

## Manawatu Car Club Presidents Report – October 2022 – September 2023

The 2023 financial year started on the tail end of the 75<sup>th</sup> year celebrations, we had just come off the back of the best ever Winter Series and now we had to keep the momentum rolling, and roll it did...

In a stark contrast to 12 months earlier, the OctoberFast meeting of 2022 was one of the largest meetings the club had seen for a while, 10 classes, with over 160 entries, the event was headlined by the ever-popular NZ Supertrucks which always bring in the crowds, but wait there was more... the icing on the cake was the celebration of fifty years of Mack Trucks in New Zealand. Some two years before, we had held talks with Mack Trucks about joining with us to hold their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at Manfeild, given the central location, the space that an event facility like Manfeild provides, and the added bonus of having to be able to hold a Supertruck race meeting at the same time ticked all of the boxes for both the MCC and Mack NZ. Saturday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 2022 saw 172 Mack Trucks roll through the Manfeild gates, and with them came many thousands of people, at one stage the line to get in stretched three quarters of the way down Brendon Hartley Drive. The atmosphere was electric, the racing fantastic, and everyone enjoyed themselves, the highlight of the event was when nearly all the trucks took to Manfeild: Circuit Chris Amon for some parade laps, it was spectacle to behold... Later that night the Manawatu Car Club was highly praised by the head of Mack NZ in front of some 600 guests at their "After Match" function for making the whole event so easy for them, it was certainly an event to remember, a once in a lifetime experience, and it couldn't have been a better way to kickstart our 2023 financial year.

As we trucked into November, our ShowVember Drift event, which was also severely impacted 12 months before was back. While not the Drift Competition event that it had been in the past, this time it was a drift practice and tutoring event utilising both the front and back tracks. Incorporated into the event was a Show & Shine, and there were several cruise sessions run throughout the day. Once again it was a large event with lots of people attending.

December '22 saw the first of the three round Mitre 10 Mega Summer Race Series; this was the final event for the club's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year. There was a different format for the first round, competitors had an additional fourth race that featured a marble draw for grid positions and a rolling start that was a new experience for most of the drivers who entered. The two latter rounds of the Summer Series in February & April '23 saw them combined with other classes from around the country such as the Superkarts, 2K Cup, Production Race Series, Formula First, and NZ Superlap. Prizegiving for the Summer Series and the club's Volunteer Awards Dinner was held late in April '23 at the world class Coach House Museum in Feilding, 80 people attended the evening with several travelling from Napier, Whanganui, and the Wellington Region to attend, it was also notable that for the first time all of the prize & award recipients were present. Troy Brown, Mikayla Waldrom, Renee Thompson, Barbara Wild, Bob Higginson, and Jarod Carruthers deservedly took home the Volunteer silverware. While down on revenue for the series it is important to note that the previous year's last two rounds included many NZ Championship classes, notably the Supertrucks in April '22 which bolstered the revenue results for that year.

January 2023 saw the start of the new 8-round Super Sprint NZ Championship, rounds 3 & 7 were to be held at Manfeild: Circuit Chris Amon, in late January and mid-April respectively, the latter date to include a round of the D1NZ also. It was great to see the championship classes return to the best drivers track in the country. It also meant that the revenue from these meetings put us on a par with the previous summers results.

Cyclone Gabrielle put paid to the one event that we had planned for March '23, the Pararorangi Road Rallysprint had to be cancelled due to damage to the road, luckily it did not impact the Central Districts Field Days which was able to go ahead unimpeded unlike the previous year. This meant that the goal of having a motorsport event on for every month of the year was not going to happen this year.

May '23 meant that it was Motorsport NZ AGM & Conference time which Jeff Braid, and I attended on behalf of the Manawatu Car Club, it was a very well organized and run weekend, with lots of informative and interactive seminars, and the AGM was very constructive in many ways as well. On the Saturday night the MSNZ Awards Dinner was held at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, and what a great night it was for the Manawatu Car Club... Life Member and Club Patron, Brian Davies was awarded the "Clerk of the Course D'Honneur". Fellow Life Member and Club Patron, Terry Rush received an "Historic Heritage Award". I was very honoured to accept a very special award on behalf of the MCC... as one of the original founding car clubs, the MCC was awarded a beautiful shield which had the badges of each of the founding clubs on it. And if that wasn't enough, our favourite son Brendon Hartley was awarded the Jim Clark Trophy, the fourth time he has been awarded this.

Another great event held in May was the Winter Series Information Night. Over 50 people joined us in person, while another 31 joined us via a live feed that we had set up, to hear about the upcoming Feilding Auto Electrical Winter Race Series... it was a very informative evening with Clerk of the Course Malcom Glen, Scrutineer's Rod McCardle & Greg Browne, Chief Rescue Marshall Noel Beale, and Event Organiser Jeff Braid, all speaking on the night. The feedback for this event was nothing but positive, so we will be looking to do it again before the next series.

June arrived and with it the start of our club's flagship race series, the Feilding Auto Electrical Winter Race Series. The series format stayed the same, 8 classes, qualifying and three 6-lap races for each round of a four round series held over the first weekend of the months of June, July, August, and September. Since they were such a hit the previous year, the round trophies introduced the previous year also returned for the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> placegetters overall for each round of the four-round series. Overall, the series attracted some 458 entries in total, second only to our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year the year before. 96 people attended a great Winter Series Prizegiving event on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September '23 which was once again held at the Feilding Civic Centre with award recipients travelling from as far north as Auckland's North Shore and as far south as Wellington's Hutt Valley. It was a special night for a number of reasons, but none more so in that it was the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary that Russell Harris and I had hosted that event together.

Our Grassroots and Clubsport events which incorporates the GT Oil and Transpec Services Ltd Manfeild Open Days, Multi Event Weekend, Bent Sprint, Back Track Autocrosses, and the 24 Minutes of Le Manfeild continued their resurgence from the previous year, entries were up across the board as we continued to welcome many newcomers to our sport. These events have taken on a new lease of life, they are relaxed, fun, cheap to get into, and you get plenty of seat time, so they are real bang for buck. Many seasoned competitors are now willing to help mentor some of the younger generation coming through so this has continued to have a lot to do with the success of these events.

After Drifting fell back in our 2022 year due to situations beyond our control, it bounced back in 2023 with a vengeance. The aforementioned ShowVember, Fugu February, our front and back track drift tutoring and practice days were all sold out and oversubscribed. I said last year that I would like to think that drifting will be a big part of the club's continued success in 2023, and it was, in fact it surpassed my and many others' expectations, so I would like to thank Troy Brown and Jodie Bell and the rest of the Drift Team for running some great events over the year.

Our MCC Membership continued to rise in the last year, with the club hitting an all-time high in the 2023 year, at 486 members some 5 members ahead of the previous year. It is the seventh year in a row that we have been over 400 members. Our female membership continued to stay strong for the second year in a row with 82 female club members spread across all age groups.

Also on the rise is our Facebook page where we now have some 8,300 followers from around the world, and on average per month our posts are actively viewed 60,000 times, it shows that the content on our page is the right stuff that people want to see and more importantly read. 77% of our audience is male, with the balance

of 23% being women, the largest age group for both is in the 25-34 age bracket, followed by the 35-44 age bracket.

One of the absolute pleasures of being the president of this club is working with our family of sponsors, many of whom have been with us for well over a decade now. The generosity these sponsors give to our club is well and truly above and beyond the call of duty as the actual sponsorship is only a small part of what they do. Many also support the club in other ways, whether it be the supply of goods/labour at very good rates, and/or experienced advice and help, they are always there when we need them, and many of them race with us on a regular basis as well, and for this I would like to thank each and every one of them for what they do for this club. Our current family of sponsors are, Huw & Kathy Allen from Feilding Auto Electrical (our naming sponsor for our Winter Race Series), Andrew Stewart from Stewarts Mitre 10 Mega (our naming sponsor for our Summer Race Series), Greg Browne from GT Oil and Warren Cleland from Transpec Services Ltd (our naming sponsors for our Grassroots and Clubsport events), Matt Tasker from Danny's Autos, Anton Cheetham from Geartech Automotive, Geoff Spencer from Coresteel Buildings Manawatu, Ernie Stevens from Ernies Engineering, Michael Eden from GDM Retail Systems, Johnathan & Jill Hogg from Max Tarr Electrical Ltd, Jeremy Hoskins from Tremaine Energy Centre, Dan McGregor from Total Truck Spray, Nick Stewart from SAFEngineering, and Shane Hayter from H.E.L Performance. Thank you all for your ongoing generosity and support and for helping us to continue to make this the best club in the country.

Financially the club is in a very strong position given the successful year that we have just had, this success was not born from good luck, rather it was from great management and planning by the MCC Committee, with the help of our club patrons Brain Davies and Russell Harris. It is interesting to note that half of the committee have been there for a decade, or longer, while another three have sat on the committee for the last three years. Their vast experience means that they have seen the good times and the trying times, and they are all totally invested in the club, they know what works and what doesn't, and they use their skills to look to the future and more importantly plan for it. I cannot thank the current committee strongly enough for the work that they have put in over the past year, we have had more events than ever – 30 over 47 days, with more classes than ever before and more pressures to try and accommodate everyone that is wanting to come and race with us, a trend that is set to continue over the 2024 year (and beyond) with some 31 events planned over 49 days. So in saying that, it would now be the perfect time to also thank our Club Secretary and Events Coordinator extraordinaire, Mr Manawatu Car Club himself, Jeff Braid, who has just come out of the busiest year that the club has ever had, thank you for everything that you do for us Jeff, it is hugely appreciated by not only myself, the MCC Committee, but by everyone here and everyone that attends one of our events. Now I was going to say to help ease the workload on Jeff, but it is really because the workload has increased substantially due to the number of classes and competitors that are now coming to race with us, Jodie Bell has stepped in to help with some of the secretarial and event management duties.

Given the increased workload and the extra events that we are now running, I am very aware of burning people out, especially our V-Force. Our volunteers are the lifeblood of our sport, without each and every one of them we do not go racing! Currently we have an absolutely awesome team of volunteers and while we have looked at how we can do more for our volunteers each and every year, we will always need to do more to keep the ones that we have and to attract new volunteers, so this will continue to be a big focus point for the committee over the year to come. A huge thank you from me and from everyone that races with us, for the time that you, our V-Force, give up freely to us so that we can go racing, but most of all thank you for keeping us safe. Your dedication to, and support of our club, is truly awe-inspiring, we cannot thank you enough for what you do for us.

Speaking of big focus points, I have several points to focus on this coming year (if re-elected), one will be on the changes to the Incorporated Societies Act that officially came into force on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 2023. While not big changes for our club in that we already do much of what is required in the new regulations, there will be some changes to our club constitution to make sure that we are compliant with the 2022 Act, so these changes

will be carried out this year with an eye to ratifying them at the next AGM in February 2025 which will be well in advance of the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2026 deadline. One of my other focus points will be on succession planning... it is no secret that we are all getting older, it happens every second of every day that we are alive, so I am very mindful of some certain positions that will require preparing other people to support, and eventually take over these roles. In many ways this has already started some time ago as we now have a good mix of old and young in most sectors of the club but there is still some work to do. Part of this work will see the creation of a youth council, four or five younger members of the club will be asked to sit on this youth council which will be tasked with a list of things to do with the future of the club, this will give them a good taste of what is involved in running the club and will give them a good grounding should they then want to join the MCC Committee in the years to come. I also want to look at ways to make everything easier, right from the way people join the club, to everything that happens on a race day for not only the competitors but for all of the volunteers, so we will again be looking at ways to improve what we do to ensure we continue to give our volunteers, event competitors, and the general public, the best experience that we can possibly give them.

And lastly but by no means least, I mentioned at the last AGM that the MCC Committee voted unanimously to explore all of the options tabled with regards to the clubrooms, and that after consulting with some key stakeholders such as the Manfeild Park Trust and the Manawatu District Council the future of Manfeild Park took on a whole different light. Over the past year several meetings have taken place with several sporting clubs around the region to talk about what the future needs of their clubs are, and how Manfeild Park may be a part of that future. Discussions looked at ways clubs could work together to lessen overheads and indeed day to day costs, and lastly what could the region do that meant the rest of the country, or other sporting organisations in different parts of New Zealand, might see Manfeild Park as an alternative venue. Indeed, a very well-prepared presentation was to put to the board of Motorsport NZ at the AGM in May '23 by myself and Shanye Harris – as Chief Executive of the Manawatu District Council, inviting Motorsport New Zealand to think about setting up the head office of MSNZ at Manfeild Park, the benefits of doing this were numerous and the whole presentation was very well received by the MSNZ board. Following further discussions with the MSNZ board, a further proposal is being worked on currently, and while ambitious, both sides agree it certainly warrants further discussions.

Manawatu Car Club members were more prominent racing overseas, one being the first female member to race internationally.

FIA World Endurance Championship winner Brendon Hartley enjoys the highest profile of any member of our club, and rightly so as he went on to win his fourth FIA World Endurance Championship after a dominant victory in the 8 hours of Bahrain where Brendon also secured pole position. This is an absolutely tremendous feat that I feel is unfortunately lost on most of the New Zealand public.

Fast lady Reanna O'Meara-Hunt joined California's Hannah Grisham to share driving duties in the GT4 America Sprint X Series, the pair racing an Aston Martin Vantage under the 'Heart of Racing' banner. Both were competitive and rounded off their season by winning the final two races of the Pirelli GT4 America AM Series on the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Road Course.

Kaleb Ngatoa had a busy year seat swapping, his schedule included two rounds of the Formula Regional Oceania Championship highlighted by winning the opening race at Hampton Downs, at the same meeting Kaleb finished fifth in the New Zealand Grand Prix. There was a quick visit to Asia to race in the Formula Regional Japanese Championship round at Suzuka that brought a 4th and DNF, in Australia there was a two top six places in the Formula S5000 support races at the Vailo Adelaide 500 Supercar meeting and a winning introduction to saloon racing at Queensland Raceway. He joined circuit owner Tony Quinn for the GT4 Australia Series round, sharing a Porsche Cayman they were second home in Race 1, won the 'Fight in the Night' Race 2, with another second in Race 3 to take the round honours. Back home Kaleb returned to open-wheelers and

quickly became the man-to beat in the GVI Formula Open Series driving a Swift DB4 Formula Pacific, at Manfeild Circuit Chris Amon he set a new class lap record that had stood for 32 years.

On the national scene, the standout performer was Chris Symon who won the New Zealand Formula First crown for the third successive year, being beaten only once in the 21-race series to finish 538 points ahead of the runner-up, extraordinary. Chris chases a 4th straight title in 2024 to emulate the feat of his father Ross back in the late 1980's.

Also retaining his title was Kevin Ingram in the SAS Autospares MSC Formula 5000 Tasman Cup Revival Series. This historic series continues to expand, and the competition was intense among the top drivers. Kevin's scorecard showed 2 wins, 10 podiums, 2 pole positions and 3 fastest laps, consistency is the name of the game in this category that continues to be a top crowd pleaser.

Fellow racer Tim Rush was honoured at the Ruapuna round, being presented with the Stan Redmond Memorial Trophy to acknowledge his contribution to Formula 5000 racing, his sportsmanship, passion and enthusiasm - the same attributes that Redmond was respected for. Adding to the occasion Tim received the trophy from the great Australian driver John Bowe, the special guest at the meeting.

Blake Dowdall continued to impress in his first full New Zealand Formula Ford Championship run over four rounds. Driving the ex-Callum Crawley Spectrum 015 the high school student is both fast and competitive as his results show, Blake showed his race craft by holding off the legendary Greg Murphy to score a dramatic victory at Taupo. Sixth place in the championship standings was poor reward for his efforts in a season highlighted by being presented with the Morrie Smith Memorial Trophy following his win in the feature race at Hampton Downs.

One of this country's most competitive classes is the Toyota 86 Championship where Justin Allen lined up on the grid for his fifth series that was in its tenth season. The #99 NAPA Auto Parts entry was a front runner with multiple podiums; however, his title hopes were diminished with a disastrous Taupo meeting where he dropped big points which eventually left him fifth overall in the series. A win in the last round at Hampton Downs was the highlight.

The big disappointment was Chris Pither losing both his PremiAir Racing seat and long-time Coca Cola sponsorship in the Repco Supercar Championship. With grids of nearly 30 cars qualifying in the critical session with the entire field covered by less than a second, unfortunately the Coke Camaro was often near the rear, following a spirited drive Chris placed a best 10th in Race 32 at the Gold Coast 500 round.

I would now like to say a special thanks to Kathy Gibson and her team at Manfeild, along with Board Chairman Hamish Waugh and the rest of the Manfeild Park Trust Board, thank you for the continued support that you have given to the MCC over the past year, without your help and sharing in the vision that the MCC have, we would have not been able to succeed in the ways that we have done this year, so it goes without saying that I look forward to what we can achieve together in the coming years.

And lastly but by no means least, thank you to our wonderful competitors, without you the 76<sup>th</sup> year of this club would not have been the great year that it was...



**Richie Arber**  
**President**  
**Manawatu Car Club Inc**