

INSIDE BATHURST LEGENDS POSTER + EVENT GUIDE

Supercar **Xtra** MAGAZINE

ISSUE 107
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FORMERLY **V8X** SUPERCAR MAGAZINE

CELEBRATING CRAIG LOWNDES

COMMEMORATIVE EDITION

END OF AN ERA



PLUS

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Ed's Desk

CELEBRATING A LEGEND

Craig Lowndes will end his full-time Supercars driving career at the conclusion of 2018. While he will remain at Triple Eight Race Engineering as an endurance co-driver, it does mark the end of an era dating back to his stunning championship debut in 1996.

We celebrate the career of the fan favourite in this edition of *SupercarXtra* with the story of his journey in the series, his greatest victories and his remarkable records and achievements.

It was at Bathurst in 1994 where Lowndes burst onto the Australian touring-car scene, so it's only fitting that in this issue we reflect on the iconic moments from the event's storied history.

Elsewhere, we chat with Jason Bright on his return to the driver's seat at Team 18, profile the Kostecki family-run team and look back on last



season's dramatic season finale at Newcastle.

You'll also find the latest columns from Lowndes, Mark Winterbottom and Garry Rogers, analysis of key issues around the series and our ranking of the top 10 title deciders in the history of the Australian Touring Car Championship/Supercars.

We continue the trip down memory lane with a profile of the Holden VL Commodore and a look back at the key developments from the 1973 season.

Remember, this edition is also available in digital

form online and in the App Store and Google Play stores.

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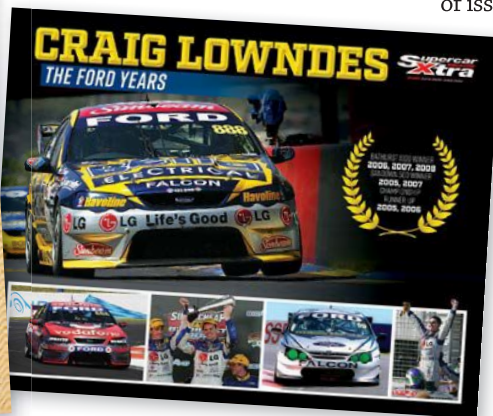
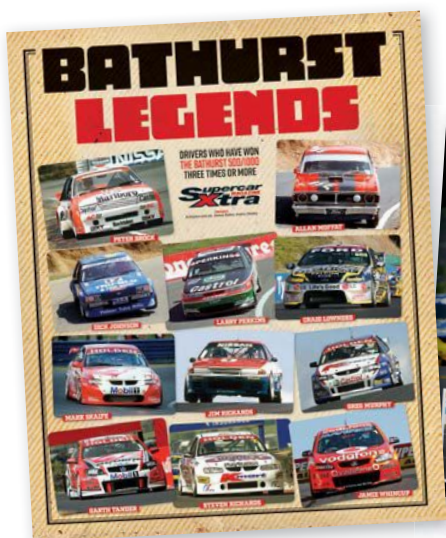
Below are the two sides of the pullout poster you'll find in the print edition of this issue, including the second of a three-part Lowndes farewell special series.

Part one, featuring Lowndes' Holden Racing Team years, was included with the print edition of issue #106. Part three, the Triple Eight years, will be included in the print edition of issue #108.

Purchase our posters and more from our online store.

Enjoy!

—Adrian



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KIWIS TAKE FLIGHT

With two New Zealanders set to do battle for the Virgin Australia Supercars Championship as we approach the ITM Auckland SuperSprint, we look at the reasons why Kiwis are dominating the Australian-based series.

For a country with a population of less than five million people, New Zealand has made a remarkable contribution to motorsport with competitive entrants across the globe.

This is also evident in Australia, where Scott McLaughlin and Shane van Gisbergen are competing for the Virgin Australia

Supercars Championship, Fabian Coulthard, Richie Stanaway and Andre Heimgartner have competitive full-time drives and Earl Bamber and Chris Pither are joining the grid for the endurance events.

Their current success in Supercars can be traced to the inclusion of a championship round at Pukekohe Park Raceway in New Zealand from 2001.

The likes of McLaughlin and van Gisbergen grew up watching and idolising Greg Murphy winning on home soil and at Bathurst, inspiring them to race in Australia.

"You've got to have the right people and the right support around you to make sure all your skills are tuned and that you're able to extract them to the absolute maximum," says Murphy.

"That's what we've got at the moment, which for all the Kiwis fans back in New Zealand watching and for the likes of me it's great and is fantastic for our motorsport culture."

New Zealand's motorsport culture is strong thanks to a large number of circuits, strong domestic categories that run over the southern hemisphere summer, with European drivers racing in





them, and, as Murphy states, benefactors willing to back young drivers.

“I think it sort of comes back to the fact that we are a small nation and there is a strong desire to succeed here,” says MotorSport New Zealand CEO Brian Budd.

“I guess we like to beat Aussies but that’s beside the point. We definitely punch above

our weight internationally in a whole range of sports and activities and motorsport is one of those.

“A lot of young guys, particularly ones that are on farms, are driving vehicles at a young age.

“We’ve got a very strong karting scene and most major towns and cities have a kart club and a kart track.

“We’ve got a lot of circuits for

the size of the population, eight permanent-licence circuits for four and a half million people.

“If you look at Sydney you’ve got one or two. There’s a chance that a lot of young guys will do a heck of a lot more racing because it’s not a big thing to travel the length and breadth of the country to do events.”

It took a New Zealander 25 years to win the Australian

Touring Car Championship courtesy of Jim Richards in 1985. He set the path for New Zealanders to follow in Australian touring cars.

Now, with the current level of talent coming out of New Zealand and the likes of McLaughlin and van Gisbergen at their peak, we could be in a spell of Kiwi domination in Supercars. **X**



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WHO IS THE NEXT LOWNDES?

With Craig Lowndes retiring from full-time Supercars driving at the end of 2018, who will step up to fill the breach as the fan favourite of the series?

Craig Lowndes has been the undisputed fan favourite in Supercars for more than two decades. His absence as a full-time driver from next season presents an opportunity for other drivers to assume the role of Supercars' number one with the fans.

These are some of the contenders:



SCOTT MCLAUGHLIN

McLaughlin has been popular with fans since his arrival into the series with Garry Rogers Motorsport. He has also attracted a new fanbase by driving for Dick Johnson in the iconic #17 and being the leading Ford entrant over the last two seasons. He engages well with fans in person and on social media, but can a New Zealander become the most popular driver of an Australian-based series?



CHAZ MOSTERT

Mostert came through the ranks with Scott McLaughlin and shot to fame with his dramatic win in at Bathurst in 2014. His recovery from the injuries sustained at Bathurst the following year added to his story, and he too is popular with fans at and away from events. He's been unable to match the results of McLaughlin in recent seasons as Tickford Racing has lost ground to DJR Team Penske, with a return to the top step of the podium needed to build more awareness.

DAVID REYNOLDS

Reynolds has become more than just the joker in the Supercars field, emerging as a genuine contender with Erebus Motorsport following their breakthrough win at Bathurst last year. He and team owner Betty Klimenko have made a great team and developed



a strong fanbase, which will continue to grow and showcase Reynolds' personality with the more races they win.

SHANE VAN GISBERGEN

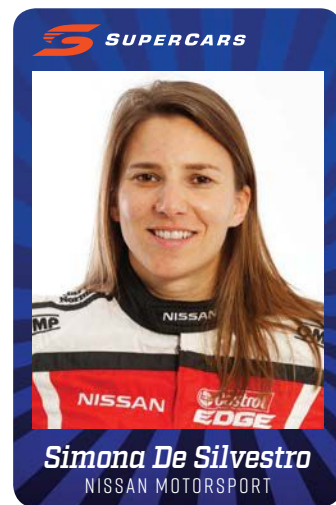
Van Gisbergen divides opinion amongst fans, yet there's no denying his natural talent and ability to drive anything with



wheels quickly. Still only 29 years of age, despite racing in Supercars for more than a decade, van Gisbergen will be at the forefront of the series for some time still if he stays in Australia. While he might not be as popular with fans as the likes of Lowndes, McLaughlin and co, he lets his driving do the talking.

SIMONA DE SILVESTRO

De Silvestro became the first full-time female driver in the Supercars era when she joined Nissan Motorsport last season. The Swiss driver is helping to bring a bigger female audience to Supercars and is set for a climb up the grid with her impending move next season. If she does become a regular towards the front end of the field in the coming seasons, her fanbase will only grow and, potentially, from non-traditional Supercars fans. **X**





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TRIPLE EIGHT RECORD BREAKERS

Triple Eight Race Engineering is now the most successful team in the history of the Australian Touring Car Championship/Supercars, achieving the feat on the brink of its 15th anniversary in the series.

When Triple Eight Race Engineering entered Supercars after purchasing the Briggs Motor Sport team heading into the Sandown 500 in 2003, few could have predicted the impact new arrival Roland Dane would have in Australia.

Fifteen years later, Triple Eight is the most successful team in the history of the category, surpassing the Holden Racing Team/Walkinshaw Andretti United's mark of 180 race wins. In that period, it has also taken the record for most pole positions, most teams' championships (eight) and most drivers' championships (eight).

Ironically, Triple Eight took over the mantle of the factory Holden squad and Holden Racing Team name from the team now known as Walkinshaw Andretti United in 2017.

"Sandown is the 15th anniversary of Triple Eight in Australia and we've achieved that (victory) milestone in a far shorter period in time than they've had," Dane told Supercars.com.

"We've come first or second in the championship every year since '05. We've won something every year since '06, whether it's Bathurst or the teams' championship or the drivers' championship.

"It's very satisfying to have been operating at that level for that long. Everyone can

KEY TRIPLE EIGHT RACE WINS	
EASTERN CREEK 2005	First victory courtesy of Craig Lowndes
SANDOWN 2005	First enduro win with Lowndes and Yvan Muller
ADELAIDE 2006	Jamie Whincup's debut round win
BATHURST 2006	First victory at Mount Panorama
BATHURST 2008	Third consecutive Bathurst 1000 victory
ORAN PARK 2008	Whincup seals first championship
ABU DHABI 2010	Debut round win with Holden
BATHURST 2010	One-two formation finish
ADELAIDE 2013	Debut win with VF Commodore
ADELAIDE 2018	Debut win with ZB Commodore
THE BEND 2018	Record-breaking 181st victory

justifiably feel extremely proud not only of the achievement but also the relatively short period of time it has taken."

Triple Eight has set a new standard in Supercars since

its arrival, with its continuity of staff and sponsors, its well-timed switch from Ford to Holden and determination to win rated as the keys to its success within the paddock. **X**



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RANKING THE ROOKIES

Five full-time rookies feature on the 2018 Virgin Australia Supercars Championship grid. This is how they've fared this season.

It's been an up and down season for the five full-time rookies in the Virgin Australia Supercars Championship.

The five youngsters had varying levels of experience heading into 2018. Considering that experience and their circumstances, this is how we rank them thus far:

1 JACK LE BROCQ

Le Brocq had the most experience entering this season and has proven he belongs in the main game, scoring regular top 10s with the added responsibility

of leading a single-car customer team in Tekno Autosports. He is showing clear signs of progress as the season goes on.

2 ANTON DE PASQUALE

De Pasquale was the only one of the five rookies who hadn't made a Supercars start entering this season. And despite just two seasons racing touring cars in the Dunlop Super2 Series, he has been a worthy addition to Erebus Motorsport, holding his own in the midfield and assisting the continued rise of the team and teammate David Reynolds.

3 TODD HAZELWOOD

Hazelwood faced the biggest challenge of the rookies with a one-car team new to Supercars. The mid-season switch from a Falcon FG X to Commodore VF added to the workload, yet the reigning Dunlop Super2 Series has shown great maturity in leading the team on and off the track.

4 JAMES GOLDING

Golding is the latest rookie given his break in Supercars with Garry Rogers Motorsport and has found his full-time transition into the main game difficult, particularly with the team struggling

to find consistent speed from its ZB Commodores compared to other Holden entrants. Matching up against the experienced Garth Tander has been no easy feat, either.

5 RICHIE STANAWAY

Big things were expected of Stanaway, yet his arrival coincided with a significant form slump from Tickford Racing. It's been a frustrating season for the highly rated New Zealander, trying to find his way at a struggling team up against experienced teammates. Some top-10 finishes are required to salvage his campaign. **X**





SUPERCARS

2018 CHAMPIONSHIP CALENDAR

MAR 1-4	Adelaide 500	Adelaide Parklands Circuit
MAR 22-25	Coates Hire Supercars Melbourne 400	Albert Park Street Circuit
APR 6-8	Tyrepower Tasmania SuperSprint	Symmons Plains
APR 20-22	WD-40 Phillip Island 500	Phillip Island GP Circuit
MAY 4-6	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	Watpac Townsville 400	Townsville Street Circuit
JUL 20-22	Coates Hire Ipswich SuperSprint	Queensland Raceway
AUG 3-4	Red Rooster Sydney SuperNight	Sydney Motorsport Park
AUG 24-26	OTR The Bend SuperSprint	The Bend Motorsport Park
SEP 14-16	RABBLE.club Sandown 500	Sandown Motor Raceway
OCT 4-7	Supercheap Auto Bathurst 1000	Mount Panorama
OCT 19-21	Vodafone Gold Coast 600	Surfers Paradise Street Circuit
NOV 2-4	ITM Auckland SuperSprint	Pukekohe Park Raceway
NOV 23-25	Coates Hire Newcastle 500	Newcastle Street Circuit

Dates correct at time of printing

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BEYOND THE WHEEL

Column by Mark Winterbottom



FIGHTING BACK FOR THE FALCON

It's been a challenging season for us at Tickford Racing, though we are determined to give the Falcon a strong farewell in the final few events.

The feedback from our drivers has been the same this season, though it's been a hard fix to implement right away. We are on the right track and developing the right bits in the right areas, but it doesn't happen overnight so you have to maximise what you've got in the meantime.

The change in tyres this season definitely had an impact, especially in terms of how we approach setting up our cars for each race weekend.

The thing about Supercars is

there are no consistently slow teams, especially with customer teams running so much gear from the bigger teams. The game has moved forward in a big way, so you've got to be on top of your game so you aren't left behind.

Although we are switching to the Mustang next year, the bits we bolt onto the car are similar from this season so we need to try and finish strongly to start from a better base next season. Our time will come again, but as a driver we want it yesterday and not tomorrow.

Hopefully it means we will be in a position to challenge for race wins in the final few events of this season.

It's strange to think they

"IT'S STRANGE TO THINK THEY WILL BE OUR LAST FEW EVENTS IN A FALCON. AND IF SCOTT MCLAUGHLIN DOESN'T WIN THE CHAMPIONSHIP, ONE OF US COULD BE THE FINAL DRIVER TO WIN IN A FALCON..."

will be our last few events in a Falcon. And if Scott McLaughlin doesn't win the championship, one of us could be the final driver to win in a Falcon.

I've won a championship and a Bathurst in a Falcon. In fact, it's all I've ever raced in Supercars, so it holds a special place for me and we want to give it a fitting farewell.

It'll be the end of an era in

more ways than one when we roll out for the final time in a Falcon. But it's a positive change with the arrival of the Mustang, which is such an exciting development not just for our team and Ford but also Supercars.

We can't wait to roll it out and start a new era for the Blue Oval.

- Frosty



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RIGHT ON TRACK

Column by Craig Lowndes



RIDING THE EMOTIONS

We head into the final stages of the 2018 season

confident that we can end on a high and in the top five of the championship standings.

The new-generation Commodore suits my style better and we've developed it into a consistently strong race car, which will prove a strong asset at the likes of Bathurst.

It seems to have a lot more rear stability, especially at high speed, so across the top of Mount Panorama it will give us a lot more confidence to push on through those key corners.

Steven Richards and I have had a great relationship for a long time, not just in Supercars but back in Formula Ford and other categories. He's the same height and weight as me and likes the car to perform in a similar way, so we develop the car the same way over the course of the endurance events.

The addition of co-drivers brings a new lease of life into

the team, also giving us a new pair of eyes on the development of the cars and the direction we've taken it. Co-drivers are vital to the championship with 900 points on the line at the PIRTEK Enduro Cup events, so it's a real championship game changer.

Now that we've made our decision regarding our future, it will become more emotional as we head towards Newcastle

“NOW THAT WE’VE MADE OUR DECISION REGARDING OUR FUTURE, IT WILL BECOME MORE EMOTIONAL AS WE HEAD TOWARDS NEWCASTLE IN NOVEMBER.”

in November. Nothing's changed in terms of how we've approached race weekends, but knowing it will be my last

event as a full-time driver in Supercars will be a different feeling.

Last season's Newcastle event was pretty dramatic in terms of the championship outcome and it's shaping up to be that again. We'll go back to Newcastle better prepared knowing what we need to get the car to perform on that circuit. It was a fantastic round there last year and I have no doubt it will be the same.

Hopefully through this important period of the championship we can make some inroads to the number-one spot, but to finish off my full-time career placed in the top five in the standings would be a great outcome.

— Craig



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- Medal of the Order of Australia
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- Five-time Barry Sheene Medallist

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GARRY THE GURU

Column by
Garry Rogers



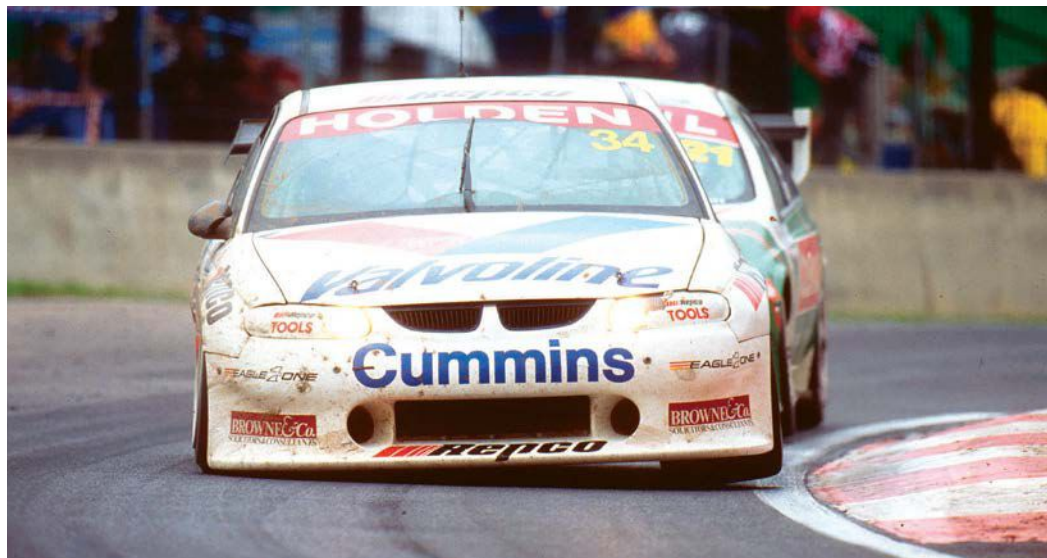
MILESTONES & MEMORIES

Garry Rogers Motorsport reached a number of milestones this season, including our 300th event at The Bend Motorsport Park and 700th race start at Bathurst.

While milestones and statistics are really just numbers, they do create an opportunity to celebrate some of the achievements of the team over the years. And I am extremely proud of what we have done in the sport.

We started with Steven Richards in a single-car team in 1996. When I think back to those days, we had a lot of fun with our racing. We still have fun today, but there is a lot of official rubbish that gets in the way. I think it's great that the sport is so professional now thanks to Tony Cochrane and SEL getting involved, but it really is different times.

I have enjoyed giving young people opportunities in the sport over the years. We gave starts to Richards, Jason Bright, Jamie Whincup, Garth Tander, Lee Holdsworth, Michael Caruso and Scott McLaughlin. However, it's not just the drivers as we have also given some opportunities to some great engineers and mechanics.



As for my favourite races, there are a lot that I have enjoyed, but in terms of achievements it's hard to go past winning Bathurst in 2000. That was a terrible day weather-wise and I think it's fair to say that we weren't the favourites, but Garth and Jason Bargwanna just drove magnificently and the team was on its game.

Garth was six-foot and Bargs was two-foot nothing and we made it work from a driver position point of view with some good old ingenuity, by Bargs using a 'booster' seat. I think that sort of ingenuity is lost a little bit today with the

so-called professionalism.

That car, the 2000 Bathurst-winning VT Commodore, is one of the few cars that I have kept. Another is the Bathurst 24 Hour-winning Monaro. Winning that race twice after being trusted by Holden to build the Monaro from the ground up was a real feather in the cap of the team.

Talking of building a car from the ground up, another huge achievement was making the Volvo competitive from day one. That was a big project and the team did a great job for those three years. Yes, it had a disappointing end but if you ask me if I would have done it even if we knew how it was going to end, the answer would be an unequivocal "of course".

Probably one of my proudest days was when Barry said he wanted to get involved in the team. He had never really showed a lot of interest in the racing as a youngster and he didn't need to take over my

business for the money.

Barry has been an extremely successful businessman in his own right, but he decided that he wanted to get involved. As a father and just as his mate, I was extremely happy with that outcome and it's fair to say that Garry Rogers Motorsport is in good hands, so roll on the next 300 events and 700 races!

— Garry

“WHILE MILESTONES AND STATISTICS ARE REALLY JUST NUMBERS, THEY DO CREATE AN OPPORTUNITY TO CELEBRATE SOME OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE TEAM OVER THE YEARS.”



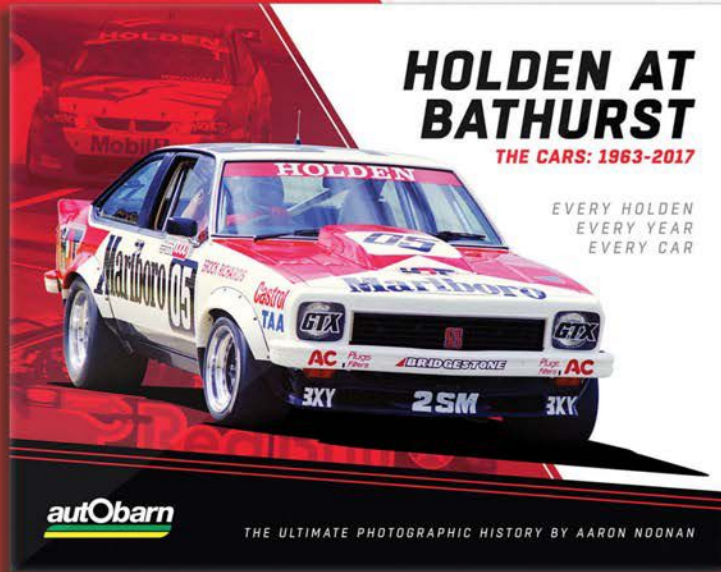
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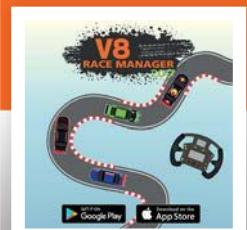
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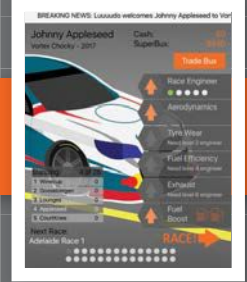
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CRAIG LOWNDES

CELEBRATING A LEGEND

CRAIG L



LOWNDAS THE END OF AN ERA

Craig Lowndes' full-time Supercars driving career comes to an end this season. It's been a remarkable journey since he burst onto the scene as a championship-winning rookie. This is his story.

WORDS Bruce Newton IMAGES Supercars, Autopics.com.au, Ben Auld

Come late afternoon on November 25 in Newcastle, the Craig Lowndes era in Australian touring-car racing will come to an end. He will clamber from his racing car for the last time as a full-time Supercars driver.

Yes, he will continue with Triple Eight Race Engineering as an endurance co-driver and ambassador. But when the V8s roar at the Adelaide 500 next year, for the first time in the history of that event he won't be part of the field.

Just on the basis of his results there's no doubt Lowndes' contribution has been monumental. But his departure counts for more than that. And that's because

his story is a classic. Take the cars and the multi-million dollar trappings of motor racing out of it and it would still resonate. Everyday kid makes good, emulates his idol, endures setbacks but still comes through smiling.

Literally smiling, because that's a key ingredient of Lowndes' appeal. Through good times and bad, occasionally forced but often genuine, Lowndes has been the very human face of Supercars. Big grin, big teeth, eyes squinting, freckles abounding, bushy eyebrows, a thumbs-up and a voluble willingness to communicate.

Pleasant and approachable and always with time for the punters, Lowndes comfortably slipped into the role of fan favourite following on from his Holden Racing Team (HRT) teammate and mentor, Peter Brock. His popularity has endured without damage despite his swap from Holden to Ford and back again during his career.

CRAIG LOWNDES

CELEBRATING A LEGEND

After more than 20 years in the spotlight there are still recognisable traits of the ‘The Kid’ in there. He still comes across as relatively straightforward. Sure, pitlane, a place that can be vituperative, spiteful and corrosive, has had an effect, has worn down that exuberance and erased that naiveté. But those who know him well insist he remains an uncomplicated and genuinely nice fella, who has driven at an elite level for more than two decades at a time when the category has never been tougher.

And now, as Lowndes himself says, in 2019 he enters a new chapter. Predictably, Lowndes’ decision has generated masses of comment and controversy. In a world where 15 seconds worth of fame is now an achievement, it says much about Lowndes that his retirement is the biggest local motorsport story of 2018. It’s been energised – as Neil Crompton would say – because not everyone is convinced Lowndes actually wants to retire.

Lowndes admitted publicly as far back as mid-2017 that 2018 might be his last year, but that was when he was struggling for front-running pace on the new Dunlop tyre and learning to work with engineer John ‘Irish’ McGregor. Back on song in 2018 and with a contract to drive full-time into 2019, his retirement announcement was a shock.

Lowndes’ performance at the press conference in Townsville where he and Triple Eight team boss Roland Dane announced his retirement was unconvincing. “We know that this is the right time for me,” he said more than once in Townsville, without really sounding like he believed it.

Since then both men have appeared in multiple television and print interviews together and separately to insist he wasn’t forced out. Lowndes has sounded more at peace with his decision, while Dane has defended as he always does, by attacking.

“I couldn’t care less what everyone else thinks about it,” he said. “Craig and I know what the decision that he made that I completely agree with and that I think was the right decision to make. He knows the facts and I know the facts.”

THE BEGINNINGS

Lowndes was born on June 21 in 1974 and grew up in Melbourne’s north-eastern suburbs. His father Frank worked for the old Holden Dealer Team in the era when Peter Brock was Australia’s superstar touring-car driver.

Lowndes was originally meant to test a Dick Johnson Racing Falcon as a reward for winning the 1993 Formula Ford Series, but that never happened and Holden Racing Team stepped in, at team manager Jeff ‘Hog’ Grech’s urging, to give the 19-year-old a go.

His touring-car career began in September 1994 when he debuted in a HRT Commodore as Brad Jones’ co-driver in the Sandown 500, where they finished fifth.

A few weeks later Lowndes imprinted himself on the national psyche with a daring round-the-outside-pass of John Bowe at Griffin’s Bend with just laps to go in the Bathurst 1000. Bowe fought back to win the race in the Shell-FAI Falcon he was sharing with Dick Johnson, but less than two laps in the lead literally launched a new legend.



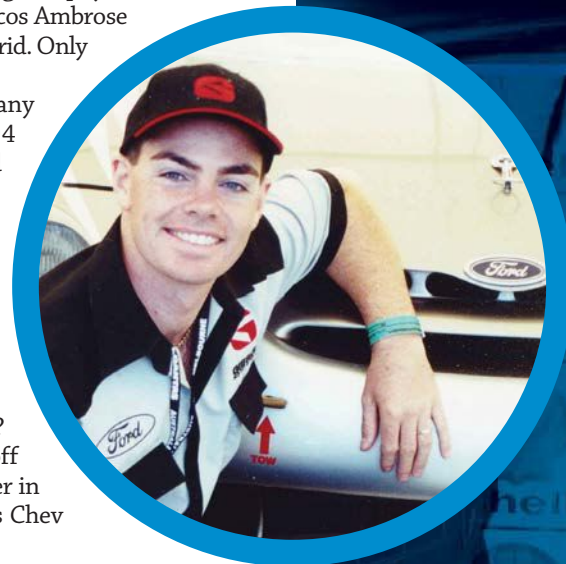
“If I hadn’t made that passing manoeuvre, who knows?” pondered Lowndes. “Hopefully I had done enough already to have interest from other teams, but I think that pass sparked my future with HRT.”

Lowndes’ performance cracked the dyke. After a decade where the veterans had locked out young talent, Lowndes led the likes of Greg Murphy, Steven Richards, Jason Bright, Marcos Ambrose and Garth Tander onto the grid. Only Tander has outlasted him.

And yet there were so many nuances to Bathurst 1994 and so many ways it could have gone wrong. He might not have been there at all if Swede Rickard Rydell hadn’t pulled out of his HRT co-drive at Sandown for family reasons.

Did Lowndes actually mean to pass Bowe or did his foot slip off the brake? How lucky was he to stay off the wall when he spun earlier in race... even luckier the car’s Chev

ABOVE & BELOW: Lowndes had significant spells with both Holden and Ford in Supercars.





“WE’LL BE FIGHTING HARD TIL THE END OF THE YEAR. WE WANT TO FINISH THE SEASON ON A POSITIVE.”

– CRAIG LOWNDES

engine wasn't too damaged to start when he crashed in the warm-up session. And then there was Jones' role, performing a heroic double stint to get the car back into contention from nearly a lap down. Jones' reward was to never drive for HRT again.

“Hog' was in love with Craig and it turned out he was right,” Jones said years later. “He went on to do amazing things.”

THE STATS TELL A STORY

Lowndes' record since he started in touring-car competition in 1994 now stands at: 600-plus races contested, 100-plus races won, 40-plus pole positions, three drivers' championships won, six Bathurst wins.

Dig into those statistics and there are bare patches that tell their own story of times not always successful. In fact, Lowndes' Supercar career can be split into three distinct patches, each of them with their challenges.

From 1994 to 2000 he was ensconced within the Holden Racing Team and the Walkinshaw empire. It was then he won his three drivers' championships.

His first full year in 1996 was simply incredible. Armed with HRT chassis #033, a VR Commodore designed by emerging young engineering superstars Chris Dyer and Richard Hollway and rolling on Bridgestone tyres superior to the rival Dunlops and Yokohama, he dominated the 1996 championship and then was joined by Murphy to win the Sandown 500 and Bathurst 1000. It's a tri-fecta no-one has yet emulated.

In that year Lowndes demonstrated an ability to conjure tyre life that remains one of his most valuable racing assets. He could make a softer compound live just as long as the harder compounds teammate Brock used.

Lowndes learned much about the merciless reality of motor racing in this period from two of its toughest operators, HSV/HRT owner Tom Walkinshaw and his chief lieutenant John Crennan.

They controlled the early days of his career, signed him to a 10-year management deal and found the funding for a 1997 Formula 3000 campaign in Europe. Their unwillingness to spend another \$1.2 million in 1998 to go again rendered the first cracks in the foundations of that relationship.

When Lowndes came home disillusioned in 1998, he faced a new and hungry teammate at HRT in Mark Skaife.

Complex, aggressive, ruthless, utterly committed and focused, Skaife worked constantly to garner the team's loyalty. He also had a father-son relationship with Crennan, both of them fascinated by the business and politics of racing. That's not Lowndes in the slightest.

Even though he won two more championships for the team in 1998 and 1999, Lowndes, by now living in Queensland, increasingly found himself on the outer at HRT. One day he rang the workshop only to discover the team had gone testing at Phillip Island without him.

“It was one of the hardest decisions in my life to cut ties with someone I started my career with,” Lowndes said in 2004. “The decision was heart-wrenching.”

From 2001 to 2004, having been wooed by Ford Australia chief Geoff Polites across the great divide, Lowndes raced unsuccessfully for two Ford teams in four years. In this period, driving uncompetitive and unreliable cars, he was overshadowed by Skaife and Ambrose, who had returned from overseas to lead Stone Brothers Racing.

“We've smiled at times when we were angry inside,” Lowndes said at his retirement press conference. There was a lot of that going on in the early 2000s.

RESURRECTION AT TRIPLE EIGHT

The third (and final) chapter of his Supercars career began in 2005 when he made what then seemed to be the risky decision to move from Ford Performance Racing (FPR) to Triple Eight Race Engineering, the Ford team built up by Irish émigré Roland Dane and his volatile engineering sidekick Frenchman Ludo Lacroix.

In those days FPR was the factory team and Triple Eight the support act – and not a particularly convincing one in a 2004 season blighted by unreliability. But it proved an inspired decision. Lowndes won Triple Eight's first Supercar race at Eastern Creek in 2005 and has followed up with five of his six Bathurst 1000s, including the emotional 2006 victory just weeks after Brock's death, and 50-plus Supercars race wins for the team. He has only once finished outside the drivers' championship top four since 2005.

BELOW: Lowndes won the championship on his first attempt with the Holden Racing Team in 1996.



CRAIG LOWNDES

CELEBRATING A LEGEND

Armed with cars often the class of the field, there is no doubt Lowndes' career has been maximised by the move to Triple Eight. The wrong decision in 2004 may well have seen it fizzle out years earlier. But while he has been Triple Eight's most popular driver and a merchandising money-spinner, he has not been its best driver. That honour clearly goes to Jamie Whincup, who was initially signed in 2006 to be Lowndes' number two but soon flipped the roles. Their head-to-head fight has been one-sided. Whincup has won seven championships to none and won a record number of races, all with Triple Eight.

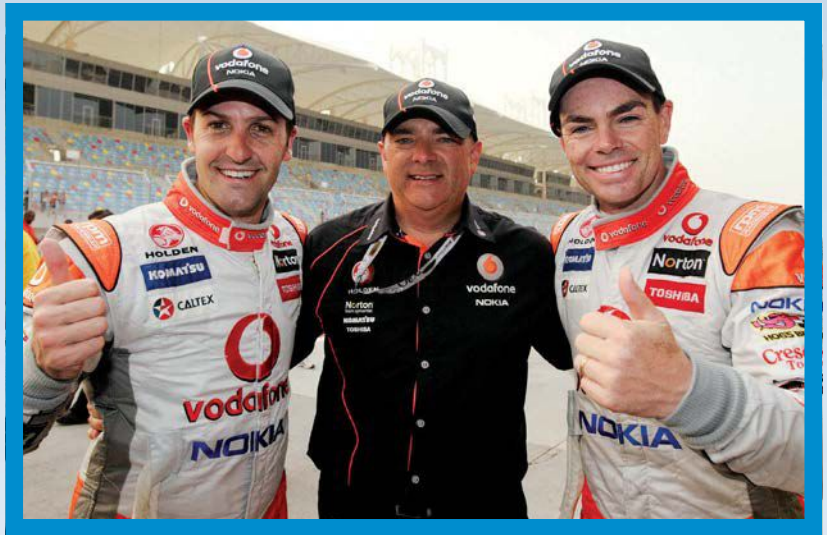
"We've been second [in the championship] numerous times to Jamie, which has been a thorn in my side," admitted Lowndes. "But he's been a fantastic teammate and collectively we've pushed the team to where it is."

Like Skaife, Whincup is an immensely hard worker, melding great speed with a willingness to spend hours dissecting the data and looking for performance improvement from himself and the car.

To his credit, Lowndes has never given up. He has lifted his performances time and again, worked harder on setup, improved his qualifying and honed his fitness. Through the years his natural talent has remained obvious and his love of racing and fierce competitive instinct undimmed. It was never enough. And yet fan regard increased rather than decreased.

That popularity helps explain why Dane chose to keep Lowndes as a driver in a satellite team within the Triple Eight organisation after he had signed Shane van Gisbergen to partner Whincup. Firing Lowndes would have been a PR nightmare and a revenue danger. But Dane, a ruthless businessman, had other motivations which revealed another side of him.

"I think Triple Eight as a business owes Craig a debt of gratitude," he said when the deal was announced.



ABOVE: Three constants in the rise of Triple Eight Race Engineering, Jamie Whincup, Roland Dane and Lowndes.

"I want to make sure we do the right thing by the business, the right thing by Craig, the right thing by the fans and also in due course Craig can morph into being an endurance driver if that is what he wants."

And, yes, he does want that. It is expected he will become Whincup's co-driver in 2019. They already have three Bathurst wins together – and their dominance was one important reason Supercars decided that regular drivers could not team together. Their reunification will surely make them Great Race favourites. But, before that, there's a championship still to fight for.

"I'd love to be in the top three or four [of the] championship at the end of the year," says Lowndes.

"We'll be fighting hard til the end of the year," he promised. "We want to finish the season on a positive." And an era. **X**

Lowndes in his final full-time season in Supercars in 2018.



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WORDS Adrian Musolino IMAGES Autopics.com.au, Justin Deeley, James Baker, Peter Norton

1996 EASTERN CREEK

Lowndes had already stunned the establishment with his starring debut at Mount Panorama in 1994. Then he took the championship by storm in 1996. In the first round of the season at the short Eastern Creek layout, Lowndes harried John Bowe in the first race before getting the jump and scoring his first win in the second race. He backed that up with his second win under lights in the final race for a sensational round victory. He would go on to sweep the year with the championship plus Sandown and Bathurst victories.



1998 SANDOWN

Following his domination of the 1996 season, Lowndes ventured to Europe to compete in Formula 3000. After a character-building season, he returned home and claimed victory in the 1997 Sandown 500 with Greg Murphy in preparation for a full-time return from 1998. He then picked up exactly where he left off, claiming two of three races at the season-opening Sandown round in an emphatic return to the championship.



1998 ORAN PARK

Lowndes wrapped up his first championship in 1996 with a round to spare. In 1998 he headed into the final round of the season at Oran Park with an in-form Russell Ingall just six points behind. Both had debuted their new VT Commodores the round before at Hidden Valley, but Ingall won the round while Lowndes' car suffered a series of mechanical failures. Lowndes, however, lifted for the finale, claiming

pole position and racing away to sweep the round with comfortable victories in all three races.



1999 ADELAIDE

Perhaps the most convincing of all of Lowndes' wins was at the first Adelaide 500 round on the punishing street circuit. Lowndes won the first 250km leg despite a stop-go penalty for contact with privateer Danny Osborne. He was sent to the back of the grid for the second leg, only to work his way through the field without the aid of a safety-car intervention. While the heat and demands of the circuit took its toll on his rivals, Lowndes kept his cool for an incredible come-from-behind win.

2001 ADELAIDE

Lowndes shocked Supercars when he departed HRT to cross the manufacturer divide in a striking silver and black Gibson Motorsport Ford AU Falcon. After finishing second in the opening round at Phillip Island, he headed to Adelaide and from eighth on the grid avoided the carnage around him for his first win in a Ford and 50th all-time race win. A collision with Mark Skaife in the second race would rob him of another round win in Adelaide.

2001 SANDOWN

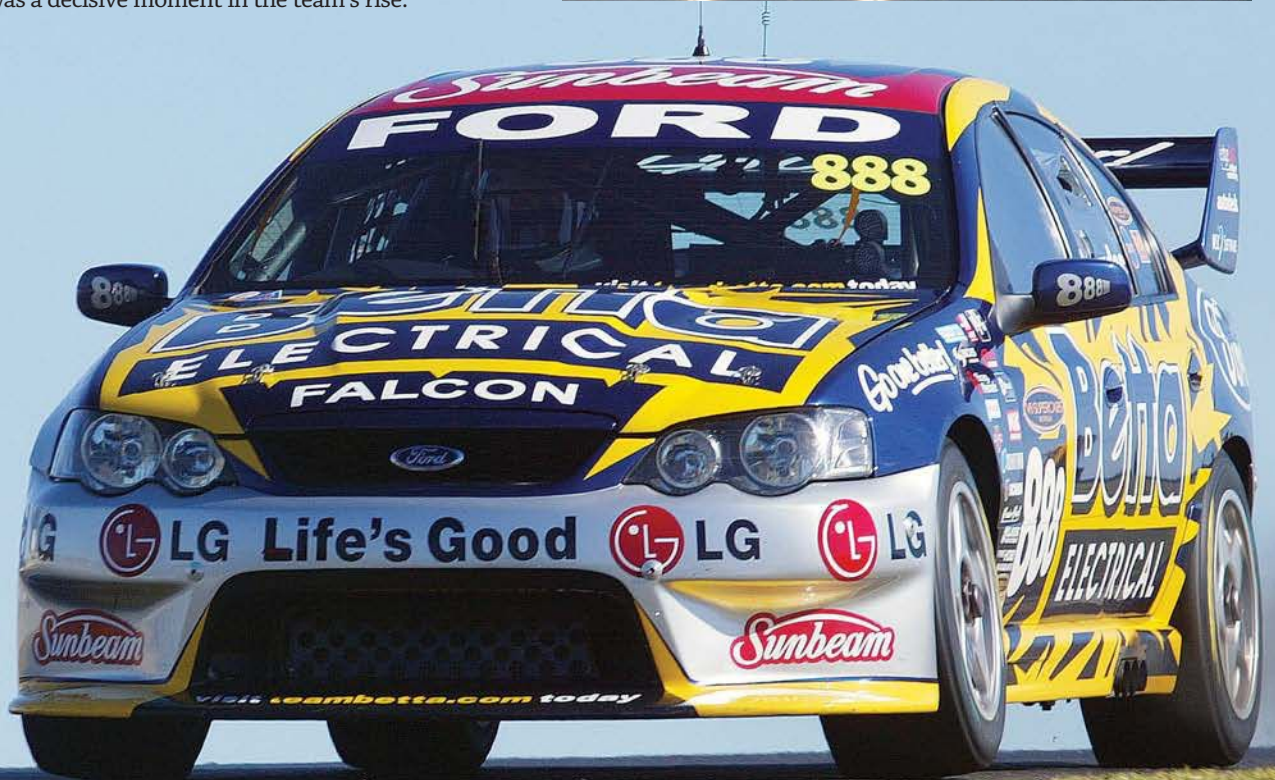
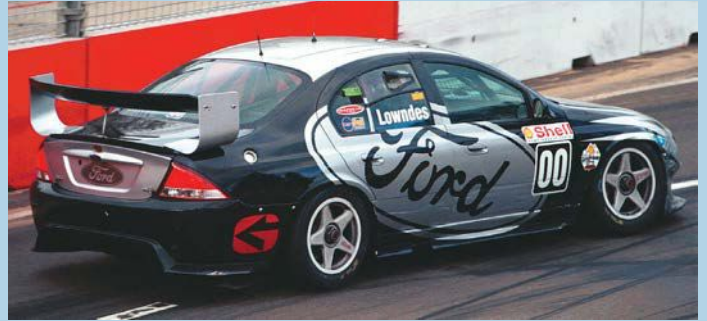
Wet weather is a great equaliser in motorsport and that proved to be the case at the 2001 season finale at Sandown, where torrential rain allowed Lowndes to overcome the deficiencies of his AU Falcon. The race started under the safety car and Lowndes, from third on the grid, overcame the challenge of fellow AU runner and rookie sensation Marcos Ambrose to score what would be his second and final win for Gibson Motorsport.

2003 PHILLIP ISLAND

Lowndes' spell with Ford Performance Racing was characterised by frustration as the new factory Ford outfit struggled with reliability. So while Stone Brothers Racing and Marcos Ambrose took the BA Falcon to the title, Lowndes battled away for minor placings. Nevertheless, at the second round at Phillip Island, he fought through from sixth on the grid on a wet day to be leading when the race was red-flagged due to torrential conditions.

2005 EASTERN CREEK

Lowndes' move to Triple Eight in 2005 revived a career that appeared to have stalled. The Roland Dane-led team was on the up and Lowndes' arrival brought the team into contention. At the fourth round of the season at Eastern Creek, Lowndes beat Marcos Ambrose with a quicker pitstop for the team's break-through win. Defeating the era's dominant team in a straight head-to-head was a decisive moment in the team's rise.





CRAIG LOWNDES

CELEBRATING A LEGEND

2005 SANDOWN

The momentum of that breakthrough win carried into the endurance events. Lowndes teamed with versatile Frenchman Yvan Muller for the long-distance races, with the duo putting in a virtuoso performance at Sandown to confirm their reputations as wet-weather masters. From second on the grid, Lowndes pulled away from the field in the opening stint, while Muller dealt with the changeable middle-stint conditions with ease. While a strategy gamble handed Mark Skaife the lead, Lowndes hunted him down on an increasingly wet track and passed with four laps remaining. It would be the first of many Triple Eight endurance triumphs. And, fittingly, future teammate Jamie Whincup joined them on the podium.

2006 MOUNT PANORAMA

The death of Peter Brock a month before set the tone for a sombre 2006 Bathurst 1000. Lowndes – as Brock’s protégé – was thrust into the spotlight and even took part in a pre-race parade of Brock’s cars. Without a win at Mount Panorama since 1996, Lowndes and new co-driver Jamie Whincup fought back from an early strategic error that sent them to the back of the pack. The duo worked their way into the lead, with Lowndes holding off Rick Kelly in an edge-of-your-seat finish. Fittingly, Lowndes and Whincup held aloft the first Peter Brock Trophy, with Lowndes unable to hold back the tears.

2007 MOUNT PANORAMA

Lowndes’ ability in damp conditions and love of Mount Panorama stood out in the closing stages of the 2007 Bathurst 1000. As rain increased, many struggled in the conditions and high-calibre drivers such as Mark Winterbottom, Jason Bright, Russell Ingall and Mark Skaife all fell victim. Lowndes battled away with Steven Johnson on slick tyres on the slippery track to claim a second consecutive Bathurst 1000 win with Whincup.

2010 MOUNT PANORAMA

New co-driver rules that forced full-time drivers to remain in their own cars for the endurance events separated Triple Eight’s dream team of Lowndes and Jamie Whincup. It recruited Lowndes’ former teammate Mark Skaife as his co-driver for 2010 and the duo won first up at Phillip Island. At Mount Panorama, Lowndes was again in top form with a record-breaking lap in practice (2:06.8012). In the race, Skaife was troubled by a back complaint and Lowndes would be forced to triple stint from lap 82 to lap 161 and fight back to regain lost track position. He just avoided the limit on driving time to lead home a Triple Eight one-two formation finish in the team’s first season with Holden.

2013 ADELAIDE

The 2013 Supercars season saw the introduction of the Car of the Future regulations, bringing new manufacturers into the series. Meanwhile, Holden introduced the VF Commodore and Triple Eight debuted with new title sponsor Red Bull. Showing his versatility as he approached his 40th birthday, Lowndes won the first race of this new era on the streets of Adelaide to go equal at top of the all-time wins’ list with 90 victories.



2013 BARBAGALLO

Lowndes didn't have to wait long to surpass Mark Skaife's record of most race wins. Three events later at his favourite Barbagallo Raceway hunting ground, he moved up from fourth on the grid to second in the first half of the 60/60km SuperSprint race. Then he got the jump over Jamie Whincup at the start and raced away for the record-breaking 91st win. Fittingly, Skaife was in parc ferme to welcome home and congratulate his former teammate.

2015 HIDDEN VALLEY

As Lowndes edged closer to the 100 mark, the pressure mounted. A double on the Saturday at Symmons Plains left him sitting nervously on 99, but he squandered the chance to notch up the century on Sunday with a clumsy dive bomb on David Reynolds off the start. Three events later at Hidden Valley, the seas parted for him when front-row starters Rick Kelly and Fabian Coulthard collided into turn one and he vaulted from fifth on the grid into a lead he would hold for the rest of the race. A relieved Lowndes finally claimed the century in, incredibly, the 888th championship race in the #888 car a day before his 41st birthday.

2015 MOUNT PANORAMA

Lowndes put in a vintage performance to secure his sixth Bathurst 1000 win in 2015. He and co-driver Steven Richards missed the Shootout and started down in 15th, though the veterans fought back in mixed conditions and took the lead with 40 laps to go. The win helped keep Lowndes in championship contention, though he would eventually lose out to Mark Winterbottom at the season finale in Sydney.

2016 BARBAGALLO

Lowndes and engineer Ludo Lacroix played the strategy game and won at Barbagallo Raceway in 2016. They decided on an extra pitstop for new tyres at a circuit notorious for high tyre degradation, dropping to 22nd but carving through the field in the final stint of the race. Lowndes even had time to pull out a five-second lead, despite a last-lap downpour.

2018 SYMMONS PLAINS

After a winless run dating back to Barbagallo Raceway in 2016, Lowndes responded to criticism over his form with a dominant display at Symmons Plains. The 44-year-old scored his first pole since August 2015 and converted it into his first win since May 2016. The double podium across the event came just weeks before he announced his retirement from full-time driving in Supercars. **X**





CRAIG LOWNDES

CELEBRATING A LEGEND

RECORDS & NUMBERS

Craig Lowndes' remarkable list of achievements in Supercars...

SUPERCARS CHAMPIONSHIP WINS: 1996, 1998, 1999

PIRTEK ENDURO CUP WINS: 2013

BATHURST 1000 WINS: 1996, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2015

SANDOWN 500 WINS: 1996, 1997, 2005, 2007, 2012

QUEENSLAND 500 WINS: 2000

PHILLIP ISLAND 500 WINS: 2010, 2011

FIRST RACE WIN: Eastern Creek Raceway, 1996

25TH RACE WIN: Barbagallo Raceway, 1998

50TH RACE WIN: Adelaide Street Circuit, 2001

75TH RACE WIN: Phillip Island Grand Prix Circuit, 2010

100TH RACE WIN: Hidden Valley Raceway, 2015

MOST WINS PER MANUFACTURER: Holden, 81*

MOST WINS PER TEAM: Triple Eight Race Engineering, 54*

MOST WINS PER CAR: Holden VT Commodore, 23

MOST WINS PER CIRCUIT: Barbagallo Raceway, 16

MOST WINS PER CO-DRIVER: Mark Skaife and Jamie Whincup, 4

MOST RACE WINS IN A SEASON RECORD: 16 from 30, 1996

MOST RACE WINS AT PHILLIP ISLAND RECORD: 11

MOST RACE WINS AT BARBAGALLO RACEWAY RECORD: 16

MOST RACE WINS AT QUEENSLAND RACEWAY RECORD: 12

MOST RACE WINS AT SANDOWN RACEWAY RECORD: 9

MOST PODIUMS IN THE BATHURST 500/1000: 13

YOUNGEST SUPERCARS CHAMPION RECORD: 21 years, 11 months, 11 days (1996)

MOST RACE WINS IN SUCCESSION RECORD: 8 (Lakeside, Barbagallo, Mallala – 1996)

MOST ROUND STARTS RECORD: 289*

BARRY SHEENE MEDALIST: 2005, 2006, 2011, 2013, 2015

FANS' MOST POPULAR DRIVER CHOICE: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016

FIRST SUPERCARS DRIVER TO 100 RACE WINS: Hidden Valley Raceway, 2015

** Up to date to the conclusion of the OTR SuperSprint.*

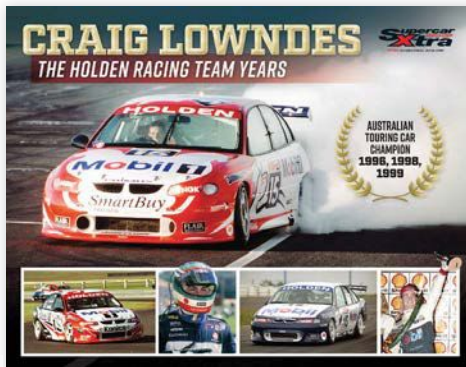


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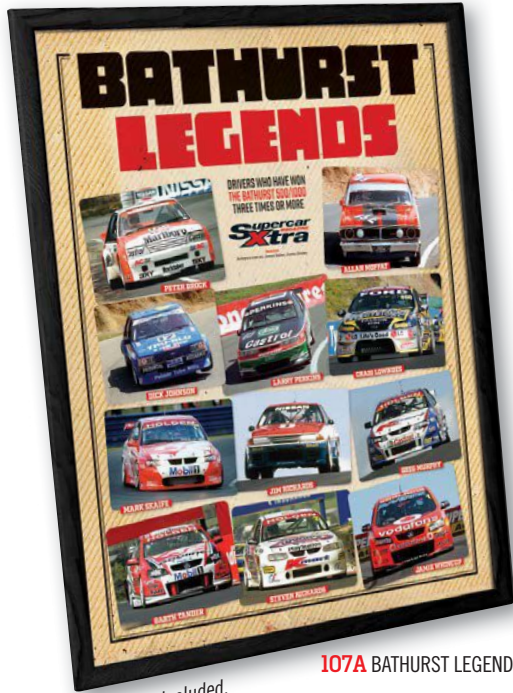
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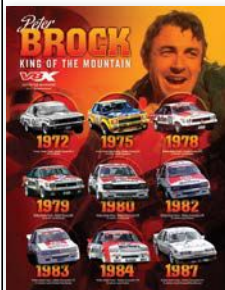
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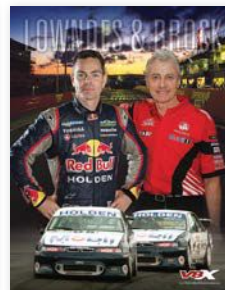
107B CRAIG LOWNDES: THE FORD YEARS



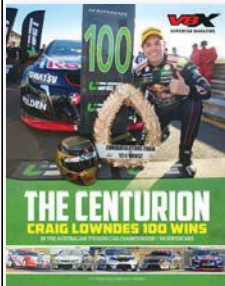
107A BATHURST LEGENDS



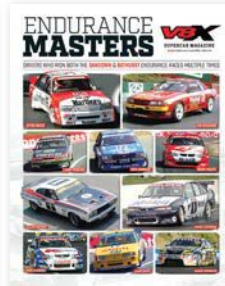
86A KING OF THE MOUNTAIN



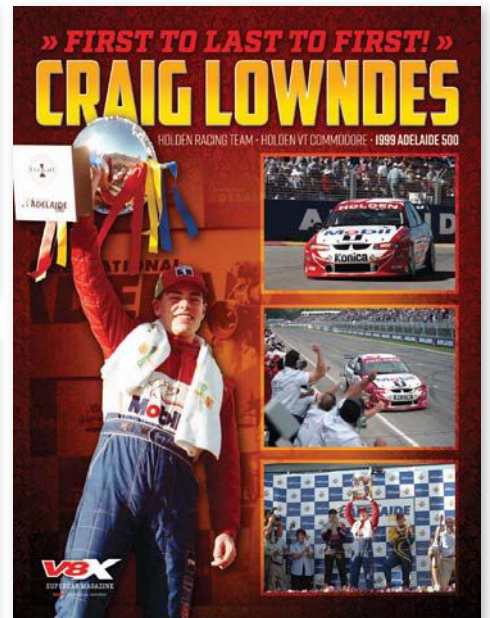
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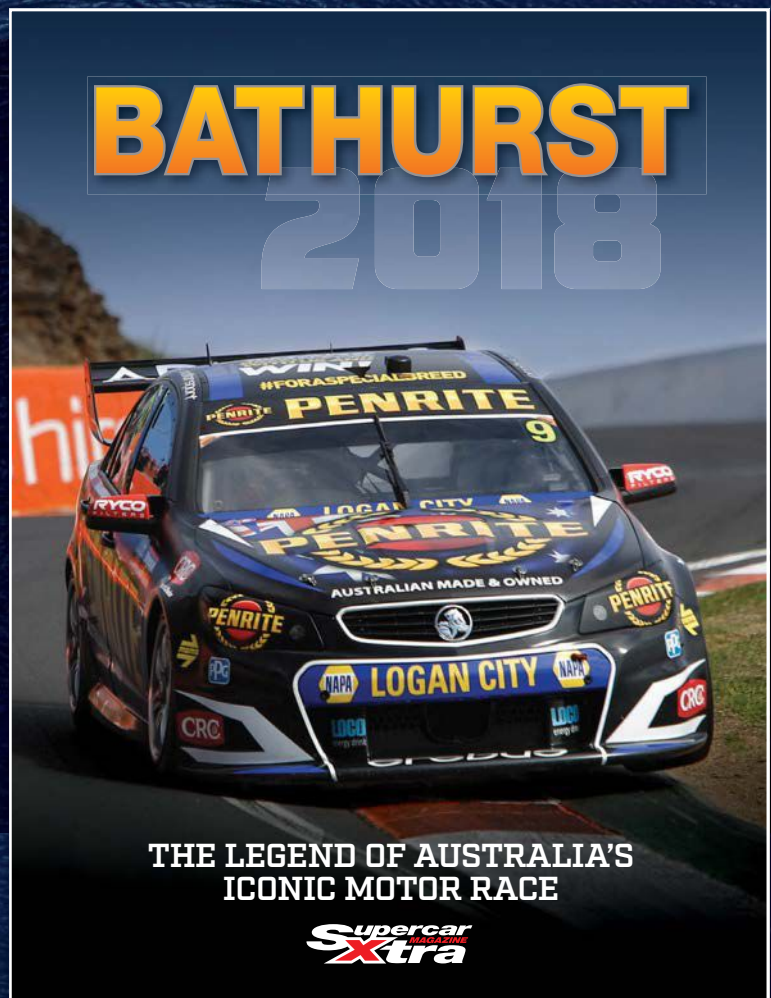
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SUPERCHEAP AUTO



The Ultimate Test of **ENDURANCE** BATHURST & GOLD COAST EVENT GUIDE



PIRTEK ENDURO CUP 2018

ENTRY LIST

#	Driver	Team	Car
1	Jamie Whincup / Paul Dumbrell	Triple Eight Race Engineering	Holden ZB Commodore
2	Scott Pye / Warren Luff	Walkinshaw Andretti United	Holden ZB Commodore
5	Mark Winterbottom / Dean Canto	Tickford Racing	Ford FG X Falcon
6	Cameron Waters / David Russell	Tickford Racing	Ford FG X Falcon
7	André Heimgartner / Aaren Russell	Nissan Motorsport	Nissan Altima
8	Nick Percat / Macauley Jones	Brad Jones Racing	Holden ZB Commodore
9	David Reynolds / Luke Youlden	Erebus Motorsport	Holden ZB Commodore
12	Fabian Coulthard / Tony D'Alberto	DJR Team Penske	Ford FG X Falcon
14	Tim Slade / Ashley Walsh	Brad Jones Racing	Holden ZB Commodore
15	Rick Kelly / Garry Jacobson	Nissan Motorsport	Nissan Altima
17	Scott McLaughlin / Alexandre Prémat	DJR Team Penske	Ford FG X Falcon
18	Lee Holdsworth / Jason Bright	Team 18	Holden ZB Commodore
19	Jack Le Brocq / Jonathon Webb	Tekno Autosports	Holden ZB Commodore
21	Tim Blanchard / Dale Wood	Brad Jones Racing	Holden ZB Commodore
23	Michael Caruso / Dean Fiore	Nissan Motorsport	Nissan Altima
25	James Courtney / Jack Perkins	Walkinshaw Andretti United	Holden ZB Commodore
33	Garth Tander / Chris Pither	Garry Rogers Motorsport	Holden ZB Commodore
34	James Golding / Richard Muscat	Garry Rogers Motorsport	Holden ZB Commodore
35	Todd Hazelwood / Bryce Fullwood	Matt Stone Racing	Holden VF Commodore
55	Chaz Mostert / James Moffat	Tickford Racing	Ford FG X Falcon
56	Richie Stanaway / Steve Owen	Tickford Racing	Ford FG X Falcon
78	Simona De Silvestro / Alex Rullo	Nissan Motorsport	Nissan Altima
97	Shane van Gisbergen / Earl Bamber	Triple Eight Race Engineering	Holden ZB Commodore
99	Anton De Pasquale / Will Brown	Erebus Motorsport	Holden ZB Commodore
230	Will Davison / Alex Davison	23 Red Racing	Ford FG X Falcon
888	Craig Lowndes / Steven Richards	Triple Eight Race Engineering	Holden ZB Commodore

Entries correct at the time of printing.



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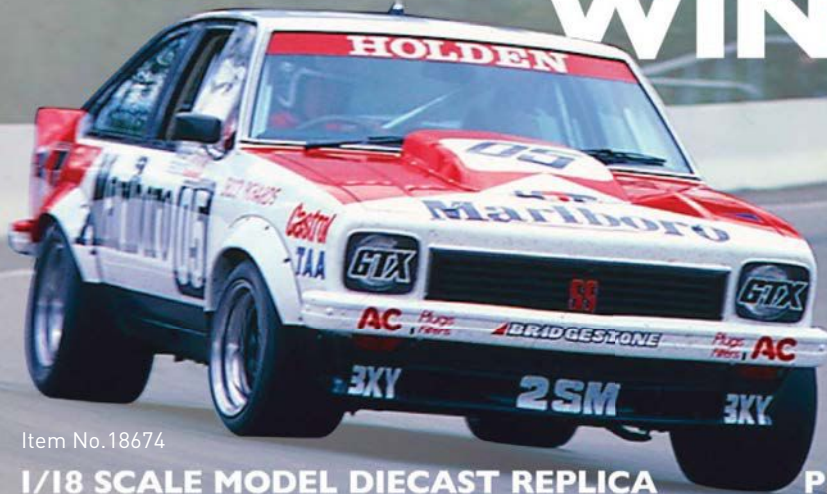


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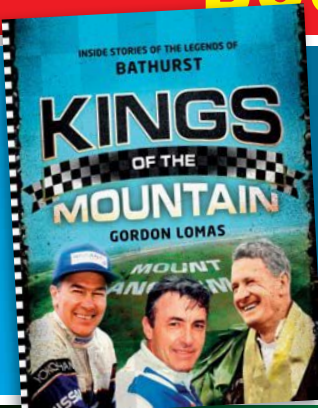


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18 TALKING POINTS FOR THE 2018 SUP

IMAGES Peter Norton

The 2018 Supercheap Auto Bathurst 1000 shapes as another endurance classic at the Mount Panorama Circuit. These are the 18 talking points for the 2018 version of the Great Race.

CHAMPIONSHIP BATTLE

Triple Eight Race Engineering's Shane van Gisbergen and DJR Team Penske's Scott McLaughlin head to Mount Panorama as the drivers to beat in the championship race. The New Zealanders have swapped the points lead throughout the season, with reigning champion Jamie Whincup needing a strong endurance campaign to keep pace. Co-drivers will play their part, with van Gisbergen partnered by Supercars rookie Earl Bamber and McLaughlin joined once again by Alexandre Prémat. The two powerhouse teams endured difficult races at Bathurst last year, so will be looking for a clean run in 2018.





WINNING POINTS

PERCHEAP AUTO BATHURST 1000

FALCON VS COMMODORE

The 2018 Supercheap Auto Bathurst 1000 shapes as the final battle between the Holden Commodore and Ford Falcon at Mount Panorama, with Ford teams set to replace the Falcon with the Mustang from 2019. The Falcon has not won at Bathurst since 2014 and will need to defeat the new-generation Commodore on debut at Mount Panorama if it's to go out with a 15th and final win. The new Commodore has proven to be at its best at high-speed circuits, posing a challenge to the Ford entrants.

DJR TEAM PENSKE'S BID TO END THE DROUGHT

Dick Johnson Racing/DJR Team Penske has not won at Bathurst since 1994, when Dick Johnson and John Bowe won for a second and final time as a combo. The team has been through some bleak times since that win and emerged as championship contenders following the arrival of Team Penske as owners. Giving the Falcon a final win at Mount Panorama would be a fitting way for the team Dick Johnson built to end its drought.

TRIPLE EIGHT CONVERSION

Triple Eight Race Engineering has been in contention for the win at Bathurst for more than a decade and has had to watch as other Holden teams took the wins over the last two years. Roland Dane's team doesn't accept defeat easily and will be going all out for another Bathurst win. It would draw Triple Eight level with Walkinshaw Andretti United (formerly Holden Racing Team) in second on the all-time Bathurst wins' list with seven, two behind the Holden Dealer Team.

LOWNDES' FINALE AS A LEAD DRIVER

Craig Lowndes will retire from full-time driving in Supercars at the end of 2018, making this his final Bathurst 1000 as a lead driver. It therefore could be the final time we see Lowndes qualify and race in the final stint of the event. The driver with the most podiums in the history of the event (13) would join Jim Richards in second on the all-time wins' list should he claim a seventh victory, ironically alongside Richards' son Steven.

BATHURST 1000

A MOUNTAIN OF MOMENTS

EREBUS' BID FOR ANOTHER WIN

Erebus Motorsport upstaged the bigger teams in Supercars with victory at Mount Panorama last year. The winning combination of David Reynolds and Luke Youlden return to defend their title in a season in which Reynolds has become a regular front-runner. The other entry features two Bathurst 1000 rookies, Anton De Pasquale and Will Brown.

TYRE COMPOUND

Supercars switched back to a 2016-spec version of Dunlop tyres this season. The compound is more reliable yet slower, throwing a curve-ball for teams at certain events this season. The result could be slower lap times at Bathurst this season.

LAP RECORD WATCH

Scott McLaughlin produced his own version of 'Lap of the Gods' with a 2:03.8312 qualifying lap record in 2017. It remains to be seen if the different-spec tyre will be able to match the times of last year, so it could be a case of how close drivers can get to the 2:03 bracket.

TICKFORD'S REDEMPTION

Tickford Racing has endured a challenging season, struggling to find a setup with the new tyres and regularly falling down the order into the midfield. A third win in six years at Mount Panorama would reverse the team's fortunes, with a strong driver line-up that includes 2013 Bathurst winner Mark Winterbottom, PIRTEK Enduro Cup winners Chaz Mostert and Steve Owen, the experienced Dean Canto and David Russell and full-time rookie Richie Stanaway.

Tickford Racing is out to put a difficult season behind it with a strong Bathurst result.



Last year's winners David Reynolds and Luke Youlden reunite in the #9 Erebus Motorsport entry.



TEKNO'S ATTEMPT TO BOUNCE BACK

Tekno Autosports went from winning in 2016 to struggling for pace and finishing two laps down in 14th in 2017. Its bid to climb back up the grid rests on Jack Le Brocq in his first Bathurst as the lead driver, having finished in the top 10 as a co-driver in the last two years, joined by team owner Jonathon Webb.

WALKINSHAW ANDRETTI UNITED ANNIVERSARY

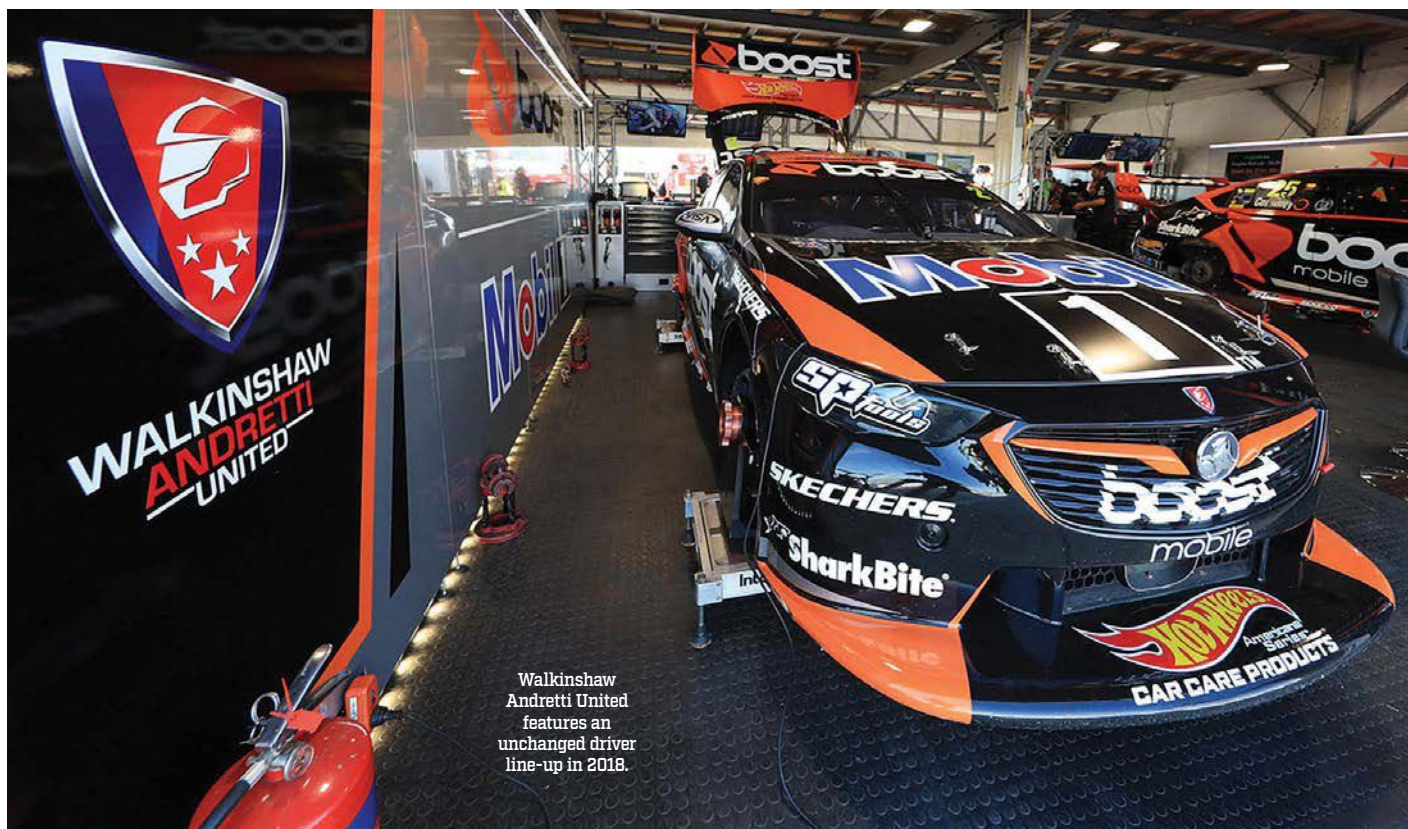
Twelve months ago Walkinshaw Andretti United was born, with Andretti Autosports and United Autosport buying into Walkinshaw Racing. There have been some signs the team is on an upward trajectory as the anniversary approaches, with the team heading to Mount Panorama with an unchanged driver line-up of Scott Pye and Warren Luff, who finished second last year, and James Courtney and Jack Perkins.

GRM'S MIXED STRATEGY

It's 18 years since Garry Rogers Motorsport won its one and only Bathurst 1000. Garth Tander, who won for the team at Bathurst in 2000, is in his second season back with the outfit and heads a strong entry with the experienced Chris Pither, race winner in the Dunlop Super2 Series, as co-driver. The second entry features the less experienced duo of James Golding and James Muscat, also products of the Dunlop Super2 Series.

COMPULSORY BRAKE-DISC CHANGE

The 2018 Supercar Bathurst 1000 will feature a compulsory brake-disc change for the first time in the event's history. It follows recent concerns of brake wear with some teams choosing to voluntarily change discs during the races. There will not be a mandated window for the disc change within the race, which adds to the strategic options for teams.



Walkinshaw Andretti United features an unchanged driver line-up in 2018.

BATHURST 1000

A MOUNTAIN OF MOMENTS

NISSAN'S RESURGENCE

Nissan Motorsport is enjoying its best season yet with the Altima. Bathurst hasn't been kind to the team in recent seasons, though, so the event will be a litmus test of the its pace and poise. Three of the team's four co-drivers – Garry Jacobson, Dean Fiore and Alex Rullo – have been racing Altimas in the Dunlop Super2 Series, which should hold them in good stead.

BRAD JONES RACING'S WAIT

Brad Jones is the most successful driver never to win the Bathurst 1000, scoring six podiums and three runner-up finishes. That winless run extends to his team, with Brad Jones Racing still on the hunt for that elusive win. Tim Slade and Nick Percat have shown flashes of speed this season, with Ashley Walsh returning to the team after missing last year with injury and Macauley Jones and former full-timer Dale Wood back for another campaign.

THIRD TIME LUCKY FOR TEAM 18'S VETERANS

Team 18 made a late call to opt for experience over youth by replacing Matthew Brabham with veteran Jason Bright as co-driver to Lee Holdsworth. Team 18 will be hoping for better luck at Bathurst, having retired from the event with mechanical failures over the last two years, with no shortage of experience from its driver pairing.

MATT STONE'S UNDERDOGS

Matt Stone Racing enters its first Bathurst following a mid-season switch from a FG X Falcon to a VF Commodore. Adding to the challenge for the single-car team is the fact this is Todd Hazelwood's first campaign as a lead driver and co-driver's Bryce Fullwood first start at Bathurst.

THE BROTHERS AT 23 RED RACING

Will and Alex Davison combine for a third time at Mount Panorama, though it's their first campaign together in a Falcon in 23 Red Racing's debut at Bathurst. The team has impressed this season with regular top 10 finishes and could be a dark horse to keep an eye on. **X**



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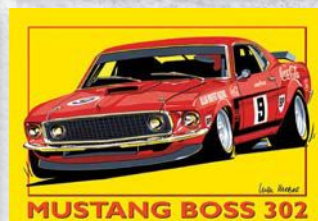


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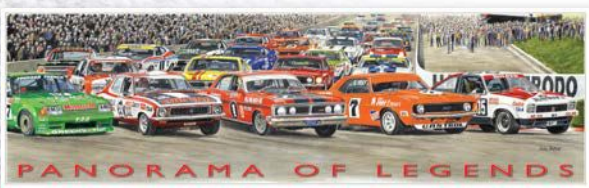
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Fraternising with Foges

FEATURE BY MARK FOGARTY

RUSTY FRENCH

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

In an exclusive interview, Tickford Racing partner Rusty French reminisces about a long and varied career as a driver, team owner and patron that is continuing well into his eighth decade...

IMAGES James Smith, Autopics.com.au

Tall piles of sand and soil are being sorted, shifted and loaded by heavy machinery. Rusty French points to a large conveyor and announces: “That costs around half a million dollars. Everything around here costs half a million.”

Driving around his quarry, French explains the intricacies – and cost – of mining sand as big yellow front-end loaders dig and dump the lucrative loam. A constant stream of tipper trucks line up to take on tonnes of sand that has been separated into different shades and grades.

The site yields six kinds of sand, including top soil, supplying direct to the construction industry and landscapers. The colours range from off-white to a mustardy brown. French rattles off facts and anecdotes about sand and getting it out of the ground as he takes us on a tour. Who knew there was so much to sand?

Unlike sea-washed beach sand, the variety from under the ground – deposited millions of years ago when Melbourne’s southern sand belt was beneath the ocean – is silica mixed with clay. That’s important for sand that’s not simply decorative – or needs to be super-fine for use in glass-making or toothpaste (no, really).

Sand is big business. For more than 40 years, French has operated Skye Sands, excavating from what is now a huge hole in the ground in a semi-rural suburb in Melbourne’s southeast. The family farm sat over a major deposit of sand, buried in stratified layers up to 50 metres beneath the surface of the 101 hectares property.

French is more animated and informative talking about his mining empire and the subtleties of sand than he is about his nearly 60 years as an accomplished

driver and team owner. It is actually very interesting and provides an insight into French’s decades of dynamism. His enthusiasm for a material most only know from the beach or as a binding agent for concrete is not so surprising when you consider the fortune he has made from it has largely funded his racing.

French, 75, is best known these days as a co-owner of Tickford Racing. He also supports young gun Thomas Randle in a Tickford-run Falcon FG X in the Dunlop Super2 Series and regularly races Mustangs, old and new, in Touring Car Masters, Historic Group NC and TA2, plus a De Tomaso Pantera in Historic Group S.

He is one of the oldest active racers in the country. He started in speedway stock cars and hot-rods in 1960 and switched to circuit racing in ’68. For those who’ve following the sport since the ’70s, he is most famous for his black and gold Porsche 935s, in which he achieved his greatest success, and his similarly sinister Group C XC and XD Falcons.

French is motor racing’s ‘Man In Black’. He dresses in black, his road cars are black and almost all his racers through the years have been black and gold or yellow – or some variation of the hard-to-clean theme.

Despite being well past normal retirement age, he is as active in business and racing as ever. Skye Sands is booming, evolving into a virtuous circle of mining and reclamation. The quarry is good for another 10 years, with the deep diggings being progressively restored with clean fill, which will eventually rebuild the property to its former ground level in an environmentally and profitable manner.

“Quarrying is just part of a cycle,” French notes. Once refilled, the quarry site will be sold as pristine residential land. Property development has become a lucrative sideline, with French building apartment complexes and clusters of industrial units around Melbourne.



Fraternising with Foges

Rusty French Racing has just moved into an expansive new factory that also houses his collection of race and road cars, in addition to the offices of Skye Sands. He has kept just about every race car he has ever owned – or found similar replacements for the few he didn't keep.

French has three 935s undergoing bare-metal restorations, along with his XD Falcon racer. His cars are restored and maintained by long-time associate Dean Randle, who is Thomas's father.

"It works well because I'm helping and sponsoring Thomas, paying his way in the Tickford car, and Dean also works for me on the race preparation of my cars. It's a good relationship. Thomas is not doing too bad in his first season considering the guys that he's running against that have been there for a long time."

French was a prominent privateer in touring cars in the late '70s and very early '80s in XC and XD Falcons and later in Commodores, in which he scored a couple of top 10 finishes at Bathurst, but it was in sportscars that he achieved prominence.

Driving the first of his big-winged, extended bodywork 935s, he was second to retired F1 world champion Alan Jones in the 1982 Australian GT Championship. He bought the Jones 935 from then Australian Porsche importer Alan Hamilton for the newly combined Australian GT and Sports Sedan championship, winning the title against an eclectic line-up of stars and cars.

The achievement earned him an invitation to race for the Porsche factory supported Kremer team in a Group C 956 at the Le Mans 24 Hours and the Australian round of the world sportscar championship at Sandown in 1984. At Le Mans, where Peter Brock, Larry Perkins, Vern Schuppan and Allan Grice were also competing in 956s, French was the best-performed Aussie, finishing ninth. He was also the top local at Sandown, scoring fifth in his return with the Kremer brothers.

His black and gold 935s also sported innovative



ABOVE: French at Calder Park in 1983.

BELOW: French in his XC Falcon at Surfers Paradise in 1978.

sponsorship from the John Sands group, which included Valentine greeting cards, Corgi toys and Sega computer games (although not, oddly, any sort of loam).

"It wasn't a lot of money compared with today, but it was pretty good at the time and it was very successful for John Sands," he recalls. "It generated a lot of business for them."

Those seminal 935s remain the favourites among extensive stable of racers. "The old 935s have always been a soft spot, even though they're a dog of a thing to drive," French acknowledges.

"When I went into the 935, I was running the old Panthera in production sportscars and my sponsors at the time was Valentine Sands, the greeting card company. We'd had a few DNFs with that car because we were trying to get big horsepower out of it to run with the Porsches and it as just an uphill battle.





ABOVE: Tickford's 2013 Bathurst-winning model holds pride of place in French's office.

BELOW: French finished in sixth in a Holden VH Commodore SS at Bathurst in 1984.

"So my sponsor said, 'Look, we'd like to see you step into a Porsche, otherwise we'll have to look for somebody else that is running a Porsche'. It was at the time when Alan Jones came back to drive that car for Alan Hamilton when they first did that GT championship in 1982, not long after AJ had retired from F1. Bruce Spicer owned the car that John Latham raced a few times, which we're now restoring, and Bruce had some health issues, so I bought the car from him to satisfy my sponsors.

"I'd never driven a Porsche and I went straight from a Pantera to a 935, which is a bit of a step. It was a twin-turbo with 800 horsepower – a fair bit more than the Pantera ever had – so I wrestled with that to learn how to drive it. I finished second to Jones that year. The following year ('83), because I'd had a bit of fun in that 935, Alan Hamilton decided to sell his car that Jones had raced and I bought it. It was a good year because I ended up winning the championship in that car.

"Those two years in the Porsches brought me to the attention of the factory in Germany. I was over there

for a prizegiving at the end of '83. I met the Kremer brothers and as a result of that, in '84 I was invited to have a run at Le Mans with them. If I hadn't been in a 935, I guess I wouldn't have got that opportunity – even though it was probably a bit out of my depth.

"We started ninth and finished ninth. Tiff Needell and David Sutherland were the other drivers. Tiff had an off during the night, through no fault of his, knocking a bit off each end, so we went from up around fifth to way back down the bottom and then we worked our way up to ninth.

"It was a frustrating old race, but the opportunity came about through doing well here in the 935, so that's why I have a soft spot for the 935s. Then we finished fifth at Sandown and I was again the best Australian finisher."

French also finished sixth at Bathurst that year with Geoff Russell (father of Supercars co-driver and GT racer David) in a VK Commodore, earning a rare recognition for his combined achievements. One of the very few items of personal memorabilia on display at his new factory is the Sport Australia award he received for his Le Mans/Bathurst/Sandown results.

Nominated by CAMS, he was honoured for the best single effort Australian sporting performance of 1984. The framed certificate citing his "outstanding performance" sits on a stand in the boardroom. "I was very proud of that," he smiles.

French is matter-of-fact about his skill behind the wheel and his enduring ability to continue racing as a septuagenarian.

"I was never a professional driver," he shrugs. "I was self-taught. I didn't go to driving schools or any of that sort of thing. Frank Gardner helped me a little bit when I first bought the Pantera because that was the first car I drove with slick tyres. But I think some of my speedway stuff, which I did before I got my first CAMS licence in 1968, actually helped me quite a lot.

"The first car I really raced on the bitumen was a big old Chev Impala two-door coupe. Prior to that, I'd just been involved in speedway cars and hot-rods, which became Sprintcars. I started in speedway in 1960. I used to run at Tracey's Speedway at Maribyrnong.

"I don't play golf or tennis or anything like that. I just do what I enjoy, which is racing, and while I can still go around at a reasonable pace, I'm happy to keep doing it. I enjoy the Mustangs. The old ones are hard to drive and not as enjoyable as the TA2 car."

French has just added a Bentley Continental GT GT3 to his collection and doesn't rule out racing that as well.

"I'm certainly looking forward to giving that a squirt around Phillip Island to learn how to drive it," he grins.

"I'll drive it and see what I think of it before deciding what to do with it.

"I bought it not necessarily to race, but to add to my collection because I enjoy my Bentley Continental GT road car so much."

On his longstanding passion for classy black and gold liveries – assumed to be inspired by the iconic mid-1970s F1 John Player Special Lotus – French says the explanation is even simpler.



"I did that because I fancied black. The Pantera started as red, which is what it's back to now, but I decided to change it to black and gold. That was well before Frank Gardner ran the BMWs in the JPS black and gold colours.

"I've always liked that combination, although the gold was originally more a dark yellow. John Sands liked the combination as well, even when we ran with Corgi backing in 1982. So it has been sort of my signature ever since. It's hard to keep clean, but it's different."

French suffered severe burns to his face, arms and hands – plus a broken jaw and fractured right arm – in a light plane crash in 1992 and still bears the scars.

"The plane had not long been serviced and it appeared an injector came loose and sprayed fuel in the engine bay," he recounts. "I was lucky to get out of that. To come out alive was a bit of an achievement. It took me six months to recover. I didn't get back in a car for 12 months."

He is forever grateful to the staff at the burns unit of Melbourne's Alfred Hospital and to this day does whatever he can to help, including counselling burn victims.

As well as his 39 per cent share of Tickford Racing and his own operation, French is considering an entry in the new S5000 V8 open-wheeler category, which revives the spirit of the popular Formula 5000 'big bangers' of the 1970s.

"I've always been a fan of those cars," he says. "I was a fan of F5000 back in the day, so when I had the opportunity to assist with the S5000 program, I put my hand up."

"I need to have a chat with Thomas and his people to see if that's the direction they want him to go. If he continues in Super2, it wouldn't be ideal to have him in both."

"If I can't put Thomas in the car, then I might consider putting some other up-and-coming young driver in it. I'm happy to help if I can."

As a lifelong fan of Mustangs – he has recently taken delivery of the latest model (in black, of course) with subtle performance and appearance upgrades – French is looking forward to Tickford Racing's switch to the pony car's body shape in 2019.

"The Mustang is going to be a good thing and I'm excited about it," he enthuses.

"I mean, I'm a Mustang person. I've had Mustangs since back in the '60s. One of the first I bought belonged to John Laws – a '69 Mach 1 Mustang that I bought in the very early '70s. It was one of my very early Mustangs."

"I've always had a soft spot for Mustangs. I think the new Mustang Supercar is going to be good. It's not going to be a lot different to the Falcon we race now, though."

"Underneath the new bodywork, it's much the same because of the control chassis rules and the engine will be the same."

"From the public perspective, to see a new Mustang on the track is going to be great and it'll be good for sponsors."

"I think it's going to create a lot of interest. These cars are stale and we need to get rid of them and move on because if we're trying to keep the category alive and exciting, we can't be running superseded cars." **X**



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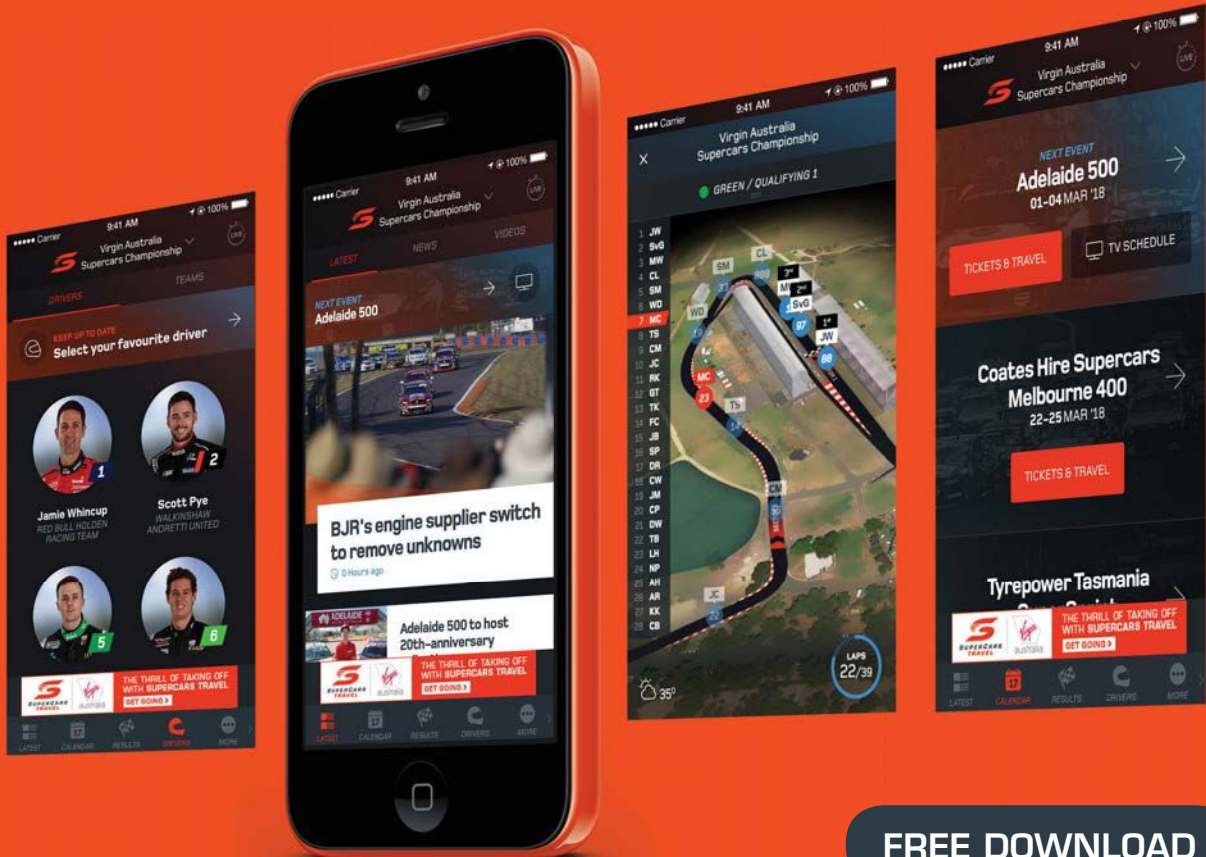


Dick Johnson and Mike Raymond have a casual chat in the paddock at Amaroo Park; two iconic figures of Australian touring cars in the 1980s.

WHO: Dick Johnson and Mike Raymond. **WHERE:** Amaroo Park Raceway, NSW

WHY: Dick Johnson became a household name after his tangle with 'The Rock' in 1980. And his profile only grew with the advent of 'RaceCam', on which Johnson would famously throw out some classic one-liners during races. Channel Seven's Mike Raymond played an integral part in the evolution of motorsport coverage. The two are seen here having a casual chat at Amaroo Park Raceway; Johnson in his racing overalls getting around on a bike and Raymond with his iconic red Channel Seven suit.

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ICONIC MOMENTS OF THE GREAT RACE

Mount Panorama Circuit was born 80 years ago and the Great Race 55 years ago. To celebrate the milestones, we look back at the iconic moments that helped create the legend of the Bathurst 1000.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

1963 Australia's long-distance touring-car endurance race moved from Phillip Island to Mount Panorama, Bathurst. There were 56 cars and 16 manufacturers on the grid for the first Bathurst 500, won by Harry Firth and Bob Jane in a Ford Cortina MkI GT.

1967 V8 power rose to the fore, with the Ford works team of Harry Firth and Fred Gibson handing the Falcon its first win at Mount Panorama.



1968 Holden took the fight to Ford and prevailed for its first win courtesy of Bruce McPhee and Barry Mulholland in the Monaro HK, with Holden sweeping the podium.

1973 The event went from 500 miles to 1000 kilometres, won by Allan Moffat and Ian Geoghegan in the Ford XA Falcon GT Hardtop, and ran to the same

regulations as the Australian Touring Car Championship for the first time.

1985 Australian touring cars implemented the international Group A regulations. The V12-powered Jaguar XJ-S was the car to beat with victory going to John Goss and Armin Hahne.

1993 The Ford Falcon and Holden Commodore V8 formula replaced Group A, with Larry Perkins and Gregg Hansford winning in a Holden VP Commodore featuring a Perkins Engineering-developed Holden engine.

2013 Supercars opened up to other manufacturers, with Nissan Altimas and Mercedes-Benz E63 AMGs joining the field, though the race came down to a last-lap Ford versus Holden showdown won by the Ford FG Falcon of Mark Winterbottom over the Holden VF Commodore of Jamie Whincup.



CORONATION OF KINGS

1970 Canadian-born Allan Moffat became the first driver to win the event solo, doing so in a GTHO Falcon in a time of six-and-a-half hours. He repeated the feat the following year.



formation finish in the event, with owner/driver Allan Moffat crossing the line just ahead of teammate Colin Bond for Ford's most famous moment at Mount Panorama.

1979 Peter Brock and Jim Richards led from start to finish, winning by six laps and Brock setting the fastest lap of the race on the final lap to underscore their domination.

1984 The Holden Dealer Team claimed its own one-two formation finish, with Brock leading home the team's Holden VK Commodore in the farewell to the Group C era.

1991 The combination of Richards and Mark Skaife signified a changing of the guard, with the Nissan teammates taking the first win for the manufacturer in the Skyline BNR32 GT-R.

1997 Perkins Engineering secured its third Bathurst win from five starts, in what was Larry Perkins' first win.

DOMINATORS

1966 The Morris Cooper S dominated the race, filling the first nine positions in what remains the best result for a manufacturer in the event.

1977 The Moffat Ford Dealers team completed the first one-two



1970



1972

1972 Holden driver Peter Brock defeated Allan Moffat in wet conditions for his first win at Mount Panorama, setting up the rivalry between the two drivers and Ford and Holden. It was also the first win for the Torana.

1996 Young guns Craig Lowndes and Greg Murphy combined for victory, completing a near-perfect season for Lowndes and confirming the most significant generation change in Australian touring cars.

1978 The combination of Brock and Jim Richards scored the first of three consecutive wins for the Holden Dealer Team. It's considered the greatest driver pairing in the event's history.

1982 Larry Perkins joined Brock at the Holden Dealer Team, starting their own run of three consecutive victories.



1996

sixth win and confirmation of his mastery of producing cars that could conquer Mount Panorama.

2003 Greg Murphy set Mount Panorama alight with his 'Lap of the Gods' in the Shootout. He and Rick Kelly completed their domination of the event with a comfortable race win the following day.

BATHURST 1000

A MOUNTAIN OF MOMENTS



2010

2008 Triple Eight became the second team after the Holden Dealer Team to win three Bathurst 1000s in a row; the third success for the combination of Craig Lowndes and Jamie Whincup.

2010 Triple Eight achieved its one-two formation finish in the team's first season running Holden Commodores and with Lowndes leading home Whincup after they were split by new co-driver rules.

HEARTBREAKS

1980 Dick Johnson led in his privateer Falcon until he hit a rock thrown onto the circuit, resulting in an outbreak of support from fans.

1982 Kevin Bartlett's hopes of winning Bathurst with the Chevrolet Camaro ended with a dramatic rollover following a puncture in the early stages of the race.

1983 Johnson once again suffered the wrath of Mount Panorama three years after his encounter with a rock, crashing into the trees on the exit of Forrest's Elbow in the Shootout.

1995 Glenn Seton came within 10 laps of his dream of following in the footsteps of his father, only to

suffer an engine failure while leading. It handed the win to Larry Perkins and Russell Ingall, who fought back from a puncture on lap one to storm through the field.

2004 Peter Brock's final Bathurst 1000 ended before he could even get in the car, with co-driver Jason Plato colliding with fellow

international John Cleland. Brock's long-time co-driver Jim Richards looked on course for victory alongside son Steven Richards, only to collide with a kangaroo.

POPULAR WINS

1974 Privateers John Goss and Kevin Bartlett survived wet conditions to win



2004

1981



one of the the longest Bathurst 1000s in history, taking seven hours and 50 minutes.

1981 Dick Johnson recovered from the heartbreak of the previous year, claiming the championship and Bathurst double.

1986 Allan Grice ended years of Bathurst near-misses with a rousing win in his own Chickadee entry alongside co-driver Graeme Bailey.

1990 The Holden Racing Team scored a debut win at Mount Panorama

courtesy of Grice and Win Percy, overcoming the challenge of the then-dominant Ford Sierras.

1998 Stone Brothers Racing young guns Jason Bright and Steven Richards overcame an accident earlier in the weekend and a lowly grid position to win in the team's debut year.

2000 Garry Rogers Motorsport's Garth Tander and Jason Bargwanna survived wet and treacherous conditions to give team owner Garry Rogers a long-awaited win at Mount Panorama.

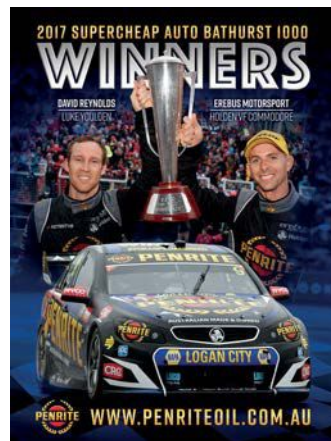
2006 As Mount Panorama mourned the loss of Peter Brock, his protégé Craig Lowndes overcame the emotion of the weekend to end a decade-long drought at Bathurst in the first win in the event for Triple Eight and co-driver Jamie Whincup.

2017 Erebus Motorsport's David Reynolds and Luke Youlden took a commanding win. It marked the rise of Erebus and Reynolds as genuine contenders and was also Youlden's first race win in his 18th Bathurst 1000.

CONTROVERSIES

1987 Bathurst saw an influx of international entrants as a round of the World Touring Car Championship. Following a wet and action-packed race, the Eggenberger Ford Sierras were disqualified for a technical infringement, handing Peter Brock his ninth win.

1992 Jim Richards and Mark Skaife were awarded victory when the race was red-flagged due to heavy rain, despite the fact Richards had crashed out just as the race was stopped. Richards' response to the unhappy crowd



ABOVE: Posters commemorating great moments, winners and legends of the Bathurst 500/1000 are available to purchase at SupercarXtra.com.au

1986



BATHURST 1000

A MOUNTAIN OF MOMENTS



1992

at the podium presentation went down in Bathurst folklore.

2002 Greg Murphy received a five-minute penalty for a fuel spillage at a pitstop. He angrily parked his car and retreated to a toilet cubicle in disgust.

2005 Marcos Ambrose was at the centre of a dramatic Bathurst 1000, receiving a penalty for not wearing a balaclava and then colliding with rival Greg Murphy on the run to the Cutting.

2016 A three-car collision involving Jamie Whincup, Scott McLaughlin and Garth Tander paved the way for Tekno Autosports' Will Davison and Jonathan Webb to take the win.



2014

Whincup was penalised for causing the incident, only for team owner Roland Dane to launch an unsuccessful post-race protest.

DRAMATIC FINISHES

1976 Holden drivers Bob Morris and John Fitzpatrick nursed their ailing Torana to the line for a popular privateer win.

1994 Rookie Craig Lowndes took the fight to John Bowe in the final stint of the race, snatching the lead with a brave pass around the outside of Griffin's Bend, only to lose it and the win in the remaining laps.

2007 A late rain shower turned the race on its head, with leading contenders falling off the road and Lowndes holding off his rivals in the run to the line.



2011

2011 Garth Tander and rookie Nick Percat overcame a late challenge from Lowndes to win by just two-tenths of a second.

2012 Jamie Whincup came under sustained pressure from David Reynolds in the final stint, producing a classic Holden versus Ford battle in the 50 years of the Great Race celebration.

2014 The race came down to the final lap, with Whincup running out of fuel, then passed by Chaz Mostert, who came from the back of the grid and survived an early-race crash for an unlikely win. **X**



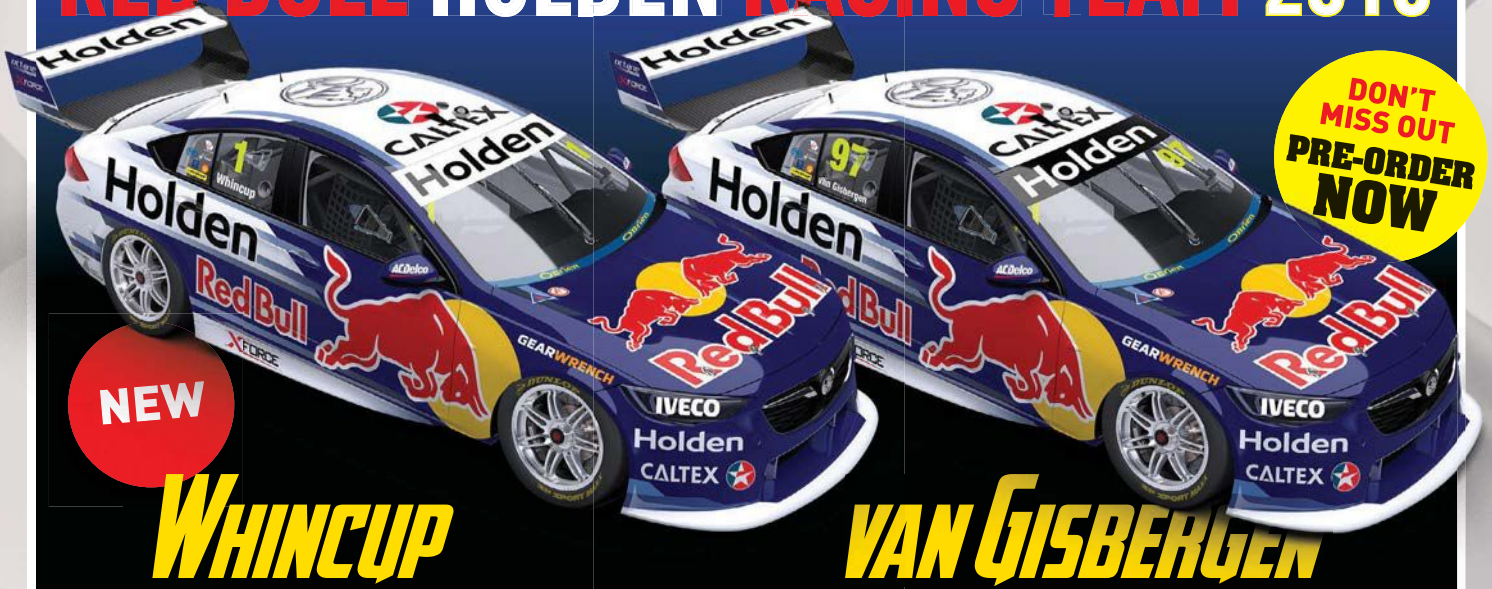
1976

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AUSTRALIA-WIDE DELIVERY

1973 THE YEAR THAT WAS

Australian touring cars united under the same technical regulations in 1973 in a season that saw the first head-to-head championship battle between Allan Moffat and Peter Brock, the first title success for the Falcon and the creation of the Bathurst 1000.

After being dominated by imported cars such as the Mustang and Camaro, Australian touring cars set about rewriting its rulebook in favour of locally made racers in 1973.

New rules, which were essentially the merger of Series Production and Improved Production and in response to the 'Supercar scare' that played out in the national media,

ended the schism that had seen different variations of touring cars compete in the Australian Touring Car Championship and Bathurst 500. The result saw the foundations built for what's often regarded as the greatest era of Australian touring cars, Group C.

Allan Moffat was the driver to beat, having parked the Mustang he had raced in previous championships for the GTHO

Falcon that had dominated at Bathurst in previous years. Holden young gun Peter Brock had defeated Moffat in wet conditions at Bathurst in 1972 and would be the main challenger once again.

Moffat opened the season in commanding fashion with wins in the opening four races, setting up a championship lead he would hold onto despite the drama that would follow.



Moffat sealed the 1973 championship with victory at Oran Park.



Moffat guides the Ford XA Falcon GT Hardtop to victory at Mount Panorama.

Brock won rounds five and six at Surfers Paradise and Adelaide, where Moffat's Falcon was remarkably stolen from pitlane the night before the race. Murray Carter gave Moffat his Falcon to race, with the championship leader storming from the back of the grid to salvage second in the borrowed car.

The stolen Falcon was recovered the following week with only slight damage and Moffat secured the title with a win at the penultimate round at Oran Park. Brock rounded out the season with a win

at Warwick Farm, completing a dominant season for the two drivers, who won all eight rounds between them.

This set up a fascinating showdown for Bathurst, the scene of Brock's coming of age the previous year and where Moffat had ruled previously.

The race's length went from 500 miles to 1000 kilometres, ruling out the solo efforts by the likes of Brock and Moffat in previous years.

Ford's contenders had switched to the XA Falcon GT Hardtop, which would do battle

up against a horde of Torana GTR XU-1s.

The Falcons took an early lead but an engine failure for the Fred Gibson/Barry Seton entry left Moffat and Ian Geoghegan fighting a solo battle against the Toranas.

While the thirstier V8 Falcons needed more fuel stops, the Holden entrants tried to stretch their strategy to gain track position.

This proved costly when the Torana of Brock and Doug Chivas ran out of fuel on the approach to pitlane. The unfortunate Chivas was forced to push the car into pitlane, no easy feat for the 52-year-old in 35°C heat. He did so but the damage was done – the leading Holden entry had lost three minutes.

Moffat and Geoghegan won by a comfortable margin for Moffat's third win in four years and Geoghegan's first (and only) triumph in the Great Race. Fittingly, it marked the generation change enforced by the new rules following Geoghegan's multiple championship wins in the Mustang and Moffat's championship and Bathurst double with the Falcon.

Brock and Chivas recovered to second place, with Colin Bond and Leo Geoghegan completing the podium.

Toranas filled positions second to fifth, with a Queensland rookie by the name of Dick Johnson rounding out the top five alongside Bob Forbes.

The Falcon claimed the first battle of the locally built cars in the new era of Australian touring cars, in what became a period of extraordinary growth for the championship and Bathurst 1000. **X**

1973 ROUND WINNERS

LAUNCESTON

Allan Moffat, Ford Falcon XY GTHO Phase III

CALDER PARK

Allan Moffat, Ford Falcon XY GTHO Phase III

SANDOWN

Allan Moffat, Ford Falcon XY GTHO Phase III

WANNEROO

Allan Moffat, Ford Falcon XY 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 Falcon XY GTHO Phase III

WARWICK FARM

Peter Brock, Holden LJ Torana GTR XU-1

CHAMPIONSHIP TOP 10

1	Allan Moffat	Ford Falcon XY GTHO Phase III
2	Peter Brock	Holden LJ Torana GTR XU-1
3	Graham Ritter	Ford Escort
4=	Bob Holden	Ford Escort
4=	Eric Olsen	Ford Escort
6	Fred Gibson	Ford Falcon XY GTHO Phase III
7	Murray Carter	Ford Falcon XY GTHO Phase III
8=	Lawrie Nelson	Chrysler Valiant Charger R/T E49
8=	Ian Geoghegan	Chrysler Valiant Charger R/T E49
10	Bob Morris	Holden LJ Torana GTR XU-1

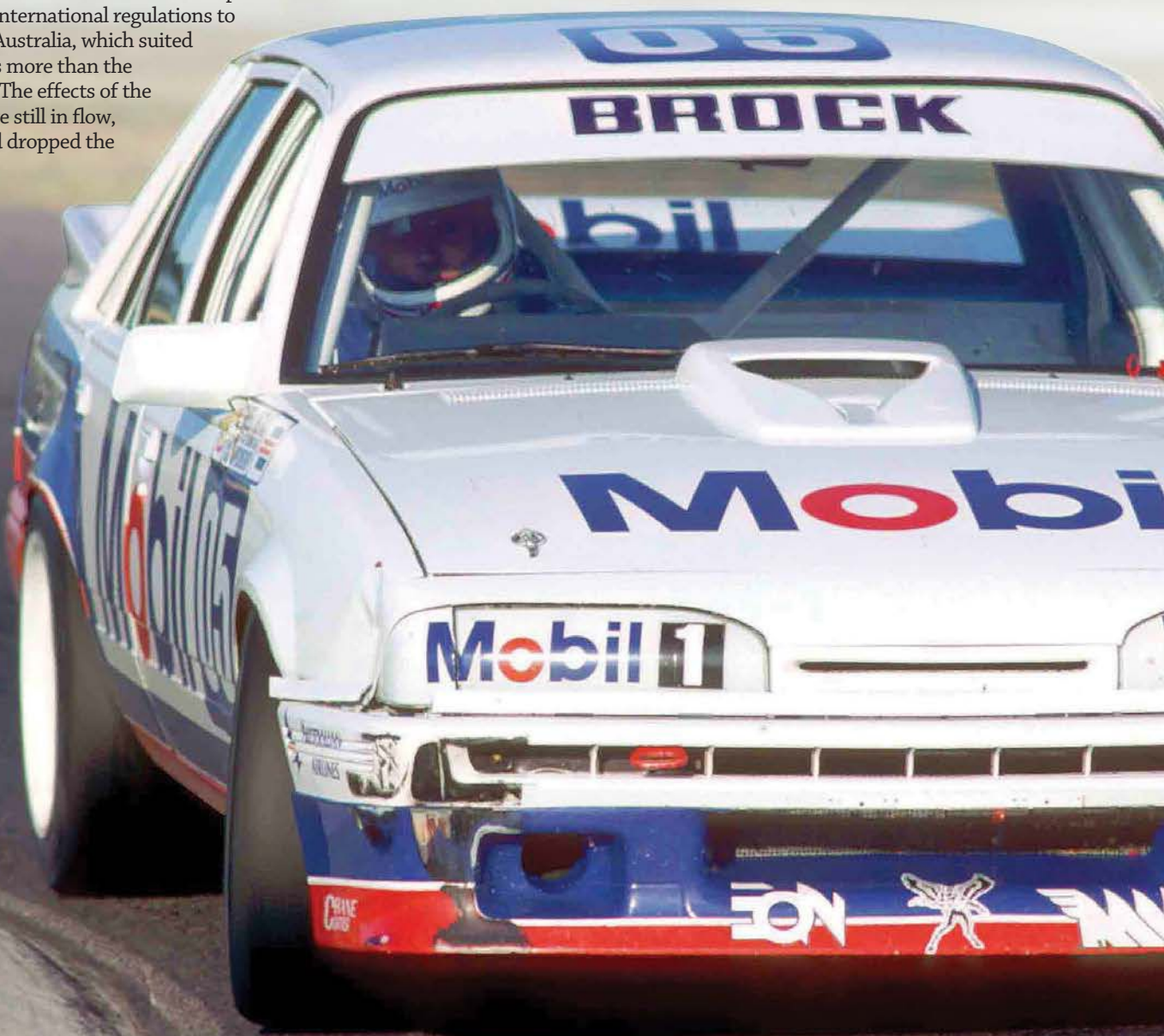
BATHURST TOP 10

1	Allan Moffat/Ian Geoghegan	Ford XA Falcon GT Hardtop
2	Peter Brock/Doug Chivas	Holden LJ Torana GTR XU-1
3	Colin Bond/Leo Geoghegan	Holden LJ Torana GTR XU-1
4	Bob Jane/John Harvey	Holden LJ Torana GTR XU-1
5	Bob Forbes/Dick Johnson	Holden LJ Torana GTR XU-1
6	Ray Kaleda/Peter Granger	Chrysler Valiant Charger R/T E49
7	Murray Carter/Lawrie Nelson	Ford XA Falcon GT Hardtop
8	Ray Harrison/Mal Robertson	Alfa Romeo GTV 2000
9	Mel Mollison/Bruce Hindhaugh	Mazda RX-3
10	Bernie Haehnle/Wayne Rogerson	Mazda RX-2

HOLDEN VL COMMODORE

The Group A era wasn't suited to locally made cars, yet Holden defied the odds at the Bathurst with two wins for the VL Commodore.

The mid 1980s were a tumultuous time for Holden. There was the arrival of the Group A international regulations to Australia, which suited imported cars more than the local product. The effects of the fuel crisis were still in flow, rival Ford had dropped the





V8 engine and Holden weighed up doing the same, while a messy divorce with star driver Peter Brock was on the horizon.

Yet through it all Holden won three Bathurst 1000s in five years against the might of Group A's international invaders, with the VL Commodore winning at Mount

The two VL Group A racers, the Holden Dealer Team version (left) and Walkinshaw version (above).



Panorama in 1987 and 1990.

The VL was released in February 1986. And though it shared the same base shell as its predecessors, there was a revised front and rear end. Holden bowed to public pressure and retained a V8 option.

The Group A racing version debuted on the international stage at the first round of the World Touring Car Championship (WTCC) at Monza, Italy, in 1987. Amidst protests and disqualifications, it emerged victorious with Allan Moffat and John Harvey.

The Australian Touring Car Championship wasn't so kind to the VL and Holden went through the season without a win, unable to compete with the BMW M3 and Nissan Skyline in the short races. Larry Perkins was best of the Holden brigade in fifth, albeit running the older VK model.

Bathurst was another round of the WTCC and it was once again marred by protests and disqualifications. The Holden Dealer Team's Peter Brock crossed the line third, despite a mid-race car change, but was later awarded the win following the disqualification of the winning Eggenberger Sierras.

It was back to reality at the next round of the WTCC at Calder, where the best-placed VL was in sixth place (Perkins and Denny Hulme) and two laps down. Same again at the penultimate race of the season on the streets of Wellington, with Brock and Parsons two laps down in fifth.

Brock and Holden were in the midst of an ugly separation over the 'Energy Polariser' scandal, with the split leading to the demise of the Holden Dealer Team.

Tom Walkinshaw Racing took over the mantle as Holden's factory-backed team and Holden Special Vehicles the

VL SUCCESSES

1987

Monza 500 win: Allan Moffat/John Harvey

1987

Bathurst 1000 win: Peter Brock/David Parsons/Peter McLeod

1990

Sydney 500 win: Larry Perkins/Tomas Mezera

1990

Bathurst 1000 win: Allan Grice/Win Percy

1992

Sandown 500 win: Larry Perkins/Steve Harrington

performance-vehicle partner. The first car to come out of this new partnership was the SS Group A SV version of the VL, a more aggressive looking car that claimed to reduce drag by more than 25 per cent.

The new version of VL racer faced stiffer competition, with the Ford Sierra dominating in the championship and Bathurst in 1988 and 1989. The VL struggled and finished three laps down from the winning Sierra at Bathurst in 1989 (Perkins and Tomas Mezera in sixth).

Teething problems were ironed out with the creation of the Holden Racing Team as its own entity into 1990, with driver/owner Win Percy finishing in the championship as the best non-Sierra or Skyline in eighth.

Bathurst was expected to be a Sierra and Skyline demonstration, but as those entries fell by the wayside it was VL steersmen Percy and Allan Grice who emerged as the shock winners. A win for Perkins and Mezera in the Sydney 500 a month later confirmed that the Commodore was reliable and a worthy opponent to the international cars in longer distance races.

The VL was replaced by the all-new VN in 1991, though by then the Nissan Skyline R32 GT-R was proving unbeatable. There was a final hurrah for the VL with Perkins and Steve Harrington winning the Skyline-less Sandown 500 and Perkins qualifying the older model on the front row at Bathurst in 1992. But the Skyline ruled the final year of Group A.

It may have come in a bleak period for Holden yet the VL delivered three milestones: a win at the legendary Monza, the ninth and final Bathurst win for Peter Brock and the first for the Holden Racing Team. **X**



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JASON BRIGHT



BACK IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

After stepping down as a full-time driver at the end of last season, Jason Bright returns to drive a Supercar 20 years after he conquered Mount Panorama.

In the 1990s he was the coming kid, a driver with a Bathurst win and thirst for IndyCars. In the 2000s he was a contender. And in the 2010s he was about consolidation and leadership. Through it all, Jason Bright etched out a career of significance.

He left pretty much every team he drove for in better shape than when he arrived and once he had settled in Australia for his racing he kept pushing towards his goal of team ownership. Now he is retired from full-time driving and a business owner and father. And strangely given his pedigree, it looked like an endurance drive was going to escape him until a late call-up from Charlie Schwerkolt at Team 18 to partner Lee Holdsworth.

"November last year was my last race and this is the longest time I've ever spent out of a race car," says Bright.

"I obviously didn't plan on spending the whole year out of a race car but I was busy with my business. I didn't have the time at the end of last year or the start of this year to try and pull something together in Porsche or GT. But I'd liked to have been out there in one of those categories. I'm lucky that we've been able to pick up a drive with Charlie and Lee for the enduros pretty late in the piece.

"I expected to still race something and I didn't mean to miss out on enduros this year, which is what it looked like I was going to. I was trying to do a wildcard for Bathurst, which excited me. But by the time that didn't happen most of the other drives were taken up. I was fortunate that Charlie called and that I got this opportunity.

"I haven't missed the racing as much as I expected. When I was leaving Newcastle last year, I was like, 'It's gonna be a pretty big void to fill' but I think if I didn't have my business, which keeps me very occupied, then I probably would have missed it a lot more."

Bright still owns a Racing Entitlements Contract (REC), which is leased to Matt Stone Racing for Todd Hazelwood. He hasn't worked out what he is going to do with the REC yet, but he knows its value and he does enjoy the involvement it gives him in the sport.

"Over the last six months since the Supercars season started I've watched the races, been to a few, worked a



few with the Hazelwoods and enjoyed watching it a bit from the outside," says Bright.

His journey started like most kids in karts and then hit its straps in Formula Ford. In 1995 he won the Australian Formula Ford Championship but also shone in front of the international teams at both the Australian Grand Prix and the Gold Coast Indy. Then it was the Australian Drivers' Championship and two years later he had that title and was also co-driving at Bathurst.

In 1996 he started dabbling overseas with a second place in the US Formula Ford 2000 Championship, putting him well and truly on the path he had chosen.

He came back to run Supercars and won Bathurst with Stone Brothers Racing in 1998 and then went back to North America for a season of Indy Lights in 2000, leading to a drive in ChampCar on the Gold Coast.

"It was hard as an Aussie going overseas to race," he says of that year.

"Trying to find the money to go over there and do Formula Ford 2000 initially, I managed to get a full season in that but I didn't have the budget to stay there or move up to Atlantics or Indy Lights at that stage.

"I had the opportunity to come back to Australia and drive for the Holden Racing Team. My number-one priority, even when I went overseas, was to make sure I could make a career out of it and that is what I did when they made me the offer."

The wins started piling up at the Holden Racing Team, though not as quickly as teammate Mark Skaife, who was settled in the team and dominating the series. Then Bright left and joined Paul Weel Racing, where he started working with Phil Keed. That driver-engineer combination proved to be pretty special.

“The Holden Racing Team was very good, as it was obviously the most high-profile team in the category back then, but I enjoyed the Paul Weel Racing period more,” he says.

“I liked working with Phil, my engineer at the time. We punched above our weight with what we had as far as resources. I enjoyed that environment where we were a pretty small team but having a good crack.”

In 2001 and 2002 at the Holden Racing Team he finished third and fourth in the championship and also grabbed a podium at Bathurst. But a pattern was starting to emerge: Bright just wasn’t satisfied being there, he wanted more, which came with Paul Weel Racing.

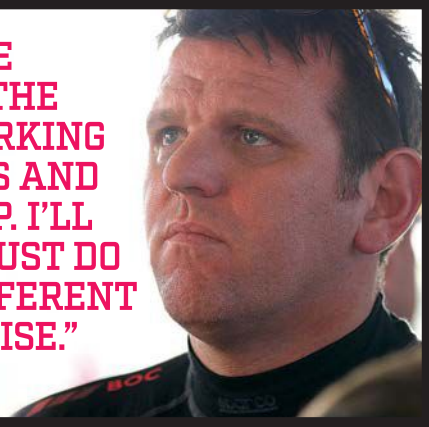
It started out as Team Brock and became something of a giant-killer, but a rough run at Sandown and Bathurst killed the dream of championship success.

At the end of the 2004 season he left. He had worked with the minnows and had them heading somewhere, but this was now turning into a pattern. There was a deeper plan and it meant he had to drive at Ford Performance Racing (FPR) to make it happen. Bright wanted his own team and he was building Britek from the ground up.

In 2005 he had Ford backing lined up for his new team, but in order to get that he had to help sort out FPR. There were complexities inside the deal that slowed the evolution of the Britek team, such as testing limitations, but they were getting there. The other

“I STILL ENJOY THE DRIVING. I ENJOY THE ENGINEERING, WORKING WITH THE TECHIES AND THE DRIVER I HELP. I’LL PROBABLY STILL JUST DO A MIXTURE OF DIFFERENT THINGS RACING-WISE.”

– JASON BRIGHT



part of the deal was working brilliantly and FPR was fast becoming a contender.

“I felt like we had reached a peak at Paul Weel Racing but we still could have been a contender in 2005 and there turned out to be a lot of change there,” reflects Bright.

“I don’t have any regrets, but if it was all about winning a championship there’s probably three or four occasions where I would do something different, including staying there. But I wanted my own team and I had a five-year deal with Ford that meant I had to spend some time with Prodrive.

“I had the Fujitsu sponsorship to look after as well, so I needed to go there and drive after the two years. But had I known the global financial crisis was coming and that Ford was going to pull out I might have done things differently; I probably wouldn’t have left Prodrive.

BRIGHT’S SUPERCARS JOURNEY

- 1997**
Garry Rogers Motorsport
- 1998-99**
Stone Brothers Racing
- 2000**
Dick Johnson Racing
- 2001-02**
Holden Racing Team
- 2003-04**
Paul Weel Racing
- 2005-06**
Ford Performance Racing
- 2007-09**
Britek Motorsport
- 2010-16**
Brad Jones Racing
- 2017**
Prodrive Racing Australia
- 2018**
Team 18





ABOVE: Bright ended his full-time Supercars career at Prodrive Racing Australia in 2017.

BELOW LEFT: It's 20 years since Bright won Bathurst alongside Steven Richards at Stone Brothers Racing in 1998.

BELOW RIGHT: Bright teams with Lee Holdsworth at Team 18 in 2018.

"Ford wanted all sorts of things which meant we did it the way we did it. In hindsight, we would have been better getting a Triple Eight or Holden customer car, but Ford wanted it done the way we did it.

"The second half of 2006 was really good at Prodrive, I think we scored more points than anyone in that time. I think we certainly would've gone into 2007 as a very serious contender... that was probably the best chance for a championship.

"I went there with a two-year plan, felt like I did my time during those two years and did what was expected of me to do there."

He says the progress at Britek was as expected, until Ford's withdrawal left him "a couple of million dollars" short, which proved to be a hard gap to fill for a growing team.

They nearly won Bathurst in 2007, a contender late in the race when a rain shower hit, though Bright drifted

off the racing line and hit the wall along with the likes of Skaife and Russell Ingall.

The minnows weren't bad, but they were struggling and the team was on its knees.

That led Bright to a happy place at Brad Jones Racing (BJR), where he could park his REC and stayed for seven years before finishing his full-time career back at Prodrive.

"I never thought I would drive for a team for seven years straight but BJR has made my time here a very satisfying chapter in my Supercar career," he reflects.

In the end, his career could have given a greater returns on the wins front and maybe even titles, but it looked like every time he was near he jumped ship.

Now with the full-time career done and a burgeoning life as an entrepreneur with his Taskforce business, we are seeing the business acumen that pushed his racing career in different directions shine through.

As a driver, everywhere he raced he helped improve the team. He left them all (except, perhaps, the final stint at Prodrive) in better shape than when he arrived. For now, it is life as a father and businessman that gets him out of bed every day.

"I'm enjoying doing other things, though I still enjoy the driving," he admits.

"I enjoy the engineering, working with the techies and the driver I help. I'll probably still just do a mixture of different things racing-wise like Porsches or GTs. It's just time-consuming trying to pull those things together, so we'll see what happens. I'll do a little bit more racing next year. It'll be good. I'm not gonna lose too much sleep over it if I don't. I'd still like to do enduros, depending on how well this year goes. I'd like to have involvement with a team in some way, but we'll see what happens."

Twenty years since the win in the Bathurst 1000 that showcased his talent, he is once again helping to steer a growing team in the right direction at Mount Panorama and beyond. **X**



IMAGES Peter Norton

THE GREATEST

Newcastle debuted on the Virgin Australia Supercars Championship with a spectacular 14-turn, 2.6-kilometre street circuit around the east-end of the town and along the foreshore and Nobbys Beach.



FINALE

The inaugural Coates Hire Newcastle 500 produced the most dramatic championship-deciding showdown in the history of Australian touring cars. Let's reflect on that historic weekend through the images of our lead photographer Peter Norton.



ABOVE: Jamie Whincup celebrates title number seven, the most unexpected success of his record-breaking championship tally. BELOW: Five drivers entered the event with a mathematical chance of securing the championship, Jamie Whincup, Scott McLaughlin, Fabian Coulthard, Chaz Mostert and Shane van Gisbergen. Realistically, though, it was between Whincup and McLaughlin.



The view from Fort Scratchley down to the final sector of the circuit, with the stage set for the championship showdown.



Scott McLaughlin on the run down the second sector. The DJR Team Penske driver scored two pole positions in Newcastle, taking his record-breaking season tally to 16 - pole in 61 per cent of the races.



Scott McLaughlin won the opening race of the weekend to take a healthy lead into the final race following a tyre failure for Jamie Whincup. But the title would be decided on the final lap of the 26th and final race of the season.



Three penalties, including for a last-lap tangle with Craig Lowndes, demoted Scott McLaughlin to 18th and opened the door for Jamie Whincup to snatch the title.





ABOVE: While the drama played out with Scott McLaughlin, Jamie Whincup did his bit with a commanding performance across the event. BELOW: The sun sets on the 2017 Virgin Australia Supercars Championship. What will the 2018 season finale produce?



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WORDS John Bannon IMAGES Kostecki Brothers Racing, Peter Norton, Supercars

TRIPLE THREAT

When Kostecki Brothers Racing arrived in Supercars three seasons ago, the limited fanfare was around the age of their young drivers. But with Triple Eight Race Engineering equipment, an expanded team, a talented engineering group and growing confidence amongst the drivers, it's quite possible the team's foray into the main game will be in more than just wildcard entries.

Kostecki Brothers Racing (KBR) has cleverly refashioned the bygone era concept of the father and son race team and adapted it for the professional Supercars era. The three-car Dunlop Super2 Series line-up features brothers Kurt and Jake and cousin Brodie. Kurt and Jake's father Steven is in charge of the operation, while Kurt and Brodie manage the day-to-day preparation of the cars from the team's base in Meadowbrook, Brisbane.

The Kostecki family has a proud racing history, which includes dune-buggy racing, drag racing and building engines. The boys themselves raced karts around the car park of the family business in Malaga, Perth, from just four years of age. The trio have been racing American

stock cars or Supercars since they were as young as 14 and this early investment is starting to pay dividends.

The team is well backed thanks to the boys' hard-working grandfather Gene, who after immigrating to Australia from the Ukraine – alongside sons Steven and Andrew – developed a preeminent product for the mining industry, which is now widely distributed across the globe. Steven continues to run the day-to-day business and the product Arcoplate features prominently on the KBR liveries.

KBR has displayed agility in how it uses its resources, which has seen the team take significant steps forward in the Dunlop Super2 Series since its debut in 2016. From the purchase of recent race-winning Triple Eight Race Engineering equipment to Kurt doing two years as a mechanic at the main-game squad and the hiring of Bathurst and championship-winning engineers Geoff Slater and Jason Gray, the team has developed and grown into a serious championship contending operation.

Kurt says plenty of hard work's gone in to reach this point and credits his father Steven for providing this opportunity for the whole family to work in collaboration.

"A lot of drivers can just show up with their helmet at the track and race," he says. "But for us it's a lot of work day in day out, but we try and get to the track in the best way we can and show up with the best cars we can and we're really lucky to be able to do that."

Brisbane-based Kurt is the only KBR driver to drive in the main game to date. The Perth native received a surprise call-up to the main game in 2016 as an 18-year-old to sub in for an injured Lee Holdsworth.

With Holdsworth's car sustaining significant damage,



Brodie, Kurt and Jake Kostecki.



the team had to source a car and driver from the Dunlop Super2 Series to fill in at Townsville and Queensland Raceway and Kurt was the lucky one to receive the call up.

“At the time it was probably a little bit early to jump up,” Kurt admits. “But it was definitely really good to see what it’s like in the main series and what I would have to improve on when I wanted to go back.”

The former Triple Eight mechanic felt the experience of being thrown in the deep-end back then made for a smoother transition during his two wildcard rides at Queensland Raceway and Tailem Bend this year.

“I think it definitely allowed me to focus rather than jumping in the car and being nervous the whole time,” he says.

“I sort of knew what to expect and we just want to keep building on what we’ve done. We want to take back what we’ve learnt to the Development Series [DVS] and try and go stronger there because ultimately that’s our number one focus.”

Kurt’s results have slowly improved each year in the series, with breakthrough podiums in Adelaide and Perth giving him the confidence to fight towards the front in 2018.

“It definitely puts more confidence in the program we are running,” he says. “I think we just need to keep building on that. We’ve had a few struggles this year with the car set-up and the driving but it’s all part of the learning process. I think if we can just keep making progressive steps, then Dad’s happy...it’s been slow progress but it’s always been there which is good to see.”

The recruitment of former Bathurst 1000-winning engineer Geoff Slater to manage the team and run Kurt’s car this season has also yielded improvements.

“I think he’s forced me to get the most out of what I feel in the car,” he says. “To be able to relay back to him so he can make the right changes and we can talk about what we want from the car. I think so far this year that’s been the biggest thing.”



A taste of the main game has given Kurt food for thought, but he remains focussed on this year's Dunlop Super2 Series.

"I think we want to focus on the DVS program at the moment and getting the most out of that," he says. "But definitely next year has come up in conversation a lot recently... we're still fighting for a good spot in the championship, so we just want to keep that going."

While Kurt and Brodie manage operations of the race team from Meadowbrook, Jake is based at the family business in Perth, which manufactures wear plates for the mining industry.

While the younger Kostecki brother remains focused on his racing career, he's sought to add to his expertise outside the car in 2018.

"I'm doing a marketing course, first year, just for a little bit of back-up I guess," he says. "It's always going to help from the team perspective... we're always going to need to find sponsors, to develop our brand, our name and to help build more of a following so we can get the cars onto the track. I've developed an interest in it to help me in motorsport and in the family business."

On track, Jake has found himself battling in the mid-pack this season, while Kurt and cousin Brodie fight towards the front.

"Kurt and Brodie are driving excellently at the moment," he says. "But also they've been to America and have done a lot of stock-car racing, so they've got a lot of knowledge about these cars and how to make them fast."

Kurt and Brodie also have an advantage in that their days are spent thinking about the race team and preparing the cars from the team's Brisbane base.

"They've got a lot of knowledge to make these cars fast off the track before they even hit the track," he says. "I'm trying to learn as much as I can and copy them but when the race meeting comes I've got to be on it. I've got to be the best that I can because they are already making steps forward and I've fallen back a bit, but I'll get there."

"I want to be at the top of Supercars. I want to be fighting with the top guys which is hopefully my brother and cousin as well. We'll see what happens."

Kurt and Jake's cousin, Brodie, has adapted quickly to Supercars, fighting for wins in just his second season and his first under the KRB banner. After a debut season with established squad Matt Stone Racing in an older model Falcon last year, the switch has yielded instant success, with Brodie scoring regular podiums this season.

The Perth native puts the quick transition down to the time he spent in the US, which included three USAC Ford Focus Series national championships, wins in late-model stock cars and top-five finishes in the NASCAR K&N Pro Series.

"I went over to America at a very young age," he says. "I raced a lot and over there; racing is like a lifestyle. You race week in, week out, there is no break. You race for 50 weeks of the year. I got to run a lot of laps and experience different things. I think that's been a bit of a key to me running where I am this early on."

The battle between Kurt and Brodie has been close



this season, with both boys pushing inside the top five in the championship. He was also quick not to rule Jake out of the mix.

"I think we all push each other to a certain level," he says. "We've always pushed each other from a very young age. Kurt and Jake are I are very competitive in everything that we do. We know why we are here and it's definitely not a competition between ourselves, it's a competition with other competitors out on the track. So we all work very close together and we're trying to make our team better. We spend a lot of time together and I'm having a lot of fun doing it with them."

Like his cousins, Brodie has main-game aspirations and believes it is possible for the KBR operation to make that transition.

"If the opportunity did present itself and we had everything in place to move up, I'd say that we do have the capabilities to do that," he says.

"I think you can do that as a family operation. But you need some sort of peer support from a big team, you can't really go in to Supercars these days and do it all yourself." **X**

TOP 6 ABOVE: Kurt Kostecki has gone from mechanic at Triple Eight Race Engineering to driving one of its cars in Supercars.

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TOP 10 CHAMPIONSHIP SHOWDOWNS

10 PHILLIP ISLAND, 2007 ▶

Two sets of teammates did battle for the title at Phillip Island, HSV Dealer Team's Garth Tander and Rick Kelly and Triple Eight's Jamie Whincup and Craig Lowndes. Tander prevailed with the round win

9 ADELAIDE, 1979

Holden drivers Peter Brock and Bob Morris went head to head for the second consecutive season, with Morris prevailing in a win for the privateer entry over the factory-backed star.



Mustangs and Bob Jane in a Chevrolet Camaro. Jane claimed the race win and title.

6 ORAN PARK, 1987

Nissan's Glenn Seton and BMW's Jim Richards were battling for the title and running one and two in the finale when Richards punted Seton off track. Richards went on to win the race and the championship. Seton retired soon after the accident.

8 ORAN PARK, 1990 ▲

Four legends of the sport did battle for the title at the Oran Park finale – Jim Richards in a Nissan Skyline and Dick Johnson, Colin Bond and Peter Brock in Ford Sierras. Richards held the advantage entering the round and sealed the title with victory, leaving the Sierras to fight for the runners-up place. That went to Brock.



5 SYMMONS PLAINS, 1969

The first multi-round championship went down to the wire, with Alan Hamilton in a Porsche 911 needing to win to overcome the gap to Ian Geoghegan, who was disqualified from the race for receiving a jump start on the formation lap. But Hamilton was unable to pass the ailing Norm Beechey in the dramatic final stages, handing the title to Geoghegan.

4 PHILLIP ISLAND, 2006

The 2006 championship ended in controversial circumstances when Rick Kelly nudged title rival Craig Lowndes into a spin on the second lap. Kelly received a drive-through for the collision but still won the title with Lowndes down the field.

3 SYDNEY, 2010 ▶

The three championship protagonists, James Courtney,

2 LAKESIDE, 1981

Dick Johnson and Peter Brock's battle for the 1981 title came down to a Lakeside finale, with Johnson winning on home soil for his first championship win. The Ford driver resisted race-long pressure from the Commodore of Brock for a famous win.

1 NEWCASTLE, 2017 ▼

The championship was settled on the final lap of the final race in Newcastle. Scott McLaughlin tangled with Craig Lowndes and was duly penalised, dropping him down the order and handing the title to race winner Jamie Whincup. X



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