

NSW Hillclimb Championship 2023

Round 7: Raymond Terrace, Ringwood Park Motorsport Complex

By Jacqueline & Stuart Clark

And that's a wrap for the 2023 NSW Hillclimb Championship! Seven rounds, six locations, six months – what a ride! Buckle up because this report is a long one...

Round 7 was hosted by the MG Car Club Newcastle and held at Ringwood Park Motorsport Complex, just north of Raymond Terrace. Wollongong Sporting Car Club finished the championship series strong with over 20 competitors, making up more than one third of the 60 driver field.

The weekend offered some excellent results including PBs, new class records and wins, but it wasn't without incident, some even before race day at Saturday's practice. It turns out there were many 'offs' during the course of the weekend and a good portion of them were performed by our club members – perhaps it was about testing the limits at this last race of the 2023 Championships and making it to the podium? Or, in the case of the Brown family trio, it was Cameron pushing to catch up on points with his dad Ben to try and get the one-up around the family dining table. Note: it wasn't to be for poor Cam.

In terms of the weather, it was a bright sunny day at Saturday practice, however Sunday was a bit up and down. The morning runs seemed to favour the first half of the field with dry conditions before the heavy drops of rain started, impacting the second half of the rounds.

Practice Day

After arriving early on Saturday morning and zooming around the track four times (before most of us had arrived) and well before the lunch break, Gavin Parker decided to test the resilience of the nose of his Subaru Special by running straight into the wall just before the finish line. While limping off the track there were nods and thumbs up indicating no leaks, and what just looked to be front nosecone and radiator support damage.

Importantly, Gavin didn't sustain any physical injuries and as soon as he was off the track, a bunch of people jumped in to help get the car back into shape and ready for race day. With Dave Hussey leading the charge there were tools, parts and helpers aplenty which saw Gav able to race on Sunday and set a cracking time of 79.96 – a PB given his first time racing here along with the class win.

Stuart Clark was channelling Queen B and took a slide 'to the left, to the left' skidding off the track and onto the slippery grass just as he crossed the finish line on practice run #2 (which may have caused him to do a #2 😊). With the car having its own momentum he was lucky to pull up just shy of the tyre wall in front of a cement drain! It seems the little bit of rain that hit the area the week prior created a bog which was the only reason the AE86 pulled up short. There was a lengthy delay to get it out and back on track as the "dad's army" safety crew couldn't find a 'D' shackle to connect the tow rope...

Race Day

On race day itself, registered championship drivers from WSCC did fantastically well with 3 in the top 10, and 8 club members inside the top 20 of the overall leader board. And if you include Steve Moxon and Searle Courtright in their Talbot 184, who are club members but registered in the state rounds with SDMA, they finished in outright third and fifth place respectively, making it 5 in the top 10 and 10 in the top 20 - pretty impressive.

As well as it being Gavin's first run at Circuit Italia, also competing here for the first time was Ben Ford, Mitch Brown, Travis McGeorge, Klaus Clemens and Lana-Rose Bolton (making her racing comeback after an incident at Huntley back in 2021).

WSSC Class Winners

- Gavin Parker – as mentioned, Gavin was able to get some repairs sorted to enable him to race on Sunday. In doing so he took out the win in his class.
- Peter Brown – set a [new class record of 68.02](#) and finished second overall, in what he thinks was around his tenth time competing here – he’s been racing here since the 1990s.
- Greg Jones – Greg has competed at Ringwood each year since 2017 and was again the winner in his class, just a couple of seconds ahead of Mick. But he wasn’t quite able to beat the class record he set last year in his Locost GSL Clubman.
- Dave Hussey – his third time here at Ringwood and racing against club mate Chris Tait, Dave took out the win in 76.35 seconds.
- Riley Macqueen – also racing in a class on his own at his fourth outing at Ringwood, the only thing Riley was focused on was setting a [new class record](#); and that he did! With Loosey in good form, Riley shaved almost two seconds off his first run to last run and took 0.6 seconds off the previous record; impressive drive!
- Michael McGeorge – Sharing his Fiat with son Travis as a multi-club competitor, Michael was competing in the championship against friend Martin Gallard. These two have switched the 1-2 a few times throughout the series but Michael finished the season with a win; though couldn’t quite get to the record he set last year.
- Richard Ostle – again in a class of his own, Richard zoomed around Ringwood (a new track configuration for him at his third appearance here) in a time of 83.47 seconds.
- Ben Ford – wowers! Ben set a [new class record](#), smashing it by over 16 seconds on debut and won the class in 75.25 seconds.
- Wayne Penrose – another [new class record](#) was set by Wayne, despite a few splutters and issues with Phoenix. Tuning and tweaking the superbug throughout the day, she got over the line in a time of 71.14 seconds, taking 1.5 seconds off the previous record. It wasn’t without controversy though and the final result is pending.
- Mitchell Brown – this was a first time visit for Mitch, as had been the case all season. He finished first as the only competitor in his class. He had a great day in terms of time improvement, knocking around six seconds off his first run to his best – of 85.17 – but still exactly two seconds off the class record set by brother Cam last year. Maybe next year?
- Warren Bell – competing at Ringwood since he was 17 years old (so that means maybe 10-15 years?! 😊), Warren had a decent weekend until his last run on Sunday, when WAZDAT took a spin on the last corner just before the finish line and was facing the wrong way – he had to do a quick flick turn to get over the line. He of course won the class but couldn’t quite get to the class record time he set last year.
- Stuart Clark – after his off at practice, Stuart rested the car and set out to try and replicate his 80.08 he recorded at practice (while staying on the track this time). He didn’t quite get there but recorded a time of 80.56 seconds, cutting nearly 5 seconds off his best run from last year. Being his second time here, Stuart went on to win his class but also avoid the rain in that second run too, so he was happy.
- Chris Bolton – who was competing against his daughter Lana-Rose in their rebuilt Ford Escort enjoyed the return to the track and hanging out with Wollongong clubmates. He’s been a member for over 10 years and racing for more than 20 in all sorts of machines so he enjoyed being at the track and supporting Lana as she got back into the groove.
- Travis McGeorge – set a new record as a junior in a production vehicle in only his second race weekend behind the McFiat Racing Fiat.

Also enjoying themselves over the weekend were:

- Mick Arts - enjoyed his fourth appearance at Ringwood by clocking a PB of 75.56 seconds which he was thrilled with. At the beginning of the weekend Mick's goal was to crack a sub 80 seconds; so he certainly nailed that target.
- The family rivalry in the Brown Clio took a different turn at this event with only one point difference between Ben and Cameron, due to Cam being ill and unable to compete at Tamworth. Whoever came out ahead between the two would also be the winner between the two across the 2023 Championship. With Ben nudging ahead of Cam, the latter decided to go out and leave it all on the track. Unfortunately, that was his undoing in his second run for the day, stacking it up on the back straight. Thankfully Cam was OK though he did knock his leg on the dash which he'd injured previously – though thankfully not too serious.
- Michael Kirwood – also here for the second time (first time last year) he recorded a PB at practice and continued with impressive runs on race day. A big shout out to Mick for helping Stuart with a wheel alignment on the AE86 earlier in the week too, which helped Stuart knock the solid five seconds off his time from last year.
- Chris Tait – Chris was grateful to be back for his third time at Ringwood Park and his second competing in the State Championships. After the gear box issues at Tamworth, Chris was still working on the black Forester into the wee hours of Saturday morning trying to get a clutch pedal. After an early conversation on Friday night with Dave Hussey, Chris loaded up the car without the clutch pedal being 100% right and headed to Ringwood. Upon arrival later Saturday morning Dave quickly assessed the situation, went and found a long 8mm bolt in his bag of tricks which sorted the clutch pedal issue. Chris was certainly happy with the efforts on the track having sliced over 3.5 seconds from his first run to his best run, finishing with 83.11 seconds.
- Ian Chantrey – it was great to see Ian back on track for his second outing at Ringwood in the Supra after his off at Huntley earlier this year. It wasn't without some off-track drama though; the front spoiler was ripped off while he was getting the car off the trailer and it was identified he'd driven a good portion of the trip up to Raymond Terrace with a loose tow hitch.
- Klaus Clemens – a first timer here for hillclimb, Klaus was competing for fun as he wasn't part of the championship this year, but had a great time improving on every run with a best time of 80.75 seconds.
- Lana-Rose Bolton - fully rebuilt by dad Chris, Lana handled the Ford Escort and conditions well, building her confidence despite the intermittent showers throughout the day.

There was a big WSCC support crew once again who made the effort to come along and support partners, family and friends; and I think most of us enjoyed Saturday evening wherever we were cheering on the Matildas.

It was a great weekend to wrap up the Championship season for 2023 and we now await the official results. No doubt we will have quite a few class champions from the Wollongong Sporting Car Club.