

NSW Hillclimb Championship 2023

Round 5: Grafton, Mountain View Motorsport Complex

Round 5 of the 2023 NSW Hillclimb Championship took place on the King's birthday long weekend (10/11 June) and saw a smaller group of 8 WSCC members making the long trek to compete in Grafton. Hosted by the Grafton Sporting Car Club at their impressive Mountain View Motorsport Complex, there were 24 state championship competitors, who were joined by 22 club members.

While it was a big field, with race day running smoothly and being relatively incident free, each driver was afforded 5 runs up the hill and around the track.

The sun shone for most of the weekend, though the track did start each day a little slippery. There were certainly lots of squealy tyres and a few spins, one of the more impressive being Gavin Parker's first practice run which had him heading over the finish line backwards! Apparently Ben Brown, who lead the order of racing, had a little spin just after his arrival onto the top circuit on a slippery track. Stuart Clark also took a spin on an early run which was caught on video by Michelle (check out the WSCC Facebook page).

The fastest time from team Wollongong was Greg Jones who broke the 50 second mark – 49.85s – but not quite enough to break his own class record (49.13s). He also won the class but that was inevitable without any other competitors at this round, which was the story for a few of the other classes on the day. This was Greg's third appearance at Mountain View for the State Championships.

In the Formula Libre over 2000cc class the "battle of the Dean's" continued with Dean Amos edging out Dean Tighe and setting not only a new class record, but also a new track record, in a time of 40.95 seconds. Wow. That 2006 Gould GR55B goes. As does the Empire Wraith which pops and cracks its way around the course.

A few new records were set across the day, including Dave Hussey who was racing in a new class with his 1991 Ford Laser tx3 (against club mate Chris Tait). His time of 51.13s was also a personal best by 3 seconds on the Grafton track. It was his third outing here also. For Chris, this was his second visit to Grafton where he clocked similar times to previous runs – his best this year being 55.03s. His visit wasn't without a few little dramas – a new PCV developed a small oil leak – not to mention a bit of behind-the-scenes motel booking mix-ups, which thankfully was resolved.

Team Brown was again present with our youngest competitor Mitch Brown completing his Grafton debut as the fastest junior in the championship, along with setting a new class record. Once again, we saw the family battle of B Brown v C Brown in the Renault Clio with Cam once again edging out dad Ben. It was Ben's fourth outing at Grafton clocking a PB of 54.39s, while Cam made his third appearance (first in this class sharing his dad's Clio), with his best run and PB being 53.85s. Cam and Ben came second and third in class respectively.

Two other drivers made their debut at Grafton this year – Gavin Parker and Stuart Clark – which by default meant that they created PBs for this track also. Gavin drove solo in his class, winning it in a time of 56.51; while Stuart came second from a field of 5 (3 championship competitors) in a time of 55.55 which he also achieved on his fifth and final run of the day. Ahead of Stuart, class winner Erran Hennessy set a new record of 49.21 in his 1994 Honda Civic.

While a smaller mix of the WSCC mob made their way to Grafton there was great camaraderie as always, with most of the crew catching up on the Saturday night for a pub meal by the river. A few bevies were had, along with stories told ahead of race day on the Sunday.

About the track & Grafton Sporting Car Club

Set on 67 hectares, the Mountain View Motorsport Complex, is an impressive facility on the outskirts of Grafton, about 15 minutes following the river out of town. It's surrounded by bush, and the current track incorporates part of the original run up the hill in the early years of the Grafton Sporting Car Club (first run in 1955 and GSCC formally established in 1956), now combined with a go-kart circuit up the top of the hill.

There's plenty of room for spectators, a permanent canteen (which is a bit of a hike up the hill alongside the start line) with all the usual favourites, and the facility also provides some relatively new carports (for a fee of \$70) in the pit area. The day ended with presentations up at the Canteen area (how many walks up that hill was that for the weekend??!). For the full race results check out the GSCC website. Next is Tamworth in mid-July for Round 6.