

BONUS! 2019 SUPERCARS CASTROL CALENDAR

Supercar **Xtra** MAGAZINE

ISSUE 108

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FORMERLY **V8X** SUPERCAR MAGAZINE

Commemorating Ford's Legendary Racer

THE FALCON



CRAIG LOWNDES PULLOUT POSTER
THE TRIPLE EIGHT YEARS

DICK JOHNSON WITH FOGES
GOODBYE FALCON, HELLO MUSTANG

HOLDEN'S SUPERCAR FUTURE
CAMARO OR COMMODORE?

MOTORSPORT LEGENDS
BOB JANE, DRAN PARK, TORANA L34

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

ENDURO CHAMPS! LOWNDES & RICHIO

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COMMEMORATING THE FALCON

The Ford Falcon has a long and storied history in Australian touring cars, dating back to the first Great Race at Phillip Island in 1960.

As the Falcon heads into retirement, to be replaced by the Mustang in 2019, we take a look back at the great models that contributed to the Ford legend in this issue of *SupercarXtra Magazine*.

We also touch base with Blue Oval hero Dick Johnson to discuss his journey with Ford, from the XD Falcon and his previous stint with the Mustang to the pony car's return to Australian touring cars.

On the Holden side of the ledger, we examine the possibility of the Camaro joining the Mustang on the grid in the foreseeable future for an all-American muscle-car battle.

Elsewhere, we chat with 2018 Supercheap Auto Bathurst 1000 winners Craig Lowndes and Steven Richards on their



endurance-event successes, take a detailed look at the 2019 Virgin Australia Supercars Championship schedule and its implications for 2020, meet the newest Miss Supercars and so much more.

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 New Zealand drivers in the history of the Australian Touring Car Championship/Supercars.

Remember, this edition is also available in digital form online and in the App Store and Google Play stores.

Visit us at SupercarXtra.

com.au for more details and to visit our online store, or keep in touch with us on our social media channels: on Twitter and Instagram at @SupercarXtra and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SupercarXtra.

Below are the two sides of the pullout poster you'll find in the print edition of this issue, including the third 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 and part two, celebrating his Ford years, was in issue #107.

Purchase our posters and more from our online store.

Keep up to date with all the off-season news and more at SupercarXtra.com.au.

We wish you all the very best for the festive summer months and will see you in 2019.

Enjoy!

— Adrian

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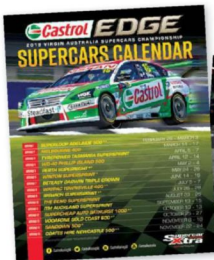
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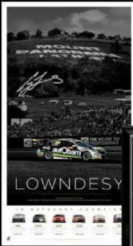
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2019 CALENDAR CHANGES

A 15-event Virgin Australia Supercars Championship calendar is set in place for 2019, featuring a number of key changes with an eye to 2020.

The 2019 Virgin Australia Supercars Championship schedule appears similar to 2018 on paper but the subtle differences are significant as the category weighs up a summer switch (see page nine).

These are the changes to the 2019 schedule:

■ Perth replaces Sydney as host of the SuperNight format event. Sydney Motorsport Park is left off the schedule for 2019, though will return in 2020 in a probable summer slot.

Sydney hosted the first Supercars night event in 21 years in August 2018 and a big crowd confirmed the demand for night racing in Australia.

"We'll be back in Sydney early in 2020," Supercars CEO Sean Seamer tells Supercars.com.

"We're working with the

ARDC (Australian Racing Drivers' Club, Sydney circuit promoter) to get there in Q1 of 2020.

"That also gives the ARDC the time to work through getting permanent lighting for the circuit.

"We believe they're in discussions with the state government about that, and if they are successful we'll look to do a long-term agreement there for a night race in Sydney.

"Perth and Sydney are not mutually exclusive. When Sydney comes back online, we will keep the night race in Perth."

The move to a night event provides a boost to the Perth event, which will run to a Thursday-Saturday format and be broadcast into the east coast of Australia in a prime-time slot given the time difference to Western Australia.

"Western Australia is critical to the growth of our sport and we

can't wait to draw fans in with this new format," says Seamer. "We can expect a special night."

■ Bathurst becomes the PIRTEK Enduro Cup opener, with the Sandown 500 moving to November, after the Gold Coast, as the final endurance event of 2019. It'll be the first time since 1967 that there won't be an enduro warm-up before Bathurst.

The switch gives Supercars flexibility of freight options for the trip to New Zealand, which now moves into September, while also moving Supercars away from a clash with the AFL and NRL finals in Australia.

"If you look at where Sandown's sitting, that gets us away from the NRL and AFL finals in September," says Seamer.

As for Bathurst, he adds: "It's a good one for us because

ideally you want it to either be the start or the end of the enduros. Because of turnaround times and other operational reasons, it's at the start. "Moving the date of Bathurst is something we wouldn't consider. It's the week after the long weekend next year and after the NRL final."

■ The ITM Auckland Super-Sprint effectively switches places with Sandown and moves into September, allowing Supercars to freight the cars across the Tasman.

"Freight forced the issue, but when you stop and consider it, it makes sense for us to be in Auckland when the NRL and AFL's going on, not Melbourne," explains Seamer.

"We also need to freight in and out; freight costs have skyrocketed as 747s have been slowly getting



decommissioned. It's getting significantly more expensive to air freight, so we needed to find another solution.

"While we were doing that, it became clear to us that if we had a choice, it would make sense to put New Zealand in September, bring Sandown into a better weather window outside of NRL and AFL and enable a more rhythmic run into the end of the year across the enduros into Newcastle."

■ The Gold Coast enduro switches to a single 500km race rather than the two 300km races used since 2010. It mirrors the format used at Sandown, with the starting order to be set by a pair of 'Race for the Grid' sprints, which will be awarded championship points at both events in 2019. It also frees up the Saturday of the Gold Coast, with talks

being held with NASCAR and IndyCar to race at the event.

"It would certainly add a lot more pressure on the teams and drivers to be doing a full 500km on the Sunday; it'll be hard on the cars, but great for the fans," says Seamer.

"We'll also have 'Race to the Grid' on the Saturday, as we do at Sandown, and those 'Race to the Grids' will include points, so it's a new format and it will spice up both days.

"It also gives us the opportunity to clear the schedule on the Saturday, to add some innovation, (with) potentially new categories joining us next year."

■ Symmons Plains and Phillip Island become back-to-back events in April, easing the travel pressure on Queensland-based teams.

"One of the big things was how much time the Queensland

teams are spending outside of Queensland in that first half of the year," explains Seamer.

"By doing that they're gone for one week and that, ironically, is an easier turnaround for them.

"On the face of it you'd think it's harder, but when you consider that they can just go away for two weeks it's significantly easier. And you've then got Easter and ANZAC Day clear for the teams.

"In general, we're really happy with the overlay, where the events sit but also the flow between the events, which means teams can navigate the country a little bit easier."

■ Pre-season testing will be held from February 13 to 14 at Phillip Island and Queensland Raceway for the Victorian and Queensland-based teams respectively, moving away from

the centralised Sydney test.

During the season teams will be able to choose between Phillip Island, Winton, Sydney and Queensland Raceway for each of their remaining two days.

"The strategy behind four test tracks versus two was to provide maximum flexibility for the teams in testing," says Seamer.

"This allows them the opportunity to use as many tracks as possible, without putting every track down."

The 2019 season gets underway with the Superloop Adelaide 500 in March.

Adelaide, Perth, Townsville, Queensland Raceway, Bathurst, Sandown and Newcastle will also host Dunlop Super2 Series rounds in 2019.

Turn the page for the 2019 Virgin Australia Supercars Championship calendar. ✕



SUPERCARS

2019 CHAMPIONSHIP CALENDAR

FEB 28-MAR 3	Superloop Adelaide 500	Adelaide Parklands Circuit
MAR 14-17	Melbourne 400	Albert Park Street Circuit
APR 5-7	Tyrepower Tasmania SuperSprint	Symmons Plains Raceway
APR 12-14	WD-40 Phillip Island 500	Phillip Island GP Circuit
MAY 2-4	Perth SuperNight	Barbagallo Raceway
MAY 24-26	Winton SuperSprint	Winton Motor Raceway
JUN 14-16	BetEasy Darwin Triple Crown	Hidden Valley Raceway
JUL 5-7	Watpac Townsville 400	Townsville Street Circuit
JUL 26-28	Ipswich SuperSprint	Queensland Raceway
AUG 23-25	The Bend SuperSprint	The Bend Motorsport Park
SEP 13-15	ITM Auckland SuperSprint	Pukekohe Park Raceway
OCT 10-13	Supercheap Auto Bathurst 1000	Mount Panorama Circuit
OCT 25-27	Vodafone Gold Coast 500	Surfers Paradise Street Circuit
NOV 8-10	Sandown 500	Sandown Motor Raceway
NOV 22-24	Coates Hire Newcastle 500	Newcastle Street Circuit

Dates correct at time of printing

CALENDAR FRIDGE MAGNET COMING SOON!

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2020 SUMMER SERIES

The changes to the 2019 Virgin Australia Supercars Championship open up the possibility of switching to a summer-based schedule into 2020.

A seismic shift from winter to summer could transform the Virgin Australia Supercars Championship from 2020.

The often talked-about change, detailed in these pages regularly, including in issue #106, has been acknowledged by Supercars as a possibility and the 2019 calendar paves the way for a more summer-focussed schedule. The 2020 championship could, therefore, run in two parts either side of an extended winter break, transitioning into a summer-based schedule in 2021.

"We will be starting earlier in 2020," CEO Sean Seamer tells Supercars.com.

"How much earlier, we need to see. We've got to understand when the [tennis] Australian Open's going to take place and, obviously, we've got the Bathurst 12 Hour to consider as well.

"Our ambition is to get that 2020 calendar out early next year, and perhaps even release two to three years' of calendar if we can get that sorted out.

"There will be a period of transition that we need to work through.

"We're still working through those conversations with teams and obviously the proprietors of the tracks."

Moving to summer has a number of advantages over the current schedule, namely moving away from the dominant

football codes, the AFL and NRL; racing in daylight savings times away from winter; the possibility to run more twilight and night racing; and condensing the schedule with a more consistent gap between events.

"I've been really up front for a while that we want to try and get the sport into the best-possible weather window, making sure that we're giving our events the maximum opportunity to drive attendance through good weather and also finding clear air from a broadcast point of view," says Seamer.

The Sydney SuperNight event, which was left off the 2019 calendar, is set to return in 2020 as one of the marquee events over the summer.

Another possible gain from the summer move is a date change for the Adelaide 500, shifting the event away from Adelaide's arts festivals and potentially having the event as a season finale, as the Australian Grand Prix was when held in Adelaide from 1985 to 1995.

Newcastle shapes as a potential season opener if the calendar is inverting, keeping the status of season openers and finales for two of Supercars' marquee street-circuit events.

Also, having the Bathurst 1000 in the early stages of the season as opposed to the latter stages differentiates and separates the attention the winners of the Great Race and championship receive. ✘





THE CHANGING FACE OF THE GRID IN 2019

With Craig Lowndes retiring from full-time driving and Mark Winterbottom in a Holden Commodore, the Virgin Australia Supercars Championship grid will look very different at the 2019 season-opening Superloop Adelaide 500.

Back in 2005, the last year Mark Winterbottom wasn't part of Tickford Racing, Russell Ingall won the title, Marcos Ambrose had yet to depart for NASCAR, Craig Lowndes only had one Bathurst 1000 win and Jamie Whincup had yet to race for Triple Eight Race Engineering.

The last time Lowndes wasn't a full-time driver in Supercars back in 1997, Whincup and Winterbottom were still racing in go-karts, Peter Brock was still racing full-time, Marcos Ambrose had yet to debut in Supercars and Triple Eight Race

Engineering was six years away from arriving in Australia.

That puts into perspective the significance of Lowndes' retirement as a full-time driver and Winterbottom's departure from Tickford Racing and impending move to Team 18 for 2019.

Lowndes kickstarted the silly-season moves with his retirement announcement, then won Bathurst and the PIRTEK Enduro Cup. He reunites with Triple Eight Race Engineering as an endurance co-driver in 2019.

With Sandown moving to November, Lowndes' next Supercars race following the

conclusion of the 2018 season will be the 2019 Supercheap Auto Bathurst 1000, where he will be out to defend his title and add to his tally of six Bathurst wins with the team.

Despite strong results throughout 2018, Lowndes insists he's "still happy with the decision" and he "still believes it's the right time" to retire.

Winterbottom's departure from Tickford Racing was the second shock of the silly season, ending a 13-year partnership that began in 2007 and netted a Bathurst win in 2013 and championship in 2015.

It also means Winterbottom will race a Holden for

the first time in his Supercars career, having raced Falcons exclusively through the Dunlop Super2 Series and main game, and his Ford links dating back to his karting days.

"It's very hard to walk away after 13 years," says Winterbottom. "That's probably the saddest part, but life moves on and you look for new challenges."

For more from Winterbottom and Lowndes, read their latest columns in *SupercarXtra Magazine* on pages 14 and 16 respectively.

Keep up to date with all the off-season driver and team changes leading into 2019 at SupercarXtra.com. **X**



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CAMARO VS COMMODORE



With Ford teams rolling out the Mustang, the possibility of the Camaro joining suit remains a work in progress and faces stiff challenges, despite the desire for many to see the American muscle cars battle it out in Supercars.

The prospect of an all-American muscle-car contest between the Mustang and Camaro in Supercars remains on the backburner as Holden/General Motors continues to back its ZB Commodore Supercar, despite the talk of the Camaro option.

The appearance of a Walkinshaw Andretti United race-liveried road-car Camaro at the Supercheap Auto Bathurst 1000 sparked significant interest in the prospect of the Camaro going up against the Mustang, though both the team and manufacturer downplayed the possibility of an imminent arrival for the coupe.

Walkinshaw Andretti United has been the focus of the Camaro talk given co-owner Ryan Walkinshaw and his Holden Special Vehicles (HSV) organisation's arrangement to import and convert to right-hand-drive Chevrolet products into Australia.

But any potential Camaro Supercar project would need the go-ahead from Holden/General Motors, which is committed to the current-generation ZB Commodore for the foreseeable future.

"We've got a strong relationship with GM, it's absolutely critical that we have their support and engagement and permission to do it," says Walkinshaw.

"At the end of the day we're not going to do something without their permission, and we've got a road-car business relationship to maintain with them, so it's going to be their call as well.

"We've still got technical work that needs to be done before we even have that discussion internally.

"Then there's going to be a branding discussion and then there's going to be a safety discussion and then a performance discussion, so there's more to happen before we go down that route, for sure."

The low-lying Camaro would

require a rule change so an adequate body style could fit on Supercars' control chassis/roll cage, a rule change denied to the Mustang. While the Mustang, the first coupe to be turned into a Supercar, met the current requirements after significant adjustments to its bodywork design, the Camaro would need a concession given its height difference.

Much will depend on the future of Holden and the Commodore in Australia, which have suffered a knock in the marketplace following a slump in sales for the ZB.

Holden continues to back

the ZB as its preferred racer in Supercars, despite the fact the road-car version of the Commodore has no V8 or rear-wheel-drive option.

New executive director of marketing Kristian Aquilina has renewed Holden's interest in Supercars and a continuation of its backing for Red Bull Holden Racing Team is expected. But if Holden and the Commodore's slide continues, the Camaro and other imported Chevrolet options appear the obvious alternative for the Australian marketplace.

For more on a Camaro Supercar, see page 54. ✕



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BEYOND THE WHEEL

Column by
Mark Winterbottom



MOVING ON

It's with mixed emotions that I part ways with Tickford Racing at the end of 2018 and move onto new opportunities in 2019.

I've been part of Tickford Racing for 13 years and we have achieved many of our ultimate goals with 38 race wins, 117 podiums, 36 pole positions and, in particular, a Bathurst win in 2013 and a championship in 2015.

In that time I've worked with so many amazing people and they will continue to be a big part of my life.

When I first came to the team I was the young guy, inexperienced and raw, and to this day I still appreciate the teammates who mentored me.

Jason Bright and Steven Richards openly taught me the tricks of the trade. And, over the past few years, it's been an honour to give back and play that role with the younger guys who have joined Tickford Racing. I know that the team is in good hands with the young guys they have now full of talent.

We talk a lot about loyalty in this sport and that is incredibly important to me. And I want you to know that this decision was not financially motivated.

I shook hands with the Tickford Racing management and we've wished each other all the best for the future.

We will always remain respectful and grateful for the history we have created together and the amazing times we have shared. Tickford Racing will always hold a special place in my heart.

Consistently good results is something I strive for and have always prided myself on. The last few years have been really tough; my five-year-old son can't even remember seeing me win a race! The last thing I want is to fade away and just turn up for a pay cheque.

I know I can still compete like I did three years ago when I won the championship.

I want to get back to the front and I have the backing of many people that I respect in this sport.

I know I'm a better driver now than I was in my 20s and I have the experience and the passion to race and be competitive.

"IT'S WITH MIXED EMOTIONS THAT I PART WAYS WITH TICKFORD RACING AT THE END OF 2018 AND MOVE ONTO NEW OPPORTUNITIES IN 2019."

I always have and always will drive the car to its strengths. I go into every race thinking I can win and I'm as hungry and motivated as the first day I sat in a Supercar.

So I'm going to stay true to myself and who I am and continue to be a genuine, good person for my supporters, family and sponsors.

I've always tried to be a role model within our sport because championships are not just made on the track but behind the scenes as well.

In recent weeks I've received many messages of support from fans, which has really humbled me, so thank you. And see you in 2019!

—Frosty





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RIGHT ON TRACK

Column by
Craig Lowndes



GOING OUT ON A HIGH

Looking back at the 2018 PIRTEK Enduro Cup, I was an incredible way to end my partnership with Steven Richards in my final full-time season in Supercars.

Steve and I have had mixed results at Sandown over the years, so to be part of a Triple Eight lockout of the podium there was really special and gave us great momentum leading into Bathurst.

However, at Mount Panorama leading into the race, we had nothing but power-steering issues that weren't resolved until the warm-up session on Sunday morning.

This meant we headed into the race with so few changes to the car's setup, because we were so focussed on addressing the power-steering issues throughout the weekend.

So to come out with the win was incredible. It came down to really knowing what we needed for the race, which was a fast car for the final stints, and



the car just got stronger and stronger over that period.

It was obviously disappointing for David Reynolds to finish with the issues he had during the race because it could've been a great battle between us into the final stint. But to have a victory with a gap on the final lap was pretty special.

It was the biggest gap I had ever had on a final lap at Bathurst, so it was a great opportunity to absorb the atmosphere. It's one of the few

circuits where you can hear the crowd, especially at the top of the mountain, so I really enjoyed it.

To end our time with Richo with a win in the PIRTEK Enduro Cup on the Gold Coast, especially after fighting back from our grid penalty in 21st to a podium, was also incredible.

We knew going into the campaign that it would be our last time teaming up, so we wanted to go out on a high. To be able to have a result at all three events,

finishing on the podium at Sandown, Bathurst and the Gold Coast, was very special for us.

My first race back in a Supercar next year will be at Bathurst, where we'll be determined to have another strong showing.

Bathurst is always special because it's the event I grew up wanting to compete in the most, so we are fortunate we can continue doing that beyond our full-time careers.

I said earlier in my career that I didn't think anyone would get near Peter Brock's record of nine Bathurst wins. Who knows if we can get closer?

Roland Dane says I've got another five years left in me, so having won two over the last five years we could match the nine. But, in saying that, I won't be going into Bathurst in 2019 focusing on the tally but rather my role as co-driver - making sure the car is fast so I can hand it over in a winning position, and return to the top step of the podium.

- Craig

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LOWNDES RACING

CRAIG LOWNDES'
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CRAIG LOWNDES – PERFECTION AT PANORAMA

Paying tribute to the stunning Bathurst 1000 career of one of Australian motorsport's most loved champions, Craig Lowndes

- ✦ Features iconic imagery of the moment when Lowndes overtook David Reynolds during lap 135 of the 2018 Bathurst 1000, leading to his seventh victory at Mount Panorama
- ✦ Lists the key statistics from his seven Bathurst 1000 triumphs, alongside imagery of his cars from each respective race
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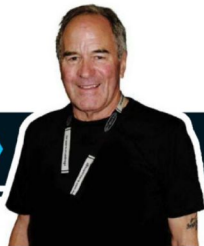


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GARRY THE GURU

Column by
Garry Rogers



BRING ON THE SUMMER SERIES

There's been a lot of talk about Supercars switching to a summer series of late. Personally, that is a change I would support. I actually believe that it is long overdue and is something that we should have done years ago.

It just makes sense on so many levels. The race meeting should be Friday and Saturday nights with qualifying and races on both nights. It worked for the Thunderdome with NASCAR and AUSCAR in the mid-1990s and I have no doubt that it would work even better in today's market.

You only need to look at how many people were marching into Sydney Motorsport Park for the twilight meeting earlier this year to get a sense of how popular that timeslot is with the fans. There was a constant stream of race goers filing in from mid afternoon all the way up to the race on Saturday evening.

It would be great timing for television. People today do not want to watch television on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, but Friday and Saturday evenings is prime-time.

Whilst I really enjoy what Foxtel has done for the sport and there is no doubt that those guys and girls do a fantastic job with what they produce, I believe that the free-to-air offering needs to



be improved. The balance just needs to be brought back a little.

A summer series would alleviate the need for much of the lighting and also means that we wouldn't be going up against the two big football codes of AFL and NRL. Sure, the timing of the northern Australian rounds at Darwin and Townsville would need to be closely

looked at to make sure that we don't end up racing at a time of year that has less favourable weather conditions, but surely that can be worked out.

Another thing I want to make clear, is the incorrect perception in the media that my drivers are 'locked in' for 2019.

While it is true that we are likely to start the season with the current two drivers of Garth Tander and James 'Bieber' Golding in the main game, I want to be perfectly clear that like any sport, motor racing is a performance-based

industry and everyone on my team is only as good as their last performance.

If any of my drivers continually fail to perform, they will be replaced. But that's no secret to them. No one is 'locked in' for 2019 or 'guaranteed' a drive for the whole season.

I will be looking for an improvement in results from the whole team next year. We underperformed in 2018, there is no question about that. I can't lay the blame with any one area, but for whatever reasons our on track results just weren't where we expected them to be.

We put a lot of sponsors money in and a lot of our own money in, so you can't say that it was a lack of funds or investment. I know that the mechanics worked extremely hard and that has been a real positive for us, our mechanical reliability and pit stop performance has been excellent.

It makes me so proud when I see the amazing feats that these guys continually produce when the chips are down, like the repairs they did in such a short time to Bieber's car after a huge hit at the Gold Coast.

We must improve our performance for 2019 as motorsport is like any business - there's no use continuing to tip in money if you're not getting the results that you are expecting.

In closing, I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! I'm looking forward to catching up with you all at a track somewhere in 2019.

- Garry

"THE RACE MEETING SHOULD BE FRIDAY AND SATURDAY NIGHTS."

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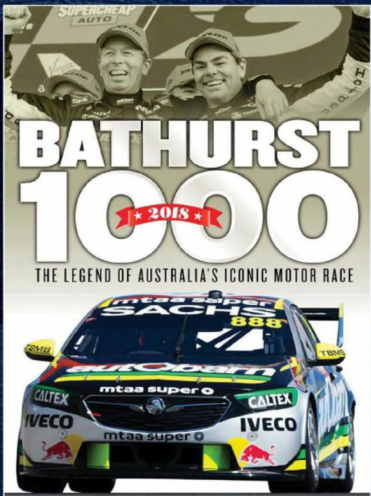
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FALCON

The Falcon name has gone from Australian new-car showrooms and when the chequered flag comes down on the Coates Hire Newcastle 500 it will have raced its last racing lap in top-line Australian touring-car racing. It won't soon be forgotten, though.

When that last Falcon crosses the line in Newcastle, it will have been 58 years since the first left an Australian touring-car grid. In that time 14 of Ford's 20 Bathurst wins and 16 of its 24 Australian Touring Car Championship (ATCC) titles have been grasped, grabbed, stolen or simply run away with in racers wearing the badge.

Next year's Mustang Supercar might have history on its side and an undoubtedly bright racing future, but it also has big shoes to fill.

Here, through seven generations, we revisit the highlights of an Australian touring-car legend.

XK/XL 1960 was a big year for Australian touring cars – the first Australian Touring Car Championship ran in February at the Gnoo Blass circuit near Orange in NSW, then in November the first Great Race, the inaugural Armstrong 500 at Phillip Island in Victoria. And the first Falcon, the XK, was in the latter, just two months after its release. Two started and eight and a half hours later the Bob Jane and Lou Molina XK – after overcoming a roll – finished third in class.

In the 1961 Armstrong 500, Ken Harper, Sid Fisher

and John Reaburn went one better in their XK with second in class. It would be the first time the Blue Oval prevailed in a direct Ford versus Holden battle in the Great Race, with an EK also contesting Class B but not posting a result.

In 1962 the Armstrong 500 glory was all Ford's. Five of the then-new XL Falcons fronted and wrapped up the first four positions in their class ahead of the first EJ Holden. The winning Jane/Harry Firth car was also first over the line for the then-unofficial outright win. The Falcon's first Great Race victory was under its belt.



But just like the Phillip Island track – which was so comprehensively torn up in 1962 organisers had to look elsewhere to host the 1963 Great Race – the Falcon was destined for the racing shelf.

When the event decamped to Bathurst Ford had a new touring-car coal in the fire, its Cortina small car, and it would spend the next few years dominating with it at Mt Panorama, winning in 1963, 1964 and 1965.

SUCCESSSES

- 1st, Class B, 1962 Phillip Island 500 – Harry Firth/Bob Jane, XL Falcon

XR-XY Ford might have shone during Australian touring-car racing's Appendix J era but it would be an even more definitive presence as the late 1960s came into view.

In the new Improved Production category of 1965 – the class that now determined the Australian Touring Car Championship – its V8-powered Mustang became the weapon of choice, winning five straight ATCC titles between 1965 and 1969.

In the Series Production category that had ownership of the Bathurst 500 and other events, the Falcon would once again become Ford's front-line racer and make an even bigger impact.

When the new XR GT finished one-two first time out at Bathurst in 1967, the first win for a V8 at the Mountain, it set a Bathurst-winning blueprint that still prevails today.

Dominant Bathurst victories in 1970 and 1971 for its XW and XY successors, plus countless other Series Production wins, would cement this generation of Falcon as a touring-car legend of legends. But it would only just sneak in an ATCC title.

While Falcons did contest Improved Production events during the early 1970s, including Ian 'Pete' Geoghegan's famous Super Falcon, they never managed to truly get one over the Mustangs other American muscle cars that had owned the category from the start. But when the ATCC and Bathurst were brought together under the same wing for 1973's new production-based Group C formula – stripping the highly modified US beasts of their status as Australian touring car's premier attraction – it would be Ford factory driver Allan Moffat and his mighty XY GTHO Phase III that claimed the maiden Group C title, giving the soon-to-be superseded Falcon racer a final battle victory.

SUCCESSSES

- 1st, 1967 Bathurst 500 – Harry Firth/Fred Gibson, XR Falcon GT
- 1st, 1970 Bathurst 500 – Allan Moffat, XW Falcon GTHO Phase II
- 1st, 1971 Bathurst 500 – Allan Moffat, XY Falcon GTHO Phase III
- 1st, 1973 Australian Touring Car Championship – Allan Moffat, XY Falcon GTHO Phase III

XA-XC As Moffat was winning the 1973 ATCC in his XY, the next generation of Falcon touring car – the XA GT Hardtop – was already being blooded by privateer John Goss.



BELOW The XR Falcon was the first V8-powered car to win the Great Race at Mount Panorama.





ABOVE: The XA GT Hardtop claimed a second Bathurst 1000 win in 1974.

It wasn't a smooth debut for the Goss car, which only clocked two ATCC points finishes, but the XA soon showed a knack for winning. When the Ford factory team moved into its own for the endurance races, Fred Gibson gave the new car victory straight-up in the opening round at Adelaide. At Bathurst, Moffat and Ian Geoghegan sealed the Falcon's fourth win at the Mountain.

The XA and its XB and XC successors would keep on winning through the 1970s, despite famously on-and-off support from Ford Australia. Its withdrawal from the sport at the end of 1973 saw the balance of power swing towards Holden and its new V8-powered Toranas in 1974 but the Holden's mechanical frailty meant the big Ford walked away with the Sandown 250 and Bathurst that year.

1975 was a depressingly lean year for Falcon runners but in 1976 Moffat, after encouraging Ford back into

the fold, tapped into a form upsweep in his XB and took another ATCC title.

In 1977, with the factory now back behind the Moffat Ford Dealers team in a big way, the Ford star swept all before him to not just steal the ATCC and Bathurst honours but make it a team one-two in each.

The Hardtop, however, was running out of puff. In 1978 a horde of Torana A9Xs would keep it to just a pair of ATCC wins and little in the way of enduro glory. In 1979, with Ford having pulled out of touring-car racing again, the Holdens won everything in sight.

SUCCESSSES

- 1st, 1973 Bathurst 1000 – Allan Moffat/Ian Geoghegan, XA Falcon GT Hardtop
- 1st, 1974 Bathurst 1000 – John Goss/Kevin Bartlett, XA Falcon GT Hardtop
- 1st, 1976 Australian Touring Car Championship – Allan Moffat, XB Falcon GT Hardtop
- 1st, 1977 Australian Touring Car Championship – Allan Moffat, XB Falcon GT Hardtop/XC Falcon GS500 Hardtop
- 1st, 1977 Bathurst 1000 – Allan Moffat/Jacky Ickx, XC Falcon GS500 Hardtop

XD/XE There wasn't a lot to suggest a revival for the Falcon as the 1980s kicked off. As Holden star Peter Brock strode to the



ATCC title in his all-new VB Commodore, Ford was largely AWOL – no factory team, no big star (Allan Moffat didn't contest the series) and, by the end of the season, not a single win.

Yet things were bubbling. A Group C version of the new XD had contested the 1980 ATCC in the hands of Ford privateer Murray Carter, who'd quietly clocked up four podiums. As the enduro season approached, other Ford runners saw the potential.

Moffat was one, but he and the XD never got on – a rushed Bathurst entry ended in an early retirement and, with Mazda beckoning for 1981, he'd never race a Falcon again. Instead, it would be Queensland privateer Dick Johnson who harnessed the promise. He put everything on the line to build the ultimate XD for the 1980 enduros and its destruction at Bathurst that year after hitting 'The Rock' while in the lead would be followed by a famous outpouring of public support and an unprecedented funding boon for Johnson.

BELOW: The XC GS500 Hardtop delivered Ford a famous one-two finish at Bathurst in 1977.





In 1981 Johnson, now in a new Tru-Blu XD, beat Peter Brock to the ATCC title, then took victory in a shortened Bathurst 1000. In 1982 he and his XD snared another ATCC crown. Then – after struggling with the new XE model's handling gremlins during the 1982 enduros and much of 1983, then destroying a newly green, newly sorted car at Bathurst later that year – he and the Falcon were back on top in the ATCC in 1984.

But the Falcon's front-line touring-car career was about to hit a roadblock. With new Group A regulations coming, Ford no longer building a V8 Falcon or much interested in building anything that would translate to competitiveness on the track (a necessary evil of Group A), Johnson and other loyal Ford runners would have to look overseas to stay on the grid from 1985.

SUCCESSES

- 1st, 1981 Australian Touring Car Championship – Dick Johnson, XD Falcon
- 1st, 1981 Bathurst 1000 – Dick Johnson/John French, XD Falcon
- 1st, 1982 Australian Touring Car Championship – Dick Johnson, XD Falcon
- 1st, 1984 Australian Touring Car Championship – Dick Johnson, XE Falcon

EB-EL The Ford Australia of the mid to late 1980s was more interested in fleet sales than motorsport but avowed petrolhead Jac Nasser's arrival into the top job saw the V8 Falcon return with 1991's EB model. With Australian touring cars moving to a V8-powered Ford versus Holden formula for 1993, the EB would also be the first top-level Falcon to hit racetracks in nearly a decade.

It didn't take long for it get back in the winning swing of things. Glenn Seton won four of the nine rounds in his EB to wrap up his first ATCC title in a team one-two ahead of Alan Jones. In the Sandown 500, a Glenn

Seton Racing EB would prevail again in the hands of Geoff Brabham and David Parsons.

The early days of the five-litre era were all about 'parity', where one side of the Ford/Holden divide would bitch that its car was fundamentally compromised and lobby for balancing actions. Exactly such a 'readjustment' ahead of the 1993 enduros would make the Commodores more competitive. By that stroke of fortune for Holden, bad luck or whatever, a Falcon didn't win Bathurst that year.

This parity fight would continue until the standardisation of key components with 2003's Project Blueprint regulations, but look back today and the winning spoils seem to be shared as they should have been in a series of two – pretty evenly. In 1994 a Holden won the ATCC but Dick Johnson and John Bowe reset the ledger with

ABOVE: The XE didn't replicate the success of the XD, though it did win the final Group C title in 1984.

BELOW: The EB made its Bathurst debut ahead of schedule in 1982, against Group A benchmarks such as the Sierra.





ACTIVE: The EL scored a surprise Bathurst win in 1988.

RIGHT: The BA broke Holden's stranglehold of Supercars with a run of three consecutive championships.

BELOW: The AU failed to win a Bathurst or championship, despite the speed shown by the likes of Dick Johnson Racing.

Sandown and Bathurst glory in their EB. In 1995 and 1997, successes for the Falcon in the ATCC was followed by a Commodore winning at Bathurst, while Holden's ATCC-dominating VT lost out to a soon-to-be-pensioned EL in the Great Race of 1998. Only in 1996, when Holden newbie Craig Lowndes won almost everything, did the first generation of Falcon Supercar not give its fans something to cheer about.

SUCCESSSES

- 1st, 1993 Australian Touring Car Championship – Glenn Seton, EB Falcon
- 1st, 1994 Bathurst 1000 – Dick Johnson/John Bowe, EB Falcon
- 1st, 1995 Australian Touring Car Championship – John Bowe, EF Falcon
- 1st, 1997 Supercars Championship – Glenn Seton, EL Falcon
- 1st, 1998 Bathurst 1000 – Jason Bright/Steven Richards, EL Falcon

AU-BF The much-heralded AU of 1998 was a product misfire and the Supercar version that debuted in 1999 suffered a similarly sad fate on the track.

It never lacked speed – Bathurst poles in 1999, 2000 and 2001 proved that. But fragility (its front airdam/splitter would regularly shatter in bump-and-grind V8 races, forcing pitstops), some bad luck (retiring while in a strong position at Bathurst became a depressingly familiar trait) and an increasingly dominant Holden Racing Team would see it end its career in 2002 with only a handful of race wins to its name, and no championship or Bathurst success whatsoever.

But the next in this line of Falcons, the BA, would turn it all around. A newly ascendant Stone Brothers Racing and Marcos Ambrose won six of 13 rounds with it in 2003 to claim the championship and did it again in 2004, the first title double for the Falcon in years.



Teammate Russell Ingall repeated the feat in 2005 to make it an unprecedented three titles for the Falcon on the trot.

Bathurst glory was less forthcoming for the BA but when then-Ford stars Craig Lowndes and Jamie Whincup bagged the big one in 2006 – eight long years after the Falcon's last win at the Mountain – the dam burst and two more Bathurst wins in succession followed, the only time the three-peat has been done in a Falcon. And in a cherry on top not seen since the days of the XD, Whincup bagged the 2008 championship – his first – to go with his Bathurst crown.

SUCCESSSES

- 1st, 2003 Supercars Championship – Marcos Ambrose, BA Falcon
- 1st, 2004 Supercars Championship – Marcos Ambrose, BA Falcon
- 1st, 2005 Supercars Championship – Russell Ingall, BA Falcon
- 1st, 2006 Bathurst 1000 – Craig Lowndes/Jamie Whincup, BA Falcon
- 1st, 2007 Bathurst 1000 – Craig Lowndes/Jamie Whincup, BF Falcon
- 1st, 2008 Supercars Championship – Jamie Whincup, BF Falcon
- 1st, 2008 Bathurst 1000 – Craig Lowndes/Jamie Whincup, BF Falcon

FG/FG X Only three other drivers have won V8 Supercars/Supercars titles since Whincup won his first in 2008. And since 2010 – the year after he won his second title behind the wheel of an FG Falcon – he and his Triple Eight team have been doing their winning for arch-rival Holden.

That's a lot of wins for the General in the last near decade but the FG and the current FG X have kept the win, Bathurst and title counters ticking over while delivering plenty of memorable moments. Think James Courtney's in-the-pits defeat of Whincup and Holden in the stormy 2010 title decider in Sydney and Ford Performance Racing's slew of Bathurst and championship success between 2013 and 2015. Or Scott McLaughlin's recent streak of poles and wins.

This final generation of Falcon has also brought heartbreak, not the least McLaughlin's title loss last year. But if the Kiwi does manage to bag the championship this year, the FG/FG X will end its racing days with two Bathurst wins and four championships to its name, putting it right up there with some of its most successful predecessors. Now that would be a fitting end to the Falcon touring-car story

SUCCESSSES

- 1st, 2009 Supercars Championship – Jamie Whincup, FG Falcon
- 1st, 2010 Supercars Championship – James Courtney, FG Falcon
- 1st, 2013 Bathurst 1000 – Mark Winterbottom/Steven Richards, FG Falcon
- 1st, 2014 Bathurst 1000 – Chaz Mostert/Paul Morris, FG Falcon
- 1st, 2015 Supercars Championship – Mark Winterbottom, FG X Falcon





ABOVE LEFT: The BF won two Bathursts in a row in 2007 and 2008.

LEFT: The FG won two titles in 2009 and 2010.

BELOW: The FG X won the title on debut in 2015.

THE NON-FALCON FORDS

MUSTANG

The American-built Mustang was the car to beat under the Improved Production rules, scoring five consecutive championship wins from 1965 to 1969 before it was ruled out of contention by the change to Group C from 1973. The Mustang reappeared in Group A in 1985 but didn't trouble the European-made cars. The pony cars will return under a third iteration in Supercars in 2019.

CORTINA

The British-built Cortina gave Ford its first Australian Touring Car Championship win courtesy of

Ian Geoghegan in 1964. It also won the first three Bathurst 500s from 1963 to 1965, before being phased out and eventually replaced by the Australian-made Falcon

SIERRA

The Sierra replaced the Mustang in Group A in 1987, going on to become the dominant car with championship and Bathurst sweeps in 1988 and 1989. The Dick Johnson Racing Sierras were the cars to beat, eventually superseded by the all-conquering Nissan Skyline BNR32 GT-R from 1990, before Group A was put to bed at the conclusion of 1992.





FALCON LEGENDS

FAN FAVOURITES

Allan Moffat and Dick Johnson stand out in terms of Falcon legends, taking the fight to Holden hero Peter Brock across three decades.

Moffat started the Falcon success in the championship in 1973 and battled for supremacy against Brock at Mount Panorama. When Moffat moved on to Mazda in 1980, Dick Johnson stepped up and took over the Ford mantle with his heroics at Mount Panorama.

Glenn Seton and John Bowe were the dominant Falcon drivers at the start of the V8 era from 1993, winning three championships and going head to head for supremacy.

After Holden became the dominant force, Marcos Ambrose endeared himself to Ford fans by ending the Commodore's rule with two successive championship wins. Mark Winterbottom will also go down as a Falcon legend for winning Bathurst and a championship in the midst of a period of Holden rule.

Triple Eight's Craig Lowndes and Jamie Whincup claimed the only Bathurst three-peat for the Falcon at Bathurst before Triple Eight's defection to Holden, which marked a downturn in results for Ford.

It's impossible to name one Falcon as the most loved above the rest. The XC GS500 delivered Ford its most famous moment with the one-two formation finish at Bathurst in 1977. For a fairytale moment, it's the XD

and Dick Johnson's recovery from 'The Rock' incident in 1980 to winning the championship-Bathurst double in 1981. The XY GTHO Phase III (above) is probably the most sought-after Falcon, while the XR will go down

in history as the first V8-powered winner at Mount Panorama. The BA ended Holden's rule with a dominant three-year period, while the FG X marked the end of the Falcon era. All could be considered iconic Falcons.



Allan Moffat and Colin Bond, teammates and one-two finishers at Bathurst in 1977.

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MotorSport Legends



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OBITUARY: **BOB JANE**



PAGE 36

IN MEMORIUM: **ORAN PARK RACEWAY**



PAGE 40

ICONIC CARS: **HOLDEN LH TORANA SL/R 5000 L34**



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THE YEAR THAT WAS: **1999**

WORDS Adrian Musolino IMAGES Autopics.com.au

VALE **BOB JANE**

Bob Jane passed away aged 88 in his hometown of Melbourne in September. We remember a man whose achievements in the automotive world matched his incredible successes on the racetrack.

Bob Jane is often forgotten when discussing the greats of Australian touring cars. The oversight is perhaps a result of him being remembered for his business ventures rather than his racing achievements. But with four Australian Touring Car Championship wins and four

Armstrong 500 wins, Jane is amongst the greats of Australian motorsport.

The Melbourne-born racer started out on two wheels, winning a number of state-based cycling titles before turning his attention to four wheels, establishing the Bob Jane Autoland business in partnership with his brother Bill.

Jane settled into touring-car racing just as it was about to boom with the creation of the Australian Touring Car Championship and Armstrong 500 at Phillip Island. And despite a frightening

crash at Phillip Island in 1961, when he was thrown out of his FJ Holden and was in a coma for more than a week with a fractured skull, he was committed to racing.

It was in partnership with Harry Firth that Jane won three consecutive Armstrong 500s, two at Phillip Island in a Mercedes-Benz 220SE and Ford XL Falcon in 1961 and 1962 respectively and in a Ford Cortina GT Mkl in 1963, the first to be held at Mount Panorama, Bathurst.

Jane went on to win the event yet again in 1964, this time alongside George Reynolds in another Cortina GT, making him the only driver in history to win what we now call the Great Race on four consecutive occasions.



LEFT: Jane and Harry Firth win the 1961 Armstrong 500 in a Mercedes-Benz 220SE.

BELOW: Jane at his beloved Calder Park Raceway.





Jane in his Camaro at Sandown in 1971.

Jane won his first Australian Touring Car Championship title in the single-race decider at Longford in Tasmania in 1962, driving his Jaguar Mark II 3.8 to a 23-second win on the punishing street circuit.

He defended his title with a Jaguar Mark II 4.1 at Mallala in South Australia in 1963, making him the first multiple winner of the Australian Touring Car Championship. Victory in that year's Australian GT Championship, also in a Jaguar, made Jane the undisputed number one in Australian motorsport.

Jane's success on the racetrack was matched in the business world. He became a Jaguar and Ford dealer following on from his victories with the brands, while his development of the first radial tyre brand built in Australia (and raced by Jane to victory at Bathurst) led to the creation of Bob Jane T-Marts in 1965. In the same year he had another lucky escape, surviving a spectacular crash in a Mustang at Katoomba.

In 1969 Jane teamed up with Holden by purchasing the Southern Motors dealerships. This led to a switch to racing Chevrolet Camaros in the Australian Touring Car Championship now being run over multiple rounds.

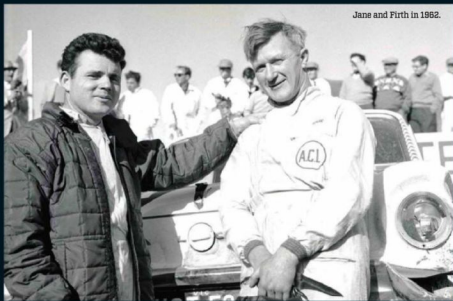
Jane won the 1971 title in his seven-litre Chevrolet Camaro ZL-1 following a dramatic

season finale at Oran Park Raceway, where he overcame the challenge of the Ford Mustangs of Allan Moffat and Ian Geoghegan to win his third championship.

Despite engine restrictions coming into place to combat the brute power of the seven-litre V8, Jane took his 5.7-litre Camaro to an even more convincing championship win in 1972.

His business commitments limited his motorsport outings to sports-sedan racing in the latter half of the 1970s and into the 1980s, before he retired once and for all in 1982.

By this time his focus was on his businesses, which from 1971 included owning and running Calder Park Raceway on the outskirts of Melbourne.



Jane and Pirih in 1962.

Jane won two consecutive championships with the Camaro.



Jane invested heavily in the facility, including staging the Australian Grand Prix from 1980 to 1984 and attracting the likes of Alain Prost, Niki Lauda, Nelson Piquet, Jacques Laffite, Alan Jones and more to the event, despite its non-championship status and the fact it ran to Formula Mondial regulations.

Jane's ambition was for the Australian Grand Prix to be granted world-championship status. But once it became clear that Formula 1 management wasn't keen on Calder Park, Jane threw his support behind Adelaide's bid for the event. The development of the Australian Grand Prix at Calder Park proved crucial to the event gaining world championship inclusion.

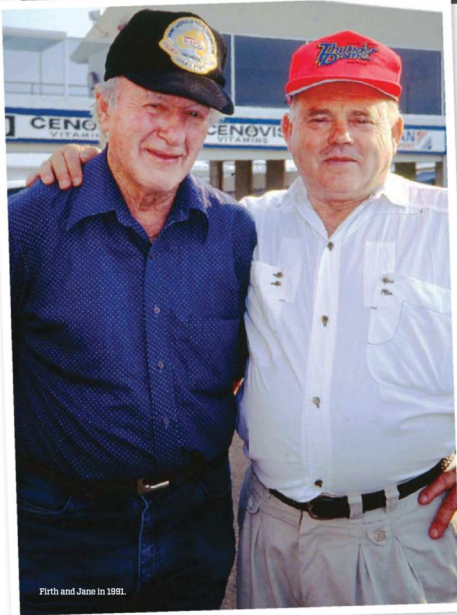
After giving up on his dream of a world-championship event at Calder Park, Jane turned his attention to building a super-speedway at the facility to hold NASCAR races, the first such facility to be built outside of North America.

The cost of building the facility is said to have been in excess of \$200 million and the oval races attracted big crowds by bringing a new form of motorsport to Australia. With the oval, dragway and racetrack, Calder Park became the hub of motorsport in Victoria.

Jane's philanthropy wasn't limited to Calder Park. He threw his support behind a number of other initiatives, sponsoring entries and drivers such as Peter Brock and Larry Perkins' 1984 Le Mans 24 Hours entry and events such as the Bob Jane T-Marts-backed Bathurst 1000 from 2002 to 2004.

By this time, though, illness and the battle for control over Bob Jane T-Marts had led to struggles for Jane, which would continue in the latter years of his life.

Jane squeezed a lot into his 88 years. And his achievements on and off the track have left a legacy of a larger than life all-rounder that's unlikely to be repeated. ✖



Firth and Jane in 1991.

BOB JANE SUCCESSES

- 1961 Armstrong 500
- 1962 Australian Touring Car Championship
- 1962 Armstrong 500
- 1963 Australian Touring Car Championship
- 1963 Australian GT Championship
- 1963 Armstrong 500
- 1964 Armstrong 500
- 1971 Australian Touring Car Championship
- 1972 Australian Touring Car Championship

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WORDS Adrian Musolino **IMAGES** Justin Deeley

REMEMBERING ORAN PARK

Ten years ago Oran Park Raceway hosted Supercars for the final time. We discover what's left at Oran Park Town and take a trip down memory lane to Sydney's best and much-missed motorsport circuit.

Oran Park Town looks like any other suburb, bustling with new houses, shops, cafes and more. But the land was once home to one of the most-loved racetracks in Australia. And there are plenty of hints of its past scattered around the suburb 60km to the south-west of Sydney, which is now home to more than 25,000 residents and 7000 homes.

Peter Brock Drive runs through the heart of the suburb and intersects with Skaife Street, where you turn off and head to Francevic Street, past Lowndes Drive, to 'Grandstand Park', where banks of fans once sat at Oran Park Raceway and today the locals can sit and look upon a map the old track layout.

There's motorsport nostalgia throughout Oran Park Town. The main shopping centre is named 'Oran Park Podium'. The local rugby league club is the 'Chargers', complete with chequered flags on its logo. And the recent addition of a 'Walk of Fame' honours 30 motorsport greats.

It's not quite the same as still having the circuit operational, but it's a fitting nod to history for an area that hosted the

The start of the final Supercars round at Oran Park Raceway in 2008.



Australian Touring Car Championship (ATCC)/Supercars every year from 1971 to 2008, often as the season finale.

Oran Park Raceway opened in 1962, in the wake of the closure of the nearby Mount Druitt Circuit, to cater for state-level events.

Dan Cleary handed over the land on which a 1.6km layout was built. Grandstands and other facilities were built up in preparation for the circuit's first ATCC round in 1971.

More than 33,000 fans packed in to watch the muscle-car championship battle



between the Ford Mustangs of Allan Moffat and Ian Geoghegan and the Chevrolet Camaro of Bob Jane, which included a fan driving his Valiant Pacer onto the track during the race and was won by the Camaro of Jane.

The popularity of the circuit led to an expansion to 2.6km into 1973 and the creation of the 'grand prix' layout for a figure-eight layout and the iconic bridge section.

In just over a decade, Oran Park had gone from a dirt track hosting state-level races to home of the Australian Grand Prix and the ATCC season finale.

There was also a regular endurance event, often run to 300km as part of the Australian Endurance Championship/Manufacturers' Championship.

But it's the ATCC decisions that Oran Park is best remembered for. There was the title-deciding tangle between Jim Richards and Glenn Seton in 1987, the Sierra versus Skyline battle of 1990, the all-Dick Johnson Racing battle of 1989 and all-Nissan Skyline battle of 1992, Seton versus John Bowe versus Peter Brock in 1995, Seton versus Bowe versus Russell Ingall in 1997,

ABOVE: Oran Park Town is home to more than 25,000 residents and 7000 homes.
BELOW LEFT: 'Grandstand Park' in Oran Park Town remembers Oran Park Raceway, with the track map at the heart of the park keeping the memory of the circuit alive.



an all-Commodore battle between Craig Lowndes and Ingall in 1998 and Jamie Whincup's first title success in 2008.

The latter was the final round held at Oran Park. It marked the end of an era in more ways than one; the final full-time drive for Mark Skaife, the coronation of Whincup and the farewell to Oran Park.

Since the closure of the circuit, Sydney events have struggled to attract Oran Park-like crowds. The circuit's elevation and camber changes made for great racing, while banks of spectators gathered on the outside of the final turn at one of the great natural amphitheatres in Australian motorsport that hasn't been replicated elsewhere.

The NSW government rezoned the land for residential purposes in 2004 and the circuit hosted its final track days and club-level meetings in 2010.

Ten years since its final Supercars round, Sydney is without a round on the schedule for 2019. Nothing can replace what was lost at Oran Park. **X**



RIGHT: Oran Park Town's 'Walk of Fame' celebrates the greats who raced and won at the circuit.

BELOW: A huge crowd was on hand for the final Supercars round at Oran Park in 2008.



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HOLDEN LH TORANA L34

ICONIC
CARS

The Torana had already taken the fight to V8-powered Falcons in the early days of Group C before it received a boost in power with the LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34.

Ford ruled Australian touring cars in 1973. Allan Moffat had won the Australian Touring Car Championship in the Falcon GTHO Phase III. He upgraded to XA Falcon GT Hardtop at Bathurst and duly won the first Great Race run to 1000 kilometres.

Holden needed a response. And, after

being the David to Ford's Goliath with the six-cylinder LJ Torana GTR XU-1 in recent seasons, it joined Ford in racing a V8 with the LH Torana SL/R 5000.

The LH Torana SL/R 5000 road car was released in March 1974 and looked quite different to its predecessor, with its longer, wider and heavier body reflecting the beefed-up engine.

The race-going version debuted in April 1974 and was raced by Peter Brock in the second half of that season, helping him to secure the drivers' title.

The upgraded L34 option would debut at Bathurst in 1974. The main change came under the bonnet with a Repco-developed engine upgrade with an eye to success on the racetrack. Bolted-on wheel arches



The 1975 Bathurst-winning LH Torana SL/R 5000 L34.



The V8-powered L34 paved the way for the LX A9X.

added to the aggressive look of the racer.

But one of the wettest Bathursts in history in 1974 wasn't the ideal setting for the L34's first crack at Mount Panorama. Ford prevailed again, though the Blue Oval's lack of support for its team and drivers gave the Holden an advantage heading into 1975.

Brock, though, had split with the Holden Dealer Team, moving to the privateer Gown-Hindhaugh team. Colin Bond would lead the factory team, while Allan Grice and Bob Morris would also race L34s, with Ford hero Moffat running a limited campaign in his Falcon.

A rule change that allowed for an increase in the maximum oil-sump capacity assisted the Torana in terms of reliability, helping the L34 dominate the season.

Bond won the title by a comfortable margin, winning the season opener at Symmons Plains Raceway and the final two rounds at Adelaide and Lakeside. Grice and Morris took two wins apiece to complete the clean sweep of races in 1975.

Brock finished the championship in seventh but made amends in the endurance events with victory at Phillip Island, Sandown and Bathurst, the latter his

only win in the Great Race away from the Holden Dealer Team.

Ford returned as a supporter of Moffat in 1976 and won the title, setting up the foundations for the famed one-two formation finish they would achieve at Bathurst in 1977. Bond was once again best of the L34 runners with second place in the championship.

But the L34 was again on top in the endurance events with wins at Phillip Island and Sandown for Bond and Brock respectively and a second consecutive Bathurst success for a privateer entry, this time the entry of Morris and John Fitzpatrick surviving a leaking gearbox oil seal in the latter stages of the race for a popular win.

It was symbolic of the L34's history: claiming success but with unreliability an occasional concern.

The L34 was phased out during 1977 by the LX A9X, which went onto dominate Bathurst and the championship as the curtain call for the Torana. And though the LX A9X is arguably the best-remembered Torana, the L34 set the foundations for its success. **X**

TORANA L34 SUCCESSES

1974

Phillip Island 500: Colin Bond

1975

Australian Touring Car Championship: Colin Bond

1975

Sandown 250: Peter Brock

1975

Phillip Island 500: Peter Brock

1975

Bathurst 1000: Peter Brock/Brian Sampson

1976

Sandown 400: Peter Brock

1976

Phillip Island 500: Colin Bond

1976

Bathurst 1000: Bob Morris/John Fitzpatrick

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WORDS Adrian Musolino IMAGES James Baker, Autopics.com.au

1999

THE YEAR THAT WAS

The 1999 season saw the final implementation of changes that created modern-day Supercars, from the inclusion of the endurance events into the championship and the move to a control tyre to the debut of the Adelaide 500.

Three critical developments in the 1990s set Australian touring cars down the path to what we now know as Supercars. There was the implementation of the V8-only regulations from 1993, the rebranding from the Australian Touring Car Championship (ATCC) to V8 Supercars in 1997 and, finally, the reworking of the schedule in 1999.

Not only did the Bathurst 1000 become part of the ATCC/Supercars championship for the first time but there was the debut of the Adelaide 500, which would establish a template that the category could use for marquee street-circuit events across Australia and New Zealand.

The historic season started at Eastern Creek with the paddock chat dominated by talk of tyres. Bridgestone had been awarded

the contract to provide the control tyre in a move away from the tyre war of recent V8 seasons.

It was a logical move for a category that had put such a heavy emphasis on achieving parity between the Holden Commodore and Ford Falcon, with variance in tyre performance often masking the form of the teams, drivers and cars.

The Holden Racing Team entered the season as the team to beat following Craig Lowndes' triumphant return from racing in Europe to winning his second title in 1998. Holden entries had filled the top-four places that year with the debut of the VT in the final rounds against the EL Falcon.

Ford teams upgraded to the AU for 1999 and with the new-look Falcon was a radical departure from recent efforts from the Blue Oval. And the arrival of the new car

coincided with significant changes amongst its teams: Glenn Seton Racing receiving backing from Ford to become the unofficial factory team, John Bowe's departure from Dick Johnson Racing for the new-look Caterpillar Racing and Paul Radisich replacing Bowe in the #18.

But it would be a troubled season for the new Falcon. Teething problems with bodywork and setup left the Ford teams playing second fiddle.

By the end of the season the AU had won just one round in the hands of Stone Brothers Racing's Jason Bright at Hidden Valley Raceway in Darwin.

There were glimpses of what could have been from the AU, which had one-lap speed but struggled in the races, most notably when Bright scored pole position for the first Adelaide 500 and when Mark Larkham



The field charges into Turn One at Hidden Valley Raceway.



Lowndes won the first Adelaide 500 from the back of the grid.

put his own Falcon entry on pole for the season-ending Bathurst 1000.

Holden had an advantage having raced the VT in the final rounds of 1998, carrying that experience and momentum into the following season with a strong cast behind Lowndes: Perkins Engineering's Russell Ingall following his hot form of the previous two seasons, the rejuvenated Gibson Motorsport with Steven Richards and Greg Murphy, the rising threat of Garry Rogers Motorsport's Garth Tander and Jason Bargwanna, and Mark Skaife alongside Lowndes at the Holden Racing Team.

It was Skaife who won his first round for the factory Holden team at Eastern Creek in a dominant display from the championship favourites. He and Lowndes finished in first and second in two of three races and swept the round.

The second round marked the debut of the Adelaide 500, a new round on a slightly shortened version of the city-based street circuit that hosted the Australian Grand Prix from 1985 to 1995.

Big crowds proved that Supercars could be the headline act, having supported the event with non-championship races during the grand prix days, and they witnessed a classic race.

Lowndes, after winning the first race, was sent to the back of the grid for the second following a tangle with a backmarker but fought back and took the round win.

Lowndes continued winning at Barbagallo Raceway, keeping a remarkable undefeated run at the circuit across three years, then Skaife fought back with the round win

at Phillip Island to give the Holden Racing Team 11 straight race wins across the opening four rounds.

Bright broke through for Ford at Hidden Valley Raceway, the second round held at the circuit outside of Darwin, after track conditions and tangles for the leading Holden entrants opened the door for a first round win for the AU.

The Holden Racing Team recovered with a round win for Skaife at Sandown, while Tander won at the first round held at the new Queensland Raceway circuit to signal the rise of a new Holden threat.

Then it was onto Calder Park, where the championship appeared to come unstuck for Lowndes. At the start of the second race

of the weekend he was sent into a series of frightening rollovers, coming to a stop of his roof on an embankment. Other drivers raced to his aid and Lowndes avoided major injury, though a knee injury forced him to miss the following round at Symmons Plains.

Skaife closed up with round wins at Calder Park and Symmons Plains, then Lowndes returned for Winton, where Garry Rogers Motorsport's Jason Bargwanna took the round win.

Skaife gained further ground with victory at the final sprint round at Oran Park, before the unknown of the endurance events thrown into the championship battle. The Holden Racing Team inevitably kept its championship contenders in their own cars, while the likes of Perkins Engineering, Gibson Motorsport and others paired up their main drivers.

The inaugural Queensland 500, which had replaced the Sandown 500, was the second round of the season at Queensland Raceway and victory went to Perkins Engineering's Ingall and Larry Perkins. Lowndes scored valuable points in third and Skaife counted the cost of a tangle with Bright down in 22nd.

With the points system heavily weighted to the endurance races, five drivers could still win the title at Bathurst: Lowndes, Seton, Skaife, Ingall and Tander.

Debate would rage over whether Bathurst should be included in the championship, with critics claiming that a Mount Panorama season finale would lead to the title winner being overshadowed, or vice versa.



Lowndes' rollover at Calder Park Raceway.



It looked as though the Dick Johnson Racing entry of Radisich and Steve Ellery would take a surprise win for the AU until a tangle with a backmarker led to mechanical dramas that left Radisich on the side of the road entering the final stint of the race.

It would have been a fairytale win for the team in Dick Johnson's final full-time season, with the owner/driver and son Steve Johnson finishing best of the Fords in fourth.

The win went to the Gibson Motorsport entry of Murphy and Richards, a historic result with Richards becoming the first driver to win Bathurst in a Ford and Holden, in consecutive years, no less.

Lowndes wrapped up the title with second place, fittingly joined on the podium by Skaife, who took third. A dominant season for Holden had ended with a podium sweep for the VT, completing a top-three finish in the championship.

Murphy, Richards and Lowndes shared the podium and the spotlight as Bathurst and championship winners, though the arguments over whether the championship should end at Bathurst, let alone be included in it, would continue on.

But the 1999 season was deemed a success. The Adelaide 500 would lead to similar events on the Gold Coast, Canberra, Townsville, Sydney, Hamilton and Newcastle, with varying success depending on the location.

Also, the endurance events remain in the championship to this day. And though the Holden Racing Team dominated, control tyres had levelled the playing field. **X**

1999 ROUND WINNERS

EASTERN CREEK

Mark Skaife, Holden VT Commodore

ADELAIDE

Craig Lowndes, Holden VT Commodore

BARBAGALLO

Craig Lowndes, Holden VT Commodore

PHILLIP ISLAND

Mark Skaife, Holden VT Commodore

HIDDEN VALLEY

Jason Bright, Ford AU Falcon

SANDOWN

Mark Skaife, Holden VT Commodore

QUEENSLAND RACEWAY

Garth Tander, Holden VS Commodore

CALDER PARK

Mark Skaife, Holden VT Commodore

SYMMONS PLAINS

Mark Skaife, Holden VT Commodore

WINTON

Jason Bargwanna, Holden VT Commodore

ORAN PARK

Mark Skaife, Holden VT Commodore

QUEENSLAND 500

Russell Ingall/Larry Perkins, Holden VT Commodore

BATHURST 1000

Greg Murphy/Steven Richards, Holden VT Commodore



Murphy and Richards celebrate victory in the Bathurst 1000.

CHAMPIONSHIP TOP 10

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Craig Lowndes | Holden VS/VT Commodore |
| 2 | Russell Ingall | Holden VT Commodore |
| 3 | Mark Skaife | Holden VT Commodore |
| 4 | Glenn Seton | Ford AU Falcon |
| 5 | Garth Tander | Holden VS/VT Commodore |
| 6 | Greg Murphy | Holden VT Commodore |
| 7 | Steven Richards | Holden VT Commodore |
| 8 | Jason Bright | Ford AU Falcon |
| 9 | Larry Perkins | Holden VT Commodore |
| 10 | Dick Johnson | Ford AU Falcon |

BATHURST 1000 TOP 10

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Greg Murphy/Steven Richards | Holden VT Commodore |
| 2 | Craig Lowndes/Carm McConville | Holden VT Commodore |
| 3 | Mark Skaife/Paul Morris | Holden VT Commodore |
| 4 | Dick Johnson/Steven Johnson | Ford AU Falcon |
| 5 | Glenn Seton/Neil Compton | Ford AU Falcon |
| 6 | Todd Kelly/Mark Noske | Holden VT Commodore |
| 7 | Russell Ingall/Larry Perkins | Holden VT Commodore |
| 8 | Paul West/Greg Crick | Ford AU Falcon |
| 9 | Greg Ritter/Steve Owen | Holden VT Commodore |
| 10 | Geoff Brabham/Neal Bates | Ford AU Falcon |



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INTERVIEW BY MARK FOGARTY

THE

FALCONER

DICK JOHNSON

Ford's most successful, enduring and popular figure in racing for nearly 40 years, Dick Johnson is synonymous with the Falcon. Here he takes a walk down memory lane to pay tribute to the iconic Aussie car that helped make him one of the all-time greats

IMAGES Glenis Lindley, DJR Team Penske. Autotpics.com.au, James Baker

No one has raced more Fords for longer than Dick Johnson. Since 1977 Johnson has been the Blue Oval's standard-bearer on the track, driving Fords for more than two decades and still running them today.

As a minority co-owner of DJR Team Penske, the 73-year-old Ford folk hero remains the best-known face in Australian motorsport. More recognised than Craig Lowndes, Daniel Ricciardo, Mark Webber, Alan Jones and even fellow Ford treasure Allan Moffat.

And when it comes to Falconry on the track, Johnson is the master of the bird of prey. He is to Ford Falcons what the late Peter Brock is to Holdens. Brock versus Moffat popularised the Red versus Blue rivalry, but Brock versus Johnson raised it to a new level.

Johnson, of course, shot to overnight fame by hitting a rock while leading the 1980 Bathurst 1000 in his Tru-Blu XD Falcon. Out of despair came salvation, with a TV fundraising campaign – matched dollar-for-dollar by Ford – securing his future.

Of Johnson's five championship wins, the first three were won in Falcons and, of his three Bathurst 1000 triumphs, two were in the Aussie iron as well. In between his Falcon flights the laconic Queenslander raced Mustangs – unsuccessfully – and Sierra Cosworths – very successfully – in the Group A era, when the international rules didn't allow a then non-existent local V8 Ford.

Since 1993 Dick Johnson Racing has remained faithful to Falcon, with the alliance continuing through American mogul Roger Penske's takeover to form DJR Team Penske (DJRTP) in 2015.

DJRTP last year joined Triple Eight Race Engineering as one of the powerhouses of Supercars and will now replace the ageing Falcon with a DJRTP-developed Mustang Supercar in 2019

The return of the Mustang brings the sport full circle, harking back to the dawn of V8 tin-top racing's popularity in the mid-1960s. Ford's two-door coupe battled with Chevrolet Camaros and homegrown Holden Monaros into the early '70s.

Johnson is the figurehead of the long Falcon racing era that is ending, but even he is more enthused about Ford Australia's comeback with the Mustang, Australia's – and the world's – hottest selling 'sports car'.

You're the driver and team owner most synonymous with the Falcon, so it's truly the end of an era. Your thoughts?

Well, it was something that was inevitable once the vehicle itself was no longer produced. The name's disappeared, but it's certainly served us very well in motorsport and I think it's been a very good brand for Ford. It's well-known and it still has a huge following. I've always been a very loyal person. I tried to be loyal to Holden once, but that didn't work, so when the opportunity came to change to Ford I grabbed it with both hands.

Mark Fogarty is an award-winning motorsport writer.



You helped make the Falcon such an iconic car but equally it helped make you, didn't it?

Oh, absolutely. Without the series of events that I went through, I probably never would've had a career like I've had. We stuck with Falcon the whole way because we knew the car pretty well and, as it turns out, it rewarded us. And there was quite a difference, really, between the Fords and the Holdens. They were different from the point of view that they had different strengths and weaknesses, and I think that's what the punters really enjoyed and what made it more exciting.

That was especially so in what many would regard as the golden era of Group C, when it was a five-litre Commodore against a 5.8-litre Falcon.

Yeah, but the Falcon was a lot heavier and a lot bigger, and not as nimble. Even further back, the Torana XU-1s were a very nimble little car when they were up against the GTHO Falcons. It was always a very interesting era and it depended on which track you went to as to which one dominated.

As you say, you started racing Holdens but you switched to Fords and you've stuck with them ever since. Why have you stayed with Fords for so long?

Well, like I said, I've always been a very loyal person, but I've also stuck with Ford because we had all the stuff that worked with them. Remember, we were a privateer team, as much as might think we were a factory team. But that was never the case. I had to pay my own bills and all the infrastructure I had centred on the Ford. And to be quite honest, I thought I had a much better chance of winning in the Falcon because it was a bit more powerful and it was reliable.

It was the Tru-Blu XD that made you famous but your association with the Falcon started with the XB through Brisbane Ford dealer Bryan Byrt. That was the trigger for you to switch to Ford, wasn't it?

Yes, it was because I was in a situation where I was paying all my own bills and funding my own motorsport. Having said that, the opportunity came along where I actually drove a Holden Dealer Team XU-1 at Surfers Paradise International Raceway once and I also drove an XU-1 for Zupps (big Brisbane Holden dealer) for a few years, but then Zupps decided they didn't want to continue in racing.

So there I was, left with nowhere to go and back to funding my own motorsport. Luckily, Bryan Byrt came to me and asked me if I'd like to drive his car. Right about then it could've been a Skoda and I would've been in there because someone else was paying the bills! Seriously, though, it was a good, competitive car (XB Falcon Hardtop).

Sure, it took a while to get my head around things and get the preparation of the thing right. We were up against the factory then, too, where Moffat had the factory cars. But we held our own in certain places and led a couple of championship races, only to have some minor failures very close to the end, which was disappointing. Obviously, the wins were to come later.



And that program sowed the seeds for the XD.

Absolutely. When Bryan Byrt unfortunately passed away just after Bathurst in 1978, the business got taken over and sold. The guy who bought it, John Harris, continued backing the team in '79, but the writing was on the wall and I offered to buy all the bits and pieces, which we could transfer into an XD body.

I also asked Harris to supply me with an XD – which he did, an ex-highway patrol car, would you believe? – and that was the deal that started Dick Johnson Racing.

We built the XD race car out of the patrol car and the bits from the XC two-door. I gave him back the XC with all the 351 V8 running gear out of the XD cop car. He sold it as a road car. I think it was found in recent years and rebuilt into the race car again. That's how Dick Johnson Racing started and we did it all in the garage from our home.

'The Rock' incident at Bathurst in 1980. Absolute heartbreak, but it actually made your career.

It was the best thing that happened. At the time, it was the worst thing, but it turned out to be the best thing.

ABOVE: Johnson in the XD Falcon at Amaroo Park Raceway in 1982.





ABOVE: Johnson with his Group A Mustang in 1985.

We'd put an awful lot on the line to get to there and it seemed like it was going to be the end, but because of one of the callers to Channel Seven (who launched a fundraising appeal), what happened saved us.

Seven's switchboard was absolutely jam-packed with people ringing in to donate money to get us back on track and one of the callers was Edsel B Ford II (Ford Motor Company heir and then assistant managing director of Ford Australia).

Edsel said that for every dollar donated he would match it one-for-one – and he did.

He may have thought it was only going to be four or five grand, but 78 grand later, he'd given us a pretty good budget to do the full season the following year, which I needed really bad. In a sense, that put an awful lot of pressure on me.

I'm not one to let people down, so it made me, not try harder, but it made it more important for me to get out there and make sure I did the best job for all the people who supported us.

Was \$78,000 the total or what Edsel had to match?
That's what he had to put in.

So it was \$156,000 all up? That would have bought you a nice new car.

Too right. That was a lot of money in 1980. But we never really did it easy because there was only the two of us. It was (Dick's brother) Roy and I. We were building the car together and I was building the engines and gearboxes. Roy and I used to drive the truck everywhere and we'd live in the truck. We didn't have the budget to stay in motels. There were some interesting times, I'll tell ya.

Ford tipped in on that occasion and provided varying levels of support over the years, but DJR has never actually had full factory backing, has it?

Not 100 per cent. They obviously got to a point, in the latter years, where they were putting in pretty good money to support our team. But back in '81, after the rock thing, it got me into Ford through Motorcraft (parts and accessories division).

Doug Jacobi headed up Motorcraft and he was absolutely fantastic. He did everything he could to support what we were doing, sort of through the back door. And that led to bigger things later on when Howard Marsden returned in the mid-to-late '90s when Ford Australia got more involved again. We had a meeting with Jac Nasser (then boss at Broadmeadows) and Peter Gilitzer (then marketing chief).

As you'll remember, Gilitzer was a huge supporter of motorsport and Nasser saw the commercial benefits for the Falcon being involved in racing. It was really in '93, after the Sierras when we went back to V8 Falcons, that we started getting some serious support. Then under Marsden, who came from Tickford, the main Ford teams all got significant backing. But we were never the official factory team like Ford Performance Racing.

You mentioned 1993, which was the return of the Falcons and the start of the V8 era. As good as the Sierra Cosworths were, it must have been great to be back in a V8 Falcon?

It really was. And that was a result of the team owners getting together as a group and starting TEGA (which still exists as a legal entity to hold the teams' shareholding in Supercars). That grew to the point where, along with trying to work with CAMS, we could control our own destiny. And that was a real fight, I can tell you.

It was almost wholly funded by Fred Gibson and myself, and the one person that changed TEGA dramatically when he came to work for me was Wayne Cattach. He virtually masterminded the whole operation of converting TEGA into what we see today. It was the foundation of what became Supercars.

We were just a bunch of owner/drivers that really wanted to see our future secured. Motorsport was changing from being a part-time thing into a full-time occupation and that was pretty significant for me because after about 1985 or 1986, I didn't have another means of support. When he came in and saw how this thing was being run by a bunch of team owners he said, 'Look, we

really have to dismantle this to rebuild it.' He brought in the idea of franchises for each of the teams and put some structure around it.

Wayne did a magnificent job in laying down the rules and then, after I finished driving full-time at the end of 1999, he joined V8 Supercars as its chief executive officer. But let's go back a step. In '96 Tony Cochrane and James Erskine came along and pitched the team owners on taking over the running of touring-car racing and we knew we needed something like that to take us to the next level.

Anyway, in the early '90s, Group A was dying. Our TV ratings were going down, our attendances were going down, so we sat down as this group as asked, 'What are we going to do to turn this around?' And the answer was what had already worked, which was the Ford and Holden V8s. So that's how that was born, and then Cochrane came along and they took it to the next level again. It's what we still have today, which is Ford versus Holden.

We're saying goodbye to the Falcon, but the exciting replacement is the Mustang. Of course, you've been there once before with the Group A Mustang in 1985/86. It's a bit like Groundhog Day. Very different, though, this time. Just explain why you had to switch to the Mustang in '85.

Well, when Group C finished after CAMS decided to go to this worldwide Group A category, there wasn't a Falcon that was suitable to go racing (the V8 road-going model had been dropped in 1982).

Our priority was to remain as competitive as possible because at that point we knew the Sierra was coming in a couple of years. It was too soon to go down the road of the Merkur XR4 Turbo, which they were already running in Europe (as a forerunner to the Sierra RS Cosworth), and it was something totally different to what I was used to. It had computerised electronic engine management, whereas I was just a carburettor and distributor guy – the old Model T Ford stuff. I needed a bit of time to find the right people and get my head around what was coming.

So the Ford that fitted the bill was the Mustang, which Zakspeed had been running in Europe with engines built by Jack Roush. Ross Palmer (of Palmer Tube Mills, DJR's main sponsor) and I went over to Germany to Zakspeed and asked them if they wanted to sell the two cars they had, which they did.

One of them had never been raced and the other one had been raced a couple of times. So we bought the two cars and brought them back to race here.

To be fair, it was a struggle with them, wasn't it?

It was. It was difficult, but we could've done a much better job if we had've been able to get into the factory to give us what was there and available, and get it homologated.

Unfortunately, Ford was never involved because the Americans weren't interested in Group A. It meant nothing to them and was, really, unique to Australia that the Mustang was going to race in Group A.



They didn't see any benefit in it. We made the most of what we had and it filled the gap we needed to fill until the Sierra.

ABOVE: The Group A version of the Mustang (top) and the SuperCar Mustang that debuts in 2019.

So the new Mustang next year. How much are you looking forward to that?

Well, the Falcon is past it's use-by date. Not only has it been out of production for a couple of years, but technically and physically the FG X Falcon racer is at the end of its life.

The ZB Commodore was a huge step forward and the Mustang will enable us to catch up. You're only talking about very small gains, but in such a tightly controlled category little things make a big difference. It's crucial to have everything spot-on.

It'll be popular with the fans because the Mustang is sold here in right-hand-drive and it's now Ford's signature model in Australia. It's what those people out there want to see. And it's great to have Ford Australia involved in racing again.

I think they're really excited about it, too. I don't think they expected the reaction they got from the public when they announced they were coming back to Supercars with the Mustang. ✘

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COMMODORE TO CAMARO

Will we see the Camaro take on the Mustang in Supercars? Bruce Newton examines the possibility with Walkinshaw Andretti United.

If you've got your heart set on seeing in a new decade of Supercars racing in 2020 with the Chevrolet Camaro part of the action, be prepared to be disappointed. For all the positive talk, the Bathurst promotion and the obvious support of racing fans on social media, there are a series of significant hurdles to be overcome before serious work on a Supercars Camaro gets underway, let alone an actual racer fires up in anger.

Those hurdles stretch from the technical and the political to the financial and even, perhaps, the malicious. And they are substantial.

WHY CAMARO?

So why are we even talking about Camaro in the first place? You can trace that back to Holden's decision to end local manufacturing and kill off the locally built

Holden Commodore V8 that formed the basis of its touring-car attack for nearly 40 years.

Subsequently, but intrinsically related, was Holden's decision to remove factory Holden Racing Team status from Walkinshaw Racing and hand it over to Triple Eight Race Engineering in 2017.

Along with that gig, Triple Eight was handed the sole right to develop the new-generation imported Commodore ZB (nee Opel Insignia) for Supercars racing. It also controls the sale of replacement body parts for the new car.

What that means is Walkinshaw Racing – in 2017 transformed into Walkinshaw Andretti United (WAU) with the buy-in from Michael Andretti and Zak Brown – has gone from a factory outfit to just another customer, paying to race a car over which it has had no fundamental development control.

And just as bad if not worse, WAU is no longer directly promoting cars being modified by Holden Special Vehicles (HSV), the Holden-sanctioned company started





ABOVE: The race-converted Camaro road car at the 2018 Supercheap Auto Bathurst 1000.

by the late Tom Walkinshaw that has prospered for 30 years on the back of the locally built Commodore V8.

The ties between HRT and HSV were weld-tight, a racing team and sports-sedan tuner working out of the same premises cross-pollinating, cross-promoting and building on each other's success.

But with the closure of Holden's Elizabeth plant, HSV embarked on a new strategy, rejecting the imported Commodore as a target for its tuning abilities, instead modifying and uprating the Holden Colorado one-tonne utility and converting to right-hand-drive General Motors products sourced out of the USA that Holden couldn't convince its parent to supply RHD ex-factory.

The first of them was the Silverado full-size truck and the second, launched in October, was a batch of 550 2018 V8 2SS specification Chevrolet Camaros. This was the car HSV fans had been baying for ever since Holden had announced plans to kill off the local V8 Commodore and therefore extinguish HSV models such as the ClubSport, Senator and legendary GTS.

As soon as the rumours of HSV's plans for Camaro began to solidify, the connection with the development of a racing version was made.

After all, the current Gen2 technical regulations are designed to allow body styles other than four-door sedans into Supercars. This change was driven by the need to make the championship more attractive to more brands as local manufacturing by long-term combatants Holden and Ford, as well as Toyota, wound down.

The new rules allow Holden to race a five-door (the new Commodore is a hatchback) and have also lured

Ford back to Supercars with the Mustang in 2019. It will be the first two-door coupe to enter the championship, replacing the dated Falcon FG X sedan that went out of production in 2016. It will also act as a cornerstone of promotion for the Ford Performance sub-brand locally.

The arrival of the Mustang has created a tidal wave of interest and bolstered the Ford faithful. The prospect of a Mustang versus Camaro 'pony car' shootout has elevated that hype to another level.

Some of us remember there was a time in the 1960s and early 1970s when Ian Geoghegan and Allan Moffat starred in Mustangs while Bob Jane and Norm Beechey raced Camaros (the latter only briefly). More recently there's been Kevin Bartlett's Group C Camaro and Dick Johnson's Group A Mustang.

MARKETING APPEAL

Clearly, the ruling clique at Walkinshaw Park in the Melbourne suburb of Clayton has taken notice of all this attention. The promotional opportunities a Camaro Supercar can provide for HSV are obvious. It also unthethers WAU from Triple Eight's yoke.

The decision to show off one of its first locally converted right-hand-drive Camaros in WAU colours at Bathurst wasn't only sticky paper to draw fans to merchandise displays, it was an attempt to both gauge and stir interest in a Camaro Supercar.

"We'd view it [Camaro] from an HSV perspective as a marketing tool for the product that we make," was how HSV managing director Tim Jackson put it earlier this year. "You can see the reaction from the public, 'Oh yeah



it's going to be Mustang versus Camaro shootout-type scenario'.

"If it [Camaro] costs X [to develop] you need to be comfortable there is enough of a marketing return and we might say, 'Yes there is.'"

"If there is enough profile to generate enough excitement around the product and a little bit of that rivalry, we might say that is a worthwhile marketing investment, as opposed to purely, 'We have spent this, we need to get this back from whatever parts we happen to sell on the car.'"

That dollar reference is important. Developing a racing version of the Camaro is a multi-million dollar project. The Walkinshaw Group has the engineering and design resources to attempt it but finances are a challenge. Even if some of the costs is written off as marketing expenditure, at least some of the cost would have to be ameliorated by selling it to other teams.

"I'd imagine if you were the only team running it wouldn't make financial viability, you would need other teams willing to run it," says Jackson.

Finding other Supercars teams interested in Camaro would probably rank as the least challenging of the issues. Repeatedly the championship produces bedfellows from bitter enemies bonded together by necessity.

Jackson is officially the managing director of HSV, which is an independent structure within the Walkinshaw empire. But his reach stretches into all parts of the organisation.

Despite his background as a world-class sprinter who represented Australia at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, he is cautious in his public statements and in charting the company's course.

He is the yin to company chairman Ryan Walkinshaw's impetuous yang. The latter is passionate about the racing business, hyper-competitive and aggressive.

He talks up the Camaro program's prospects while Jackson constantly takes a less bullish line.

HEAD SPACE

One message they do coalesce on is the belief the control Gen2 chassis is going to have to be modified so a reasonable facsimile of the Camaro body can be moulded over it.

"In order to make it fit the [Gen2] roll cage it looks more like an Aussie Racing Car," Jackson said. "I am certainly not interested in it if it looks like that."

"It's skinny and tall... it would look a bit weird."

The offending item is the kink in the roll hoop above the driver's head. It was specifically introduced to accommodate taller drivers. Call it the Garth Tander rule if you like. In fact, Tander was one of the test pilots for the modification back in 2012 when he was a HRT driver.

The practical problem with straightening the kink is that the helmets of taller drivers will make contact with the roll-bar tubing when the car hits bumps and kerbs. Dropping the seat deeper in the cockpit to compensate isn't really viable, both for engineering and driver visibility reasons.

But the Walkinshaw message is plain. The simulation work done by HSV's engineers – not WAU staff, Jackson reveals – says the problem cannot be overcome without a chassis modification, which requires a rule change.

"In order to be comfortable to put it together in a way that reflects what Camaro is about we would need a rule change to address the roll cage," confirms Jackson.

At this point rock meets hard place. A rule change would have to be ratified by the Supercars Commission, which includes pitlane heavy hitters such as Brad Jones (also a board member), Todd Kelly (Kelly Racing), Tim Edwards (Tickford Racing) and Ryan Story, the boss of DJR Team Penske (DJRTP), the team which is doing much of the Mustang development.



ABOVE: Previous Camaro racers, the Bob Jane Chevrolet Camaro ZL-1 (top) and Kevin Bartlett's Camaro Z28.

And these guys show no interest in giving the Camaro technical relief.

For a start, they've all had to shape and mould the cars they race onto the standard chassis without a concession, including the Mustang that comes next year.

"When we started work on the Mustang we also wanted the roll hoop lowered and when that was rejected we just worked our arse off and figured out how to work around it," Edwards says.

A fundamental concern for teams running rival cars is that lowering the height of the Camaro's roll cage would deliver it a centre of gravity advantage.

"Whether it's a perceived or real advantage everyone will then be forced to build new cars to lower the cage to lower the centre-of-gravity," says Edwards, speaking in his Tickford rather than commission role.

"We shouldn't be forcing 26 cars to reshell to run lower cages."

Edwards' point alludes to a concern that some teams have; that HSV and WAU have yet to truly apply engineering rigour to the challenge of making the Camaro fit.

"There's no doubt in my mind we could see a Camaro racing as well [without a rule change]," declares Story. In fact, it's understood DJRTP has even offered HSV data from the Mustang project to help that process.

Clearly, there is a fear that more model-specific modifications simply lead further down the rabbit hole. Those around in the days of Group C will remember the mess constant rule evolutions got the category into.

There is a current precedent here of course: the

concession handed to the ZB Commodore to run more carbon-fibre panels than its predecessor was allowed. That forced Ford teams and Kelly Racing into a rushed and expensive retro-fit.

Supercars boss Sean Seamer certainly seems downbeat about the Camaro's prospects.

"No, there's not going to be any concessions made," he said when quizzed about the Camaro's technical issue.

"We have the Mustang and we've worked through that with Ford. We will continue to look at ways to support Walkinshaw bringing the Camaro in should they wish to, but those conversations haven't happened at Commission level yet."

And what happens if the Supercars Commission does have that conversation?

"I think it's very unlikely that the commission would agree to make a concession for one vehicle when the concession hasn't been made for the one that's entering [Mustang]," said Seamer.

Jackson clearly isn't convinced that obstacle is insurmountable. While there have already been informal discussions with Supercars, the suggestion is more pressure can be applied. After all, the championship will be just Commodore versus Mustang from 2020 because the Nissan Altima drops out at the end of 2019.

"At some point we will probably ask the question of Supercars how interested they are in having a Camaro in the Supercar field," says Jackson.

HOLDEN ON

You think all that's complicated? Now consider Holden's stance and HSV's relationship with it.

Sure, Holden isn't the big-bucks investor in Supercars it once was, but it's still in there spending and there are signs under the new regime of former Toyota Australia boss Dave Buttner and his marketing chief Kristian Aquilina that its sometimes-shaky commitment is firming.

Having two GM products on the Supercars grid racing each other isn't necessarily something Holden and its US parent would endorse. In his most recent comments Aquilina did seem to be leaning away from Camaro.

"I don't mean to be a killjoy but it (Camaro) is a little bit of a distraction from what we are here and in the market to do," he said.

"Fact of the matter is, resources aren't aplenty like they used to be. We have to narrow our focus on what we concentrate on and we've decided what we're concentrating on... is Commodore, making ZB an absolute success.

"I can understand why fans are excited (about the Camaro), but it's our job to get as many people as possible excited about the Holdens that we're selling rather than Chevys."

If that attitude solidifies into policy then there's no doubt the Camaro Supercars plan would be dropped like a hot rock. That's because HSV's commercial deal with GM and Holden is far more important to it than a race program it now co-owns.

The supply of Silverado, Colorado and Camaro (and other models in the future) must be guaranteed above all else.

"I think that is something that needs some fairly reasonable discussion," concedes Jackson.

"As Holden and HSV we have spent a lot of time working together, so it might seem a bit weird actually going and competing against each other on the track.

"The spectator may not worry about it too much but the industry may find it interesting."

Intriguingly, Triple Eight boss Roland Dane says there's no way GM and Holden will sign up for the Camaro program: "I know it won't happen," he insists.

Dane obviously has skin in this game as Holden's current factory representative and he is no friend of Walkinshaw. So he's unlikely to talk the project up, but he is well-connected and understands the intersection between industry and racing better than most.

"The reality is it's a Chevrolet product, so you'd have to get permission from Chevrolet but they don't sell it themselves here, it's sold by HSV," says Dane.

"So where's the motivation in anyone allowing it to happen? I don't understand it. If the product was here as a full-blown GM product on sale in Australia etcetera, through GM then I can understand it might make sense.

"But at the moment it's one batch of 550 cars which are the old model, so it doesn't stack up at the moment. I'm not saying it won't at some point in the future, but right now it doesn't stack up."

GEN3?

All that leaves the Camaro where? Even now there is quiet pessimism at Clayton that the Camaro will be racing in 2020.

That might then make it more sensible to wait for the new 'Gen3' rules that are currently under development by Supercars and scheduled for a 2022 introduction.

"THE REALITY IS IT'S A CHEVROLET PRODUCT, SO YOU'D HAVE TO GET PERMISSION FROM CHEVROLET BUT THEY DON'T SELL IT THEMSELVES HERE, IT'S SOLD BY HSV..."

That could be the technical break point that presents the best opportunity for HSV to get the Camaro into racing.

By then Commodore may also no longer be Holden's racing weapon of choice, remembering sales are slipping and supply from Opel (now owned by the French PSA group and not GM) may be drying up.

All that boosts a potential HSV/WAU program. But what if GM bites the bullet and commits to a right-hand-drive program for the Camaro ex-factory to be sold here by Holden rather than HSV?

Could Camaro then become the official Holden Supercar entry even if it is badged with a Chevrolet bowtie? Who then would get the job of developing and racing it for the factory?

There are all sorts of permutations, twists and turns to consider there. And then there's one more challenge for the Clayton crew if it does somehow get the Camaro on-track: winning. Ultimately, that's the point of all this.

"We can talk about rules and regulations and wanting to race, but there needs to be an extraordinarily strong plan behind all that," admits Jackson.

"I am sure GM wouldn't be happy if we go racing and spend our time coming second, third, fourth or fifth or something worse." ✕



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Fairytale FAREWELL

Craig Lowndes bowed out as a full-time driver in Supercars with a seventh Bathurst win and the PIRTEK Enduro Cup title, a fitting reward in the final outing for the Lowndes/Steven Richards pairing. We caught up with them to reflect on their run.

WORDS Andrew Clarke IMAGES Supercars, Peter Norton, Holden Motorsport

It was the dream result, a fairytale: two mates driving together in a Supercar at Bathurst for the fifth and last time.

Craig Lowndes, a legend of the sport and its most popular driver having his last Bathurst outing as a lead driver, aiming for title number seven. Steven Richards, the perfect co-driver, smart and accomplished, with four wins to his name.

But even heading to Bathurst in the highly fancied Triple Eight Race Engineering squad, the pair was not ranked that highly. Certainly not higher than the Red Bull Holden Racing Team entries that had dominated at Sandown.

Yet they did it. They won the race and then the PIRTEK Enduro Cup. We sat down with the duo to reflect on their Bathurst success.



SX: On Friday it was probably not a result you were expecting, was it?

Richards: From my perspective, when we turned up, it seemed we had a good car, but then the power-steering issue just kept rearing its ugly head. Then we're into Saturday and we really hadn't resolved the issue.

At the start of the weekend I'm thinking, 'Yeah, we'll just get this all turned around. We'll get out there for the next session and we'll be underway.' Then it became a bigger issue. The boys hadn't been able to get on top of it. So probably Saturday afternoon was a bit uneasy from my perspective, but we had all the right people in the right places trying to get it sorted.

SX: When we talk about the power-steering issue, what was happening?

Lowndes: When I first went out the steering was heavy straight out of the gate and I wasn't really too concerned with it; then it started to get worse. It actually got to a point where it was locking up, and that's never a good feeling going across the top of the mountain. It was more so down into the grate, under brakes, and that is an area you don't want a steering failure.

We changed the rack for that first practice session and we ended up sacrificing track time to try and fix it. But it continued to snowball. We did everything you would normally do at that point to fix an issue like that.





The two Red Bull cars were running at 1600psi and our car was running around 1200psi. It couldn't generate the force or the pressure in the system that we needed.

Richards: We just couldn't work out why it was doing it, so that was the weirdest thing. We had so many instruments and tools to look at but the guys just couldn't find this anomaly. They had no idea.

SX: Bizarre than that you showed up Sunday and it had disappeared.

Richards: They basically changed the whole of the steering system. They made up new power-steering lines on both the high pressure and the low-pressure side of the system. They even did a little bit of a redesign to try and counter something that might have been impacting. The reality is, in the end, whatever they did, the car was sorted out by Sunday morning.

SX: How much of a relief was it to go into the warm-up on Sunday and find that it was working properly?

Lowndes: We had a big window between Saturday-morning practice to Shootout, and that was when they completely changed the system from top to bottom.

The Shootout was more of an observation lap of making sure that it was actually going to work. We didn't quite maximise it, which is why I think we went from sixth to ninth, but at the end of the day the worst we were getting was 10th. It felt okay, but we still weren't 100 per cent confident because that was one lap and the pressure was dropping over a distance.

It wasn't until we did multiple laps in the Sunday morning warm-up that we really were confident that we had got on top of it. So we probably fixed it midway through Saturday, but we just weren't sure until that Sunday morning warm-up.

SX: It was a funny race because there weren't a lot of incidents. I think when we spoke to you at about lap 80, Craig, you said the track was coming to the car and everything was looking really good. Does it just happen like that sometimes? Some days the seas part and off you go?

Lowndes: We talked about it beforehand and our experience taught us pretty well. We wanted the car to feel like it's the beginning of the race when the rubber goes



down. We knew it would help the car and turn it into one that's well-balanced. Which it did.

I think experience definitely counts for a lot at a place like Bathurst. Yeah, we had a bit of luck... how often do you see a wheel come off a car? Car #1 was really strong throughout the week, and Dave Reynolds was another car that could've won; they were dominant, but then with Dave's problems it obviously took them out of the picture.

We were positioning ourselves throughout the race nicely. We lost a little bit of time with Steve's entry at pitlane, but we were lucky enough that that was early in the race so we had time to make that up.

Our stops were good, our brake-pad changes were okay, but they weren't the fastest, though they definitely weren't the slowest. As the track rubbered up we got our positioning back. When it started to rain we were still very quick and were able to close up onto the leaders. We just kept clawing back to the front.

SX: It was only 20 seconds lost for Richo's pitlane indiscretion, which isn't really that bad.

Richards: If you look at it from my perspective, I would say no, it's not. But I was still pissed off that it happened. It was a situation where I got myself in the position during that stint where I was doing a lot of fuel saving. We were going pretty comfortably at that point.

I had it in reverse almost before I

stopped. I knew I wasn't going in that hot, so I knew I wasn't going to hit the wall. Anyway, my therapist says I'm getting over it and I should be all right...

SX: There's a trophy that helps you get over it, isn't there?

Richards: Yeah, it definitely does. It's one of those situations where I think a lot of guys see the rain coming and they don't drive to the grip of the car. They drive to the wet on the windscreen.

Lowndes: We learned early in the weekend when the crossover point was for the tyres. I feel like we probably could've pushed a little harder, but you don't want to go over the limit and stick it into the wall.

Roland said he was a bit worried at times that I was, but I felt quite comfortable. Every now and then Irish (engineer John McGregor) would get on the radio and tell me how bad it is across the top of the mountain. We had a spotter up there, but by the time the rain had fallen out of the sky it was almost already evaporated by the time it hit the ground.

The track had warmth and the tyres had warmth and you're able to go through it. I don't think at any stage that I was even contemplating going to wets. You just had to wait it out.

SX: So tell me about your job Richo, was it driving to a time or a fuel use? Is that what you're looking at as you're out there?

Richards: No, not really. It just depends on the situation. That last stint before handing over I was doing some fuel saving because the risk to try and pass to get track position was a lot higher than fuel saving and getting the track position during the stop.

I had a situation where I think we had some fuel in hand over two cars in front and I had been trying to keep cruising along in the 2:10s. Then the guy peeled off in front of me and I instantly got in the low sevenths and drove away.

You just evaluate the situation you're in at the time, and at any time you can add value to get a gain in track position for the stop, it's what you do. I'm not sure how other guys do it, but that's my take on it. At the end of the day, my job is to make sure the car comes back to Craig in a position that he can go and fight for the race win.

SX: Now Craig, when you got in for the triple stint, the first 40 laps were pretty special to watch. Was it hard?

Lowndes: I was driving the car as hard and fast as I could. We were able to stay with Dave Reynolds, then we dropped off a little bit. I was not completely worried, but I knew Dave had a good car and I knew it was going to be a bit of a battle.

Then, as Richo was saying, you try and save a bit of fuel without losing too much track time to them, we knew we would need less fuel on that last stop and that if we were close enough we could pass him in the pits.

We had an issue with the rear roll bar; it got stuck, so I had to do all the adjustments through the front one, but the car was switched on and we could do low sixes and eventually close the gap up to Dave. I think at that point he was starting to hurt.

We were pushing hard to try and stretch the lead once we had it. I think we ended up with a 2.8 or a three-second gap when we did our final stop and he pitted a lap later.

Of course, you don't know where they're going to pop out and as I exited turn one he was still coming out of pitlane. We had hot tyres, we knew we had good track position and from that point on it was just trying to manage the gap.

Then when I got told that he had the drive-through penalty it was, 'Okay, who's next?' It was obviously Scott Pye and we had an eight-second gap on him. So, again, just trying to manage the gap but also manage yourself. When you've got a good, healthy gap like that you don't want to be too complacent. I asked Irish, 'Tell me what lap times he's doing, we'll try and match them.' Which we did.

Basically, that last lap was an eight-second gap. I've never been in that position before, where you command the last lap of the race in the lead with such a gap. I could enjoy it.

SX: Were you aware that Dave was in physical trouble?

Lowndes: I didn't know he was in physical trouble, all I was told was car #9 had problems. I took that as mechanical problems, not physical or driver issues.

SX: So when did you find out it was physical?

Richards: We were obviously scanning a few teams and we were scanning Erebus



Richards and Lowndes celebrate another Bathurst win.

and literally the first time we heard of it was on the lap that Craig passed him. We had no idea that anything was going on. Dave was keeping it pretty quiet, even to the team. We hadn't heard anything from Dave about his condition and it was only then that Erebus said something on the radio to indicate that he was having trouble.

SX: You've had time reflect on the win. Has your view of it changed in terms of what it means? Everybody likes to rank

them, where does it rank for you now?

Lowndes: For me, I can put it as one of the best ones I've done. The emotions of knowing this is the last one that Steve and I would drive together, the last one as a full-time driver. I'm probably never going to qualify a SuperCar there again because that's the lead driver's role. So for me it was a very emotional weekend. Not too dissimilar to 2006 in that sense. For me, it was one victory that I'll put up there very highly.



Richards: I guess from my perspective, since Craig announced his retirement, it doesn't really change anything that I do in terms of preparation or the way to go about things, but what it does change is it makes you recognise the significance of the occasion.

It's a special one because of those reasons. I guess also because the last one you win is close to the one you're never going to win again. It is pretty special what it means in terms of Australian sport, not just motorsport. It's an incredible thing and I still look at photos of us on the podium and still can't believe it.

SX: Everyone was expecting some sort of Triple Eight domination, but you were always rated as the third out of the three. Is there a little bit of satisfaction at ending up number one?

Lowndes: There's no doubt that we had good confidence. It's just a matter of going out there and getting a car that works for us. If we can do that, then we know we're competent enough to drive hard and fast all day. And that is what we did. X



Richards and Lowndes secured the PIRTEK Enduro Cup with a podium finish on the Gold Coast.

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Miss Supercars

Following a high-octane week of appearances, judgings, education, media workshops, life-coaching activities and on and off track action, Gabriella Bottarelli won the prestigious title of 2018 Miss Supercars Ambassador program driven by Unibet at the Vodafone Gold Coast 600.

QT Gold Coast Resort hosted the final, including a specially designed catwalk over the pool, under the stars.

The girls were judged in photographic, interview,

eveningwear and swimwear to ensure the perfect ambassador for the brand and motorsport.

The 2018 Miss Supercars Ambassador Program creates pathways for the future of women in motorsport, keeping within the sports brand values, reflecting modern day societal norms and successfully changing the perception of pageants or grid girl mentality; a new educational movement, empowering women whilst remaining an integral part of Supercars' Vodafone Gold Coast 600.









"This year's program has been a huge success with a mature depth of contestants and ambassadors representing the Supercars and sponsors corporate image," says Selina Macdonald of Procon Leisure.

"Delivering an educational program and charity elements, the program is reaching new heights and changing the perception of the once lycra-clad Indy girl image.

"Gabiella is an extremely deserving winner, well spoken, intelligent and driven. She is the perfect ambassador to represent sponsors and the Miss Supercars driven by Unibet brand with integrity and professionalism."

This year's competition raised over \$25,000 for *Variety Queensland – the Children's Charity*. **X**

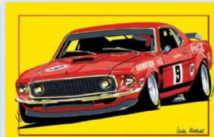
2018 MISS SUPERCARS AMBASSADOR PLACINGS

WINNER	Gabiella Botterelli, Melbourne, VIC
1st Runner Up	Alice Litow, Bundaberg, QLD
2nd Runner Up	Ashley Izod, Brisbane, QLD
3rd Runner Up	Saeran Tanton, Townsville, QLD
Miss Charity	Kayla Downey, Parkes, NSW
Miss Personality	Elyce Vanderstuyts, Seaford, VIC





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TOP 10 NEW ZEALANDERS IN AUSTRALIAN TOURING CARS

10 CRAIG BAIRD

Baird made his name in Super Touring in New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and Britain, though he also showed pace in a V8 with a race win for Stone Brothers Racing in 2000 and five top 10s in the Bathurst 1000.



9 JASON RICHARDS ▲

Richards shone at Mount Panorama, scoring three runner-up finishes over a five-year period. His career and life were tragically cut short by cancer.

8 FABIAN COULTHARD

Coulthard has been a regular in the top half of the field since moving to Brad Jones Racing in 2012. A further step up to DJR Team Penske netted more podiums and wins, though he's faced stiff inter-team competition from compatriot Scott McLaughlin.

7 PAUL RADISICH

The two-times Touring Car World Cup and Super Touring star made a speedy transition to Supercars, emerging as one of the fastest drivers in the Ford AU Falcon with Dick Johnson Racing. He scored three race wins before his career was cruelled by leg injuries sustained in huge crashes at Mount Panorama.



6 ROBBIE FRANCEVIC

Francevic became the second New Zealander to win the Australian Touring Car Championship, driving a Volvo 240T in 1986. But a falling out with the team left him sidelined for the following season, curtailing the chance to add to his tally.

5 SCOTT MCLAUGHLIN

The former Dunlop Super2 Series champion made an immediate impression in the main game, scoring a race win in his rookie season and starting in the Volvo S60 for Garry Rogers Motorsport. McLaughlin has become Ford's lead driver over the last two seasons following a move to DJR Team Penske in 2017.

4 SHANE VAN GISBERGEN

Van Gisbergen showed his natural talent as a teenager at Team Kiwi Racing and soon became a regular challenger. After reversing on a decision to walk away from the sport, van Gisbergen re-emerged at Tekno Autosports for a race-winning spell that led to a promotion to Triple Eight Race Engineering, where he has beaten record-breaking teammate Jamie Whincup in two of the last three seasons.



3 STEVEN RICHARDS

Richards followed in the footsteps of father Jim Richards by becoming a master at Mount Panorama, notching up a fifth Bathurst 1000 win in 2018. The second-generation racer has thrived as an endurance co-driver following a full-time career that included nine top-10 finishes.

2 GREG MURPHY

Murphy stormed onto the Australian touring-car scene alongside Craig Lowndes in the mid-nineties, winning Bathurst with the Australian in 1996. Though championship success

eluded Murphy, he became a hero on home soil by dominating at Pukekohe Park Raceway and went on to win a total of four Bathurst 1000s.

1 JIM RICHARDS ▼

Richards was the first New Zealander to win an Australian Touring Car Championship and Bathurst 1000. His tally of seven Bathurst 1000 wins, three in a row with Peter Brock, and the only wins for Nissan and Volvo at Mount Panorama, plus four championship wins for BMW and Nissan, made him the pioneer for New Zealanders in Australia. ✕



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