

Motor sport

By Laurie Fox

MONTHS of planning and hard work by members and supporters of the Mount Gambier Motor Cycle and Light Car Club came to successful fruition last weekend when the 2005 Master of Mac Park and round one of the South Australian Road Racing Championships were held at McNamara Park using the revised facilities for the first time.

Faced with having to relocate the pit area and move the start and finish from the original main straight to the shorter straight in front of the Campbell Memorial clubrooms to facilitate the staging of the 2006 Australian Historic Road Racing Titles, the club began work on the changes more than 18 months ago.

As well as setting up the new pits with open shelter sheds on each side of a sealed area, the new starting grid section of the track was widened and connected to the pits by a well thought out system of access roads and a new pit office where all relative information relating to next race grid positions and similar is quickly transmitted from the all new timekeepers' box and displayed for riders to check.

In practice the system worked extremely well, reducing time between events and eliminating confusion between riders moving in and out of the pits as well as providing the many spectators with excellent viewing and easily accessed amenities.

While the big 31 race program catered for almost all classes and capacities of machines, the main interest centered on the solo Master of Mac Park event and other large capacity races.

The action in earnest started with the first leg of the combined superbike and supersport championship on Saturday where the four main contenders, John Tuchyna, Ashley Roe, Karl Schmidt and New Zealander Dennis Charlett were expected to feature and did.

Flying the start, Roe led for two laps but with Tuchyna right on his tail and Schmidt and Charlett well in the picture ahead of a battling trio in Adelaide riders Paul Radford, Paul McMenemy and Mandy Beales.

Despite all Roe could do, Tuchyna held on for a narrow win, the sizzling pace of their tussle confirmed by a new lap record from Tuchyna of one minute and 12.9 seconds.

Schmidt was third behind Roe with Charlett a close fourth, then a gap to Radford, McMenemy and Beales followed by local Darren Trotter and Christian Larsen from North West Victoria.

The first four next met in the A and B grades scratch race late on Saturday with Warrnambool's 19 year old Roe showing great speed and determination to not only hold Tuchyna at bay throughout but also further reduce Tuchyna's new lap record by 0.1 of a second to one minute and 12.8 seconds.

Schmidt and Charlett were next ahead of popular Adelaide rider Michael Brenton, Beales, McMenemy and Mark Sandford.

With the second leg of the superbike and supersport championship the first race on Sunday, more action was expected and delivered

Once again Roe led for two laps before Tuchyna squeezed past, the two then staging a terrific battle until the finish and both lapping faster than Saturday's new record, Roe turning in one minute and 12.76 seconds and Tuchyna a final new figure of one minute and 12.72 seconds.

Schmidt and Charlett were again third and fourth with Beales going great guns fifth ahead of Radford, McMenemy, Hartwell's Keverell Fry and Trotter.

A great contest between Tuchyna and Roe was expected for the two leg Master of Mac Park title but, alas, it was not to be.

Again quickly off the mark, Roe led for a lap in leg one with Tuchyna right on his tail, the two seeming set for another record breaking tussle when Tuchyna fractionally misjudged his braking for the first lap two corner and took the slip road where he unfortunately came off, happily without injury but unable to continue.

This left Roe safely in front although with no room for error, Schmidt and Charlett having a no holds tussle not far behind and ready to pounce should the leader falter while Adelaide's Chris Leisavnieks was fourth after getting the better of Beales and a tight trio of Radford, Fry and Rob Vikuckis.

With Tuchyna a non-starter in the second leg, Roe rode a perfect front running race to clinch the title, safely clear of Schmidt and Charlett with Leisavnieks fourth ahead of Vikuckis, Beales and Radford.

Run concurrently, the top three in the South Australian unlimited championship were also Roe, Schmidt and Charlett.

The two races for the combination of superstocks with new categories naked bikes, lites and pro twins, also brought some very keen action.

Leg one on Saturday was hard fought between Leisavnieks and Brenton, closely matched for three laps when Brenton was able to pull away slightly and score while Vikuckis was unlucky to lose third with a last lap problem, handing the place to local Trotter ahead of Hartwell's Jon Collins and John Snoad and Scott Christie from Adelaide.

Sunday's second leg brought a repeat of the action but with Leisavnieks just in front from start to finish, Brenton unable to bridge the very narrow gap while, in a reversal of fortune, Vikuckis was just able to head Trotter for third at the last moment, then coming Collins, Christie and Snoad.

The overall placings were superstock, Leisavnieks, Trotter and Christie, pro twins Brenton, Collins and Rick Zakelj, and lites Nigel Agar.

Leisavnieks also featured in the division one C and D grade, leading the 23 strong field all the way to beat Radford and a close battling trio of Fry, Collins and Trotter who swapped places regularly throughout while early third Vikuckis finished sixth.

Division two of the C and D grade brought a brilliant victory for Mount Gambier's 125 mounted Daniel Cutting who moved ahead on lap two and drew away from the field to beat Jason Coulson on a 250, Adelaide's Joe Ahern on another 125, Collins on a 520 and local Levi Day and Adelaide's Stephen Fuss, both on 125s.

Cutting, Ahern, Day and Fuss also featured in the three 125cc championship races.

Cutting led for a lap in the first event on Saturday but Adelaide's Tim Inkster had just that little extra and moved ahead to win with Cutting sticking close and the two drawing well clear of the rest headed by Ahern, Day, Fuss, Aaron Rigby and Jack Wright.

Sunday's two legs saw Inkster a flag to flag winner over the close up Cutting clear of Ahern, Fuss and Day in the early race while in leg three Cutting made a valiant attempt after a brilliant start, leading for half distance but again having to give way narrowly to Inkster with Ahern, Fuss and Day next.

Inkster and Cutting also featured in the special consolation race for riders who entered for the Master of Mac Park but could not be accommodated in the field, finishing first and second on their 125s ahead of 250 mounted Jason Coulson and 600cc riders Glynn Foot, Richard Stanley and Mark Jonas in the weekend's biggest field of 27.

Coulson in turn had his success in the special formula Mac Park events, winning the 250ccGP class in both legs from Adelaide's Hal Hutchesson and Adrian Coles.

The concurrent class for 250cc production, supermotard/mono and F400 brought an overall first for Brett Metcalf who won the first leg from Portland's Nathan Bell and Jon Collins and the second leg from Mark Sandford and Collins.

Historic machines were also catered for with three scratch races and a special "master" race each.

The period five post-classics brought some great duels between Simon Cook and Rick Zakelj with Andy Baird and James Jay also well in the picture.

In race one early leader Baird gradually slipped back to finish fourth behind Cook, Zakelj and Jay while race two saw Zakelj just fail to head Cook in the run to the line, failing by less than half a wheel.

Baird was third ahead of 250 mounted Brett Metcalf and local Bill Fielding.

Zakelj made no bones about the next two races, winning leg three from Cook, Baird and Jay, and the six lap "master" race with another front running display, beating Cook, Childs, Baird and Jay.

Overall Zakelj won the unlimited section, Fielding the 500cc and Metcalf the 250.

Joe Ahern was the man to beat in the combined period three and four classes, winning all four events on his 750 Norton.

Richard Metcalf was second in leg one on his Manx Norton, heading Bob Jolly , Paul Walker, Murray Johnson and Mark Schuppan.

Metcalf was also second in leg two, this time ahead of Walker, Johnson and Schuppan, but in leg three had to settle for fourth behind Jolly and Walker with Johnson and Danny Ahern side by side next.

Overall the class placings were 350cc Rick Vassallo, 500cc Metcalf, unlimited Joe Ahern and period four Walker.

The period three and four “Master of Mac Park” went to Joe Ahern from Walker and Schuppan.

The combined superlights and historic 125s and period two had four races with small fields.

Race one went to Wayne Jolly from Keith Jolly, Allan Wettenhall, Trevor Henderson and Adam Burnett with Bryon Burnett dropping out.

In race two it was Wayne Jolly, Keith Jolly, Wettenhall, Bryon Burnett and Henderson with bike problems while in race three Ted Dexter livened things up with his pre-war Norton, almost heading Wayne Jolly, while Keith Jolly, Wettenhall and Bryon Burnett rounded off the field.

With only four starters, race four went to Wayne Jolly from Keith Jolly, Bryon Burnett and Henderson whose bike expired as he crossed the line.

While the sidecar field may have been small, the pace of the winner, Mount Gambier’s Stephen Jones with Jay Budarick, was outstanding, culminating in a new lap record.

Saturday’s two races were the South Australian championship rounds.

Stephen Jones led throughout in both events, the power of his outfit and his riding ability too much for the smaller engined machine of Neville Lush and Martin Scott who in turn, were clearly faster than David Jones and Jenni Jones, David Pledge and Brian Clow and Chris Smith with Tony Castle.

Pledge worked hard to move up to third in race one but then spun off at the start of lap three, handing the place back to David Jones while Smith finished at the tail on his period four machine.

Stephen Jones won easily in race two from Lush with a badly misfiring motor and David Jones the only other finisher.

Sunday’s two races were for the sidecar Master of Mac Park and won easily by Stephen Jones but at no let up in speed, scorching around on the fifth lap of the second leg to set a new lap record of one minute and 16.45 seconds, the previous record of one minute and 16.6 seconds having been unequalled since set by Terry Goldie in 1993.

Lush was second each time ahead of David Jones and Smith, Pledge unable to keep his machine going long enough to finish either event.

With good weather and a strong spectator following, the meeting was a just reward for the many hours put in by the promoting club and its helpers.

Without exception, the riders were high in their praise of the new set up and the work done to achieve it.

There were also many good comments on the running of the meeting and the great atmosphere that prevails at all McNamara Park events.

Dennis Charlett, who came from New Zealand, was most impressed with the track and the way the meeting was run and said that he intends to return, hopefully with several of his clubmates.

The next road race meeting at McNamara Park will be the South Australian historic championships on December 31 and January 1.
