

Manawatu Car Club Presidents Report – October 2020 – September 2021

The Manawatu Car Club's 2021 Year was a year of getting back on track...

There was still much disruption to motorsport events within New Zealand, and indeed around the world, in the 2021 year, it felt to me like we were forever dealing with changes that were forced upon us, many within days of our events taking place. This caused frustration not only within the club's events organising team, but also with our competitors. For me the hardest part of the year was dealing with the many texts, emails, and phone calls from people when we could not provide an answer because we didn't have the answers ourselves from the ruling bodies, or dealing with the fallout when rules were mandated by others and the club was left to enforce them. I can honestly say that there were some challenging times within the year that would have been a lot harder to deal with had it not been for the huge support of the MCC Committee and Club Advisors, to whom I cannot thank enough.

On the international scene it seemed that there were Kiwis racing in just about every motorsport series in the world, names like Dixon, McLaughlin, Van Gisbergen, Lawson, Cassidy, Armstrong, Murphy, Evans, Bamber, to name but a few, were being beamed into our lounge rooms on a weekly basis and their exploits were being praised to all who were watching. The highlight of the international race scene for me was S.V.G winning the 2021 Supercars Championship, his drive at Sandown with a broken collarbone, and his last to first place in the 2021 NZGP, is how legends are made. Another highlight for me was former NZGP winner Liam Lawson going oh so close to winning the 2021 DTM series in his rookie year. Liam announced his arrival in the DTM series with a debut win in the first race of the 2021 series at Monza, in doing so he became the youngest ever DTM race winner at just 19 years old.

During the year MCC club members enjoyed significant success internationally. Brendon Hartley completed his 7th full season contesting the FIA World Endurance Championship in what was the first year of the new Hypercar category. The series was dominated by the two Toyota Gazoo Racing GR010 entries that secured an unprecedented clean sweep of all six rounds. Each car won three rounds, the series ending with Brendon and co-drivers Sébastien Buemi and Kazuki Nakajima taking the checker in the 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps, 8 Hours of Portimao and season ending 8 Hours of Bahrain, the trio finishing runners-up for the title by 5 points to their sister car for the second successive year. Brendon's individual highlight was securing pole position by nearly 4/10ths of a second in the 6 Hours of Bahrain race. The same driver line-up also finished 2nd, again to their sister car, in the 89th running of the 24hrs of Le Mans.

Rising star Kaleb Ngatoa made his international debut by contesting the final three rounds of the revamped S5000 Australian Drivers Championship, contesting nine races at the Phillip Island, Sandown and Sydney Motorsport Park circuits. Competing against the new generation of young Australian drivers Kaleb placed 3rd in Race 1 at Sandown before scoring a brilliant win in Race 2, his 2nd championship win came in Race 2 at Sydney. Following the Australian campaign Kaleb secured a place with TJ Motorsport and Kiwi Motorsport for an intensive training regime before contesting the final round of the Formula Regional Americas Championship raced at the Circuit of the Americas, the first step in his pursuit of a career as a professional IndyCar driver. Driving a car very different from the V8 powered S5000, he had top 10 finishes in all three races with placings of 6th, 4th and 8th.

Unfortunately, 2021 was not a great year for Chris Pither, while he did not have a fulltime drive, he did co-drive with Macauley Jones at Brad Jones Racing for the 2021 Bathurst 1000 where they ended up finishing 12th. 2022 promises to be a much better year for Chris having secured a fulltime V8 Supercars drive with PremiAir Racing, replacing former MCC Club Member Fabian Coulthard.

On the local scene, the aforementioned Kaleb Ngatoa contested the 3 rounds of the Castrol Toyota Racing Series. At the 66th New Zealand Grand Prix meeting at Hampton Downs he claimed a sensational pole position in wet conditions, ultimately finishing 4th in the main race only 3/10ths of a second off of the

podium. Following further rounds at Hampton Downs and Manfeild: Circuit Chris Amon, Kaleb finished runner-up in the series behind Matthew Payne.

Justin Allen once again contested the Best Bars Toyota 86 Championship. After the 12 races had been completed, Justin ended up 10th overall, up three places on the previous years result.

The 2020 OctoberFast meeting saw the return of the Supertrucks to Manfeild: Circuit Chris Amon after an over decade long absence. A ton of work was done leading up to this meeting, we started talking with the Supertrucks team nearly a year before the 2020 OctoberFast meeting about returning to Manfeild. There were many things to work on and to take into consideration, but we got there in the end and it was well worth the hard work that was put in to see these diesel burning behemoths race around Circuit Chris Amon. The highlights of the weekend were many, to see the multitude of families turn up to this meeting was at the top of the list, while a close second was the donations the MCC was able to make to several charities in the region due the great gate takings we took from the weekend, in total \$3,000 (\$1,000 each) was donated to Eat Up NZ, St John Feilding, and Manchester House, all great charities doing lots of great work locally. This OctoberFast meeting really kickstarted our 2021 year with over 150 entries over 10 classes, all of whom enjoyed the 31-race program over the two-day meeting.

Thankfully were we able to run our 2020 Archgola ShowVember Drift Comp event after having to cancel our 2019 event due to Covid. In fact, the 2020-21 Drift Program came back with a vengeance after having a severely disrupted program the year before, there were more Practice and Tutoring events scheduled than ever before, and they were all very well supported with nearly every one of them being over-subscribed. The professionalism with which these events were marketed, managed, and run meant that the profits from the Drift Program for the 2021 year were over double that of any previous year. A great thanks to Jodie and her team of helpers, and to the Drift Community for supporting these events. Due to a move to the Taranaki region, Jodie had to step down from the MCC Committee in September 2021, while she will be missed by all, Troy Brown has kindly taken over the reins of the Drift Dept and I am sure will do the job admirably.

Once again long-time supporters of grass roots motorsport, GT Oil and Transpec returned as sponsors for our entry level events which incorporated the Manfeild Open Days, a Bent Sprint and Back Track Autocrosses. Incorporated into the Open Days was some junior driver sessions where parents could bring their children out to have a go at driving the family car in a controlled environment aided by some notable MCC competitors who helped out with the driver tutoring as well, this was a great experience for all concerned and it will definitely be included in future Open Days. Like our Drift events, these Clubsport Basic events saw a resurgence in numbers, especially the Open Days in which a total of 95 people entered this series of events for the 2021-year, worth noting were the number of Rookies that entered which totalled 21 across the series. Also worth noting was that the Open Days returned a profit to the Club for the first time since 2014.

Stewarts Mitre 10 Mega returned as the sponsor for the three round 2020/21 Mitre 10 Mega Summer Race Series. Entry numbers were up on the previous year and some smart planning saw other classes incorporated into the Summer Series weekends, notably the Superkarts and 2k Cup, which added positively to the weekend and saw some of the 2k Cup cars cross-enter into the Summer Series classes. The highlight of the series for me was the inclusion of the UBER Driver Class where competitors raced people-movers in the RS Cup class. At the end of the three rounds Gareith Stanley was awarded the G.O.A.T UBER Racing Driver award. Profitability from the 2020/21 Mitre 10 Mega Summer Race Series was also at an all-time high.

Huw and Kathy from Feilding Auto Electrical once again kindly sponsored our flagship series, the Feilding Auto Electrical Winter Race Series. The four round series was hampered somewhat this year in that the fourth and final round had to be postponed from the first weekend of September to the third weekend of October, meaning that the fourth round of the series fell outside our 2021 financial year, so while we will report on entry numbers for the four rounds, our financials will only cover off the first three rounds. The first round of the Winter Series was down on numbers on previous years, however the following three rounds

averaged exactly 100 cars per round. While not the best on record, the 374 entries, and 188 different competitors in total, are still truly outstanding numbers for a club race series.

While the 2021 NZGP was not held at Manfeild: Circuit Chris Amon, Speedworks did hold a National Race Meeting at Manfeild, which was run by the MCC. While the number of cars entered into the Premier Classes was disappointing with only 6 cars in each of the TRS and NZV8 classes, the other classes more than made up for this with the 21 strong Central Muscle Car field being the highlight of the weekend for me.

March 2021 saw the club hold the Pararorangi Road Rallysprint as part of the Central Region Sprint Series, the first gravel event the club has run in a very long time. Entries were maxed out before the closing date and the day ran very well with everyone having a practice run and three timed runs. At the end of the day the top three contenders were covered by only 0.2 seconds over a 4.8km stretch of road, which is testament to the outstanding competition in the series.

Our off-track events saw us hold a combined Xmas Party / Summer Series Prize Giving / Winter Series Prize Giving / Volunteer Awards event in December 2020, funnily enough all of the prize giving was for events held the previous financial year, however everyone enjoyed the days events and it was good to finally be able to get together and have a laugh or two.

April 2021 saw us hold the Mitre 10 Mega Summer Race Series Prizegiving at the Verdict Café. Just over 40 of us got together to celebrate with the winners and placegetters of the Summer Series and to also honour those volunteers that were the recipients of an annual volunteer awards. Indeed, I had the privilege of being able to give the MCC's Long Service Award to an unsuspecting Russell Harris.

In August 2021 just on fifty of us got 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 is succeeding on the world stage of Motorsport.

Our 2021 MCC Membership year bounced back from a quieter 2020 year, the total of 451 members is just nine members shy of our all-time best membership total, and is now the fifth year in a row that we have had over 400 members join the club. Our Manawatu Car Club Facebook page now has over 6,000 followers, up by some 800 followers in the past 12 months which is an amazing result and a testament to the great content that is posted on our page.

Financially the club also bounced back from a tough 2020, however caution on the spending front was still at the forefront of the MCC Committee's mind. During the year the Clubrooms required an Earthquake structural strength evaluation to be done for insurance purposes. While we suspected the result might be bad, we did not expect it to be as bad as it was. The score of just 20%NBS was well under the required minimum 34%NBS, so it meant that the building was not considered structurally safe in the advent of a good-sized earthquake, so the decision was made to shut the clubrooms to all public and club events. Since this report came out there has been a lot of work undertaken to get a better understanding of what is required to get the clubrooms up to the acceptable standard, and what the associated costs will be to the club to do so, so this will be one of the larger projects that the 2022 MCC Committee will be concentrating on in the year to come.

The other large project still on the table is the erecting of the flag-points on Circuit: Chris Amon. While in need of being done for quite some time, it was not solely a cautious financial approach to 2021 that stopped these from being installed. Indeed, the time that was going to be needed to do this project was not merely a couple of days, but a decent couple of weeks, given that the best option was to do all of the flag-points at once, not a couple here and there, so the only period available to us is the upcoming shutdown at the start

of January 2022, where the circuit will be closed for a month for upgrades and remedial repair work. A massive thank you once again to Ernie of Ernie's Engineering in New Plymouth for helping the club with the construction of these flag-points, and to Simon from SMB Contractors who has put in a lot of hard work with the design of what the flag-points will look like once they are erected on site, and to coordinating all of the materials and manpower that will be needed to complete the job in the allotted time to ensure that our volunteers have the best flag-points in the country.

Speaking of our volunteers, Motorsport would not be able to happen without them. We continue to have a loyal bunch of volunteers who are passionate about the club, the sport, and the part that they play in our events. While we do everything that we can to make sure that they are looked after on our race days, and they are always acknowledged for the work that they do, I am always very mindful of what else we can do for them, so this will again be at the top of the MCC Committee's agenda for the 2022 year. To all of our volunteers, thank you for everything that you do, thank you for being their rain, hail or shine, thank you for waving at us at the end of every race, but most of all thank you for keeping us on track.

While the club is financially successful, we are very aware of what we can do better. Indeed, at a recent committee meeting I pointed out a few things that I felt we needed to be better at, so the incoming committee needs to concentrate on these areas to ensure we continue to give our volunteers, event competitors, and the general public, the best experience that we can possibly give them. As Sir Richard Branson once said... "To stand still today is to go backwards... and quickly". Today marks the end of six years as MCC President, it has been a great six years and I believe we have accomplished many things in that time, however I am mindful that there is still a lot to do, I am also mindful that a club / organisation needs new blood to survive and move forward, so while I would not like to step down knowing that there are still things to accomplish, I am at the mercy of the members as to my reappointment, but would be more than happy to put my full support behind someone should they wish to put their best foot forward for the position of MCC President for the next two years.

I would like to say huge thank you to the 2021 MCC Committee, a special mention goes to retiring committee member Gareith Stanley, and club advisor and MCC Magazine editor Trevor Weir. Special thanks go to Jeff Braid, Tim Wilde (P2) and Russell Harris... the three of you continue to help this club, and myself, in ways that not many people know as it is not always seen publicly, but with you three there the foundations of the club are very strong indeed, so thank you. Also, thanks go to Kathy and her team at Manfeild, thank you for the continued cooperation and the backing that you have given to the MCC over the past year, without your help we would have not been able to succeed in the ways that we have done, so it goes without saying that I do hope that we can continue to work closely together in the coming year.

And lastly but by no means least, thank you to our family of sponsors, who continue to support our members and our events. We love having you as part of our MCC family, and are so very pleased that you believe in our club and want to be a part of this journey with us. Thank you for helping to make the 2021 year that year that it was, and I look forward to working alongside you all again in 2022 to make the club even better.

I am also looking forward to a very special year ahead, for it will be our 75th anniversary year...

Richie Arber
President
Manawatu Car Club Inc