

## **NSW Hillclimb Championship 2023**

### **Rounds 1 (The Esses) & 2 (Mountain Straight) – Mount Panorama, Bathurst**

It's every motor enthusiasts dream to race on Australia's great circuit and for the 20+ entrants from the Wollongong Sporting Car Club, it's fair to say they were living the dream over the weekend of 4 and 5 March.

The weather was 90% perfect (the late afternoon downpour on Saturday hit about an hour or so too early for a fully dry completion of race day 1) with the track living up to the legend!

With 85 entrants in total for the Esses, and 96 entrants for Round 2 on Mountain Straight, WSCC continued to punch above its weight in terms of entrants, first in class positioning and overall placings on each day.

There were also plenty of personal best times broken on each day, and for Peter Brown, the setting of a new class record (beating his own previously set records) for both the Esses and Mountain Straight in his Prosport Mulsanne (before it decided to join the 'injuries list' on Sunday with a broken driveshaft... *rumour has it WPVW said they will de-tune it to assist with its reliability*).

Of our club participants we had one third who were first timers at Bathurst, and who, by default recorded PBs for their runs. Congratulations to Jason Hickey (who was also 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> overall on the respective courses), Gavin Parker and Mitchell Brown (who were both first in their classes on both days), new club members Bayley Davitt and Klaus Clemens, along with Michael Kirkwood and Stuart Clark (actually his second trip here but this year the AE86 decided to cooperate 😊).

On top of that our club members boasted 8 places of the top 24 on both days and within that 5 in the top 15 for both courses. Pretty impressive!

#### **Summary Results**

Here's a summary of the key results for Team Wollongong (you can see the full entrant list and results for each day on the Bathurst Light Car Club website):

Nine of our members were first in class for BOTH days so big congrats go to Greg Jones (also PBs for both), Peter Brown (as stated PB AND class records for both climbs), Ben Ford (PBs both days), Richard Ostle (PBs both days), Mitchell Brown, Cameron Brown (beating his dad in the Clio, and clocking new PBs in it), Riley MacQueen (PB on The Esses), David Hussey (PB both days which kicked off on run 1 on day 1 and went from there), and Gavin Parker.

Add to the above, Wayne Penrose and Warren Bell (PB on The Esses) who were first in class on day 2 for Mountain Straight.

Chris Tait was also pumped to achieve PBs on both days by a long way; Bob Bell scored a personal fastest on The Esses, while Ben Brown earned a PB on Mountain Straight (despite the rivalry with Cam who whacked his time both days).

#### **Facing the Mountain**

We asked this year's competitors how many times they'd competed in the Bathurst Hillclimb events and it ranged from Bob Bell (first raced in 1994) and Warren Bell in 1997; it turns out between Bob, Jo and Waz, there's been a Bell at Bathurst for just on 30 years!

Also competing for more than a decade – or two – were Wayne Penrose (since 2000) and Peter Brown not long after that (well over 15+ years).

Greg and Riley were both competing for the 6<sup>th</sup> year, Riley of course starting at age 15 as a junior. From here we had Ian Chantrey, Mick Arts and Richard for their 5<sup>th</sup>, then Dave, Ben B, and Chris for year 4. Ben F and Cam were here for their 3<sup>rd</sup> crack and then we had those 7 newbies mentioned first up.

### **And now for the Injuries List...**

- Prior to the commencement of racing Gavin had to sort out a broken clutch cable.
- And, apparently, the Brown's almost didn't make it. Taking 10.5 hours to get up to McPhillamy Park, Ben's transport truck was contending with a thermofan that packed it in requiring regular stops to let the engine cool off before limping along again.
- Similarly, Cameron spent some time nurturing his 'old' car for brother Mitchell's debut with the Pulsar having left front strut and lower control arm issues the night before day 1.
- Day 1 also saw a downtown dash for Ian to replace the serpentine belt for the chev powered Toyota Supra.
- Before racing on day 2 (Mountain Straight) Stuart had to sort out a cracked oil pressure fitting, requiring assistance of an easy-out tool provide by family Team Brown.
- Across the weekend Chris was dealing with a turbo boost cut as his engine management didn't like his new STI turbo – yet, even with this, he smashed his PBs.
- Despite posting cracking runs up Mountain Straight Wayne (with Ben F's assistance and Waz's welding equipment) was performing fixes on Phoenix when the exhaust header cracked. Oh, and not to mention that Wayne took to performing donuts on The Esses, not once but twice to perfect his moves).
- After breaking his own class records, Peter broke a driveshaft which saw him retire early on Day 2.
- Family Team Brown then had a loose nut in front of the steering wheel, not just behind it!
- Riley reported exhaust issues but still managed to smash out great results.
- Greg's clubman went out in sympathy with his own exhaust issues on day 2 – which also didn't stop him posting those PBs and winning the class.
- And finally Warren needed to retrieve the welding equipment from Wayne to sort out a broken lower control arm on WAZDAT.

It was great to see Trevor, Alison and Jo cheering on the WSCC "MOB" along with the regular family cheer squads; including our future champion in his little Chantrey powered push-along buggy.

All in all, and as always, it was a great weekend of WSCC camaraderie with everyone cheering each other on, enjoying the great weather and track conditions (mostly) and ending another successful and enjoyable weekend on the mountain.

*Disclaimer: this report was written by a motorsport novice so thanks to my husband for fixing the technical details. We hope we got it right and didn't miss any important details (if we did it may be because the speed and noise of this sport does make my belly butterflies take flight). 😊*