the fastest lap by 0.116 over Shayne Giles, Josh Donohue was + 2.49 and Sean Browne + 3.15, Jamie Potts and Chris Huszka were next on the sheet that had the top ten cars within 7.9 seconds.

The opening Scratch race saw Giles make the best start in his Nissan Sylvia to lead Cheetham and David Thomsen who had started on Row 4, next were Browne, Potts and Donohue. The top four places remained unchanged until the end of Lap 3 but the MMC Camaro driven by James Broadbridge was making great progress after starting from P12, moving up to 4th ahead of Browne. The Camaro powered past Cheetham on Lap 5, Potts was running 4th, Giles had enjoyed a comfortable lead out front and came home 8.23 seconds ahead of the impressive Broadbridge, Cheetham finished third 13 seconds behind the winner with the GT-B class drivers Potts, Donohue and Browne making up the top six.

For the Reverse Grid Mike Robb (MMC) was alone of the front row with Hayden Rau (MMC) and Thomsen on Row 2, the double-spacing had Giles on Row 15 at the back. Not surprisingly Thomsen took full advantage of his grid position to lead from start to finish, Cheetham started in front of Giles and had worked his way through the field to 2nd by the end of Lap 4 ahead of Browne, Andrew Wasley, Donohue, Justin Allen and Giles who stopped on the return road on the next lap, he was able to restart and continue a lap down. The Broadbridge Camaro was out a lap later and the running order remained static until the last lap when Donohue went off at Higgins. Thomsen took the win 0.86 ahead of Cheetham, Browne was more than 20 seconds behind the pair of Mitsys in third, Wasley, Allen and Gavin McLaughlin being next over the line.

In the deteriorating conditions there were four absentees for the Handicap that meant Robb would start 25 seconds ahead of Allen and Wasley, Giles and Thomsen gave Robb 45 seconds. Robb had dropped to 5th by

the end of the first lap that saw Wasley leading Allen, Huszka, Browne and Donohue, on Lap 2 Cheetham moved up four place to P4 while Giles was still at the back and now 25 seconds behind Wasley, with 3 laps completed Cheetham was up the 2nd and 3.3 off the lead, behind the # 41 Evo were Browne, Allen, Thomsen, Donohue and Alex Corpe, Giles had gained one track position. In the conditions it wasn't surprising that Cheetham hit the front on Lap 4 and quickly pulled out a 2½ second lead, Thomsen began the last lap in P3 and Browne spun exiting Turn 1, Thomsen easily disposed of Wasley but was 10 seconds behind Cheetham at the finish, Wasley was third (+ 6.0) with 10 seconds to Donohue who got the better of Allen, Browne recovered to claim P6, two places ahead of Giles who was 44 seconds behind the winner.

The Tremaine Energy Centre/Hankook Tyres MX5 Cup never fail to deliver and Round 3 was no exception with a 15-car field, four down on Round 2. Qualifying was an indicator of what was to come with the three fastest times within 8/10ths and fastest eight within two seconds! On his final lap Jack Cleland pipped Markku Braid by 0.732, Jeremy Hoskins was 4/100ths slower, Matt Dilly was 6/10ths back in P4 followed by Denis Churcher, Chris Greaney, Trevor Weir and Tim Wilde with gaps measured in hundredths of a second, the full field was spread by 4.3 seconds.

Race 1 began with Cleland taking the initial lead and Churcher getting ahead of Dilly in the opening lap scramble, Braid took the lead on Lap 2 while Nick Cummings who started P9 was running 5th, at the halfway mark Braid led Cleland by 2/10ths with a 7/100ths gap to Hoskins with Churcher next and only 7/10ths off the lead, Dilly led the next pack from Cummings, Greaney, Weir, Wilde and Bosselman in the NZ Motoring # 89. Lap 4 started with the first four cars climbing over each other through Turn 1 and the esses, Cummins moved ahead of Dilly and Wilde overtook Weir. Another 3k's and the order was Cleland, Hoskins, Braid, Churcher and Dilly, their cars covered by 7/10ths with a lap to run, anyone of the quartet could win. It was do or die stuff with each trying to outfox the other, it was Hoskins who got to the flag first from Braid, Cleland and Churcher, the winning margin 0.972 with 1.33 covering the four cars. Dilly dropped down the field dramatically to finish a disappointing 10th, behind Churcher were Cummings, Wilde, Weir and Bosselman, all within 10 seconds of the pink '777'.

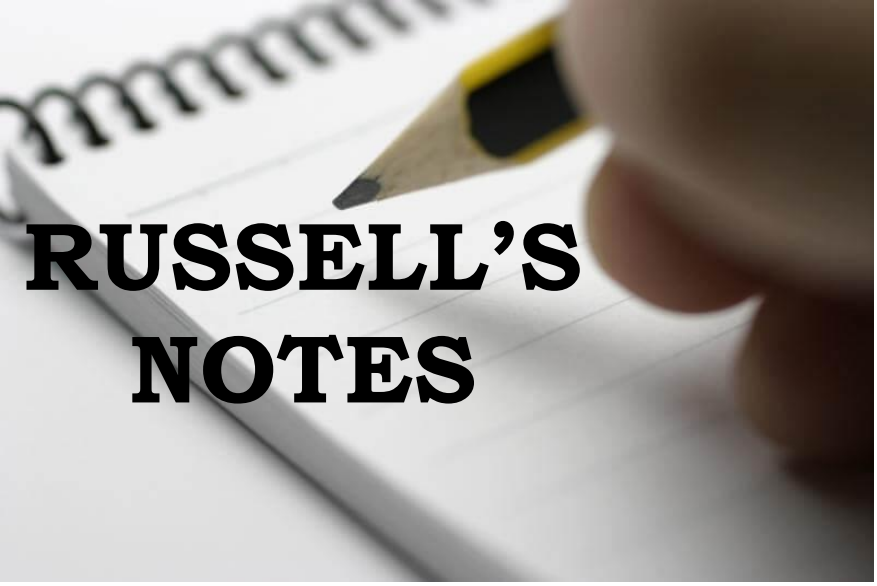
Bosselman and Mike Dunn were missing from the grid in the Reverse Grid that had Shayne Hayter and Mark Smith sharing the front row with Roger Greaney on his own behind them, Hoskins had the back row to himself with Cleland and Braid ahead. Hayter had a great start to take the lead but undid the good work by spinning onto the infield after exiting Turn 7 which allowed Conrad Healey through to the front with Wilde, Dilly, Weir and Churcher in line astern. Wilde took over as front runner on Lap 2 with Healey his shadow, on the next lap

Cleland spun at the Hairpin which took the Fleetwise car out of contention. By the end of Lap 4 Braid was up to P4 followed by Churcher, Hoskins, Weir and Cummings, the order was the same next time over the line, onto the last lap and Cleland spun at Turn 1, his second of the race, when was Braid going to make his move? He didn't and Tim Wilde scored the chocolate fish by heading Healey over the line by 1.3 seconds with a similar margin to Dilly, Braid was 4/10ths back, Churcher and Hoskins completing the first six cars, all under 5 seconds behind Wilde.

In rapidly darkening conditions only seven cars lined up for the Handicap race, the first three boxes on the grid were vacant! That left Hayter the first to be flagged away five seconds ahead of Healey with another five to Weir and Dilly, down the rear of the grid Hoskins and Cleland were together with Braid and Churcher 5 seconds ahead, the backmarkers were giving Hayter a 20 second start. The Bunnythorpe rookie got his head down and led Healey, Dilly, Weir, Wilde and Braid over the line first time round, Weir nipped ahead of Dilly on Lap 2 as Cleland started to move forward. At mid-distance the order was Hayter, Healey, Weir, Braid, Wilde, Churcher and Hoskins who was now 16 seconds off the lead, the gap was 4 seconds between the front pair. Dilly withdrew with a lap to run but the expected moves didn't eventuate, Hayter taking the flag and the fish 3.4 seconds ahead of Healey with 9/10ths back to Weir and another 1.4 to Braid, next were Cleland and Wilde while Churcher bested Hoskins in the duel for 7th and 8th, both more than 12 seconds behind an elated Shayne Hayter...

It was a difficult day for some with the changing weather and track conditions, contact between cars was absent for which the drivers must be given full credit. The class points tables got a bit of a shake-up which will make the final round extremely interesting. The FAE Winter Series is racing as it should be...

RH



RUSSELL'S NOTES

It wasn't the best way to start the day when marshals found their fire extinguishers had been vandalised or removed from the flag points overnight. That meant a big scurry around to find replacements which also meant an additional and unexpected big cost to the club. The extinguishers had been left in the shelters following the previous day's test sessions, in the future they will be put under lock and key. The act of vandalism could have resulted in a long delayed start to the meeting, no fire extinguishers, no racing...

Talking of things going missing, two race trailers went WOL from Greg Browne's Feilding premises. Sherlock Holmes and Miss Marples are working on solving the case that hopefully will end with the trailers returned to their rightful home. The inconvenience is so frustrating…

The 'not very nice day' may have accounted for the entry number dipping below 100 for the first time in this series, noted was the number of 'new' drivers for the third successive meeting which is a strong indication of the growing popularity of club racing, certainly at local level...

For this round the all-important chocolate fish were provided by Jo and Mike Dunn who operate a 'Before and After School Club' in Ashhurst under the banner of Kelly Club New Zealand. The closest Mike got to winning a fish was 8th place in the MX5 Cup Scratch race. Thank you both for your support, the fish are an integral part of these meetings...

The Manfeild Muscle Cars had an impressive increase in the size of their entry, and that was with Gary McKelvie and Philip Macey missing. The most welcome additions were Hayden Rau from Akatarawa, Mike Robb who hails from Queenstown and James Broadbridge who resides in Porirua. For many the day's 'star car' would have been the Broadbridge Chev Camaro, it had serious 'welly' and set the fastest lap of the day in the GT Cup races, 1.12.242 is very quick. Seeing and hearing the car in full flight was a reminder of the early 1970's sports sedans and the Kensington Carpet/Marlboro Z-28 Camaro of Red Dawson, brutally fast...

Despite the difficult conditions the Formula First drivers produced two very close finishes (0.081 and 0.600) but in both of those races there were unusually large gaps back to third places and the pack. Leo Scott from Whangarei picked up two wins, the final race going to Palmy's Blake Dowdall who has shown consistent form throughout the series and set the fastest lap in two of the races. SpeedSport Scholarship winner Jensen Bate seemed comfortable in the testing conditions, 4th quickest in Qualifying followed by a 4, DNF, 5 score card. A new face in the category was Daniel Petersen from Hunua that's on the south-eastern side of the Auckland region, definitely not the easiest of days to make your debut...

During the planning phase of catering for the V-Force lunches with Gala Caterers it was decided to have hot soup for Rounds 1 and 3. On a cold wet day soup is almost impossible to beat, and the savoury pumpkin 'brew' proved to be very popular. Not sure who had the crystal weather ball but it proved to be an inspired decision…

Save of the day. In the GDM Retail Systems Classic Cup Handicap first man away Bill Ritchie led the first two laps, the familiar Alfa Romeo Giulia had dropped to fourth as he crossed the line at the end of lap 3, the car hit water on the inside track edge and spun in front of the six cars coming down the front straight. Bill showed remarkable reactions to get the situation under control, miraculously the front of the car just grazed the inside barrier before the car came to rest on the other side of the track. Once the field had passed he calmly reversed onto the infield and promptly got stuck! A recovery vehicle solved that problem, coming down pit lane there was a stop for a brief visit to the medical centre for a quick check-up and a couple of Band-aids for the Alfa. It was a huge moment...

As driver's exited the dummy grid the sign ahead read 'RAIN LIGHTS ON', watching cars circulating quickly confirmed A the switch was broken, B the bulb needed replacing, C there was a break in the wiring or D the driver forgot, it's not really good enough. The rain light is a SAFETY device...

It appears that the rain gods may have won the tyre war as the day progressed. Cars were loaded onto trailers because their boots didn't suit the conditions or it was deemed the risk too high. Motor racing is expensive enough without pushing the boundaries too far...

The Trudy-Ann Trophy is presented in memory of Trudy-Ann Crooks, a popular RS Cup driver who was a true racer with a complete ignorance of what the words 'Break Out' meant, that spirit is the reason the trophy is presented to the driver of the first car to cross the finish line. Keith Pfeffer will have his name engraved on the trophy, ironically his fastest lap was more than 10 seconds slower than the 1.30 breakout due to the wet conditions...

Slip sliding away' was the title of a 1982 hit for Simon and Garfunkel, those three words are very appropriate for Round 3 of the Winter Series. Perhaps the most embarrassing was Bryce Hogg who looped the big yella Falcon in the esses on his qualifying out lap! Dave Burroughs excelled himself with four spins in back-to-back races, he was racing in two classes, Jack Cleland spun twice in the same race and experienced drivers like Ben Boyden and Warren Cleland (twice) added their names to the spinner's list. Add Brett Uncles, Nick Fisher, Alice Staddon, Bill Ritchie, Ian Humphrey, Chris Wall, Sean Browne and Shayne Hayter to the list, there may have been others. A couple got stuck on the wet infield while most were able to continue without calling for assistance, incredibly no cars made contact during these 'moments'. Probably more by good luck than good management…

Shane Hayter is one of our 2021 rookies and races in one of the most competitive classes, the MX5 Cup. Shane also rides motor cycles and in two-wheel language had a 'tank slapper' in the Reverse Grid 6-lapper. The # 24 car made a great start from the front row and looked like still leading at the end of Lap 1, but exiting Turn 7 he spun on the run to the line, Shane carried on finish 10th. The Bunnythorper's day finished on the highest possible note by winning the Handicap race by 3½ seconds to claim the last chocolate fish of the day, fully deserved too as the conditions were extremely difficult...

Michael Eden arrived with a BMW M3 in place of the familiar Chev Firenza, the Bimmer mightn't have been as quick but it was a very effective weapon on the day, his score card read 5, 2, 1. Another interesting car is Shayne Giles' extremely quick Nissan Sylvia that runs in the GT Cup, apparently the Sylvia leads a double life, it's also Shayne's drift car. All the transformation basically requires is re-setting the suspension and changing the driving style. Simple...

RH

For the Hartleys, last month brought another cross-Europe trip from their apartment in Monaco to north-west France, a road distance of 1,070 kilometres on the A7. The reason was to re-join the Gazoo Racing team to begin testing for the famous Le Mans 24 Hour race at the equally famous Circuit de la Sarthe on the following weekend.

Brendon, Kazuki Nakajima and Sébastien Buemi went into the race as defending champions and their rival Hypercar category teams, Alpine and Glickenhaus, had proved to be extremely competitive. The Le Mans classic is to sports car racing what the Bathurst 1000 is to Supercars, it's the BIG ONE.

Day 1 was a Test Day, Brendon set the fastest time in the morning session with a 3.31.263 lap, 2/10ths ahead of the Alpine A480 and half a second quicker than the sister #7 Toyota, there was less than a tenth back to the faster of the two Glickenhaus entries. In the afternoon session the pace quickened considerably, Oliver Pla produced a 3.29.115 lap in the #708 Glickenhaus to top the sheet by 0.225 from the #7 Toyota with 3/10ths to the #8 GR010, the Alpine was nearly a full second off Pla's time - at the end of the day Brendon had posted the third fastest lap.

"It's great to get back in our Hypercar and fantastic to be back at the Circuit de la Sarthe. Obviously, this is a different car to what we have raced before here so we are learning a lot. The GR010 HYBRID really came alive here, especially in the fast parts, so it was an enjoyable day. We have learned a lot and we are going in a positive direction. So, I am looking forward to the week ahead".

Day 2 saw no cars on the circuit, it was the day for making changes and fine tuning prior to the final practice sessions and qualifying.

Day 3 was most important because it would decide which 24 cars (the top six from each class) qualified for the Hyperpole and the grid positions for the remainder of the field. The 3-hour long FP1 had two red flag periods and ended with José Maria Lopez setting the fastest lap around the 13.62-kilometre circuit in the # 7 car, his 3.29.309 was around 15 seconds slower than last year's pole time. The Alpine was 9/100ths slower with 1/1000th to Nakajima in the # 8 Toyota.

Qualifying was a 60-minute session with all sixty-two cars out on the circuit, getting out of pit lane early was critical to get clean runs. Kobayashi claimed provisional pole, his 3.27.095 was 0.81 ahead of the Alpine with Brendon 3rd fastest in the # 8 and 1.39 seconds slower than Kobayashi with 6/10ths back to the first of the Glickenhaus cars. As darkness fell the shortened FP2 followed and saw Brendon in the # 8 GR010 at the top

of the sheet, 6/10ths quicker than # 7 with the leading Glickenhaus another 2/10ths back and ahead of the Alpine.

"We had a pretty smooth day. The GR010 HYBRID has felt really nice to drive again. It really feels like the car was made for here and it feels at home. It has been quite different from test day with much colder track temperatures and a different wind direction. So, we tried different tyre compounds to learn about the right crossover points for when the race goes into the night. Deciding the tyres and what setup to use was a big part of the test programme and it all went well".

Day 4 began with FP3, Scuderia Glickenhaus remaining in pit lane for the first hour as both of their cars had engine changes. Red and yellow flags punctuated the session, Kamui Nakajima had an off-track excursion at Indianapolis Corner that's approached at 320 km/h, it has a tricky entry with a fast change of direction, the # 8 car suffering damage to the rear but was able to be driven back to the pit garage for repairs. In the 3-hour session the Alpine nearly had an off at the same spot before setting the fastest lap that was 1.47 quicker than the # 7 Toyota, Brendon was P3 on the time sheet 0.196 slower.

The eagerly awaited Hyperpole session saw the two Toyotas off the leash. Kobayashi's first flying lap was three seconds quicker than anyone had achieved in the previous timed sessions, his second lap stopped the clock at 3.23.900 to claim pole position for the fourth time. In last year's Hyperpole the Japanese star recorded 3.15.267 in the LMP1 TS050, 8.633 seconds quicker and an indication of how fast the LMP1 cars were. Brendon was put in the # 8 GR010 for the all-important session and secured a front-row start 0.295 slower than the sister car. Row 2 would be shared by the Alpine A480 Gibson (+ 1.674) and the # 708 Glickenhaus (+ 1.739), the # 709 Glickenhaus had three of its nine laps deleted for exceeding track limits, it was 3.765 slower than Kobayashi but quicker that the fastest LMP2 car.

The day ended in darkness with FP4 that saw Nakajima make up for his morning mistake by topping the times, 0.286 ahead of the Alpine with the # 7 Toyota third and 1½ seconds off the sister car's pace.

Day 4 was race day with a 15-minute warm-up session in the morning and the race starting at the traditional time of 4pm.

Brendon and the Toyota team weren't overly confident with reliability being a concern - *"We have only done two six hour and one eight races where we have had a few little issues. We have done tests where we drive for 36 hours straight to try and push all those reliability concerns out. With Le Mans you can't rule out anything and you've got to be prepared for anything"*. His words would prove to be prophetic.

For the first time in the week it was raining as the countdown to the 4pm start began and the decision was made to start the race after two formation laps that were flagged away by the

French flag. With the cars separated by category and two-wide the green flag was waved…

Buemi did the opening stint in the # 8 car, two corners into the race he was hit by one of the Glickenhaus entries and spun, there was only superficial damage and he was able to resume at the back of the field. The car stopped on the Mulsanne Straight and the driver had to do a complete power cycle reset which cost more valuable time, that was followed by an overshoot into the escape road at Mulsanne Corner, all on the first lap! The sister # 7 eased away from the Alpine and Glickenhaus cars and would control the race for the full 24 hours, though there were some issues with a fuel pickup problem late in the race.

At the end of Hour 1 the running order was the # 7 Toyota a minute ahead of the Jota that led LMP2 with Buemi third after climbing back through the field with a brilliant drive, the Alpine was P4.

But the problems hadn't ended for the # 8 Toyota, there were fuel dramas which meant having to do shorter stints, Brendon - *"We had this issue with the fuel pump or fuel filter and were struggling to get all the fuel. So we started doing five lap stints, sometimes six. I think Seb was down to a two-lap stint at one point"*.

The car had suffered the same problem at Monza which effectively cost the race because of the lengthy repairs, this time the team in the Toyota garage was able to find a quicker and workable solution but the drivers still had to manage the issue.

The circuit had dried by Hour 3 and the race settled down. The Alpine had spun early in the race and dropped to 17th but had recovered to hold third place, shortly before midnight the French entry car lost four minutes when it went off the circuit at the first Mulsanne chicane which dropped it behind the two American cars. There was only a small difference in the lap times of the Alpine and the faster of the two Glickenhaus entries, positional changes came during the pit stop cycles.

When the Rolex clocked showed 12 o'clock, the # 8 car was leading # 7 by 20 seconds but the fuel problem persisted. At the Hour 16 mark Brendon was in the pits and the car went a lap down, two hours later Buemi's luckless day continued when the # 8 stopped at the end of Mulsanne Straight possibly with a fuel problem, the Hypercar burst back into life but more time was lost and

there were doubts if it would reach the finish.

The GR010's continued to run 1-2, behind them the Alpine and # 708 Glickenhaus were locked in their own battle for a possible podium spot four laps behind the leader, which car was in front continued to change with each pit stop. Starting the final hour finishing was the name of game as class wins have great importance but there was still high drama to come.

With 10 minutes remaining the commentators went into overdrive when the # 8 Toyota pitted and there was little activity in the GR garage, 20 seconds later the # 7 car pitted and stopped, the two Japanese drivers were doing the final stint and the reason for the unexpected stop was to set-up a side-by-side finish with minimal risk. Kobayashi drove around Nakajima to lead out of the pits (which put the # 8 car a second lap down) and the commentators finally worked out what was happening!

Going into the last lap the two Team WRT cars were heading the LMP2 class when the leading Oreca-Gibson slowed and stopped out on the circuit, possibly out of fuel. The 89th running of the 24 Heure du Mans ended with an impressive Gazoo Racing Toyota formation finish but there was one final piece of drama to be played out. As is traditional the chequered flag man stands well out on the track itself and the run to the finish line is at much reduced speed, but two LMP2 cars were still chasing the class win and came round the final corner at race speed, one made a sudden change of direction, the flagman took a quick step back and they crossed the line split by 7/10ths of a second.

After finishing 2nd, 2nd and 3rd in the three previous Le Mans races Kamui Kobayashi, José Maria Lopez and Mike Conway fully deserved their win, their only driving blemish was Kobayashi once running off the circuit while the Toyota garage personnel had learned how to resolve the fuel pick-up problems that came late in the race on the sister car. At the end Kazuki Nakajima, Sébastien Buemi and Brendon were two laps down in second place with another two laps back to the Alpine A410 that headed home the #708 Glickenhaus by 2½ minutes, the #709 car was 7 laps behind the winners but a lap ahead of the first LMP2 car - it was the first French podium since 2011.

Brendon - *"It wasn't disappointing. For the team to take 1-2 here was incredibly important. To take the Hypercar and get it to last 24 hours was a big achievement".*

"Le Mans always brings something crazy, and this year was no different. Right from the first lap we were dealing with issues. The way the team pulled together to get this one-two was phenomenal, we had to manage the issue, and at one point, we weren't even sure we would get to the end".

"I am incredibly happy for car No.7 who had had more than their fair share of hard luck. We are all really good friends and I am so happy to see them take their prize and live through all those emotions. A great win for the team".

The number of pit stops told their own story, the Alpine was expected to make more because of the car's smaller fuel tank, it pitted 31 times. The two Glickenhaus cars had 28 and 29 stops respectively, the winning Toyota was in the pits 33 times and the # 8 GR010 37 times, the second highest number of any car in the race.

In the 2021 WEC Drivers' Championship Kobayashi, Lopez and Conway moved to the top with 120 points, Nakajima, Buemi and Hartley have 111 with Alpine Elf Matmut drivers André Negrao, Matthieu Vaxiviere and Nicholas Labierre currently on 90 points. In the FIA Hypercar World Championship Toyota Gazoo Racing have accumulated 141 points to Alpine Elf Matmut's 90, Glickenhaus Racing have 37 points.

There are two rounds to complete the 2021 WEC Championship, both at the Sakhir International Circuit, the Six Hours of Bahrain on the 30th of next month and Eight Hours of Bahrain a week later. Toyota's history shows that who wins the Le Mans 24 Hour doesn't win the World Championship, could Brendon secure his third world title?

Following the celebrations, debriefs and team meetings Brendon and Sarah returned home with another trophy for their impressive collection. They could reflect on 24 hours that didn't bring ultimate victory but did show the resilience of the drivers and entire team, they shared the delight and disappointment that motor racing brings.

It was also knowing that Brendon is the first driver to hold the Hypercar race lap record of 3.27.607, an average speed of 236.3 kilometres an hour...

RH

KIWIS ABROAD

Last month began with an international first for our country, a NZ team competing in Belgium's legendary Spa 24 Hour race. The Team Porsche New Zealand Pro-Am entry was driven by Ryan Harker and Will Bamber with co-drivers Adrian Henry D'Silva (Malaysia) and Carlos Rivas (Luxembourg), but they had a bad start to the weekend. In the qualifying session their car was plagued with gearbox issues, with a best lap 7.2 seconds of the pole time, they started 56th on the grid with only two cars behind them. The team's problems continued on race day when D'Silva was replaced by German driver Wolfgang Triller.

There was better news for Earl Bamber sharing one of the twelve Porsche 911 R's with Matt Campbell and Mathieu Jaminet, the Frenchman was fastest in the night practice session and 9th fastest in the Super Pole qualifying, Bamber had been 8th fastest in the regular qualifying, the trio started the race from Row 5, Raffaele Marciello had pole in a Mercedes-AMG for one of the world's most important races for GT3 cars.

The TotalEnergies 24 Hour was 22 minutes old when the race was neutralised following a four-car crash at Raidillon, the corner following the high speed Eau Rouge, two drivers being hospitalised. After 30 minutes under a Full Course Yellow the race resumed but a heavy rain shower brought change as some drivers stayed out on slicks and lost positions. In the opening two hours the W Bamber/Campbell/Jaminet # 22 car dropped as low at P16 but recovered to 11th overall and 10th in the Pro class. After the qualifying problems Team Porsche New Zealand was having a much better run, at the 12-hour mark the car was 25th overall after starting 56th and sitting third in the Pro-Am class eight seconds behind the leading Ferrari, the car dropped to 5th after 18 hours. There was more rain with an hour to run and a Safety Car deployment with 40 minutes to the flag, but there was no positional change, 20th overall and 5th in class on debut, the EBM Ciga 911 GT3- R covering 547 laps of the 7.04-kilometre-long circuit.

William Bamber - *"We were determined to see the finish and we succeeded. Although we started from the back of the grid, we ended up finishing 20th overall and the best placed Porsche in the Pro-Am Cup. The right strategy proved to be the decisive factor".*

Earl Bamber won the race last year, this time the GPX Martini Racing Porsche was challenging for a top ten position during the night, at 3am the car pitted to resolve a steering problem, after another 2½ hours racing the same issue ended their race, the team being unclassified in the results because it had covered less than half the total laps of the winner.

In the race there was a dramatic final hour that began with the two leaders split by 23 seconds with one pit stop remaining. The front running Ferrari pitted first and stayed on slicks, the Audi a lap later for wets as the Ardennes weather brought more rain and a leader change. The Ferrari pitted again for wets and the chase began, an inspired Alessandro Pier Guidi caught the Audi with 10 minutes remaining and regained the lead with a daring overtake at the wet double-left high speed Blanchimont corner to give Ferrari their first Spa 24 Hour victory since 2004 and ending a decade of German dominance, the margin 3.9 seconds after 3,894 kilometres with the first three cars (Ferrari/Audi/Aston Martin) on the lead lap. No doubt the New Zealanders will be keen to return...

Meanwhile, a few borders away Jaxon Evans was at the Hungoraring for Round 4 of Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup, one of the support races for the F1 Hungarian Grand Prix in Budapest. Jax was second quickest in qualifying, 0.143 behind Marvin Klein but only 2/1000ths ahead Florian Lattore who shared the second row of the grid with series leader Larry ten Voorde. There was just a single 15 lap race so the opening segment was key. There was an even start but at Turn 1 Jax got a tap from ten Voorde, as a result he got boxed through Turns 2 and 3 and lost P2 to the Dutchman. At Turn 4 two cars spun causing yellow flags, when the Safety Car released the field there were only 10 laps remaining. At Turn 1 championship contenders Dylan Pereira and Dorian Boccolacci spun causing another yellow, they would finish 11th and 17th respectively. Polesitter Marvin Klein led ten Voorde while Evans was under constant pressure from Florian Lattore and refusing to be intimidated, the Kiwi was under huge pressure but didn't buckle. There was another caution period at the start of Lap 13 before the race ran out with Klein taking the checker 3.53 seconds ahead of ten Voorde, Evans was 1.83 behind in third place and just 2/10ths ahead of Lottore, scoring another podium for the # 20 Martinet by Almeras car.
The post-race technical check revealed less than the mandatory 2 kilograms of fuel in the winning car, the Steward's disqualified Klein which gave ten Voorde maximum points with Evans and Lattore filling the minor placings. In the championship ten Voorde has 95 points to Evans 75, the pair well ahead of third placed Leon Kohler on 46 points. The Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup team had their summer break before the final rounds at Spa Francorchamps, Zandvoort and Monza.

Staying in Europe the DEKRA DTM Championship was at the 4.01 km former GP circuit of Zolder circuit in Belgium for Round 3, where overtaking is difficult. The meeting marked the first appearance of a McLaren 750S in the hands of Christian Klien. Qualifying for Race 1 ended with Kelvin Van der Linde securing pole position by 2/100ths from Gotz, Albon was on Row 2 and Lawson P10 Row 5, 0.331 slower than the pole sitting Audi, the McLaren being 16th fastest on the time sheet.

The 31-lap race was an Audi benefit with Kelvin Van der Linde beating Mike Rockenfeller who started P6 by 7/10ths in a 1-2 finish. Albon completed the podium 1.7 seconds behind the winner while Klien brought the McLaren home in 12th place in its race debut, 40 seconds in arrears at the line.

There were no championship points for Lawson in this one, his race ended at Turn 5 on the first lap. An incident caused a chain reaction with drivers having to change direction while braking heavily. The left side of the Red Bull Ferrari took a big hit and ended up in the gravel trap, the three cars involved all made it back to the pits but were retired, Lawson's car with suspected suspension damage.

There was a dramatic qualifying session for Race 2 when it was red flagged with two minutes remaining when many drivers were on their flying lap, they had to revert to their previous best time. That put Marco Whittman in his BMW M6 on pole position with Lucas Auer sharing the front row. Lawson was initially P7 but moved up one position when Jundacella was penalised five grid positions, Klien in the McLaren was right behind the Kiwi and Albon a lowly 12th, surprisingly 1.29 slower than the BMW.

Lawson had a very good opening lap this time, picking up two places to be behind Kelvin Van der Linde, there was an early Safety Car with the race going green on Lap 6. Lawson immediately passed the Audi driver, 3rd became 2nd and then 1st during the round of pit stops, the Red Bull driver pitted on Lap 11, returning to the track in P4. Two laps later the Audi stopped but got caught up in the pit lane traffic as he exited. Lawson remained 4th with Whittman, Auer and Gotz 20 seconds behind Albon who was the leader on the road until he pitted late on Lap 28, the AlphaTauri car returning in 6th place. Whittman backed up his qualifying performance by scoring BMW's first win of the series, 1.7 seconds ahead of Gotz and Auer, but the Austrian had received a 5 second time penalty for a pit lane violation which dropped down the order to 5th and elevated Lawson to 3rd, 3½ seconds behind Whittman.

In the Driver's Championship Kelvin Van der Linde had 101 points, Lawson 80 followed by Gotz with 72, Albon sat 5th with 54 points, five rounds remain. Team Abt Sportsline (Audi) kept ahead in the Team's Championship with 147 points, 13 ahead of Red Bull/AlphaTauri AF Corse.

After their break the NTT IndyCar Championship were in Nashville Tennessee for the 'Big Machine Music City Grand Prix' run on a street circuit with 11 turns. There was an entry of 27 cars, the biggest grid outside of the Indy 500 in a decade.

The start of FP1 was delayed so the track could be cleaned-up following the support classes. It ended with both Kiwi drivers in the top 10 at the end of the session, Scott Dixon was second quickest behind Colton Herta, Scott McLaughlin was sandwiched between team mates Will Power and Simon Pagenaud in P9, only 6/10ths slower than Herta. The session was punctuated by two red flags and finished early. In FP2 Dixon spun early after clipping an inside wall at the apex of a corner, undeterred he was third quickest behind Herta and Rossi, but half a second off the pace. With seven minutes remaining McLaughlin spun at Turn 7 and backed into the tyre barrier, bringing out the red flag, he was P10 on the time sheet more than a second slower than Herta.

Qualifying saw Herta take pole with a 1.13.683 lap, Dixon sharing the front row with 1.14.232. It wasn't a happy session for McLaughlin as he was eliminated in group qualifying - "Unfortunately we never got out of Q1 and on my fast lap I hit the wall, just tapped it, bent the car, and we were done". Car # 3 would start from P23 on the grid

The 80-lap race itself became something akin to a 'crash-fest', Herta dominated the first half of the race that saw the first drama occur on Lap 4 when Marcus Ericsson ran into the back of Sebastien Bourdais, the heavy contact launched the Swede's car into the air then crashing down, somehow only suffering damage to the front wing, he picked up the 'stop/go' penalty for causing the collision. The incident also resulted in a second yellow period, at the restart the leading group was Herta, Rossi, Dixon and Grojean but it wasn't long before the yellows were out for the third time, McLaughlin was spun round on Lap 16 and stalled, he was able to restart but was down in 25th place after climbing to 18th! The pit stop cycle began but when the race went green Penske team mates Power and Pagenaud collided at Turn 3, five more cars became involved and with the track blocked the red flag came out, the race resuming on Lap 24. Seven laps later there was another FCY, McLaughlin had clawed his way back to a race-high 15th before he was tagged by Power at Turn 9 and spun, another driver crashed into the front of his car, he returned to the pits for repairs and was able to resume after a long stop.

Pit stops handed the lead back to Herta before two cars tangled at Turn 9 and the yellow flags were out again, three of the leading cars pitted which put Grojean in the lead from Ericsson with Dixon 4th and Herta 9th, on Lap 55 the yellows were out for the eighth time, Grojean pitted which put the Swede back in front from Ryan Hunter-Reay, while Herta gained five places after the restart. Dixon lost second place to Herta with 19 laps to run, the young American caught Ericsson but an ambitious overtake at the high-speed Turn 9 ended in the wall, the yellow became red so the concrete barrier could be realigned. A two-lap dash ended the race with Ericsson taking the flag 3 hours after the start, he was 1½ seconds ahead of Dixon with James Hinchcliffe on the last step of the podium, McLaughlin eventually finished 13 laps down in 22nd place to end a less than memorable day...

A week later it was inter-state from Tennessee to Indiana for the 'Big Machine Spiked Coolers Grand Prix' on the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Road Course. Scott McLaughlin's # 3 Dallara-Chev was wearing its fourth different livery of the year - PPG, DEX, Pennzoil and this time the white and pink colours of CarShop.

There was only a single practice session for this race and the time sheet included a number of surprises with Chip Ganassi Racing's Alex Palou at the top with Rinus VeeKay 0.0223 behind. Team Penske's Josef Newgarden and Will Power were in the top six, Scott Dixon's best lap was 6/10ths off his team mate's pace for P15, five places and 0.28 ahead of Scott McLaughlin. The sensation of qualifying was young Danish driver Christian Lundgaard who normally competes in the FIA Formula 2 Championship. The Alpine Academy member was having a one-off drive with Rahal Letterman Hanigan Racing, clocking the 7th fastest time 0.257 slower than Palou and 1/100th ahead of his highly experienced RLHR team mate Graham Rahal on his first visit to the track! As usual qualifying ended with a flurry of fastest laps, with 90 seconds remaining Romain Grojean topped the sheet from Lundgaard, but the pair were pipped by Pato O'Ward and Power who were split by 0.0067, the rookies would start from Row 2 ahead of Colton Herta and Palou. It wasn't good news for the two Kiwis, Dixon spun on the final corner before the timing line which brought out the yellow flags, he was stripped of his fastest time which meant P9 becoming P26! McLaughlin did slightly better, he missed the Fast 12 and would start five grid positions ahead of Dixon - "The NASCAR rubber was certainly different, but we probably went a bit too aggressive on our set-up aerodynamic wise. Too much front wing".

The 85-lap race was in complete contrast to Nashville with relatively few incidents and Power scoring his first win of the season. The Australian was the dominant driver and it was only in the latter stages that the race came alive following the round of pit stops when some drivers opted for the 'black' tyres when most of the field were on the preferred 'red' compound, it was a big strategic call. The major incident came with 20 laps to run, Palou was holding 4th place before the Chip Ganassi Racing car suddenly slowed and pulled off the track with a blown Honda engine, it triggered the first yellow period and saw the field stack-up with Grojean and Colton right on the back of Power's car. It didn't take long for the second yellow when McLaughlin tagged VeeKay into a spin which earned the Kiwi a drive-through penalty. The remaining laps were incident free and at the line Power had a full second advantage over Grojean with Herta another 1.2 seconds back in third place followed by Rossi and O'Ward. Lundgaard was unable to back-up his sensational qualifying effort, after struggling with a stint on the 'black' tyres he finished 12th but less than 10 seconds behind Power. Dixon's tyre switch didn't pay-off either and he slipped down the field to P17, having started 26th on the grid, while McLaughlin's penalty saw him finish 23rd and three places further back from his start position.

Despite the DNF Palou still held a 21-point lead in the championship while O'Ward moved ahead of Dixon, the pair split by 13 points. The next stop would Illinois for the final oval race of the year.

On the same weekend New Zealand had two drivers in contention for the 2021 FIA Formula E championship before the Berlin E-Prix with the final two rounds at the Tempelhof Airport circuit, Mitch Evans and Nick Cassidy. Remarkably there were 18 drivers who could theoretically win the title. The two practice sessions were inconclusive, qualifying for Round 14 ended with DS Techeetah locking out the front row courtesy Jean-Eric Vergne and Antonio Felix Da Costa, the pair split by 0.073, Evans was back in 7th position while Cassidy struggled for pace and would start on Row 7.

In the early part of the race point's leader Nyck de Vries suffered a puncture and returned to the track in last place, he would finish a lap down and out of the points. Meanwhile Evans was working his way forward chasing a podium result, with 16 minutes plus one lap remaining he held 5th place and made the decision to activate his 'Attack Mode' which meant having an additional 35 kW boost for eight minutes. He immediately gained a position and with 10 minutes remaining overtook Norman Nato at the Hairpin with a bold inside move to be third. Cassidy had moved up the order to 11th early in the race but had dropped to 18th at the halfway point, he was one of the last drivers to use 'Attack Mode' and he got back to where he started in 14th place, but out of the points. Evans crossed the line 5½ seconds behind winner Lucas Di Gassi who headed Mortara home by 0.141, one Kiwi's title hopes remained very much alive - " we had strong pace all race long. We activated the extended boost at just the right time".

For the final race the direction of the bumpy, abrasive concrete track direction was reversed, Cassidy was an extremely disappointing 24th fastest in qualifying while Evans clocked the 6th best time to make the SuperPole for the top six drivers. He was the first to run and his lap time was ultimately beaten by Stoffel Vandoorne and Oliver Rowland, but only 0.216 off pole position. Fellow title contenders Jake Dennis, Edoardo Mortara and Nyck de Vries were all in the midfield.

In a bizarre start three of the top four championship contenders were out of the race within four minutes! When the lights went green Evan's car immediately shut down and was rammed by the unsighted Mortara who has started from Row 11 causing the race to be red-flagged. Following the restart Dennis suffered a battery failure, three down which left de Vries in the box seat. The young Dutchman had started P13 and missed the carnage at the front of the field, he was in the top ten by half-distance, his hopes received another boost when a fourth contender Antonio Felix Da Costa who was running in 7th place retired with 16 minutes to the flag. De Vries kept pushing his Mercedes and was P8 at the line in the craziest and most dramatic of races that was won by Norman Nato by 2.2 seconds from Rowland and Vandoorne, Cassidy picked up seven positions on his way to P17. Nyck de Vries scored four points, enough to be crowned the first FIA Formula E World Champion and with Vandoorne's 3rd place points secure the Team Championship for Mercedes-Benz EQ over Jaguar Racing - within a few days Mercedes-Benz announced that they would be withdrawing from Formula E at the end of next season to concentrate on Formula 1. In the final championship standings Mitch Evans finished 4th, seven points behind de Vries and two points away from being runner-up, Nick Cassidy started the weekend 7th and finished 15th overall. It was a story of what might have been with a cruel twist at the end...

The 89th running of the Le Mans 24 Hour race was the following weekend, Jaxon Evans making the pilgrimage to the Sarthe circuit along with two-time winners Earl Bamber and Brendon Hartley (see separate 'The Hartley Files').

Nick Cassidy was entered to share a Hub Auto entered Porsche RSR-19 in the LMGTE Pro class with former McLaren F1 driver Heikki Kovalainen and Dries Vanthoor who is the younger brother of Laurens Vanthoor, one of Earl Bamber's co-drivers. The drive for Cassidy and Kovalainen failed to materialise. Bamber was in the LMGTE Pro category driving a Porsche 911 RSR-19 for the American WeatherTech Racing outfit with Cooper MacNeill and Laurens Vanthoor, they were 6th fastest in the morning test session before Bamber topped the sheet in the afternoon by 0.010. In the qualifying session the WeatherTech team posted the 7th fastest time in their class, missing out on the Hyperpole by 0.058 of a second and having to start from P38 on the 62-car grid.

In the race track positions moved with the changing weather conditions, different strategies and pit cycles. Approaching the halfway mark in darkness the WeatherTech # 79's regular ISMA driver Cooper McNeill crashed heavily in the final chicane on Lap 139, the car suffering damage to both the front and rear ends giving the crew a major repair job - on Instagram Bamber posted 'Game Over' with a photo of the car. Their race lasted 10 hours and 27.21 minutes.

Entered in the 23-strong LMGTE Am class, Jaxon Evans was in his regular #77 Dempsey-Proton RSR-19 with Christian Ried and Matt Campbell. The car was P13 in the morning and 2.2 seconds off the pace, in the afternoon they were P17 but only 1.4 off the fastest time, an indication of how competitive the class is. In qualifying they were 12th quickest of the 23 cars in their category, 1.23 seconds slower than the pace setting Aston Martin Vantage that topped the time sheet, Evans/Ried/Campbell would start from P51 on the grid.

The car moved forward as the race settled down, helped by several accidents and mechanical problems, a solid stint early in the night by Jaxon got the car into fifth place a lap down on the class leader. The trio held that position to the finish and covered 335 laps, five behind the class winning Ferrari 488 and 30th overall, the race winning Toyota GR010 covered 371 laps. For Jaxon Evans the boyhood dream of racing in the Le Mans 24 Hour had been realised - "It was during my second stint, it was at night and I had time to think about here I am doing something I have always dreamed of". Now there's a desire to return - I've ticked something of my bucket list, but you don't go there to finish fifth, it is something I want to win for sure".

While the biggest race of the weekend was being run in France Liam Lawson was at the daunting Nurburgring for Round 4 of the DEKRA DTM championship that created a little bit of history, for the first time in 34 years Porsche participated in the DTM. The single GT3 entry made Porsche the seventh different manufacturer on the grid, the car being a guest entry presenting an opportunity for the German factory to evaluate the possibility of competing in the 2022 series.

Great Kiwi hope Liam Lawson was off the pace in the two free practice sessions, in FP1 the Red Bull/AF Corse Ferrari 488 Evo recorded the 9th quickest lap, 0.592 slower than Vincent Abril's Mercedes-AMG. Things were worse in FP2 where the # 30 car was P19 on the time sheet, Lawson's AF Corse team mate Alex Albon was 21st and 9th in the sessions, the surprise in practice was the Porsche driven by Michael Ammermuller that was making its DTM debut, the sole entry posted the 4th best time in FP1 and was 2nd quickest in FP2.

Kelvin Van Der Linde set the fastest time in Qualifying for Race 1, 2/10ths quicker than Philp Ellis. Albon was 9th on the sheet 3/10ths off the pace and Lawson 11th after posting an identical 1.26.511 to Maximilian Buhk, 22 of the 23 cars were within 0.714 of the Van Der Linde Audi.

In Race 1 the South African and Ellis were ahead of the early race clashes to control the 38 lapper, Lawson was working hard to elevate himself nearer the front and a yellow flag moved him up to 8th. Another two cars collided causing a Safety Car period, when the race went green Lawson became involved in a battle with team mate Albon and Maximilian Gotz, getting the better of the scrap to move to P6 but it all came undone at the halfway mark when a tap from an Audi spun the Ferrari, the Kiwi lost time but was able to resume, eventually finishing in 13th place 46 seconds behind the winner and three places outside of the points. Van Der Linde crossed the line 13½ seconds ahead of Ellis, Albon in the second AF Corse Ferrari was back in P20, 8 laps in arrears. The result meant Lawson dropped a place to third in the standings behind Van Der Linde and Gotz, what would the next day bring?

Firstly, it brought rain which meant Albon's pole time in Qualifying for Race 2 was ten seconds slower than the previous day. The Anglo-Thai driver revelled in the conditions to be 0.185 quicker than Daniel Jundadella, Van Der Linde was down in P7 with Lawson four grid spots back and 6/10ths behind the Alpha Tauri car after being 5th fastest at one time.

Race 2 was one of attrition with only 14 finishers following nine retirements, it was a day that belonged to Alexander Albon who scored his maiden DTM win and the second for AF Corse following Lawson's victory at the opening round. The Kiwi made up two places on the opening lap before the first yellow, the race went green for Lap 4 and Lawson made up further places before the next incident involving three cars, the # 30 Red Bull car suddenly found itself in P4, the team took a chance by pitting early on Lap 7, re-joining in front on Gotz who made slight contact with the Ferrari, the result was the left rear guard rubbing on the tyre which necessitated a second stop, Lawson dropping to P19, another yellow restart brought him back into the frame with a five position gain but trouble lay ahead. Lawson and Van Der Linde were side-by-side approaching the Turn 13 chicane in a "I can brake later than you' - cars were taking evasive action, VDL and Mike Rockenfeller

spun, Lawson got a puncture and a drive-through-penalty, in the end the team made the decision to retire the car with 9 minutes of the race remaining under the 38 laps or one hour rule. Out front Albon drove a perfect race taking the checker 4.6 seconds ahead of Jundadella, a great confidence boost for the 25-year-old.

With neither Van Der Linde not scoring points in this race the series standings changed significantly for the second time in 24 hours. Van Der Linde remained on 129 points, Gotz has 92 and Marco Whittmann 82, Albon jumped to 82 points while Lawson dropped back to 5th with 80. Round 5 of the DEKRA DTM takes place at Austria's Red Bull Ring on the 2nd to 5th of this month...

While all that was happening the major open-wheel race was across the Atlantic in America's state of Illinois, the IndyCar Bommarito Auto Group 500 at the Gateway Motorsport Park that's a 1.25-mile oval with long straights and tight corners that require the driver to downshift gears. Scott McLaughlin had previously tested at the track to gain data for Team Penske

There was a single 90-minute practice session that was dominated by Team Penske drivers topping the speeds, Josef Newgarden best two-lap average was 178.774 miles an hour. Scott McLaughlin drove 67 laps and his # 3 was second fastest with 177.669, three places ahead of Scott Dixon who averaged 177.463. Romain Grojean made his oval debut and recorded 176.608 to be P11 in the 24-car field.

Nearing the end of qualifying McLaughlin was sitting P2 before slipping down to 11th at 178.914 mph, team mate Will Power secured his 63rd Indycar pole with a 180.618 average that moved the Australian to within four of the all-time record held by the great Marion Andretti. Colton Herta was P2 followed by TP's Newgarden and Simon Pagenaud, Dixon clocked 179.448 which put him on Row 4 of the grid, the impressive Grojean 15th.

The Bommarito 500 was over 260 laps with the first half punctuated by several caution periods for a variety of reasons that included crashes, on-track incidents, false restarts and a technical problem with the marshal lights that meant much of the opening stint was under yellow, the end result was that most teams used the same strategy. Dixon's race was costly in terms of the championship, he was involved in a battle with point's leader Alex Palou, on Lap 65 the Chip Ganassi pair were in a high-speed collision with Rinus VeeKay. Two of the cars were out of the race while Dixon was able to get to the pits to repair the damage, eventually returning to the track and being classified 19th.

McLaughlin had a slow getaway that dropped the # 3 car several places, steering clear of trouble paid big dividends as he climbed his way into contention in the latter stages with a conservative fuel strategy. As the pit stop cycle played out he was running in 5th place, six spots ahead of his starting position, that became 4th when Alexander Rossi crashed out. Newgarden led 138 of the 260 laps and scored his 20th IndyCar win, finishing 0.539 ahead of McLaren SP driver Patricio O'Ward, Power was 5.3 seconds back in third and only 8/10ths ahead of McLaughlin, a fourth top ten result and so close to a second podium finish! Team Penske cars were 1, 3 and 4 with Simon Pagenaud taking the flag in P8, 'The Captain' would be pleased with that.

The result was a timely confidence boost for McLaughlin following a series of disappointments -*"It was an awesome day for us in the DEX Imaging Chevy. I think we had a decent car, in the second or third restart, or the tenth restart, whatever we had it was crazy - I really got into it and got comfortable and got ourselves into a nice position".*

The result gave the IndyCar points table a shakeup, Pato O'Ward now led the standings on 435 points, Palou 425, Newgarden 413 and Dixon 392 points. McLaughlin (245) sits 13th on the table two places ahead of Grojean (222) who finished 15th in the race, so the Kiwi star retains his lead for the coveted 'Rookie of the Year' award. Several race commentators named Grojean as their 'Driver of the Day, being most impressed by his high entry into the corners to get clean air and his overtaking ability.

August was very big month for motor racing in this country with two standout performances by New Zealand drivers. There was also disappointment, but that's the nature of sport...

RH

RACE WITH US

TO BE CONFIRMED AS LOCKDOWN LEVELS ALLOW

Entry details for all events available on www.manawatucarclub.org.nz or follow us on Facebook

PARTING SHOT

In the late 1990's the Club ran a number of Friday evening motorkhanas in the Square, an initiative created by then President Laurna Love in conjunction with the PNCC, in an attempt to attract some of the "boy racers" that were creating so much of a nuisance of themselves. It was great exposure for the Club and did attract some new members.

Top – Dave Wild chaperoning either Steven or Scott Wild.
Right – Tim Rush
Below – One of the Axcell brothers in their awesome Mini