

Supercar **Extra** MAGAZINE

ISSUE 104
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FORMERLY **V8X** SUPERCAR MAGAZINE



ZB UNDER THE SKIN OF THE NEW COMMODORE

RICHIE STANAWAY
THE NEW KIWI SENSATION



HOLDEN'S BOLTER
CAN THE FALCON & ALTIMA KEEP UP?

ANDRE HEIMGARTNER
NISSAN MOTORSPORT'S COMEBACK KID

MATT STONE RACING
STEPPING UP INTO THE MAIN GAME

JACK LE BROcq
FOGES ONE-ON-ONE WITH TEKNO ROOKIE

SAM MICHAEL
FROM FORMULA 1 TO SUPERCARS

2018 CALENDAR FRIDGE »
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APR 20-22	WD-40 Phillip Island 500	Phillip Island GP Circuit
MAY 4-5	Perth SuperSprint	Barbagallo Raceway
MAY 18-20	Winton SuperSprint	Winton Motor Raceway
JUN 15-17	CrownBet Darwin Triple Crown	Hidden Valley Raceway
JUL 6-8	Walpac Townsville 400	Townsville Street Circuit
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AUG 4	Red Rooster Sydney SuperNight	Sydney Motorsport Park
AUG 24-26	The Bend SuperSprint	The Bend Motorsport Park
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OCT 4-7	Supercheap Auto Bathurst 1000	Mount Panorama
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ISSUE 104 AUS \$9.95 NZ \$10.50
ISSN 1442-9926



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“WE PRIDE OURSELVES ON COVERING ALL THE TEAMS AND DRIVERS IN SUPERCARS...”

Ed's Desk

WELCOME TO SUPERCAR XTRA MAGAZINE

It's a new dawn for this publication, formerly known as *V8X Supercar Magazine* and now *Supercar Xtra Magazine*. Not only is it the first edition under our new masthead, it's also the first to be included within programs for Virgin Australia Supercars Championship events.

These changes have prompted a slight redesign for the leading Supercars publication. If you're reading the standard issue of #104, you'll find a new-look *Motorsport Legends* section in the middle section of the magazine. If you're reading this within a program, you'll find the event info in the beginning and middle sections.

Supercar Xtra Magazine will still include all of the great articles and the best images from Supercars. The same team of top-quality journalists, photographers and graphic artists will still produce the magazine, be it the standard issue or program.

We pride ourselves on covering all the teams and drivers in Supercars, as evidenced in issue #104.

The cover story is a detailed look at the new Holden ZB Commodore Supercar, from its shape to its weight and more.

We also pick 18 head-to-head battles to watch in what's shaping to be another competitive Supercars season.



There's an injection of new blood in Supercars in 2018 and we begin our coverage of the new faces and names in the category with features on Tickford Racing's Richie Stanaway, Nissan Motorsport's Andre Heimgartner, Tekno Autosports' Jack Le Brocq and Matt Stone Racing and Todd Hazelwood.

We also meet former Formula 1 engineering guru Sam Michael, who is now a part-time consultant at Triple Eight Race Engineering.

You'll also find the latest columns from Mark Winterbottom, Craig Lowndes and Garry Rogers, analysis of the key issues in Supercars and our ranking of the top-10 liveries of 2018.

Subscribers to *Supercar Xtra Magazine* will have received our popular Virgin Australia Supercars Championship schedule fridge magnets with this edition.

If you aren't a subscriber, sign up before the May 31 to receive a magnet (while stocks last). The magnet will also be on sale from our online store and at our stands at Virgin Australia Supercars Championship events.

Remember, this edition is also available in digital form online and in the App Store and Google Play stores. Visit our new-look website for details.

And below are the two sides of the pullout poster you'll find in the print edition of this issue. Enjoy!

— Adrian



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Xtra

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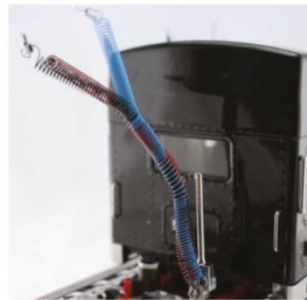
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THE PARITY

The immediate pace of the Holden ZB Commodore has its rivals concerned, prompting the inevitable parity debate about the performance of the new Commodore relative to the Ford FG X Falcon and Nissan Altima.

The Holden ZB Commodore represented a clean slate for Triple Eight Race Engineering; the first Holden racer to be developed from scratch by the factory-backed team. And it's produced what DJR Team Penske managing director Ryan Story has called a "rocket ship".

Weight was the initial concern with the ZB Commodore Supercar.

The Commodore, the first Supercar to be based on a hatchback road car, features a number of composite parts relative to the steel on the Ford

FG X Falcon and Nissan Altima.

The ZB is running with increased ballast to meet weight requirements and the positioning of this ballast gives the car a better centre of gravity than its rivals.

Getting parity with the Falcon and Altima is difficult given the lack of development for these cars, which are no longer sold in the Australian marketplace.

While the weight debate and re-homologation of parts to even up the cars presented the first parity squabble, the speed of the Commodore has forced Ford and Nissan entrants to keep pace with the better han-

its predecessor in this issue of *Supercar Xtra Magazine*.

"We thought one of the weaknesses of the VF II was it was pitch sensitive and unstable in the rear on corner entry," explains Cauchi.

"WE DO STILL FEEL THAT THERE IS MORE POTENTIAL WITH IT, JUST BECAUSE WE KNOW WE HAVEN'T HAD THE TIME TO REFINE IT..." – MARK DUTTON

dling traits of the ZB.

Triple Eight engineer David Cauchi was the project manager on the ZB Commodore and details the changes in philosophy of the new car relative to

"We always struggled with a nervous rear on entry, so the driver would have oversteer into a corner and once you have that you are out of control on the entry to the corner... so we



Y PUZZLE

thought we wanted to fix the first problem first and that's the entry."

The Holden ZB Commodore is still a work in progress, with Triple Eight promising more is to come once the car rolls out at different circuits and a set-up window is settled on for the various types of tracks.

"I'm hoping we're just scratching the surface," Triple Eight's Mark Dutton told Supercars.com.

"We do still feel that there is more potential with it, just because we know we haven't had the time to refine it.

"We haven't had the time to look for the half percenters, the one [percenters], we haven't even looked at the two percenters yet. We know we have to.

"Believe me, it's not perfect and we haven't found a sweet spot ourselves yet, it's not easy to set up yet.

"That's the ultimate goal for a good racecar, one that has a really solid base.

"When it's got a good, solid base you understand how you make it go quick, how you address handling issues, then you'll be consistent race in, race out.

"We're 100 per cent not getting ahead of ourselves because as we said, this is what we did last year, then we had a tough year for the rest of the year.

"We're definitely not getting ahead of ourselves."

With more speed still to find with the ZB, can the older Falcon and Altima models keep pace? The FG X Falcon is in its fourth season and the Altima in its sixth season.

For more on the new Holden ZB Commodore, flick to page 22. **X**



ABOVE: The different body shapes of the Holden ZB Commodore (top), Ford FG X Falcon (middle) and Nissan Altima (bottom) Supercars. The Commodore is the first Supercar to be based on a five-door hatch, resulting in a different profile compared to its VF Commodore predecessor and the other models on the grid in 2018.

TWIN-TURBO ENGINE ON ITS WAY

With Holden making a smooth transition from the VF Commodore to the new ZB on the track, attention now turns to the upcoming debut of its twin-turbo V6 engine.

The development of the ZB Supercar's body has gone much more smoothly for Triple Eight Race Engineering than its new twin-turbo V6 engine.

Based on the LF4.R 3.6-litre unit developed by General Motors Racing for the now defunct Cadillac ATS-V.R Pirelli Wold Challenge program, it was originally intended to debut with the ZB at Adelaide this year.

Now the plan is to have a couple of wildcard outings in 2018 before it replaces the iconic Chev five-litre V8 in 2019.

"There is an awful lot of the engine that is standard road car," explains Triple Eight boss Roland Dane.

"But now we are picking it up and saying we have to run it at a higher output because the engine is producing more power and operating in an environment where you can't rely on a Balance of Performance adjustment.

"In order to do that properly we have had to develop some aspects, most particularly the cooling of the engine."

The crux of it all is the LF4.R comes standard with a built-in exhaust port rather than a conventional three-port external exhaust manifold.

That's great for heating a road-car engine up quickly to operating temperatures and lowering emissions.

But race engines want to stay cool to increase their operating window. After all, a Supercar engine must operate in frigid Tassie, tropical Darwin and frequently stack up behind the safety car.

"We had to reappraise some aspects of it including the head design and we are in the middle of doing a new head for it," confirms Dane.

This year's wildcard entries will also give Triple Eight the chance to test a revised aero package as bonnet vents, at least, seem a certain requirement for the ZB Commodore V6 Supercar.

Another big issue in terms

of public perception has been noise. There has been a fair bit of angst about rumble of the V8 making way for the throatiness of the V6, especially after the exhibition laps at Bathurst last year.

"We have run four different exhaust systems on the prototype as we have played with the noise," Dane reveals.

"A V6 engine, if the exhaust is set up the right way, is capable of being one of the best noises you will ever hear. The process is far from finished, but we have worked on trying to work out the best place to join the two banks up and then what the final part of the exhaust system looks like to create a good noise." **X**

"THERE IS AN AWFUL LOT OF THE ENGINE THAT IS STANDARD... BUT NOW WE ARE PICKING IT UP AND SAYING WE HAVE TO RUN IT AT A HIGHER OUTPUT."

— ROLAND DANE



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WHERE TO FOR FORD?

While Holden teams are up and running with the ZB, Ford's entrants are left fielding the four-year-old FG X Falcon to keep the Blue Oval's presence in Supercars alive... for now.

Holden's switch from running the home-grown VF Commodore to the imported ZB Commodore in Supercars is in contrast to Ford Australia's unwillingness to allow Blue Oval entrants to trade in their Falcons for Mustangs under the current Gen2 regulations.

Ford has not provided manufacturer backing to a Supercars team since the end of 2015, a season in which the FG X Falcon was introduced and won the drivers' championship in the hands of Mark Winterbottom.

The reluctance of Ford to support its Supercars effort is

despite DJR Team Penske's majority owners, Team Penske, having close ties with head office in America through the team's NASCAR program and Tickford Racing's automotive-aftermarket arm providing enhancements to Ford products such as the Mustang. Both teams have also worked with independent Ford dealerships on sponsorship deals and marketing activations.

"We have had lots of conversations [with Ford] but I see nothing on the drawing board right now that we will be running a Mustang in 2019," Roger Penske told Supercars.com.

"If we can't get the support we need from Ford in Australia - they have been very

sensitive to their situation there and to me we have to manage through that - we will look at what other manufacturers might have interest with us."

Dick Johnson Racing/DJR Team Penske has run Fords exclusively since the team's formation in 1980, when Dick Johnson became a household name and Blue Oval hero following his collision with a rock at Mount Panorama.

"We are focused on this year but we have to be mindful of what comes next," says DJR Team Penske managing director Ryan Story.

"We have the capacity to keep running this Falcon. But, importantly, whatever we step into needs to be as competitive as we can still win races with the Falcon. We have a relationship with Ford that's limited and they've been very clear on their position in Supercars, so we have to be mindful of what comes next.

We have to respect Ford's position."

Attracting manufacturers to motorsport in such a small market as Australia is a tough sell, particularly with the car industry

moving towards self-driving and electric cars, as evidenced by the increase in support for the FIA Formula E championship.

"The landscape has evolved and, as a consequence, the series has had to evolve," says Story.

"We've gone from being heavily dependent on manufacturers to one that is significantly less so, which means teams have had to adapt to that. This team hasn't had significant manufacturer backing for some time, so we are able to live in that world."

Story insists that maintaining a Ford presence in Supercars is "critical" given the history of the Blue Oval in Australian touring cars and the fan base it has built over the years.

"You see a huge number of fans equally as passionate about Shell V-Power Racing Team as they are for the Blue Oval badge," he says.

"The Ford versus Holden is a key part of the fabric of the series and that battle will continue to thread its way into the series as it evolves."

Ironically, the number of Falcons on the grid has increased this season with Matt Stone Racing and 23 Red Racing running ex-DJR Team Penske and Tickford FG Xs respectively.

Ford also the manufacturers' title last season, its first since 2009. **X**



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NEW TALENT MOVING UP

With the likes of Todd Hazelwood, Jack Le Brocq, James Golding and Anton De Pasquale moving into the main game, a new generation is also stepping up in the feeder categories of Supercars in 2018.

The void left by the main-game graduates has been filled by a new crop of youngsters in the Dunlop Super2 Series in 2018, including a number of open-wheel converts now looking to Supercars.

Tickford Racing's new recruit Thomas Randle has an impressive record in open-wheelers that includes victory in Australian Formula Ford in 2014, runner-up in Australian Formula 4 in 2015, race wins in British Formula 3 in 2016 and a title win in New Zealand's Toyota Racing Series in 2017.

Randle is Tickford Racing's sole representative in Super2, looking to follow in the footsteps of Chaz Mostert and Cameron Waters.

Brad Jones Racing has also invested in the future by recruiting teenager Zane Goddard, who raced in British Formula 4 and Formula Renault Eurocup over the last two years, alongside Jack Smith and Macauley Jones.

New Zealand's Dominic Storey moved into Super2 from the Australian GT Championship and a stint racing GP3 in Europe. He's part of a four-car Eggleston Motorsport line-up, that includes the highly-touted Will Brown, who will make his main-game debut as an endurance co-driver with Erebus Motorsport later in the year,



ABOVE: Tickford Racing new recruit Thomas Randle is part of a new generation coming through in the Super2 Series in 2018.

and Nathan Morcom, former Australian GT front-runner and Bathurst 6-Hour winner.

Kostecki Brothers Racing is also on the up with Kurt, Jake and Brodie racing VF Commodores.

Bryce Fullwood and Tyler Greenbury are at Matt Stone Racing, while established names Garry Jacobson and Shae Davies are on the move to MW Motorsport and Paul Morris Motorsport respectively.

These youngsters will go up against experienced Supercars drivers Paul Dumbrell (Eggleston Motorsport), Dean Fiore (MW Motorsport) and Chris Pither (Garry Rogers Motorsport) in Super2, while Alex Rullo is back in a Supercar at MW Motorsport.

A drive in Super2 in 2019 is also on offer for aspiring racing drivers courtesy of the Aussie Driver Search (ADS) competition.

There are a number of young guns to watch on the Porsche Carrera Cup grid in 2018, too, including Nick McBride, Cameron Hill, Jaxon Evans, Jordan Love and Dylan O'Keeffe, who are up against former Supercars full-timers David Wall, Alex Davison, James Moffat and Dale Wood.

All eight Porsche Carrera Cup championship rounds are on the Supercars schedule this season. **X**

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For rest of the world residents, please contact us for postage rates.

Raamen Pty Ltd, publisher of *Supercar Xtra Magazine*, is also producing the official programs for the majority of Virgin Australia Supercars Championship events in 2018.

This includes marquee street-circuits events such as

the Townsville 400 and Newcastle 500, Pirtek Endurance Cup events the Sandown 500, Bathurst 1000 and the Gold Coast 600, New Zealand's Auckland SuperSprint, the new-look Sydney SuperNight 300 and the inaugural The Bend SuperSprint at The Bend Motorsport Park.

The programs will include the event schedules, track maps, entry lists, support-category profiles, features and more within the then current issue of *Supercar Xtra Magazine*.

If you're reading the standard issue of #104, you'll find a new-look *Motorsport Legends* section in the middle section of the magazine.

If you're reading this within a program, you'll find the event info in the beginning and middle sections.

Programs will be sold at the events, including at the *Supercar Xtra Magazine* stand, with digital versions made available online.

Stay tuned to our social-media channels and all-new website for updates and to get your magnet.

We look forward to bringing you the programs this season.

See you at the track! **X**

SUPERCARS 2018 CHAMPIONSHIP CALENDAR

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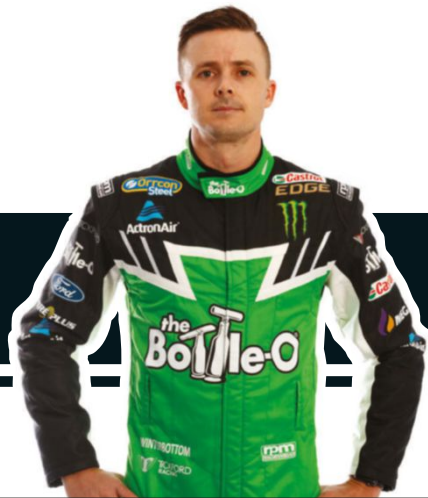
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BEYOND THE WHEEL

Column by
Mark Winterbottom



THE BATTLE FOR A FEW TENTHS

The closeness of the competition is why I race touring cars over the likes of GT racing or other similar categories.

In qualifying in Supercars, for example, if you make one mistake you're cactus. The difference of a few tenths equates to several rows on the grid. And with such even competition it has a huge impact on your race results and, therefore, championship position.

You have to know every corner so well because any slight mistake such as an early or late gear shift or missed braking point can prove costly.

This is what makes Supercars so exciting for drivers and fans alike. And for us drivers it's what drives us to work so hard on our fitness and understanding of the cars, so we can extract as much as possible from our performance on the day.

In GT racing, contrastingly, a lot depends on the car you are racing and the relative Balance of Performance (BoP) status of the manufacturer you are driving for.

While it's designed to create parity between different cars, you're still dependent on the



next readjustment and that can have a big impact on what you're racing.

It's why I've enjoyed my experience racing in Brazilian touring cars because there are also such small gaps separating the majority of the field.

It puts a lot of focus on the drivers and I love that. That's why they are looking to

Supercars drivers as they watch our racing very closely.

They know how competitive the field is and how under pressure we are in qualifying, as opposed to GT drivers, who don't typically have to deal with such close gaps.

We've been busy in the early stages of this season focusing on our race pace, an area we struggled with last season.

It's very easy to get drawn into gunning for one-lap qualifying pace with light fuel loads and green tyres, which we seem to be able to do easily. But to have a consistently quick car for long races has been a bit harder for us to achieve.

Qualifying, though, is still so important as the evenness

of the competition makes it difficult to gain positions in the race. We all tend to have the same strengths and weaknesses at the same sections of the track, which means we all just need a bit more race pace.

With so many variables in play, such as track conditions, tyre life and more, it's not an exact science.

There's also been a lot of talk about how the new Commodore compares to the Falcon and Altima, but we can only control our own car.

We know our strengths and weaknesses and always aim to improve on the weaknesses, so you can't worry too much about what others are doing.

– Frosty

“IN QUALIFYING IN SUPERCARS, FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOU MAKE ONE MISTAKE YOU’RE CACTUS. THE DIFFERENCE OF A FEW TENTHS EQUATES TO SEVERAL ROWS ON THE GRID.”

FROSTY'S HELMET

COMPETITION WINNER!

Congratulations to Paula Alexander from Melbourne, winner of our Frosty helmet subscription competition that ran throughout the 2017 season.

Paula was the lucky one whose name was drawn from all new subscriptions and renewals. Her prize of Mark Winterbottom's 2013 Bathurst-winning

helmet was recently presented at Monroe's (Tenneco) Melbourne offices by Eduard Julyan, Tenneco Sales Manger Victoria, Aftermarket Sales & Marketing.

Paula, who is originally from New Zealand, said she won't change her allegiance to Shane van Gisbergen but will now have a special soft spot for Frosty. She is currently searching for a new

cabinet to display her new prize.

Supercar Xtra Magazine and prize supplier Monroe also raised a total of \$3,991 for the Alannah and Madeline Foundation with a percentage of subscription sales going to the charity, which was matched by Monroe.

Supercar Xtra Magazine would like to thank competition sponsors Monroe (Tenneco) and V8 Race Experience.



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RIGHT ON TRACK

Column by
Craig Lowndes



COMING TO GRIPS WITH A NEW CAR

We and all Holden teams went into this season nervous about how the new-generation Holden Commodore Supercar would perform. But we've had very positive results and there's a lot of pace still to find.

The new car suits my driving style, which gives us great encouragement moving into the season. The car's aerodynamic bias produces better rear stability, which allows me to trail brake into corners deeper and harder. That's a trait I missed from the previous Commodore.

There's been a period of adjustment from inside the car with the new inner firewall. The height of the rear wing is an advantage for us as we can see through the gap between the boot and rear wing, as opposed to seeing the wing in the previous Commodore.

The side mirrors are bigger, which has helped the view



around us, but we have noted that there's a bit more of a blind-spot at the A-pillar, which impacts our attempts to find the apex into right-handers.

The layout of the interior is the same as the previous Commodore, so the driving position is no different and that helps with the adjustment of adapting to a new style.

It will take some time for us to explore the new setup options, especially when racing

at circuits with different characteristics, which throws up a lot of variables and unknowns. But in that there's the potential to find some new gains.

The Commodore should suit the high-speed circuits, which is always encouraging with an eye to Bathurst later in the year.

It was a huge off-season for everyone at Triple Eight Race Engineering, not only in building four new cars for us and Tekno Autosports but also in supplying

the panels and componentry for the other Holden teams.

To roll out and claim an event sweep with a new car was exceptional. It was a great reward for all the late nights for everyone back at the workshop. After Adelaide we had a team-bonding day to celebrate our achievement and recognise the hard work of everyone involved.

Hopefully we have more to celebrate as the season rolls on.

— Craig



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AUSTRALIA-WIDE DELIVERY

GARRY THE GURU

Column by
Garry Rogers



STOP WHINING AND START RACING

There is a lot of talk and a little controversy about the new Holden ZB Commodore, but the car is not a lot different to the rest. The aero has changed, so that is something we will learn as we go along, but the rules are such that you can't change a lot.

It's quite ironic that some of our rival manufacturer teams are already playing the parity card. They are claiming that our lighter panels in the roof are a major advantage.

I had a little giggle when a fan pulled me up and asked how we were going to place the extra weight in our roof when we were forced to put it back in the car!

It is a big storm in a teacup, really. I am not at all surprised to see the Ford and Nissan teams squawk like stuffed pigs, but they should just worry about their own backyards.

If they want to homologate lighter weight panels then so long as they go through the proper channels they are more than welcome to do so and they know that.

The ZB went through all of the relevant testing and those tests are very stringent. We went through it when we had to homologate the Volvo. In fairness, you have to give Supercars some credit for that; they do the aero testing and homologation very thoroughly.

I'm not interested in getting involved in the politics. If we beat the other cars every time on the track then that's just their bad luck. They need to



get off their backsides and do something about it.

As for our cars, we haven't been unhappy with our early results but we still aren't quite quick enough.

Garth Tander has driven very well and James 'Bieber' Golding has made a few minor errors, but at his age and experience you have to accept a little bit of that.

This is Bieber's first big deal. We ran him in the Dunlop Super2 Series a couple of years ago and then wildcards last year.

On the arrangement that we originally had he would have got into the main game a year earlier, but when Garth became available that didn't come to fruition and that was a commercial decision that I took.

Beiber can drive. I think he will be very competitive and I am extremely enthusiastic about what he will produce before the year is over.

Don't be surprised to see him get a lot closer to the lead pack as the year marches on.

Garth is still a very competitive person, but the beauty of him is that he is also very mature and I think that, whilst he has still got the speed, he also has the sensibility to not do anything stupid and take unnecessary risks that would

most likely only end in tears and a torn-up car.

We still need to do the job. We need to keep producing the cars that we have been producing, make sure that we keep on top of our mechanical workforce and keep our group of people together.

I think that Garth will be in that top handful in nearly every race and if he does that then he will end up somewhere near the top of the championship this season.

— Garry

“IT'S QUITE IRONIC THAT SOME OF OUR RIVAL MANUFACTURER TEAMS ARE ALREADY PLAYING THE PARITY CARD.”

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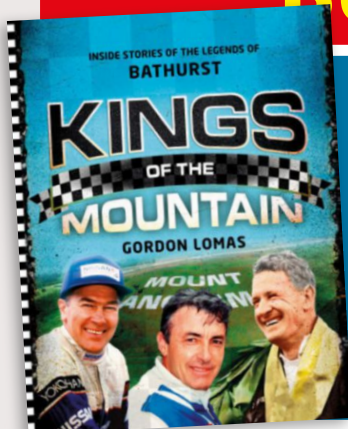
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AUSTRALIA-WIDE DELIVERY

UNDER THE SKIN OF THE ZB

The Holden ZB Commodore has made a flying start as a Supercar. We go in-depth with Triple Eight Race Engineering to track the development of the new-generation Commodore.

WORDS Bruce Newton

IMAGES Triple Eight Race Engineering, Peter Norton

For so many reasons the Holden ZB Commodore is such an important Supercar.

The fifth-generation Commodore is the first to be based on an import rather than a locally manufactured road car, the first Supercar based on a five-door hatch and the first Holden racer developed from scratch by Triple Eight Race Engineering.

Yes, Triple Eight has had input into Commodore Supercars previously in tandem with Walkinshaw Racing, the team from which it wrenched away the factory Holden Racing Team brand simply through the sheer weight of its race and championship-winning performances. And, yes, it had designed a complete car previously, the brilliant Ford BF Falcon, which is regarded by many as the best racer of the Project Blueprint era.

The ZB is the first Supercar to be homologated under the 'NewGen' technical regulations. This year it's the body and next year it will be the LF4.R-based V6 twin-turbocharged engine that will replace the iconic Chevrolet five-litre naturally aspirated V8 under the ZB's aluminium bonnet.

David Cauchi, in addition to his role as Triple Eight's head designer and Jamie Whincup's race engineer – the duo have netted two drivers' championships in four years – has been ZB project manager since late 2016.

The 10-year Triple Eight employee has mothered the project from the very first casual conversations to its racing debut. Cauchi led a small team of multi-taskers to develop the ZB including German aerodynamicist Florian Hoefflin, who was recruited from HWA in Germany specifically for the role, design office manager Ian Drapier, fellow engineers Grant MacPherson and John 'Irish' McGregor.

It's been a seminal time for Cauchi, who was hired into Triple Eight by former technical director Ludo Lacroix. He even lived with the eccentric, brilliant Frenchman years ago as he learned his trade.

Of course, Lacroix departed to DJR Team Penske late in 2016 and has played no direct role in the ZB program. So Cauchi has been in charge of a project developing a car that will be raced directly against the DJR Team Penske Ford FG X Falcon his old mentor oversees.

Cauchi is the first to admit Lacroix's teachings have helped him in this project. There's an irony here... Lacroix's pupils could school him on the track in 2018!

"Ludo always insisted that we be scientific, understand things, look at why things happen, why did that break, why did that not work?" says Cauchi.

"Force yourself or challenge yourself to have deeper understanding of all the mechanisms in the car and that will ensure you make better decisions."

THE OBJECTIVE

So just how do you go about designing a new Supercar? Step one, says Cauchi, is decide what you want to achieve. And after three years racing the VF II, Triple Eight's drivers and engineers agreed on one requirement: more rear grip!

"We thought one of the weaknesses of the VF II was it was pitch sensitive and unstable in the rear on corner entry," explains Cauchi.

"We always struggled with a nervous rear on entry, so the driver would have oversteer into a corner and once you have that you are out of control on the entry to the corner.

"That means you have compromise at the mid-corner and once you have that you have compromised your exit. So we thought we wanted to fix the first problem first and that's the entry."

What Cauchi is especially focused on here is one-lap pace. In other words, the area where Scott McLaughlin





TECH SPECS

POWER: 635-plus BHP limited to maximum 7500RPM.

ELECTRONICS: Motec L180 data logger, Motec D175 dash, Motec power distribution module (32 outputs), Motec M190 ECU, Communication via CAN bus.

TRANSMISSION: Supercars control Albins ST6 Transaxle, six-speed sequential shift with reverse gear.

SUSPENSION FRONT: Triple Eight Race Engineering designed double-wishbone suspension, driver-adjustable anti-roll bar system.

SUSPENSION REAR: Supercars control independent double-wishbone rear suspension designed and manufactured by Triple Eight Race Engineering, driver-adjustable anti-roll bar system.

BRAKES FRONT: AP six-piston callipers, 395mm ventilated steel rotors, driver-adjustable front to rear brake-force distribution.

BRAKES REAR: AP four-piston callipers, 355mm ventilated steel rotors, driver-adjustable front to rear brake-force distribution.

WHEELS: 18-inch Supercar control forged aluminium rim.

TYRES: Dunlop control tyre, Soft and Super Soft compound slick, as well as wet-weather tyre.

STEERING: Power-assisted rack and pinion steering designed by Triple Eight Race Engineering.

FUEL SYSTEM: Carbon fuel cell with Premier fuel bladder. Siamese dry-break refill system. 112-litre capacity.

WEIGHT: Minimum weight of 1410kg including driver.

TOP SPEED: 298km/hr and 0-100 in 3.4 sec.

DIFFERENTIAL: Spool drive, final ratio adjustable through transaxle drop gear.

ENGINE: KRE-developed five-litre V8, GM 305 Aurora Racing block, CNC-machined aluminium heads, control Supercar camshaft, aluminium dry sump.

SHOCK: Absorbers Sachs four-way adjustable Formula Matrix TRD dampers.

SEAT: Racetech 9129 carbon seat with OMP six-point racing harness.

STEERING WHEEL: Sparco steering wheel with Triple Eight Race Engineering designed electronics module.



ABOVE: Side-by-side comparisons of the Holden VF and ZB Commodore Supercars.

and his Lacroix-engineered FG X had it all over Jamie Whincup and Shane van Gisbergen and their Red Bull Holdens in 2017.

Race pace? Not such an issue, but when your opponents are on pole and you're not then you are clearly starting at a disadvantage... albeit one Whincup ended up overcoming in quite sensational circumstances in 2017 at the Newcastle finale to claim his seventh championship.

So more rear grip and the way to achieve that is to shift the aerodynamic balance of the car rearward. But as is well known about Supercars, there's not a lot of downforce to play with. About 310kg as measured by the Supercars 200km/h coast-down runs during parity testing.

"Out of that 310kg you've got, you can decide how much is on the front and how much is on the rear," says Cauchi.

"So we identified we wanted to put a little more of our

downforce onto the rear axle and take a little away from the front. You have to rob Peter to pay Paul.

"It does mean you get more mid-corner understeer because of more rear grip, but we thought we could engineer that out mechanically and overall have a better car. That was the philosophy; whether it is right or wrong I'll tell you in 12 months' time."

A PERFECT FIT

The first step before you get into detailed aerodynamic development detail is to actually shape the production-car body onto the Supercars control chassis.

A per usual when developing a Supercar, this was done using detailed CAD (computer-aided design) models supplied by the manufacturer.

In the case of the ZB, this process looks like a snack as the road car's 2829mm wheelbase corresponds very closely with the control NewGen 2822mm wheelbase.

But for a number of reasons the Supercar's rear doors

and roof have both been cut and shut 130mm compared to the road car.

“It’s shuffling it all around,” says Cauchi. “You have your front undertray surface, which is in a fixed position. Then you have where your wheels are positioned on the control chassis and then you are cutting or shrinking or growing the car so the rollcage is contained in the roof without popping through... and things like that.

“We had a challenge because if we didn’t cut the car as much as we did we would have had to have had much more modification to the rear door frame to fit the larger tyre of the race car.”

It was not just thinking about the aerodynamic layout of the car and aero performance that counted in the early stages. It was also the manufacturing of certain aspects of the car that was critical. It had to be as simple and efficient as possible without adding complexity to the parts Triple Eight had to modify.

Early in the process it became apparent gaining components from the Opel factory in Germany where the Commodore is made would be problematic.

When Commodore was manufactured locally in Adelaide, the race teams had ready access to spoils – body panels that were discarded for cosmetic reasons – from the production line. But no more. The bonnet is now the ZB Supercar’s only standard exterior part. The door frames and some ‘infill’ parts and side pressings are also still sourced from the factory.

But the roof, the tailgate, the guards and the doors are all made from composite material. The driver’s door is made from ballistic grade Kevlar for added safety.

“We are still a little bit reliant [on the factory for parts],



ABOVE & RIGHT. The control Supercars chassis remains the same between the Holden ZB and VF Commodore Supercars, along with the Ford FG X Falcon and Nissan Altima Supercars.





but probably only 20 to 30 per cent reliant, whereas we used to be 50 to 60 per cent reliant,” reveals Cauchi.

Both the composite roof and tailgate are a first for Supercars and the right to use similar items has also been offered to Ford and Nissan teams. After the Adelaide broo-ha-ha over centre of gravity, it seems likely that invitation will be taken up.

Cauchi doesn't bite on the weight thing. He does admit the car has to be ballasted up to the 1410kg minimum weight, but points out gains made in some areas have been negated in others. For instance, heavy tailgate hinges sit up near the roofline in ZB, whereas they were much lower in the boot of the VF II.

GIVING THE BEAST WINGS

Wind-tunnel testing is banned in Supercars, so in order to develop the ZB's aerodynamic package Triple Eight invested heavily in what's called Computational Fluid Dynamics, or CFD. Effectively, this is an engineering art form which allows the behaviour of air over a racing car's body to be modelled digitally.

“With aerodynamics it's a lot harder to visualise what's going on than for most other mechanical things, but CFD basically allows engineers to see the things you can't see,” says Cauchi.

“Where and how the air is flowing over the car and underneath the car and the pressures on all the different surfaces, because that is what makes it all work, particularly different air pressures on different surfaces and that's what determines if the car has downforce or lift.”

Not only could Cauchi, Hoefflin and co see how the car behaved in official coast-down tests, but at every speed and pitch and in corners.

Triple Eight forged an alliance with Wirth Research, a UK-based aerodynamic consultancy. Long-time Formula 1 fans may remember the company's owner Nick Wirth running the Simtek team in the early 1990s, which David Brabham briefly drove for.

Every Wednesday evening Cauchi and Hoefflin would confer by video conference with Wirth's program manager Robin Gearing and sportscar chief engineer Baptiste Rossi. Rossi also attended two key ZB aero tests in the second half of 2017.

“CFD is extremely specialised and that's why we realised we needed a partnership with a company like Wirth,” explains Cauchi.

“It's not something you can pick up every year or two and be proficient at it.”

The process started with a study of the VF II to understand where it was at aerodynamically. Then its aero package was transposed to the ZB, which resulted in the aero balance moving forward not back because of the car's fundamental shape.

“That's where CFD was really vital,” says Cauchi. “It allowed us to design the aero features to ensure we got the shift in balance we were looking for and did it in an efficient way.”

The less important aerodynamic features – side skirts and rear diffuser – were quickly resolved. The vast bulk of the CFD time was spent sorting the cheeks on the front splitter and the rear-wing position and endplates.

“WE WANTED TO PUT A LITTLE MORE OF OUR DOWNFORCE ONTO THE REAR AXLE AND TAKE A LITTLE AWAY FROM THE FRONT.”
DAVID CAUCHI

“The biggest thing you will notice is the larger rear wing and the cheeks on the ZB have a slightly more aggressive step just in front of the wheel” says Cauchi.

“The aggressive cheeks give a little more front down-force at the cost of some drag.”

Obviously, the new rear wing has generated a huge amount of chat along pitlane. The forward balance of the ZB dictated the large deck hanging off the rear of the shallow tailgate’s tiny deck. But don’t be fooled; the trailing edge of that deck is within 10mm of the trailing edge of the VF II’s boot. But the width of the wing has grown back to the maximum 1500mm from the VF II’s 1400mm, the endplates are huge wind buckets and the pivot point of the wing is higher and further back.

“These were to achieve that shift,” says Cauchi. “We then also had this fundamental issue of how you attached the endplate to the tailgate and we had to go to a completely composite tailgate. We need a lot of structure in the tailgate to be able to transfer that load down to the chassis. And from a repair point of view and mounting point of view the road-car tailgate was going to be more trouble than what it was worth.”

THE DETAIL STUFF

Clearly, ZB has been an aero-focused program. The control chassis is designed to have different facsimile bodies hung over the top without changes to the way the

engine goes in, the suspension is hung off it and so on.

But because the ZB is a liftback, one feature that needed to be added was a proper firewall at the rear of the cabin. That fix means the drivers now look through two sets of polycarbonate rear windscreens, one mounted on the control chassis firewall and one on the tailgate.

“That was to ensure even in a big rear impact where the tailgate gets partially or completely dislodged from the car the driver’s compartment is still sealed from the fuel fillers and fuel system underneath,” says Cauchi.

“That’s probably the biggest fundamental change to the control chassis in the whole car.”

Race teams always take the opportunity when building new cars to clean up niggles, try and shave a few grams, or tidy bits and pieces up. Going faster is a holistic exercise, so if you can perform maintenance easier or be more comfortable as a driver in the car, then that’s a win. In this case it was the electrics.

“We have redesigned the architecture of the wiring loom to get rid of a few large connectors and move that weight to a specific area lower and further forward,” says Cauchi.

“That just tidies things up a little bit, especially for the mechanics because there is less wiring exposed throughout the chassis and less opportunity for damage.”

After more than a year of huge effort, the Holden ZB Commodore Supercar is racing. **X**



FROM
VB TO
VF

COMMODORE EVOLUTION

The Commodore debuted in 1980 and took Holden into the modern era of Supercars. Here's a model-by-model look at the Commodores that have raced in Australian touring cars.



VB

DEBUT: 1980
CHAMPIONSHIP RACE WINS: 7
CHAMPIONSHIP WINS: 1980 (Peter Brock)
BATHURST 1000 WINS: None



VC

DEBUT: 1980
CHAMPIONSHIP RACE WINS: 4
CHAMPIONSHIP WINS: None
BATHURST 1000 WINS: 1980 (Peter Brock/Jim Richards)



VH

DEBUT: 1982
CHAMPIONSHIP RACE WINS: 8
CHAMPIONSHIP WINS: None
BATHURST 1000 WINS: 1982 (Peter Brock/Larry Perkins), 1983 (Peter Brock/Larry Perkins/John Harvey)



VK

DEBUT: 1984
CHAMPIONSHIP RACE WINS: 2
CHAMPIONSHIP WINS: None
BATHURST 1000 WINS: 1984 (Peter Brock/Larry Perkins), 1986 (Allan Grice/Graeme Bailey)



VL

DEBUT: 1987
CHAMPIONSHIP RACE WINS: None
CHAMPIONSHIP WINS: None
BATHURST 1000 WINS: 1987 (Peter Brock/Peter McLeod/David Parsons), 1990 (Win Percy/Allan Grice)



VN

DEBUT: 1991
CHAMPIONSHIP RACE WINS: None
CHAMPIONSHIP WINS: None
BATHURST 1000 WINS: None

VP

DEBUT: 1992
CHAMPIONSHIP RACE WINS: 17



CHAMPIONSHIP WINS: 1994 (Mark Skaife)
BATHURST 1000 WINS: 1993 (Larry Perkins/Gregg Hansford)



VR

DEBUT: 1995
CHAMPIONSHIP RACE WINS: 27
CHAMPIONSHIP WINS: 1996 (Craig Lowndes)
BATHURST 1000 WINS: 1995 (Larry Perkins/Russell Ingall), 1996 (Craig Lowndes/Greg Murphy)



VS

DEBUT: 1997
CHAMPIONSHIP RACE WINS: 35
CHAMPIONSHIP WINS: 1998 (Craig Lowndes), 1999 (Craig Lowndes)
BATHURST 1000 WINS: 1997 (Larry Perkins/Russell Ingall)



VT

DEBUT: 1998
CHAMPIONSHIP RACE WINS: 63
CHAMPIONSHIP WINS: 1998 (Craig Lowndes), 1999 (Craig Lowndes), Mark Skaife (2000)
BATHURST 1000 WINS: 1999 (Greg Murphy/Steven Richards), 2000 (Garth Tander/Jason Bargwanna)



VX

DEBUT: 2001
CHAMPIONSHIP RACE WINS: 45
CHAMPIONSHIP WINS: 2001 (Mark Skaife), 2002 (Mark Skaife)
BATHURST 1000 WINS: 2001 (Mark Skaife/Tony Longhurst), 2002 (Mark Skaife/Jim Richards)



VY

DEBUT: 2003
CHAMPIONSHIP RACE WINS: 23
CHAMPIONSHIP WINS: None
BATHURST 1000 WINS: 2003 (Greg Murphy/Rick Kelly), 2004 (Greg Murphy/Rick Kelly)

VZ

DEBUT: 2005
CHAMPIONSHIP RACE WINS: 37
CHAMPIONSHIP WINS: 2006 (Rick Kelly)
BATHURST 1000 WINS: 2005 (Mark Skaife/Todd Kelly)



VE

DEBUT: 2007
CHAMPIONSHIP RACE WINS: 103
CHAMPIONSHIP WINS: 2007 (Garth Tander), 2011 (Jamie Whincup), 2012 (Jamie Whincup)
BATHURST 1000 WINS: 2009 (Garth Tander/Will Davison), 2010 (Craig Lowndes/Mark Skaife), 2011 (Garth Tander/Nick Percat), 2012 (Jamie Whincup/Paul Dumbrell)

VF

DEBUT: 2013
CHAMPIONSHIP RACE WINS: 108
CHAMPIONSHIP WINS: 2013 (Jamie Whincup), 2014 (Jamie Whincup), 2016 (Shane van Gisbergen), 2017 (Jamie Whincup)
BATHURST 1000 WINS: 2015 (Craig Lowndes/Steven Richards), 2016 (Will Davison/Jonathon Webb), 2017 (David Reynolds/Luke Youlden) ✕



WORDS Adrian Musolino IMAGES Ben Auld, Peter Norton, AJ Pearson Photography

18 HEAD-TO-HEAD BATTLES TO WATCH IN 2018

The 2018 Virgin Australia Supercars Championship is underway and looks set to be another classic. Here are 18 battles to keep track of throughout the season.

COMMODORE VS THE REST

The new-look Holden ZB Commodore represents a seismic shift in Supercars. The first imported Commodore looks very different to its predecessor, with its aerodynamic performance and weight relative to the Ford FG X Falcon and Nissan Altima a major talking point in the early stages of this season. The Commodore's rate of development and results up against the eight Falcons and four Altimas on the grid will be eagerly observed over the course of 2018, especially when the twin-turbo V6 debuts as a wildcard entrant.

DJR TEAM PENSKE VS TRIPLE EIGHT

The dramatic championship battle of 2017 continues into this season with DJR Team Penske building on its breakout season as a front-running challenger to the established powerhouse of Triple Eight. The tension

between the two will only build with Triple Eight leading the development of the ZB Commodore and DJR Team Penske keeping faith with the FG X Falcon.

DJR TEAM PENSKE VS TICKFORD RACING

DJR Team Penske took the mantle of Ford's leading team in 2017, winning the teams' title and handing Ford the manufacturers' title. Tickford Racing won't take that challenge lightly, with its four-car outfit a worthy opponent in the Blue Oval battle. Both teams have continuity with the FG X Falcon relative to the Holden runners and have taken on customer teams Matt Stone Racing and 23Red Racing.

MCLAUGHLIN VS COMMODORE

Scott McLaughlin was the undisputed Armour All pole-position king of 2017 with a record-breaking 16 pole





positions, headlined by his 2:03.8312s lap of Mount Panorama. But his superior pace in qualifying trim could be under threat should the aerodynamic efficiency of the ZB Commodore give Holden runners an advantage on outright pace.

WHINCUP VS VAN GISBERGEN

The Red Bull Holden Racing Team teammates have won a championship apiece over the last two seasons and once again look like being Holden's leading contenders. The return to the 2016-spec tyre is a gain for van Gisbergen, though the New Zealander struggled to match the consistency of Whincup in 2017.

LOWNDES VS COULTHARD

While their teammates Jamie Whincup and Scott McLaughlin did battle for the title, Craig Lowndes and Fabian Coulthard nonetheless played an important role in the drama surrounding the championship decider. Lowndes and Coulthard face key seasons in their attempts

to keep pace with their more fancied teammates and could be left playing second fiddle amongst themselves.

MOSTERT VS WATERS VS STANAWAY

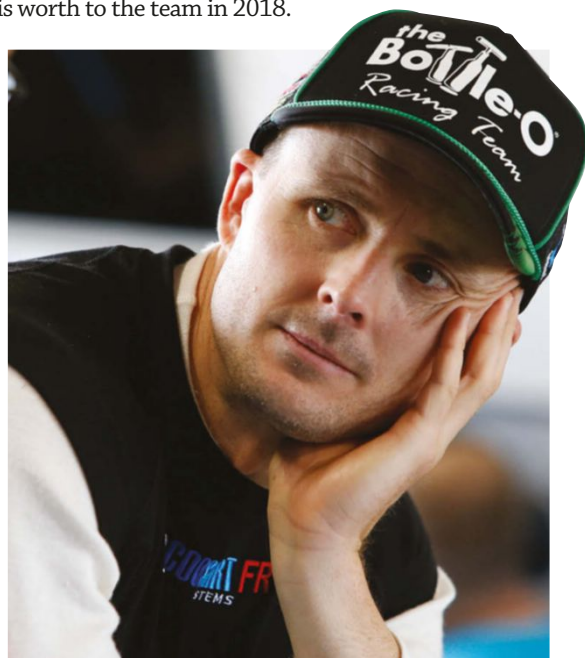
Tickford Racing boasts the most impressive four-car line-up in the field in 2018, with the addition of Richie Stanaway adding to the expectations from the Ford outfit. Chaz Mostert led the way for the team last season and Cameron Waters enjoyed a breakout campaign, highlighted by victory at Sandown. The three 20-somethings could all make a case for being a future leader of the team and 2018 is set to establish a pecking order into 2019 and beyond.

WINTERBOTTOM VS TEAMMATES

With Jason Bright's retirement, Mark Winterbottom is now the undisputed elder statesman within Tickford Racing. The 2015 championship winner is 10 years older than his teammates and will be out to keep pace with the young chargers to prove his worth to the team in 2018.

ABOVE: Red Bull Holden Racing Team teammates Shane van Gisbergen and Jamie Whincup could be set for a head-to-head battle for the title in 2018.

BELOW: Chaz Mostert and Mark Winterbottom are back in the same garage at Tickford, eagerly keeping an eye on the youngsters in the team's second garage.





ABOVE: Team 18 is aiming to shake off a run of bad luck for better results this season.

BELOW: Erebus Motorsport's David Reynolds shapes as a genuine contender in 2018.

BRAD JONES RACING VS GARRY ROGERS MOTORSPORT

These two teams emerged from the pack as fast starters with the introduction of the Car of the Future regulations and Holden VF Commodore. The ZB Commodore offers a clean slate for the two teams to once again show their technical nous. For Garry Rogers Motorsport it's a second season back with Holden and an opportunity to build on the results of 2017, while Brad Jones Racing's switch to KRE engines – the same engine supplier as Triple Eight Race Engineering – puts the team on a more level playing field with the factory Holden team.

REYNOLDS VS TANDER

David Reynolds and Garth Tander were the best placed non-Red Bull Holden Racing Team Commodore campaigners last season and are once again dark horses. Reynolds led

Erebus Motorsport to a new level last season, while Tander's return to Garry Rogers Motorsport helped the team steady the

ship following its split with Volvo. With the clean slate of the new Commodore, these two drivers are continuing to threaten the more fancied opponents, scoring podiums in Adelaide.

DE PASQUALE VS GOLDING

The two rookies are up against experienced teammates in David Reynolds and Garth Tander respectively, though their competition could be with each other. The former Super2 race winners

both have Bathurst 1000-winning teammates to learn from and teams with a string of impressive recent results, creating a positive environment for the main-game rookies.

DE SILVESTRO VS HEIMGARTNER

De Silvestro was surrounded by more experienced drivers at Nissan Motorsport last season, making it hard to gauge her progress in the Altima. The arrival of similarly less experienced Andre Heimgartner gives De Silvestro a more equal opponent in a battle that could help drive the competition within the team.

NISSAN MOTORSPORT VS THE REST

With Holden entrants running the new Commodore and more Ford entrants on the grid with race-winning FG Xs, Nissan Motorsport looks increasingly isolated. The pressure is on the four-car team in its sixth season running the Altima, with consistent top 10s and more race wins a must, but the competition from the Holden and Ford runners is deeper in 2018.

COURTNEY VS PYE

Scott Pye defeated his teammate in the championship standings in his first season at Walkinshaw Racing in 2017. And while the focus of the new-look Walkinshaw Andretti United will be to rebuild under its new co-owners, James Courtney will be determined to gain the upper hand in his eighth season with the team.

TEKNO AUTOSPORTS VS TEAM 18

The customer Triple Eight teams were separated by just 12 points last season, with Tekno Autosports prevailing. But with Tekno fielding rookie Jack Le Brocq and Holdsworth in his fourth season driving Charlie Schwerkolt's entry, the pendulum could swing between Holden's two single-car teams.





SLADE VS PERCAT

Brad Jones Racing's inter-team battle could also drive the Holden team forward in 2018. Tim Slade (above) won out amongst the Brad Jones Racing entries last season, though Nick Percat showed flashes of the speed and cunning that's netted him wins at Bathurst and Adelaide. The duo have been evenly matched in qualifying and both are entering their primes, determined to establish themselves as the leading driver.

KELLY VS CARUSO

Rick Kelly (right) and Michael Caruso (top right) have been Nissan Motorsport's most consistent drivers since the debut of the Altima and the only two Nissan drivers to finish in the top 10 of the championship standings. With Todd Kelly's retirement, Rick and Caruso take on the responsibility of the experienced team leaders driving Nissan Motorsport up the grid in 2018.

MATT STONE RACING VS 23 RED RACING

Supercars' newest teams are both campaigning former race-winning Ford FG X Falcons in 2018. While 23 Red Racing (below) has grown out of Lucas Dumbrell Motorsport, Matt Stone Racing stepped up into the main game off the back of a championship-winning Super2 campaign. As the only two Ford teams running customer FG X Falcons, the single-car teams will be a barometer for each other in their debut seasons. **X**



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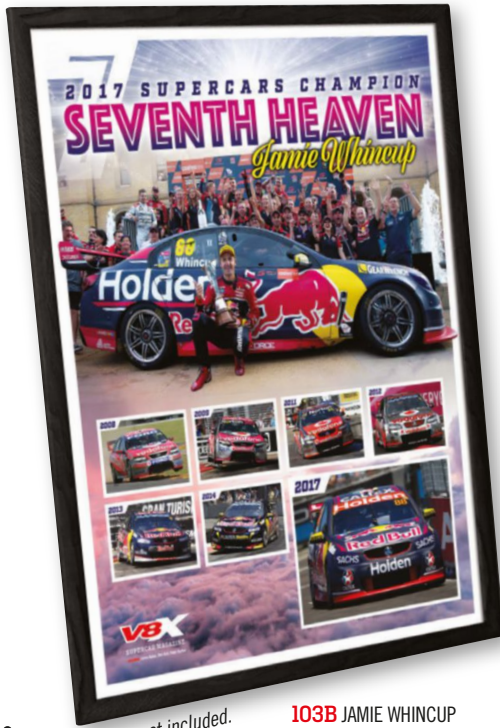
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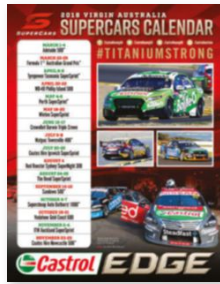
104A 2018 DJR TEAM PENSKE



104B 2018 ZB COMMODORE



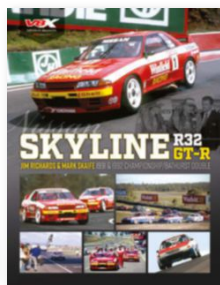
103B JAMIE WHINCUP



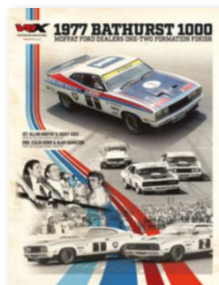
102A 2018 CALENDAR



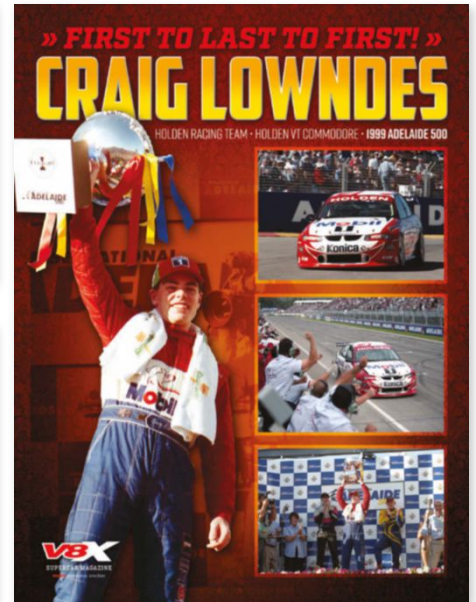
102B BATHURST WINNERS



101B SKYLINE R32 GT-R



101A 1977 BATHURST 1000



103A CRAIG LOWNDES



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MotorSport Legends



PAGE 36 **GROUP C: THE GREATEST ERA OF AUSTRALIAN TOURING CARS**



PAGE 42 **ICONIC CARS: FORD BA FALCON**



PAGE 48 **THE YEAR THAT WAS: 1985**

WORDS Adrian Musolino IMAGES Autopics.com.au

GROUPE C

THE GREATEST ERA OF AUSTRALIAN TOURING CARS

Forty-five years ago, Australian touring cars unified under the Group C regulations. Group C merged the Series Production and Improved Production rule-books into one, meaning that for the first time the same regulations would apply to the Australian Touring Car Championship and Bathurst 1000. Cars sold in the local marketplace replaced the imported muscle cars that had dominated the championship, intensifying the Ford versus Holden rivalry and adding variety to the grid through different classes. The Great Race at Mount Panorama would be increased from 500 miles to 1000 kilometres and winners such as Allan Moffat, Peter Brock, Jim Richards, Bob Morris, Dick Johnson and more became household names. Here's a snapshot of the 12-year Group C era that is widely considered the greatest of Australian touring cars.

1973

CHAMPIONSHIP WINNER

Allan Moffat – Ford XY Falcon GTHO Phase III.



Phillip Island, 1973.



Bathurst 1000, 1974.

ROUND WINNERS

Symmons Plains: Allan Moffat – Ford XY Falcon GTHO Phase III; Calder Park: Allan Moffat – Ford XY Falcon GTHO Phase III; Sandown: Allan Moffat – Ford XY Falcon GTHO Phase III; Wanneroo: Allan Moffat – Ford XY Falcon GTHO Phase III; Surfers Paradise: Peter Brock – Holden LJ Torana GTR XU-1; Adelaide: Peter Brock – Holden LJ Torana GTR XU-1; Oran Park: Allan Moffat – Ford XY Falcon GTHO Phase III;

Warwick Farm: Peter Brock – Holden LJ Torana GTR XU-1.

BATHURST 1000 WINNERS

Allan Moffat/Ian Geoghegan – Ford XA Falcon GT.

SUMMARY

The Group C era began with a first championship win for the Falcon with Allan Moffat's XY Falcon GTHO Phase III. Moffat and Brock in the LJ Torana GTR XU-1 shared the championship wins amongst themselves, with the title going to the former. While Ford and Holden did battle, Chrysler's withdrawal from racing left the Charger an also-ran. Moffat switched to the XA Falcon GT to win the first running of the Bathurst 1000.

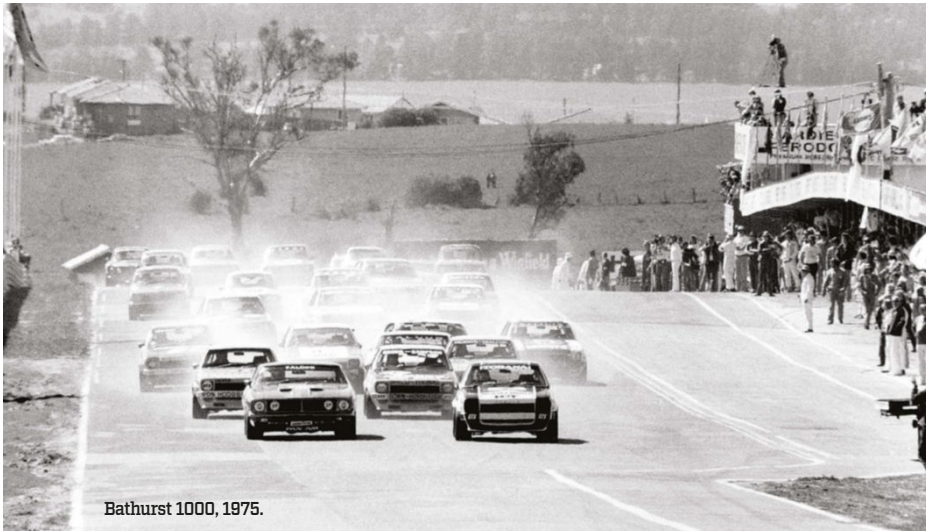
1974

CHAMPIONSHIP WINNER

Peter Brock – Holden LJ Torana GTR XU-1/LH Torana SL/R 5000.

ROUND WINNERS

Symmons Plains: Peter Brock – Holden LJ Torana GTR XU-1; Calder Park: Peter Brock



Bathurst 1000, 1975.

– Holden LJ Torana GTR XU-1; Sandown: Allan Moffat – Ford XB Falcon GT; Amaroo Park: Peter Brock – Holden LJ Torana GTR XU-1; Oran Park: Allan Moffat – Ford XB Falcon GT; Surfers Paradise: Peter Brock – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000; Adelaide: Peter Brock – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000.

BATHURST 1000 WINNERS

John Goss/Kevin Bartlett – Ford XA Falcon GT.

SUMMARY

Ford withdrew its support of Allan Moffat at the end of 1973, giving Holden the upper hand. The Holden Dealer Team's Peter Brock set the pace in the championship with the LJ Torana GTR XU-1 before switching to the V8-powered LH Torana SL/R 5000 for the final rounds. Moffat had his most competitive season as a privateer, while John Goss and Kevin Bartlett won in their Falcon at a very wet Mount Panorama.

1975

CHAMPIONSHIP WINNER

Colin Bond – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34.

ROUND WINNERS

Symmons Plains: Colin Bond – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34; Calder Park: Allan Grice – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34; Amaroo Park: Bob Morris – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34; Oran Park: Allan Grice – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34; Surfers Paradise: Bob Morris – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34; Adelaide: Colin Bond – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34; Lakeside: Colin Bond – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34.

BATHURST 1000 WINNERS

Peter Brock/Brian Sampson – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34.

SUMMARY

Holden's LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34 may have been unreliable but its strength in numbers saw the car win all championship rounds and the Holden Dealer Team's Colin Bond taking the title. Bond was the factory-backed team's leading force following the departure of Peter Brock, though the latter did recover to win Bathurst for the privateer Gown-Hindhaugh team. With development of the Falcon left to underfunded privateers, Ford entrants simply couldn't compete.

1976

CHAMPIONSHIP WINNER

Allan Moffat – Ford XB Falcon GT.

ROUND WINNERS

Symmons Plains: John Harvey – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34; Calder Park: Allan Moffat – Ford XB Falcon GT; Oran Park: Allan Moffat – Ford XB Falcon GT;

Sandown: Colin Bond – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34; Amaroo Park: Charlie O'Brien – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34; Adelaide: Allan Moffat – Ford XB Falcon GT; Lakeside: Colin Bond – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34; Sandown: Peter Brock – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34; Adelaide: Allan Grice – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34; Surfers Paradise: Peter Brock – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34; Phillip Island: Colin Bond – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34.

BATHURST 1000 WINNERS

Bob Morris/John Fitzpatrick – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34.

SUMMARY

Ford returned as backers of Allan Moffat's team, putting Ford and Holden on a level playing field. Moffat defeated Colin Bond in a close tussle, with Torana privateers in John Harvey, Charlie O'Brien, Peter Brock, Allan Grice and Bob Morris also taking wins. Morris outgunned the more fancied entries at Bathurst.



Bathurst 1000, 1977.

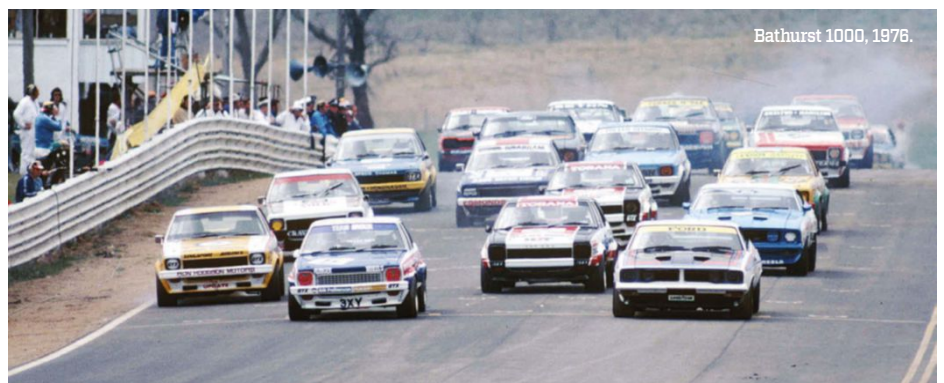
1977

CHAMPIONSHIP WINNER

Allan Moffat – Ford XB Falcon GT/XC GS.

ROUND WINNERS

Symmons Plains: Allan Moffat – Ford XB Falcon GT; Calder Park: Allan Moffat – Ford XB Falcon GT; Oran Park: Allan Moffat – Ford XB Falcon GT; Amaroo Park: Allan



Bathurst 1000, 1976.

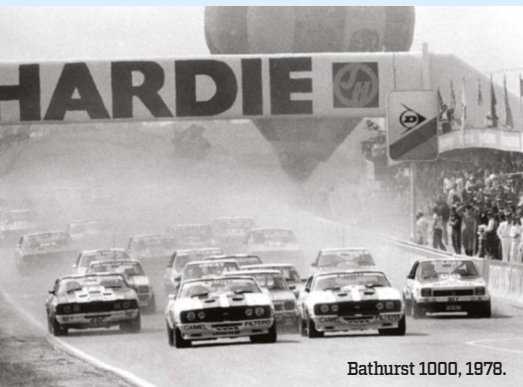
Moffat – Ford XB Falcon GT; Sandown: Allan Moffat – Ford XB Falcon GT; Adelaide: Colin Bond – Ford XB Falcon GT; Lakeside: Peter Brock – Holden LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34; Sandown: Peter Brock – Holden LX Torana SS A9X; Adelaide: Allan Moffat – Ford XC Falcon GS500; Surfers Paradise: Allan Moffat – Ford XC Falcon GS500; Phillip Island: Allan Grice – Holden LX Torana SS A9X.

BATHURST 1000 WINNERS:

Allan Moffat/Jacky Ickx – Ford XC Falcon GS500.

SUMMARY

The Ford-backed Moffat entries dominated the year for a one-two finish in the championship and famous formation finish at Bathurst. The XB and XC models proved unstoppable across the sprint and endurance races with the Holden entrants transitioning to the Torana SS A9X.



Bathurst 1000, 1978.

1978

CHAMPIONSHIP WINNER

Peter Brock – Holden LX Torana SS A9X.

ROUND WINNERS

Symmons Plains: Peter Brock – Holden LX Torana SS A9X; Oran Park: Peter Brock – Holden LX Torana SS A9X; Amaroo Park: Allan Grice – Holden LX Torana SS A9X; Sandown: Ian Geoghegan – Holden LX Torana SS A9X; Wanneroo: Peter Brock



Wanneroo, 1979.

– Holden LX Torana SS A9X; Calder Park: Bob Morris – Holden LX Torana SS A9X; Lakeside: Allan Moffat – Ford XC Falcon GS500; Adelaide: Colin Bond – Ford XC Falcon GS500.

BATHURST 1000 WINNERS

Peter Brock/Jim Richards – Holden LX Torana A9X SS.

SUMMARY

Prodigal son Peter Brock returned to the John Sheppard-led Holden Dealer Team in 1978, bringing Ford's winning run to an end with championship and Bathurst success. The Torana A9X SS became the car to have and had strength in numbers, while Allan Moffat struggled with the burden of driving and team management. Arguments over the eligibility of parts on the Falcon and Torana threatened to derail the championship, setting the theme for the final years of Group C.

1979

CHAMPIONSHIP WINNER

Bob Morris – Holden LX Torana SS A9X.

ROUND WINNERS

Symmons Plains: John Harvey – Holden LX Torana SS A9X; Calder Park: Peter Brock – Holden LX Torana SS A9X; Oran Park: Bob Morris – Holden LX Torana SS A9X;

Sandown: Bob Morris – Holden LX Torana SS A9X; Wanneroo: Peter Brock – Holden LX Torana SS A9X; Surfers Paradise: Peter Brock – Holden LX Torana SS A9X; Lakeside: Bob Morris – Holden LX Torana SS A9X; Adelaide: Bob Morris – Holden LX Torana SS A9X.

BATHURST 1000 WINNERS

Peter Brock/Jim Richards – Holden LX Torana A9X SS.

SUMMARY

With Allan Moffat losing Ford backing and sitting out most of the season, Holden claimed a clean sweep of the championship season and the LX Torana A9X SS secured its final championship and Bathurst win. Privateer Bob Morris prevailed in a head-to-head championship battle with Peter Brock, though the latter won out at Mount Panorama. Proposed rule changes limiting cars, modifications for upcoming seasons would help manufacturer-backed entries more than privateers.

1980

CHAMPIONSHIP WINNER

Peter Brock – Holden VB Commodore.

ROUND WINNERS

Symmons Plains: Peter Brock – Holden VB Commodore; Calder Park: Peter Brock

Wanneroo, 1980.



– Holden VB Commodore; Lakeside: Peter Brock – Holden VB Commodore; Sandown: Kevin Bartlett – Chevrolet Camaro Z28; Wanneroo: Allan Grice – Holden LX Torana SS A9X; Surfers Paradise: Peter Brock – Holden VB Commodore; Adelaide: Kevin Bartlett – Chevrolet Camaro Z28; Oran Park: Bob Morris – Holden VB Commodore.

BATHURST 1000 WINNERS

Peter Brock/Jim Richards – Holden VC Commodore.

SUMMARY

Holden followed Ford in withdrawing official backing for its entrants in 1980, though there was some level of support going to the Holden Dealer Team. The new Commodore model made its debut with a championship and Bathurst double. Tighter restrictions on eligible cars decreased the size of the grid. The Mazda RX models were allowed to help fill the grid, while the Chevrolet Camaro Z28 scored its first win.

1981

CHAMPIONSHIP WINNER

Dick Johnson – Ford XD Falcon.

ROUND WINNERS

Symmons Plains: Dick Johnson – Ford XD Falcon; Calder Park: Peter Brock – Holden VC Commodore; Oran Park: Dick Johnson – Ford XD Falcon; Sandown: Dick Johnson – Ford XD Falcon; Wanneroo: Peter Brock – Holden VC Commodore; Adelaide: Peter Brock – Holden VC Commodore; Surfers



Sandown, 1982.

Paradise: Dick Johnson – Ford XD Falcon; Lakeside: Dick Johnson – Ford XD Falcon.

BATHURST 1000 WINNERS

Dick Johnson/John French – Ford XD Falcon.

SUMMARY

The title battle came down to a final-round shootout between Dick Johnson and Peter Brock at the former's home round at Lakeside. Johnson prevailed and capped off his year with victory in the Bathurst 1000, completing the fairytale return from the heartbreak in 1980. The success of Johnson with his own XD Falcon once again highlighted Group C's ability to open the

door for privateer entrants. Manufacturer backing was on its way, though, evidenced by the debut of JPS Team BMW in 1981.

1982

CHAMPIONSHIP WINNER

Dick Johnson – Ford XD Falcon.

ROUND WINNERS

Sandown: Dick Johnson – Ford XD Falcon; Calder Park: Dick Johnson – Ford XD Falcon; Symmons Plains: Peter Brock – Holden VC Commodore; Oran Park: Kevin Bartlett – Chevrolet Camaro Z28; Lakeside: Allan Moffat – Mazda RX-7; Wanneroo: Allan Grice – Holden VH Commodore; Adelaide: Dick Johnson – Ford XD Falcon; Surfers Paradise: Allan Moffat – Mazda RX-7.

BATHURST 1000 WINNERS

Peter Brock/Larry Perkins – Holden VH Commodore SS.

SUMMARY

The championship was decided in the courts rather than the track, with Peter Brock disqualified from six rounds for use of non-homologated engine heads. After a protracted battle between CAMS and the Holden Dealer Team, the disqualifications were upheld and the title went to Dick Johnson. Brock made amends with victory at Mount Panorama, while Allan Moffat won the first championship race for a Japanese car in addition to the endurance championship.



Amaroo Park, 1981.

Wanneroo, 1983.



1983

CHAMPIONSHIP WINNER

Allan Moffat – Mazda RX-7.

ROUND WINNERS

Calder Park: Allan Moffat – Mazda RX-7; Sandown: Allan Grice – Holden VH Commodore SS; Symmons Plains: Allan Grice – Holden VH Commodore SS; Wanneroo: Allan Moffat – Mazda RX-7; Adelaide: Peter Brock – Holden VH Commodore SS; Surfers Paradise: Allan Moffat – Mazda RX-7; Oran Park: Allan Moffat – Mazda RX-7; Lakeside: Peter Brock – Holden VH Commodore SS.

BATHURST 1000 WINNERS

Peter Brock/Larry Perkins/John Harvey – Holden VH Commodore SS.

SUMMARY

Mazda became the first Japanese manufacturer to win a championship courtesy of Allan Moffat. The success of the rotary-powered RX-7 and increased competitiveness of turbos such as the Nissan Bluebird added to the parity squabbles. But it was the home-grown Commodore that won again at Mount Panorama.

1984

CHAMPIONSHIP WINNER

Dick Johnson – Ford XE Falcon.

ROUND WINNERS

Sandown: Peter Brock – Holden VH Commodore; Symmons Plains: Peter Brock – Holden VH Commodore; Wanneroo: Allan Moffat – Mazda RX-7; Surfers

Paradise: Dick Johnson – Ford XE Falcon; Oran Park: Bob Morris – Mazda RX-7; Lakeside: George Fury – Nissan Bluebird; Adelaide: Allan Grice – Holden VH Commodore.

BATHURST 1000 WINNERS

Peter Brock/Larry Perkins – Holden VK Commodore.

SUMMARY

The final season of Group C before the implementation of the international Group A rules from 1985. Dick Johnson won the title, with Peter Brock and Allan Moffat missing rounds through overseas commitments and injury respectively. There was a taste of what was to come with the first win for a turbocharged car courtesy of the Nissan Bluebird. Holden introduced its VK Commodore for Sandown and Bathurst and took commanding wins in a fitting farewell for Group C. **X**



Bathurst 1000, 1984.

GROUP C RECORDS

MOST CHAMPIONSHIP WINS PER DRIVER

Allan Moffat – 4

MOST CHAMPIONSHIP WINS PER MAKE

Ford – 6

MOST BATHURST WINS PER DRIVER

Peter Brock – 7

MOST BATHURST WINS PER MAKE

Holden – 8

MOST ROUND WINS PER DRIVER

Allan Moffat – 25

MOST ROUND WINS PER MAKE

Holden – 58



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ICONIC CARS FORD BA FALCON

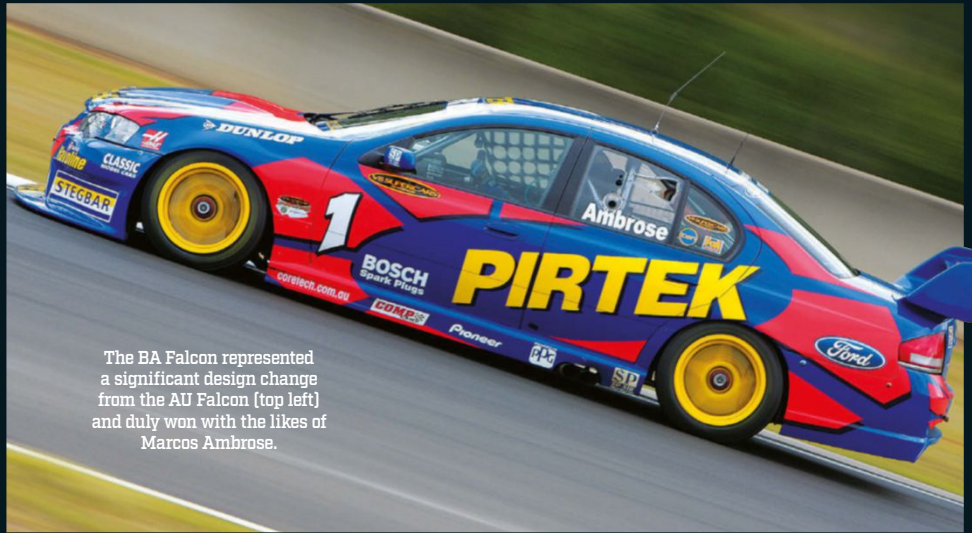
Holden ruled V8 Supercars from 1999 to 2002 with four straight championship and Bathurst doubles. Then along came new regulations – and Ford’s BA Falcon – to level the playing field.

The rebranded V8 Supercars category had been built on the rivalry between Holden and Ford. But into the 2000s it was a one-sided fight that threatened to derail the category. Led by Mark Skaife and the Holden

Racing Team, the Commodore ruled on the race track with a string of championship and Bathurst wins, while the VT and VX Commodores also dominated in the marketplace. Ford was left trailing with what many consider to be the worst Falcon produced, the AU.

The AU was rushed into production to compete with Holden’s VT Commodore and released in September 1998. But the radical design of the front grille, which varied greatly from the standard range to the XR series that formed the basis for the V8 Supercar, coupled with interior-design





The BA Falcon represented a significant design change from the AU Falcon [top left] and duly won with the likes of Marcos Ambrose.

flaws and reliability issues, set Ford back. Ford Australia reported a pre-tax loss of \$33.6 million in 2001 and sales of Falcon sedans slumped to a 35-year low.

Design plans for a new model, including the involvement of head office designers and a new philosophy within Ford Australia, began ahead of schedule in 1999. A clean slate was required to undo the damage caused by the AU Falcon, which was failing in the marketplace and on the race track. Ford Australia ended the AU's manufacturing cycle in four years, the shortest in the manufacturer's history, and the BA series was unveiled in July 2002.

Every panel was new except for the carry-over door skins. The design was more in line with Ford's global designs; a cleaner and more sophisticated appearance. The XR range would also feature a more dynamic look with a lower ride height and wide-open air intake.

The BA Falcon is said to have cost Ford Australia half a billion dollars to design and develop, though it was considered a worthy investment with its success in the marketplace undoing the stain of the AU.

Wheels magazine named the BA the 'Car of the Year' for 2002, describing it as "the most eloquent ever expression of Australia's unique automotive identity" with "a more sophisticated and worldly outlook". Ford Australia reported a \$14.85 million gain in 2002 followed by a profit of \$204.23 million in 2003.

The V8 Supercar version of the BA would conform to new technical regulations to even the playing field and end the squabbles over parity between the Falcon and Commodore. Chassis pick-up points, wheelbase, track and driving position and double front-wishbone

suspensions were shared across both models under the 'Project Blueprint' regulations.

Ford Australia's in-house developed BA V8 Supercar made its public debut at Mount Panorama in October 2002. Ford hero Dick Johnson took then Ford boss Geoff Polites for a lap on the morning of the Bathurst 1000, giving Blue Oval fans hope on a day when Skaife and Holden dominated yet again.

Ford teams were well positioned to take advantage of the new technical regulations in 2003. Stone Brothers Racing had emerged as the most competitive Ford team with the AU, with Marcos Ambrose leading the way.

Elsewhere, the British-owned Ford Performance Racing carried the factory-team status with its owners Prodrive also taking over road-car division Tickford to form Ford Performance Vehicles. Later in the year, Triple Eight Race Engineering purchased Briggs Motorsport to add to the British influence in V8 Supercars.

The BA made a winning debut, with Ambrose taking victory in the first race of the season in Adelaide.

While Skaife took out the round in Holden's new VY Commodore, the BA won the next seven rounds, six of them for Stone Brothers Racing. Holden teams bounced back with endurance wins at Sandown and Bathurst, but Ambrose had the momentum in the championship. He sealed his first title with a round sweep at the Eastern Creek season finale, ending a six-year championship drought for Ford.

Ambrose won the title again in 2004 in addition to victory in the Sandown 500, with teammate Russell Ingall finishing second in the championship standings.

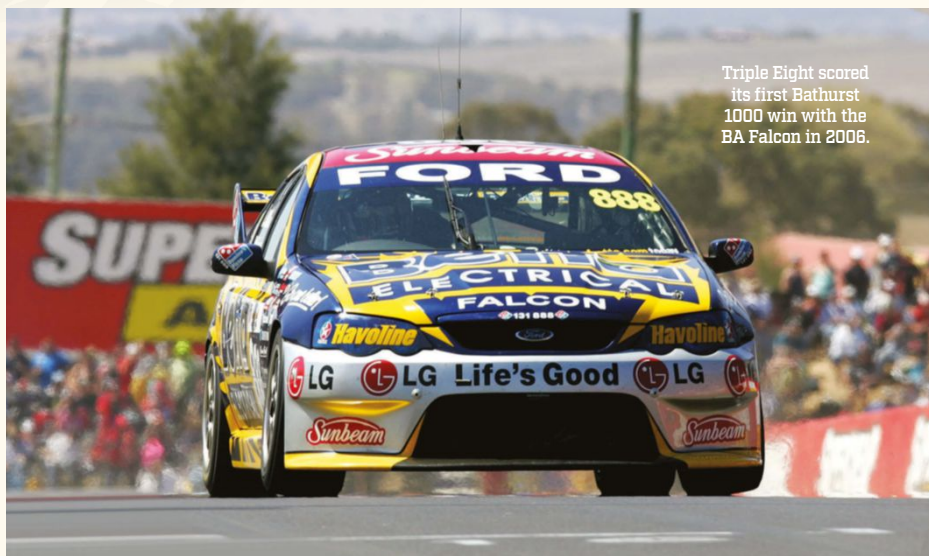
It was Ingall's turn to win the title in 2005; three consecutive drivers' and teams' championships for Stone Brothers Racing.

Triple Eight was coming of age, too, with the arrival of Craig Lowndes leading to breakthrough wins in 2005, including at the Sandown 500.

Lowndes had left Ford Performance Racing after two uncompetitive seasons, though the factory team would turn things around in 2006.

Ford Australia sketch of the BA Falcon Supercar.





Triple Eight scored its first Bathurst 1000 win with the BA Falcon in 2006.

The team won the Sandown 500 in 2006, a third straight Sandown win for the BA.

Bathurst had proved a bugbear for Ford, though, with seven consecutive wins for Holden from 1999 to 2005. It was Triple Eight with Lowndes and Jamie Whincup who would break that stranglehold with a much-deserved Mount Panorama success for the BA in 2006. However, the championship run came to an end that season.

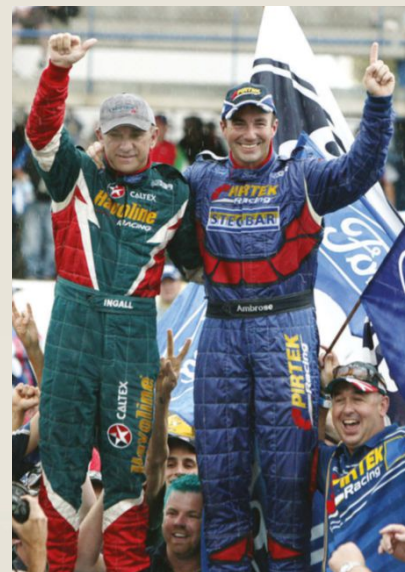
Stone Brothers Racing lost its way when Ambrose left for NASCAR, while Lowndes lost out to Holden's Rick Kelly following a

controversial tangle at Phillip Island.

The BA set the groundwork for the BF and FG Falcons, with which Triple Eight would emerge as the dominant team. However, it was Ford Australia's inability to keep Triple Eight tied to the Blue Oval that would hand the momentum back to Holden. Ford wouldn't have been in that position without the BA, though. Had it failed to end Holden's domination and undo the damage of the AU, the Ford versus Holden rivalry could well have come to an early end. **X**

BA FALCON SUCCESSES

- 2003** Drivers' championship: Marcos Ambrose
- 2003** Teams' championship: Stone Brothers Racing
- 2004** Drivers' championship: Marcos Ambrose
- 2004** Teams' championship: Stone Brothers Racing
- 2004** Sandown 500 win: Marcos Ambrose/Greg Ritter (SBR)
- 2005** Drivers' championship: Russell Ingall
- 2005** Teams' championship: Stone Brothers Racing
- 2005** Sandown 500 win: Craig Lowndes/Yvan Muller (T8)
- 2006** Sandown 500 win: Jason Bright/Mark Winterbottom (FPR)
- 2006** Bathurst 1000 win: Craig Lowndes/Jamie Whincup (T8)



Russell Ingall gave the BA Falcon a third consecutive title win in 2005.





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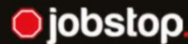
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WORDS Adrian Musolino IMAGES Autopics.com.au

1985 THE YEAR THAT WAS

Australian touring cars re-invented itself in 1985, adopting the international Group A regulations, and the BMW 635CSi and Jaguar XJ-S dominating the championship and Bathurst 1000 respectively.

Australia officially became part of the global motorsport scene with the addition of the Australian Grand Prix into the Formula 1 world championship in 1985. And Australian touring cars also joined the international fraternity that year with the change from the home-grown Group C to Group A regulations.

Group A put the emphasis on manufacturer involvement, at a time when turbos ruled across different disciplines, led by automotive brands investing heavily in the technology and motorsport.

Manufacturers had to produce certain

amounts of cars in order to race that particular model, ending the days when privateers like Murray Carter and Dick Johnson could develop their own cars such as with the Ford XD Falcon in Group C.

The parity system attempted to level the playing field on power to weight and tyre sizes. Group A cars may have been production-based with limits on engine modifications (the more power, the more weight) but the lower ride height and suspension and brake packages were an improvement on the Group C era.

Costs, therefore, increased and the look of the cars, running without the aerodynamic aids and guard flares of Group C,

were noticeably different. Entrants running European-spec cars would have the advantage while the locals played catch up.

Indeed, no Australian-made car would be on the grid for the season opener at Winton. Holden was still in the process of converting the VK Commodore into Group A spec, Ford entrants such as Dick Johnson opted for the European-built Mustang GT and Nissan was forced to sit out while it waited for the Skyline to be completed.

BMW was the favourite given its European Group A pedigree. And it was Jim Richards in the JPS Team BMW who won the season opener with ease, setting the tone for the rest of the championship.



The BMW 635CSi proved too good for the competition in 1985.



Ford runners such as Dick Johnson opted for the Mustang in Group A.



Holden's Group A Commodore looked very different to the Group C version.

Brock won in the new VK's debut event at Sandown followed by Robbie Francevic's Volvo 240T at Symmons Plains, but it was a false dawn for Richards' opponents. Richards won the next six rounds in a row to cement what would be his and BMW's first championship win.

Seven different manufacturers may have finished in the top 10 places in the drivers' championship standings, but the BMW 635CSi was a class above the rest.

Richards' domination continued in the endurance championship with wins in the Amaroo Park 300, Oran Park 250, Surfers Paradise 300 and Sandown 500, the latter with Tony Longhurst. The Bathurst 1000 was the only endurance event missing from his list of successes.

The Group A regulations opened the door for international entrants to tackle the Bathurst 1000, which included Tom Walkinshaw Racing and its three V12-powered Jaguar XJ-Ss.

The Jaguars of Tom Walkinshaw and Jeff Allam locked out the front row, with Walkinshaw's Shootout lap almost two seconds quicker than Johnson's Mustang in third place.

In the race, however, it was the third Jaguar entry of Armin Hahne and John Goss that prevailed in a race of attrition.

Brock once again starred at Mount Panorama, challenging the leading Jaguar in the closing stages despite running without a front and rear windscreen.

However, a broken timing chain ended his campaign and handed international entrants a clean sweep of the podium.

Richards and Longhurst led the way for the locals with fourth, though JPS Team BMW's bid for victory ended when both entries beached themselves in the gravel trap.

Johnson and co-driver Larry Perkins were down in seventh with the best Holden entrant in 10th.

The year ended with a victory for Johnson in the support race at the first world championship Australian Grand Prix in Adelaide. It would be the only win for the Mustang GT Group A in Australia.

However, despite a one-two finish for fan favourites Johnson and Brock in Adelaide, the reaction to Group A remained mixed.

Crowds were noticeably down across the championship and at Mount Panorama, while the variety in cars and manufacturers did little to win over Australians to the new formula.

Group A would need more than one year to cement itself in Australia.

1985 ROUND WINNERS

WINTON	Jim Richards – BMW 635CSi
SANDOWN	Peter Brock – Holden VK Commodore
SYMMONS PLAINS	Robbie Francevic – Volvo 240T
WANNEROO	Jim Richards – BMW 635CSi
ADELAIDE	Jim Richards – BMW 635CSi
CALDER PARK	Jim Richards – BMW 635CSi
SURFERS PARADISE	Jim Richards – BMW 635CSi
LAKESIDE	Jim Richards – BMW 635CSi
AMAROO PARK	Jim Richards – BMW 635CSi
ORAN PARK	Robbie Francevic – Volvo 240T

CHAMPIONSHIP TOP 10

1	Jim Richards – BMW 635CSi
2	Dick Johnson – Ford Mustang GT
3	Peter Brock – Holden VK Commodore
4	Neville Crichton – BMW 635CSi
5	Robbie Francevic – Volvo 240T
6	Colin Bond – Alfa Romeo GTV6
7	John Smith – Toyota Corolla GT AE86
8	Alan Jones – Alfa Romeo GTV6
9	Kevin Bartlett – Mitsubishi Starion
10	Bob Holden – Toyota Sprinter Trueno AE86

BATHURST 1000 TOP 10

1	Armin Hahne/John Goss – Jaguar XJ-S
2	Johnny Cecotto/Roberto Ravaglia – BMW 635CSi
3	Tom Walkinshaw/Win Percy – Jaguar XJ-S
4	Jim Richards/Tony Longhurst – BMW 635CSi
5	Kent Baigent/Neal Lowe – BMW 635CSi
6	Jim Keogh/Garry Rogers – BMW 635CSi
7	Dick Johnson/Larry Perkins – Ford Mustang GT
8	Colin Bond/Gregg Hansford – Alfa Romeo GTV6
9	Kevin Bartlett/Peter McKay – Mitsubishi Starion
10	Barry Jones/Tony Mulvihill – Holden VK Commodore



JPS Team BMW's Jim Richards dominated the 1985 season.




Armin Hahne and John Goss celebrate victory in the Bathurst 1000.



Jaguar's V12 powered away from its rivals at Mount Panorama.

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RICHIE STANAWAY

THE NEW KIWI SENSATION

WORDS John Bannon
IMAGES Tickford, Peter Norton



When Richie Stanaway arrived at Sandown as a co-driver in 2016, he did so with limited fanfare. But after just a handful of impressive performances in a Supercar, he quickly became hot property and joins the list of competitive Kiwis in the Australian-based category in 2018.

When you sit back and listen to New Zealander Richie Stanaway speak, it quickly becomes apparent how he elevated himself to the main game after just a handful of drives in a Supercar. Eloquent, analytical, relaxed yet focused, the 26-year-old has an honest and open approach that Kiwis are famous for.

Throughout our interview, the GP2 race winner displays a rare ability to describe the process of driving a Supercar in such clear and thoughtful terms that you feel like you are right there with him in the driver's seat. But that's what a quality mix of international single-seater and tin-top experience buys you; feedback that the top echelon of engineers crave. It's little wonder Stanaway's signature was being



sought after by more than just Tickford Racing for 2018.

Starting out as New Zealand Formula Ford champion in 2009, Stanaway first impressed the Supercars paddock that same year in Hamilton on his Toyota Racing Series debut. He claimed the outright lap record and race wins.

The Kiwi moved overseas in 2010 to chase his single-seater dream and won the German ADAC Formula Masters series. He graduated to German Formula 3 and duly won that title in 2011. He progressed to Formula Renault 3.5, GP3 and GP2, adding to his growing tally of race wins along the way, including at the famed Monaco Grand Prix.

But Stanaway's international experience doesn't end on the cusp of Formula 1. He's raced for DAMS in the highly-competitive Porsche SuperCup and has been a key figure in Aston Martin's sportscar program, where he's competed in the Grand Am Series in the United States and the World Endurance Championship, winning more races.

Still, the Virgin Australia Supercars Championship has claimed many international victims with impressive resumes. But Stanaway is not one of them. There's been plenty of guys and gals with big name reputations who were meant to show the local folk how it's done, only to discover to some surprise that they've arrived at one of the toughest championships in the world.

When Stanaway secured the gig at Super Black Racing for the 2016 enduros, by his own admission, he was lucky to be there. Arguably underprepared and with a lack of Supercar miles under his belt, to the seasoned observer it appeared a high-risk play. But from his first event in slippery conditions at Sandown he impressed.

If his 2016 efforts secured him a plumb drive alongside young gun Cameron Waters for the 2017 enduros, then last year's performance cemented his full-time championship arrival. He won a race on his debut weekend in the highly-competitive Dunlop Super2 Series at Sydney Motorsport Park. A front-runner all weekend at



Sandown alongside Waters, the pair secured their first main-game triumph. At Bathurst a mega stint in the wet saw the duo lead much of the race. And at the Gold Coast he produced another mighty drive in difficult conditions, securing another podium.

It's hard to name an international driver who's adapted to these cars better than Stanaway. Other internationals who made the transition were highly regarded but it is the new Tickford Racing full-timer who seems to have accelerated the learning process.

"I guess I've tried as much as possible to minimise the time that it has taken me to get up to speed just by doing as much research as we can in terms of studying onboard videos and looking at data and really visualising what it takes to drive these cars," says Stanaway.

"I expected to struggle a lot more than I have, especially when it comes to the braking zones."

This has been the hardest thing about racing in so many different categories for Stanaway, getting the braking right in different categories.

ABOVE: Stanaway starred on his Supercars debut with Super Black Racing at Sandown in 2016.

BELOW: One year later, Stanaway scored his first Supercars race win as co-driver to Cameron Waters at Tickford Racing.



“IT’S GOOD TO GET IN AN ELITE CATEGORY LIKE THIS AND HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPECIALISE WITH ONE CAR, IN ONE CHAMPIONSHIP, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY CAREER.”

– RICHIE STANAWAY

Stanaway is the latest highly rated New Zealander to commit to Supercars.

“Anyone can turn a steering wheel into a corner or squeeze a gas pedal down, but braking the car on the limit and finding good reference points relative to the grip and fuel loads is probably the hardest thing,” he says.

“I just thought these cars would be really hard to get a feel for that, especially when I’m used to driving high downforce, light cars and braking 40 meters before corners. In my experience it tends to be easier to go up in the level of car performance, like going from Formula 3 to GP2. You just have to tell yourself to brake a little deeper. I find that easier than having to peg it back a long way, which is obviously what I’ve had to do transferring to a heavy touring car with not such a big tyre on it. So I seem to have good feel on the brakes.”

The former Aston Martin works driver says being with Tickford has also accelerated his learning curve.

“The good thing for me is being with a top team; it’s a luxury that I haven’t had a lot of in my career,” reflects Stanaway.

“I’m always used to being in middle of the road teams where you always feel like you’re pushing a stone up a hill. When you are with a top team you just know you’ve got faith in their engineering ability and that is certainly the case here.

“Whenever they are not the quickest, they are never a million miles away. It’s only tiny things they are looking for. They roll out some little updates and we have good pace and it’s nice to know that the car is always there or thereabouts in terms of its setup window. So that makes it easier for my learning as well. If I was having huge balance issues out there, whether it’s no turn or a lot of oversteer, that would make things a lot harder for me.”

In what might come as a surprise to some, the candid Kiwi says on reflection the 2016 enduros with Super Black were “pretty much the worse-case scenario” considering the impact it had on the direction of his career.

“I really hadn’t driven the car enough to be racing in the enduros in the main game, it was as simple as that,” he says.

“I was just fortunate enough that Super Black probably took me more for my international profile and that I was a New Zealander as it was a New Zealand-themed entry more than the fact that I was actually the best one





to drive a Supercar at the time.

“So I was just fortunate that I had the circumstances to get in the car. When I did a co-driver session I’d be stressed to get in the top 20 and feeling just a bit overwhelmed, not really ready for the task.”

He says he was “lucky” to have mixed conditions at Sandown in 2016, which allowed him to show his potential.

“It made it a level playing field because no one really knows what they are doing in those situations,” he says.

“In those conditions everyone has to figure it out in that moment and we had a good strategy where we pitted early, so we didn’t really have much choice other than to stay out. In some ways it probably made me look better than what I was but sometimes that’s how racing goes.”

In fact, wet conditions across the 2016 and 2017 endurance events cemented Stanaway’s reputation as a natural talent who could mix it with the established stars of Supercars.

“It’s nice to have made the step up now,” he says.

“The next thing on the radar for me now is to make the step from a front-running co-driver because if you’re probably the best co-driver you’d be lucky if you’re in the top half of the field of the main drivers. That’s next on the radar for me.”

Stanaway has won races in some of the most competitive categories in the world, including GP3 and GP2, the feeder categories to Formula 1, but it’s in Supercars where he will look to establish himself.

“As a young, ambitious racing driver you always strive



ABOVE: Stanaway made his solo Supercars debut for Tickford Racing at the Adelaide 500.

BELOW: Stanaway won the GP2 Series sprint race at the Monaco Grand Prix in 2015, one of the many highlights on his impressive resume.

RICHIE'S RESUME

New Zealand Formula Ford champion
2008/09

ADAC Formel Masters champion
2010

German Formula 3 champion
2011

GP3 Series race winner
2011, 2014

GP2 Series race winner
2015

FIA WEC LMGTE Pro race winner
2015, 2016

Super2 Series race winner
2017

Supercars race winner
2017

to make it into one of those top four or five motorsport categories in the world that would be considered in the elite tier,” he says.

“Supercars is definitely one of those categories. Initially, I tried to get to F1 and that didn’t work. And all of the racing I’ve been doing the last four or five years has not really been at that elite level and not ever doing a full campaign; it’s always been the odd race here or there.

“It’s good to get in an elite category like this and have the opportunity to specialise with one car, in one championship, for the first time in my career; be somewhere where there is nowhere further to go. You’re at the top and it’s then just a matter of trying to be successful in that one category.”

Despite so far displaying a quick ability to adapt, Stanaway expects it to take a year or two to get up to speed as a main-game driver.

“It’s always the case with rookies, so I’m just hoping the team realises that and are willing to give me that time to get there,” he says.

“The same thing happened with Chaz [Mostert] and with Cam [Waters]; they’ve all had a lot of time driving these cars from a young age and eventually they come of age and are at the front. We’ve especially seen that with Cam recently. He had his first year in the main game in 2016 and look at the difference in him now. He’s not jumping up and down about it. Whereas as a rookie he was a long way away from that. Realistically, I’m just trying to get a couple of seasons under my belt to try to get to that level as well.”

Stanaway’s arrival at Tickford signals a changing of the guard. Not only does Supercars veteran Jason Bright step out of a full-time drive to make way, but the team is building around its youth with its three young guns aged 26 years or under.

Only 2015 Supercars champion Mark Winterbottom bucks the trend, 10 years older than the youthful trio of Stanaway, Mostert and Waters. But Stanaway is very clear that it’s Winterbottom he looks up to, can learn from and hopes to one day emulate.

“You’ve only got to look at him [Winterbottom], he’s been a pretty good ambassador for the Ford brand for a very long time now, everyone sees him as one of the icons,” says Stanaway.

“I’ve always looked up to Winterbottom. He’s always been a hero of mine and it’s quite surreal to be mates with him now. It’s easy to forget how much I looked up to him as a kid.”

With Winterbottom a well-recognised ambassador for the Ford brand and DJR Team Penske’s Scott McLaughlin growing in stature, there’s plenty of competition out there to be Ford’s main man. But Stanaway says his manufacturer loyalties are not something he’s thinking too much about at this early stage in his Supercars career.

“The main consideration for me is where does the team stack up in terms of performance,” he says.

“That’s the number-one consideration for me. If I can get in with one type of manufacturer and chip away at getting results, then I’m sure the fans will appreciate that.” **X**

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THE COMEBACK KID

Seemingly consigned to the Supercars scrapheap after 2016, Andre Heimgartner has made a remarkable return to the main game – in a factory team no less – for 2018. We spoke to the young charger about how he turned his fortunes around.

WORDS John Bannon IMAGES Ben Auld, Peter Norton, AJ Pearson Photography, Supercars

It's the early hours of Friday morning at Bathurst in 2017. Carrera Cup Australia front-runner Andre Heimgartner is trying to get some much-needed rest before a big weekend of racing in the one-make Porsche series. Suddenly, he is startled. His phone starts to glow like an elaborate Christmas lights display. Twitter says he's racing in the Bathurst 1000. His set-to-be new team boss Brad Jones calls shortly after to confirm. The Aucklander scurries to the track and just makes it in time for some vital practice laps. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Heimgartner had "really no intention to return to Supercars" last year. The 22-year-old debuted in the championship on a full-time basis back in 2015 with Super Black Racing but admits he was "too young and inexperienced" to capitalise on the opportunity and parted ways with the team before season's end. A move to Lucas Dumbrell Motorsport for 2016 kept the Kiwi in the main game but he says he "didn't have the equipment to perform as he needed to".

The Melbourne resident was more

than content when he secured a varied sportscar program last year, which included Carrera Cup Australia and GT racing in Asia. But when Brad Jones Racing enduro driver Ashley Walsh was injured in a nasty sportscar crash at Phillip Island in the lead up to Bathurst, fate saw Heimgartner back in the Supercars paddock.

"I didn't want to return to Supercars unless I was in a good car and a good team that could perform," says Heimgartner.

"To get those plum drives is pretty difficult. So obviously I wasn't holding my breath on that. I was pretty sorted concentrating on my GT racing. I was looking forward to doing Carrera Cup again [in 2018] and some Asian races and trying to build that program. So at that time I was pretty content with everything I was doing.

"I didn't really feel majorly upset that I wasn't going to do the enduros, either. It sort of is what it is, you can't get angry or blame other people for your problems. I was pretty relaxed. I saw the opportunity as something pretty cool that I could do to help Brad out."







ABOVE & BELOW: Heimgartner's seasons with Super Black Racing in 2015 and Lucas Dumbrell Motorsport in 2016 came to premature ends, leaving him without a Supercars co-drive in 2017 before the last-minute call-up to Brad Jones Racing to replace the injured Ashley Walsh at Bathurst (below) and the Gold Coast.



But let's take a step back. Heimgartner is just 22 but started racing Formula Vee in New Zealand at 12. Since then he's had a crack at New Zealand and Australian Formula Ford, Carrera Cup, the NZ V8SuperTourer Series and the Dunlop Super2 Series before his arrival in the Virgin Australia Supercars Championship with Super Black Racing at just 19.

"I had only done two years in DVS so I still didn't really know 100 per cent what I was doing," he admits.

"So that was an interesting year. Obviously I didn't get to complete the end of the year with them. And then I went in to the next year with LDM. I think I was driving better and I understood everything a bit more but, unfortunately, I didn't have the equipment to perform as best as we needed."

Heimgartner insists his time away from Supercars helped him learn and was good for his driving because he was racing regularly in different machinery.

"Up until the Gold Coast [Supercars round] I'd driven four or five weekends in a row," he says.

"I was definitely tuned in come the end of the year. To drive all different sorts of cars makes you think, makes you use different driving techniques and understand different things, like some cars use more aero base than others. I think it was good for me to experience some other teams like Craft Bamboo Racing and learn how they operate. It was definitely a positive experience. It keeps you interested, too, because you're not doing the same thing over and over again."

While the two-times New Zealand Formula Ford champion landed on his feet in sportscar racing last year, that didn't mean there weren't low points at the end of the 2016 season when he learned he wouldn't be returning to the Supercars paddock full-time in 2017.

"To be honest, at the time it was pretty devastating," he says.

"I didn't have any drive of any type back then. So it was a shock to my world a little bit. But we managed to get the Porsche program together and it was actually a really good year. I wouldn't have changed it for anything. I got to travel around Asia, I did some LMP3, I got to do Blacpain GT Series Asia, which was awesome.

"The experience I gained was invaluable and then working with such a good team like Sonic [in Carrera Cup] I learnt so much from them and how they operate. Although at the time it seemed like a bad thing, not getting that drive last year set me up to be with Nissan this year. So, in the end, it all worked out."

Most of all, the new Nissan Motorsport recruit says time in sportscars helped him learn how to enjoy his racing again after a challenging initiation to Supercars.

"When you're not getting results it can get pretty frustrating and you forget why you're doing it," he admits.

"So, for me, to have a year off [Supercars], to have a bit of a hiatus and go and enjoy my racing, win some races and get lots of trophies, it's pretty good for your overall happiness... it's great to get that confidence back and I'll definitely carry a bit of that in to this year.

"But it's like anything in any sport, I suppose, it's all about momentum, so once you're back peddling it's hard to change the tide. We seemed to have some good



momentum towards the end of last year, so hopefully we can carry that on in to this year.”

But more on that opportunity with Brad Jones Racing, which ultimately led to this full-time deal with Nissan Motorsport this season.

“When we heard [about Ash] we made a call to register our interest,” he recalls.

“I went and met Brad and we talked about it and I just made sure I sat in one of the cars. Then we didn’t talk too much until Bathurst... I got one practice in and then straight into the racing.”

After just a handful of practice laps at Mount Panorama, Heimgartner was thrown in to a wet race and did a very solid job, helping teammate Tim Slade to a top-10 finish.

“I think Bathurst was about what I expected,” Heimgartner says humbly.

“I got chucked out there in soaking wet conditions and I’d only done 10 laps in the car in the dry [in practice], but I managed to pull through that and I think I didn’t do a bad job.”

If Heimgartner impressed at Bathurst, then he excelled on the Gold Coast when he jumped to the lead in wet conditions after starting third in just a handful of laps. He then went about building a healthy margin over his rivals.

“At the Gold Coast I was surprised when I pulled away from everyone and managed to build that 20-second gap,” he says.

“I knew going in to that I had good form. I’d been working incredibly hard behind the scenes to improve my racing. I’d raced the four weekends before that, one

“BEING BACK FULL-TIME IS THE MAIN THING AND TO BE BACK WITH SUCH A GOOD TEAM AS WELL IS A PRETTY COOL OPPORTUNITY.” – ANDRE HEIMGARTNER

was in treacherous conditions in China. So I’d tuned up with all the rain racing. And then I’d raced before that [Supercars] race in the Porsche in the rain. So when I got in the V8 it actually felt nice and comfortable. I was just able to put my head down and go.”

Heimgartner also gave credit to Brad Jones Racing for providing him with a car that allowed him to shine.

“To be able to do what I did, the car was obviously pretty stunning,” he says.

“It was comfortable, I managed to get a pretty good seating position compromise between the two of us and it was actually really good in the wet. The Porsche that we had in the race before was shocking, so when I hopped in that V8 it was so good. It braked so well, it turned, it accelerated, it was a breath of fresh air for me.”

The former Bathurst 12-Hour Class D winner thought it was important to capitalise on this strong run and set about securing a quality endurance co-drive for 2018.

“After that round and the podium we got there was a bit of interest, and having a good event like that you need to take advantage of it,” he says.

“I thought we’d just look to see what opportunities were out there for co-drives. We talked to a few teams and had a few deals pop up here and there and when we got speaking to Nissan it was initially about a co-drive.



“Then there was a small window of opportunity to sign up and be main driver and that’s sort of how it happened. We met with Todd and away we went.”

Speculation had floated around the paddock over the last couple of seasons as to when stalwart Todd Kelly would consider hanging up his full-time helmet to concentrate on running the Nissan Motorsport operation. When it was announced that 2017 would be the year, the Kellys had a very important decision to make about which driver they believed could keep pushing them forward into the 2018 season. They arrived at Heimgartner, who is genuinely grateful for the opportunity.

“He [Todd Kelly] said publicly that anyone who was to replace him needed to be as fast or faster than him,” Heimgartner reflects.

“For him to pick me and leave me with that sort of responsibility, run his car, his number [#7], the number he has run forever... for him to hand all that over to me it’s pretty special when you think about it like that. Hopefully I’ll have a good year and do him proud. But, yeah, it’s cool and he’s a pretty trusting sort of person and we get on well so it should be a good time.”

The 2017/18 New Zealand BNT V8 championship winner is ready to show his worth in Supercars.

“It’s been good to know that I’ve got a drive before Christmas, which made me relaxed,” he says.

“But, in a way, it gave me itchy feet because you’re waiting that whole Christmas period thinking that you can’t wait to drive the car and then the test day just arrived after what seemed like months of waiting.

“It’s been good, I’ve been able to prepare properly and get everything sorted, which has been nice. I like to go in with everything under control... whereas in the past it has always been rushed.”

So what does the Altima driver hope to achieve in 2018?

“Being back full-time is the main thing and to be back

with such a good team as well is a pretty cool opportunity. And to work with Dilan Talabani again from Super Black Racing is awesome. He knows what coffee I like, so it’s all go... if we can be around that top-10 mark most of the year that would be a good achievement for us.

“I’ve been out of the category for a year, which sort of affects you a little bit, but in saying that the Altimas are good cars and they are working their hardest to make them faster. I think we should be able to get some good results throughout the year.”

If Heimgartner continues his upward trajectory, he may just have to deal with a few extra Twitter interruptions during the course of the season and more frequent congratulatory phone calls.

If Nissan Motorsport gives him the package to do the job, we might find the young Kiwi is here to stay. **X**

ABOVE & BELOW: One year on from being left on the outer of Supercars, Heimgartner has returned with a factory-backed full-time drive at Nissan Motorsport in 2018.



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Fraternising with Foges

INTERVIEW BY MARK FOGARTY

JACK LE BROCCO

JACK ATTACK

Jack Le Brocq enters Supercars on a full-time basis with high expectations that he is the rookie to restore Tekno Autosports as giant-killer. He chats with Mark Fogarty about his rise to the main game, racing for four different manufacturers over the last four years and working with Tekno Autosports in 2018.

IMAGES

Glenis Lindley, Peter Norton, Supercars, Tekno Autosports

Five years ago an influx of newcomers took Supercars by storm. Scott McLaughlin, Chaz Mostert, Nick Percat and Scott Pye all made their mark in their maiden main-game seasons. They were the start of a new generation.

The next wave of young guns may have just arrived. Dunlop Super2 Series champion Todd Hazelwood is joined by fellow graduates Jack Le Brocq, Anton De Pasquale and James Golding, plus internationally-ranked import Richie Stanaway.

They are the first group of new full-timers with the potential to rival the disruption caused by the second level's standout 'Class of 2012'.

Much is expected of Le Brocq; Super2's pace-setter of the past two seasons and further honed by three varied years of experience as an endurance co-driver.

After being in contention at 23 Red Racing and Nissan Motorsport, he replaced Will Davison at a reorganised and rejuvenated Tekno Autosports. A new commitment from the Webb family saw Adrian Burgess join, overseeing a strengthened technical team headed by veteran engineer Campbell Little to run a brand new Triple Eight-built Holden ZB Commodore with a full support package.

Le Brocq, 25, was seen as the hardened young gun to lead Tekno's return to the Shane van Gisbergen/Davison glory days of 2013-2016, when the one-car squad menaced the leading multi-car teams.



His Supercars ascension has been guided by leading manager David Segal, the former journalist and media communications guru who is Craig Lowndes' long-time agent.

Segal, who has also been Will Davison and James Moffat's deal-maker, recognised Le Brocq's pace and presentation skills as those of a potential future star. But amid so much promise, the Gold Coast-based Victorian endured a tough debut at the Adelaide 500.

He struggled to adapt to his ZB's Triple Eight-configured setup, which along with a Friday qualifying crash, an engine on the verge of failure in the opening Saturday race and penalty setbacks, left him mired at the back of the field.

Le Brocq is recovering his confidence and speed as he settles into life in the main game this season.

As I understand it you were in contention with at least three teams. So did Tekno Autosports choose you or did you pick them?

It's hard to say. We had all our doors open. We weren't 100 per cent sure which way was going to be the best direction for us, but it was just how it all played out that I ended up going down the path with Tekno.

I think we've probably landed on our feet with a really good gig, if not one of the best in pitlane. We have Adrian Burgess, Campbell Little and a new Triple Eight ZB that was built alongside the three factory cars. So, from that point of view, I think we've been very lucky with what we have. It's still early days and I still have a lot to learn about how the car works but the underlying speed is there and so far everyone in the team is gelling really well.

I can see the appeal of Tekno in the sense that they were competitive enough to win Bathurst in 2016. But weren't you concerned that they went so badly last year that Will Davison left?

I suppose so, but it's hard to go past the form they've had previously. They were previously second in the championship and Will was fourth in 2016. Last year was just one of those things.

It's a whole combination of things that produce a result like that. So, yeah, there are always concerns about how it's all going to play out, but I think Adrian coming on in a full-time role brings a lot of knowledge and expertise to the team.

The number one mechanic I have, Dominic Stott, is a guy I know well and I trust him, so that was another positive that made it appealing. Having someone you can trust putting the car together always makes you comfortable.

Bringing Adrian in was a big thing. That made it clear they were trying to bring the team back to life after the year they had last year.

"EVERYONE KNOWS WHERE WE WANT TO BE AND WHERE WE WANT TO GO. THERE'S A VERY POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE..."

– JACK LE BROCCQ ON TEKNO AUTOSPORTS





ABOVE: Le Brocq will be guided by Jonathon Webb (left) and Adrian Burgess (right) at Tekno Autosports in 2018.

Adrian Burgess comes with a big reputation. What's he been like to work with so far?

It's been really cool. It's been awesome as well to hear about his past. There's a lot I didn't know about what he'd done before Supercars in F1. He's done really well with what he's done with the team so far, just the way he's organised things and got the guys in line to get the race car ready, and all the off-track stuff as well.

Back in the workshop things are running a lot smoother. There's still a long way to go – a lot of things Adrian still wants to put in place to make the operation run smoother – but he's definitely had an impact. I get along with him really well, which always helps. Being around Adrian a lot you understand how passionate he is about the sport. He just lives and breathes it.

He's definitely committed to Tekno and making the whole program work. That's a massive confidence-builder for me and everyone else on the team.

You've seen inside well-resourced teams. How does Tekno compare?

Yeah, definitely. I definitely think everything's moving in the right direction compared with what I've been exposed to before. It's still early days, though, and there's lots of room for improvement. Everyone knows where we want to be and where we want to go. There's a very positive atmosphere in the team, which is really exciting for me.

BELOW: Foges interviews Le Brocq in the Tekno Autosports transporter.



You're in an interesting position in that you've raced four different manufacturers in the past four seasons. So having sampled the whole field, as it were, does that help you now that you're in the main game full-time?

Actually, if anything, it's probably a little bit of a disadvantage, not knowing exactly what I have underneath me. Every team in pitlane has a different way of going about setting up the car and getting the most out of it and then there are differences of how they're setup for qualifying, short race runs or long race runs. And every car reacts differently, so I guess you could look at it both ways.

I've worked with a lot of engineers and sampled a lot of different cars, so you understand how they work with all kinds of setups. So I've learned a lot from that aspect, but it might be a hindrance in the early stages here until I understand completely what the ZB requires. So it's going to be a lot for me to work out and take in. But I have a good group of guys around me to help me understand how it all works.

Is each car quite different to drive?

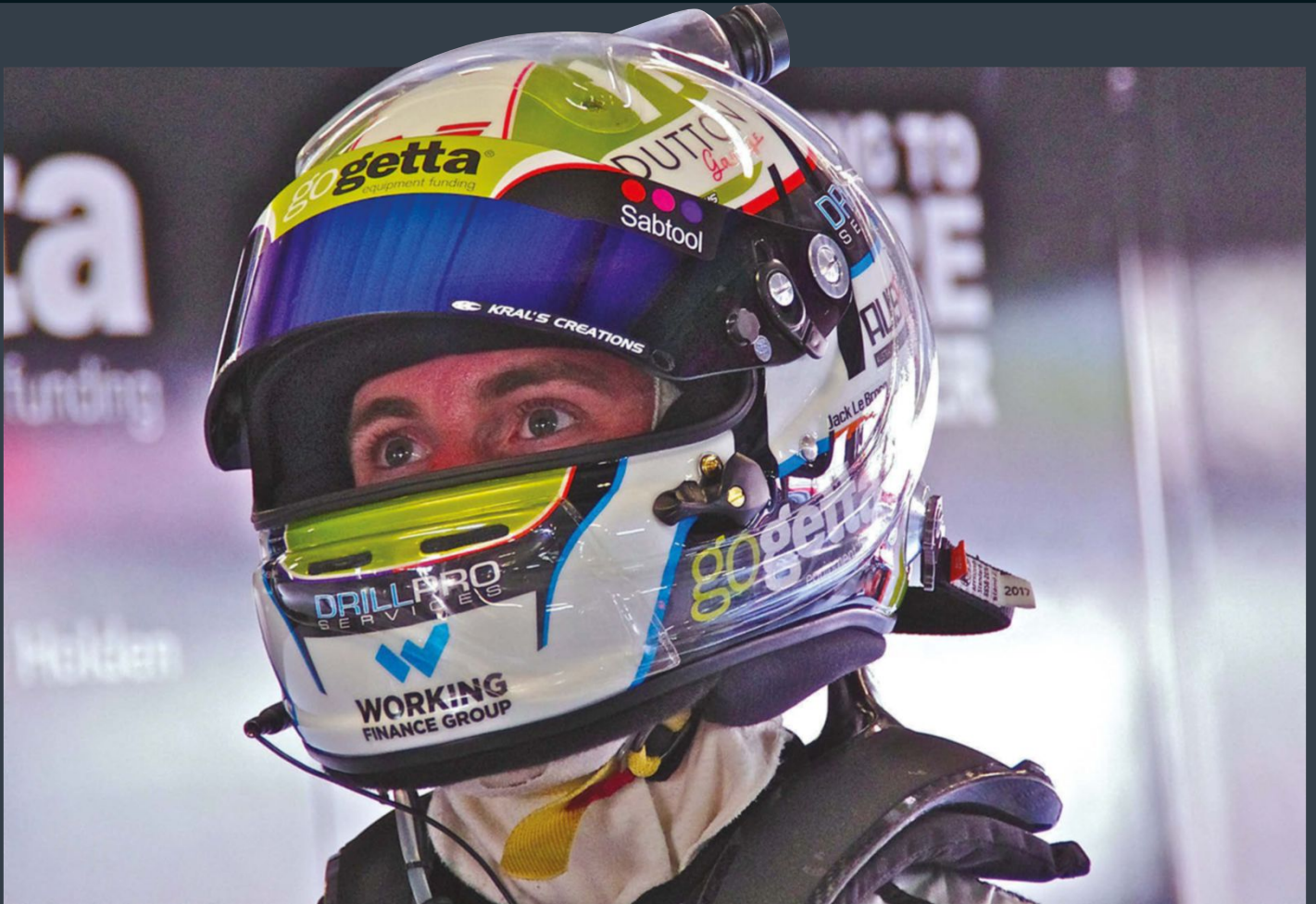
They're not hugely different. You jump from car to car and can still be within a few tenths of what each car can do. It's more about getting those last little percentages out of each vehicle.

It's about understanding how you get the speed out of a car in a qualifying run and then in a race run; understanding how it uses its tyres. Some cars burn up rear tyres faster than front tyres and vice versa. It's something I adjust to and work out on my feet.

I'd imagine the biggest difference between the Commodore and Falcon and the Mercedes and Nissan is how the engines respond. Is there a distinct difference between the 'old guard' motors and the newer ones?

Yeah, a lot of it is just driveability and how the car reacts off the corners. It's taken a little while to adjust but it's more about understanding how each car delivers its power. Each has strengths and weaknesses.

From what I've felt already in the Holden, it's very strong. KRE always build a great engine. I raced with one of their engines in the Dunlop Series with Matt White Racing in 2015, so I understand how those engines deliver their power.



You were a front-runner in Super2 for the past three years. Along with your enduro co-drives and wildcards you must be as ready as you can be for the main game?

I learned heaps. Probably did one more season in the Dunlop Series than what I really wanted to do, but even going back again last year was massive for me. It taught me a lot and doing the enduros with the Nissan factory team broadened my experiences even further. It's a massive step up into the main game – a very different ball-game this year – but I'm definitely ready.

You've certainly worked long and hard to get here. When you're clearly a quick driver, why is it still so difficult to make it?

The way the market is working at the moment, sponsorship is the biggest thing stopping a lot of fresh guys from coming into the main game. Probably only 25 per cent of it is getting into the car and driving these days.

You need to have great partners behind you before you actually get onto the track. It's been tough, but it's good to finally get the opportunity to prove that we deserve a full-time gig here and, hopefully, make a long career out of it.

Did it take you longer than you thought?

Yes. I would've loved to have been here a lot earlier but we didn't have a whole lot of family money to fast-track things early on in my career. So we sort of went the long

way about it. But, in saying that, it's been great. I probably wouldn't do it any other way. It's been a pretty cool experience for the family and everyone around us who've made it all happen. It's been exciting and it's a massive reward for everyone who's been on the journey with me.

And how important is having a good manager? [Adrian Burgess arrives and interjects that his nickname for David Segal is 'Flavio', likening him to renowned F1 deal-maker Flavio Briatore.]

I think it's been crucial for me. David came on at the start of 2015 and I don't think I could have got to where I am by myself. David's been massive in helping me understand what it takes to make it at the top end and get me ready for it.

He's also been a tremendous help commercially, getting me the backing I needed to get the right drives. He's helped me piece all the puzzle together in what's really been a team effort between us. Along with our partners and my parents he's made it all happen. I doubt I would've got here without his guidance.

As a rookie full-timer is it difficult not to be in awe of the likes of Craig Lowndes and Jamie Whincup, who were probably among your childhood or teen heroes?

It is a bit weird. I grew up watching these guys. I used to watch Craig Lowndes back in the early 2000s when

ABOVE: Eyes on the prize for Le Brocq following a long-awaited chance in the main game of Supercars.

2018



ABOVE & RIGHT: Previous experience in Erebus Motorsport's AMG Mercedes-Benz, Prodrive Racing Australia's Ford FG X Falcon and Nissan Motorsport's Altima led to the full-time opportunity in Tekno Autosports' Holden ZB Commodore in 2018.

he was in the green-eyed monster Falcon. It's one of my favourite cars and I supported him back then and now we're in a garage with him! I still admire him, of course, but now when I bolt the helmet on he's just another car out there on the track.

Watching for as long as I have you understand the reputation that some people have and how they go about their business. You just go out there and respect everyone, but if they give you some biff and barge you give it back to them.

You always want to stamp your authority, make it clear that you're not out there to be pushed around. You're here to race and do the best job you can. You try to stay out of trouble but you don't want to be taking any rubbish from the other boys.

Because the established drivers do try to intimidate newcomers, don't they?

Of course. You saw that with Cam Waters came in. A lot of the established guys tried to give him grief, but he gave it straight back and it didn't last that long. He did a good job with the way he handled it.

You race everyone as hard as you can, regardless of who they are and how long they've been around. You can't be worried about who's in the car in front of you or the one behind.

Now, your surname. Do you ever get asked if you're related to Peter Brock?

It gets brought up every now and again, but then they realise it has Le in front of it. Maybe I should be Jacques Le Brocq! **X**

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2016



2017



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EDGE

STEPPING UP

Reigning Super 2 Series champion Matt Stone Racing graduates into the main game in 2018, bringing the Stone family back into Supercars.

WORDS Bruce Newton IMAGES Peter Norton, Ben Auld, Supercars

If you love Aussie sedan racing, whether you want to call them Supercars, V8 Supercars or touring cars, then Computer Road Yatala is a special place. In the northern fringes of the Gold Coast hinterland, tucked in a non-descript industrial area a few hundred metres from the M1 Motorway, it's where the Stones have based their racing efforts since the 1990s. As in Ross and Jimmy Stone, the New Zealanders who first came to Australia in the 1980s, worked for Dick Johnson Racing for five years, Alan Jones for two years and then founded their own outfit, Stone Brothers Racing (SBR). Ross ran the business, Jimmy did the engineering, together they called the shots.

One Bathurst win and three championships – two for Marcos Ambrose and one for Russell Ingall – made SBR the pre-eminent Ford team of the early to mid-2000s. They were the 'humble Kiwi mechanics' who could, doing it on smarts and cunning rather than a huge

budget, conquering Mark Skaife and the Holden Racing Team along the way.

Ross and Jimmy were bought out of big-time racing in 2013 when Betty Klimenko turned SBR into Erebus Motorsport. Jimmy semi-retired, Ross hung in there with Erebus for a couple of years and then moved on to pursue other racing in other categories.

But the Stones never left Computer Road and now, in the very same complex that housed SBR, the next-generation Stone is returning to Supercars. This time it's Jimmy's son Matt who is running the show. He served an apprenticeship – literal and figurative – that started at SBR in 2004-05 and later included a stint as lead mechanic on Shane van Gisbergen's Falcon. He then struck out on his own in 2011 to create Matt Stone Racing (MSR).

Matt has done his hard yards in junior formulae, culminating in winning the Dunlop Super2 Series with





Todd Hazelwood in 2017. For 2018 they step up to the main game together, leasing Jason Bright's licence and securing an ex-DJR Team Penske Ford FG X Falcon with the financial assistance of one of Australia's great modern-day motorsport patrons, James Rosenberg.

Bigmate has continued as naming-rights sponsor with iSeek, Optus and Land Transport adding significant support.

The team has expanded from 10 to 16 personnel, because this program is happening in addition to existing activities in other categories.

The never-ending sponsorship search is in the hands of Queensland businessman and long-time supporter James Gomersall and Hazelwood, the 22-year-old with a maturity beyond his years and potentially elite driving capability.

And there's another important person, Jimmy Stone. In fact, the day I visit MSR, Jimmy is there helping out. Jimmy helped Matt in 2011 and has always been here playing a role.

"He's a die-hard racer and he's never not going to be at race tracks," smiles Matt.

"He'll be around helping out and being part of the team. But as a working full-time professional member of the crew, he won't be part of it. We will put him on more in a team adviser and consultant role. There's a wealth of experience and knowledge there, so we would be foolish not to use it."

Ross Stone won't be involved in any official capacity, but as Matt's uncle, a racer and with his own shop still around the corner, it's no surprise they see each other regularly.

"We are as close as we have ever been," Matt says.

We're talking in Matt's brand-new office – the paint smell is fresh, there's none of the ubiquitous racing posters or framed photos on the wall and we've had to eject his wife Nina from the room, where she had been doing the books. This is truly a family affair.

Not that Matt is getting too nostalgic about it all. He understands the historical importance of the return of the Stone name to the top rank of Australian motorsport, but he's nothing if not his father's son, which means the emotional stuff mostly gets tucked away while the plans get made and enacted.

He's right to be a little bit circumspect about building up the return. It will be eagerly anticipated by the fans, hyped by the media and aided and abetted by the fact that Hazelwood has a wonderful image as a working-class kid made good.

"It's great," says Matt. "I grew up and all through school with Stone Brothers Racing being a household name. It's quite cool to go full circle and go round to that point where we are attempting to have a resurgence. And in Fords!"

"Penske approached us originally to run Falcons in Super2 and when we told them about our plan to run

OPPOSITE & ABOVE: Matt Stone Racing purchased an ex-DJR Team Penske Ford FG X Falcon for its main-game Supercars debut in 2018.



ABOVE & BELOW: Hazelwood and Matt Stone Racing won the 2017 Super2 Series title in convincing style with a round sweep in Newcastle.

in main game they said, 'That's even better', so it has all come together quite well," he adds.

But the fact remains that in Supercars terms this is a rookie team and a rookie driver in a championship far tougher than what he or the team have experienced previously.

"We certainly are a rookie team," concedes Stone. "But not only is everyone in the team experienced in the industry but also 90 per cent of our team has worked in a past life at SBR... we are all cut from the same cloth so it shouldn't be hard to fall into a rhythm.

"It's a very big step. If we were just doing DVS and stepped to main game it would be a ginormous step. But because of everything else we do we have bridged the gap somewhat... because we have grown our resources and our infrastructure. We also have the benefit of myself and virtually everyone who works here having experience in main game, so it's not too out of reach."

MSR will be capable of servicing, maintaining and repairing its Supercars, but unlike the big teams in the category will purchase rather than design and manufacture its own componentry.

"We do more than the other small teams because we do have a fabrication shop and we do have a panel shop; we do all our own sub-assembly and dampers," Stone explains.

Engine maintenance will be supplied by DJR Team Penske, whose engine shop is literally across the courtyard in another old SBR building.

Stone has done what he can to prepare for the culture shock ahead. Former Tekno team manager Steve Greer slots in as general manager. Highly-respected former SBR and Erebus engineer Wes McDougall enters his third year working with Hazelwood in 2018. Veteran mechanic Janelle Navarro also joins the team for more main-game experience. But then there's the abandonment of the knowledge gleaned over two years with ex-Triple Eight Commodores. Wouldn't it have been easier to stick with a known quantity in year one in the main game with so much to learn?

"We are losing out on two years of development we have spent with the Commodore, but at the same time stepping from DVS to main game there are a few subtle rule changes that make for a fairly different setup of the car," explains Matt.

Those subtle things? The twin spring and the super-soft tyre.

"With both of them, going from Super2 to main game it was a new platform anyway, even if we stuck with the Holden," says Stone.

"That has made transition to the Ford easier. We are not losing as much of our development because we had to do more anyway."

MSR's big glimpse into the main game came during a promising wildcard outing at Ipswich last year. And that threw up another issue as an immediate concern.

"Our big letdown was pitstops," recalls Stone. "Having had the crew made up of half our guys and half Garry Rogers Motorsport guys; our guys and their guys weren't training for this every day of the year, so we lost a lot of time in pitstops."

MSR will share a boom with Victorian-based Tim Blanchard Racing, run out of Brad Jones Racing. And that means a challenge getting pitstops slick and quick. Still, Stone believes the goal can be achieved.

"There's no reason it can't be just as good, it's just making sure the two teams have the right understanding and commitment of what they have to achieve," says Stone.

With Bryce Fullwood running a second Falcon in Super2, Tyler Greenbury stepping up to the second-tier category in one of the team's (or Gomersall's, to be precise) Triple Eight Holden VF Commodores and entries continuing in Touring Car Masters and Kumho V8 Series, Stone's role will be one of overseeing. He will be on-hand but the Supercars team will be Greer's day-to-day responsibility.

To expectations, then. Given his character and the challenge in front of the team, Stone is cautious.

"It's a two to three-year program to get ready to make an impression in the main game," he says.

"So in our first year in the main game our ambitions are very modest; we are not looking to set the world on fire.



"We are looking to gauge ourselves with the other rookies; we'd like to be in front of them. We'd like as a team and Todd as a driver to evolve to the point where we can show real moments of brilliance.

"It takes a lot of experience from a driver and a team and an engineer and a crew to really gel together and put a whole season together and win races. There will be days when we get it right and days when we get it wrong.

"As long as the good days outnumber the bad days and we are running where we think we should be then we'll have a great year."

There's no doubt the faith Stone has in his driver. Four years together means he understands him exceptionally well. The expectation is high.

"In this day and age you have to have the raw talent, which he does," he says.

"You have to have a solid head on your shoulders, which he definitely does. I think he has the great core where he has got the talent. To go to main game he just needs to go closer to the edge of his comfort zone more regularly. That is when he will step up to elite.

"The last piece is commercial; he is a very strong driver commercially in terms of sponsorship. The way the industry is going now you can't get by alone on turning the steering wheel. It's about the full picture."

And beyond 2018? Stone agrees the natural next step is an expansion to two cars.

"We have got larger each year but I am not going to get ahead of myself," says Stone.

"It's taken five years to get it to this stage and there's no deadline where I am saying, 'I want to be at two cars', but that could be the progression next step."

And with that Matt Stone hustles off. There's work to be done and business to be completed. Resurrecting a legend take a lot of effort.



ABOVE & LEFT: Stone Brothers Racing bowed out of Supercars at the end of 2012. Now Matt Stone Racing continues the family's link to Ford.

BELOW: Father and son Matt and Jim Stone, two generations of Supercars team owners.





HAZELWOOD'S DOUBLE DUTY

Todd Hazelwood's position is unique in combining his driving duties with being Matt Stone Racing's (MSR) commercial manager. Essentially, he finds the budget with which he goes racing. He reports to Matt Stone, who owns and runs the team, and to Jason Gomersall, who has been a primary backer and supporter of MSR for four years.

Hazelwood has raced a Gomersall-owned Commodore for the last two years in Super2, while Gomersall himself races a Torana in Touring Car Masters built and run by MSR. Hazelwood even lives with Gomersall. He is also an investor in naming-rights sponsor Bigmate, a tracking-solutions company.

The other key background financial player in the 2018 mix is South Australian motorsport patron James Rosenberg, who has bought the ex-DJR Team Penske Ford FG X Falcon Hazelwood will race.

"Trying to set up a big program like this can't just come from one person, it has to come from multiple people," says Hazelwood.

"You don't want some multi-millionaire just throwing money around, you want good people in your corner.

"That's why I feel very fortunate we have got Jason Gomersall on board, who is one of the most likable blokes I have ever come across, and James Rosenberg, who is one of the most respected people in pitlane."

The relationship between Hazelwood and Stone is also deep. Only in the first year of their relationship in 2014 was a formal contract in place. Since then it's been based on a handshake.

"Me and Matt work very closely together and it's not about who makes the most money, it's all about finding the money to go out and win races. That's the essential goal for us," says Hazelwood.

"We have been working together for a long time now and we know how each of us operates; Matt's good at what he does and I am good at what I do."

Hazelwood's climb to the main game has been well chronicled; family support has been staunch through setbacks, wins and thousands of sausage sizzles. Now a start in Supercars has been attained, new goals are set.

"We have to be realistic, it is the toughest touring-car championship in the world," says Hazelwood.

"So rookie team, rookie driver, there is a lot to learn. But there is nothing like a challenge, you have to start somewhere.

"The first six months is all about taking it all in and just try and minimise the mistakes and try and learn as much as we can.

"The main thing is if we can understand the new chassis early enough and get it into the window... there's no reason why we can't start to get those results.

"I think the enduros will be chance for us to shine. If we can do a nice, consistent job and if some of these big teams trip over themselves then we can position ourselves toward the end of the day and jag a result.

"Overall, if we can have a top five, crack a few top 10s and finish top 15 in the championship that would be really special."

Hazelwood's benchmark on the way to winning the 2017 Super2 championship was Paul Dumbrell. In 2018 he will have 25 benchmarks on the grid

around him. He got a taste of what to expect in his wildcard run at Ipswich last year.

"The intensity of chassis setup was one thing," says Hazelwood.

"It was the first time I had ever driven a car with the twin-spring, which gives you more tuneability... it means your debrief is complicated by 10. It can do your head in pretty quickly."

Hazelwood recognises the challenges. He's teamed up with Bond University to develop both his mental and physical fitness for the main game.

"No one holds back," he explains.

"Throughout the whole pack it's qualifying laps right throughout the whole race to be at the front.

"There's no room for error, you make the slightest mistake they take advantage of it, which is what you have to expect.

"But I think you have to stamp your authority, not be dirty, but show them you're not afraid to race." ✕





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FROM F1 TO SUPERCARS

Sam Michael served his apprenticeship under Mark Larkham and spent 21 years in Formula 1. He now offers mentoring to Triple Eight Race Engineering's engineering group.

WORDS Andrew Clarke IMAGES Peter Norton, Alamy

The motorsport world is full of dreamers. And then there are people like Sam Michael. From the moment he converted from a love of two wheels to four, his dream of moving to Formula 1 was set in motion. And not as a driver but as an engineer.

When he was young it was all motorbikes. He tinkered and he played with them, he liked what he could do with two wheels. Then around the age of 10 his family moved from Geraldton in Western Australia to Canberra and a few years later he was playing around with rally cars with Rick and Neal Bates.

"To be honest, I was completely into motorbikes, and then when I started working for Neal and Rick they would bang on about cars all the time," says Michael.

"I was just not interested, though. Then one day Neal said, 'Come out to get in the car' and when I did I couldn't believe what you could do in a car. I was probably about 14 at that point and then I was into cars.

"So I started in rallying, then when I went to study mechanical engineering at university in Sydney I got a job with Greg 'Peewee' Siddle and Mark Larkham working on open-wheelers."

Here his passion changed yet again, but this time it took on its final form. From motorbikes to rallying, he was now firmly entrenched in the world and concept of open-wheeler cars and the purity of what was on offer. As an engineer he had found his nirvana and the next two decades were going to be filled with the hunt for speed.

"I knew 100 per cent what I wanted to do when I was a young kid; I was crystal clear," says Michael.

"The advice I give a lot of young people is you have to spend a lot of time thinking about what you want to do because it's much more powerful when you're going through university or trying to get a job. If you're in that scenario and you don't really know what you want to do,

what is your passion, it's going to be a lot harder for you to progress and do things.

"I fell in love with open-wheelers very quickly and probably because I saw Formula 1 as the best of the best, so I thought I wanted to work with the best engineers on cars that are specifically built for racing. You've got to remember that when I was here in the early days, the touring cars were road cars with roll cages in them, they weren't like Supercars are now, and that held little appeal.

"A Formula 1 car's a full-blown prototype; a continuously evolving R&D piece of equipment and never runs the same way twice. It's unrestrained.

"Yes, you've got set regulations, but you don't start with something and then mould around it, you design for a purpose, so that was really where my passion lay. That really pulled me to Europe and a lot of people I was connected with around here, like Mark and Greg, said, if I wanted to do this I had to get to Europe."

Peewee had some connections and when Michael's

BELOW: Triple Eight Race Engineering taps into the Formula 1 experience of Michael on a part-time basis.





ABOVE & LEFT: A young Michael worked with Mark Larkham's Formula Holden entry. Being part of the Australian Grand Prix in Adelaide (above) introduced him to Formula 1, where he would spend two decades with Team Lotus, Jordan Grand Prix, Williams F1 and McLaren.

time with Larko was up, and the university degree was stuffed in the back pocket (second-class honours and a high distinction for his thesis on simulation in race cars, developed on a program for Larkham's Reynard 90D), an introduction to Team Lotus changed his life. Formula 1, even for a small team, was more advanced than anything he had seen and this was what he wanted.

At the Adelaide Grand Prix he had glimpsed it when he was working with Larko – "I remember walking up and down the pitlane and walking past Larrousse and Minardi and even the teams right at the bottom were something else; you just looked at their cars and the cleanliness and the perfection of everything... you've got to remember even the worst Formula 1 teams are bloody good, especially now" – but nothing prepared him for what he was entering.

Larkham's team was pretty well funded but it was barely running on lunch money compared with Formula 1, where a small budget may be 100 million pounds a year. Team Lotus was about 60 people at that stage (about the size of the biggest teams in Australia now).

"Lotus were small but they were obviously struggling, however for a young guy coming into Formula 1 it was fantastic," says Michael.

"Throughout the 12 months that I was with them I got to work in wind tunnels, work in the R&D labs, go to

the races and go to the tests to help run the cars.

"I was actually employed as a design and R&D engineer working on vehicle simulation because they didn't have one. So we built the first vehicle simulation for them during that year, but because of the state of the company you basically had to become a jack of all trades. I remember – and I'm not a mechanic – but we were in a situation where I was mechanic-ing sometimes at tests.

"It was fantastic but even I knew that there was something not completely right and six months later they pulled out of Formula 1. But it was very good for me, it was just a fantastic year. I got paid £12,000 a year and I didn't care, I couldn't care less. I would have done it for nothing."

At the end of the season, which was Adelaide, he stayed around for a couple of weeks and the rumours started to swirl. He called headquarters before getting on the plane to Detroit for a conference to be told everything was okay. And when he finally made it to Norwich a few days later, there was nothing. No team. No job.

"Hey Peewee?" was the next call and that pointed him to Jordan for seven years. He started in the back room as a vehicle-dynamics engineer and then after six months he was in the race team as a data engineer. A couple of years later he was bored, so he convinced the bosses, including Eddie Jordan, to create a R&D department.

"We set up the team's first seven-post rig and then worked on a lot of active programmes, like power steering, active differentials, active gearboxes... I definitely got involved in a lot of different things. F1 was still at a point where you could spread yourself across the business. It's not like that at all anymore, it's extremely specialised."

From 1994 to 1998 it was all about the development, then he stepped in to engineer the car for Ralf Schumacher and it all changed. The following year he looked after Heinz-Harald Frentzen as the team reached its peak: third in the constructors' championship, two wins for Frentzen and third in the drivers' championship. But then the team started a downward slide on its way out of the sport. Michael wasn't into that, so he joined Williams. His wage had gone up, but that was never a factor.

Australians have had a soft spot for Williams since Alan Jones won the world drivers' championship in 1980. Michael came on board as the chief engineer and then, when Patrick Head stepped back a bit, became technical director. He spent there 11 years there.

"Formula 1's a 24/7 sport," explains Michael.

"I'd start in the wind tunnel and get to the aero guys and understand what they did in the last 12 hours overnight. You've got to remember, in Formula 1 things change so fast that what you thought was fact at 7am is fiction by 7pm. It's so fast changing, it's such an agile sport and you have to get used to change or you won't survive in Formula 1. It's a change-management industry, everything's changing all the time.

"Relative to the real world, budget wasn't an issue I had to manage; you know if you're working for a team with people like Frank Williams and Patrick, or Ron Dennis when I was at McLaren, they'll spend whatever it takes to make a car go faster.

“The people in the team, they’re basically like heroin addicts – especially the aero guys – and their drug is speed and they want more. So if you put money in front of them, they’ll grab it straight away.

“That’s basically what F1’s all about; it’s about lap times, and the best team bosses will just find a way of paying for stuff. That’s their job. Of course, you have to meet a budget and do those things, but you can stretch. You can do a lot of stretching as you work with that.

“Now there’s also a great beauty in that Formula 1; for all its politics and showbiz, and all the money that flows through, it’s still dominated by Newton’s laws of physics.

“You can’t get away from that, so you can go out and tell any story you want but your car is dominated by $F=ma$ and, because of that, it grounds the entire sport.”

All teams go in cycles and eventually Michael left to join McLaren when Williams was on a downward trend. Once he’d done the rounds of the best in the UK, he started thinking about what was next. It was either return to Australia then or never.

So the family packed up shop and opted for a simpler life, one where Michael could be a father and husband, where he could sit at the table without lining up his peas like some sort of engineering exercise. When he did make the move he realised how much intensity there had been in two decades in Formula 1.

Before he left the UK he set up a software business that specialised in applied machine learning and artificial intelligence, although he had to sit idle for six months to round out his McLaren career. He did just that and then worked on the software company until Triple Eight Race Engineering’s Roland Dane started knocking on his door.

Dane did so a few times before Michael relented and went to visit the factory, where he was convinced to take on a part-time consultancy-type role.

He says the role is more engineer mentor than anything else. He doesn’t get involved with the nitty gritty but he is a sounding board, maybe even a bit of ‘have you thought about this or that’ but not much more.

The technology has surprised him. He views that Supercars are a bit like an open-wheeler now with a body shell. He’s given some input from his knowledge around turbo engines, helping on technical issues around heat and the like, but also in making sure they don’t make the engine sound flat like an F1 engine.

So Michael came home to get out of racing, and then he snuck back in.

“I guess it never gets out of you, if you’re competitive it never will,” says Michael.

“People who are in competition, like Formula 1 or Supercars are, as I said earlier, just in change management.

“When you go and ask someone to change something in racing, they’ll change it, because they know you’re trying to make it more reliable or faster.

“Go into the normal world and you ask people to change something and it’s like you’ve just started World War II. Sport demands change. And if you don’t change you are dead. I need that in my life.” **X**



Michael on the pitwall for McLaren at Silverstone in 2012. Six years later he’s offering his expertise to Triple Eight (below).





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TOP 10 LIVERIES OF THE 2018 SUPERCARS SEASON

Nissan Motorsport #78



10 #78 NISSAN MOTORSPORT

A change of colours to predominately black ensures Simona de Silvestro's Harvey Norman-backed Altima stands out amongst the Nissan Motorsport entries.

9 #1/#97 TRIPLE EIGHT

The factory-backed Red Bull Holden Racing Team entries have found a better balance between the colours of Red Bull and Holden in 2018.

8 #888 TRIPLE EIGHT

The new-look Autobarn Lowndes Racing brings green and gold to the grid, which works well on the black and grey base.

7 #12/#17 DJR TEAM PENSKE

The Shell-backed FG X Falcons retain their look from last season. No need to change such an iconic livery.

6 #2/#25 WALKINSHAW ANDRETTI UNITED

Boost Mobile and Mobil1 backing combine at the new-look Walkinshaw Andretti United, with the black base reminding fans of the liveries of the team's Holden Racing Team days.

5 #33/#34 GARRY ROGERS MOTORSPORT

A change from baby blue and white to red with a black and white base gives the Garry Rogers Motorsport entries a fresh look for the change to the new Commodore.

4 #14 BRAD JONES RACING

Tim Slade's Freightliner-backed entry switches to a yellow and black colour scheme with more prominent signage from Alliance Truck Parts.

3 #6 TICKFORD RACING

The Monster black and green

Brad Jones Racing



Erebus Motorsport



livery has been popular with fans since first appearing with Triple Eight in the Super2 Series and continues with Cameron Waters' Tickford Racing entry.

2 #9 EREBUS MOTORSPORT

The black base and red and gold trimmings of the

Penrite-backed entry of David Reynolds once again stands out on the grid in 2018.

1 #15 NISSAN MOTORSPORT

The iconic green and red of Castrol return as a naming-rights sponsor in 2018. Fittingly, it's with a team that was once Perkins Engineering. **X**

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