

Motor Sport

by Laurie Fox

NOW an established feature of the South Australian motor cycle road racing calendar, last weekend's annual over 45s seniors meeting at McNamara Park proved to be a most successful event with record entries and plenty of exciting racing.

A unique promotion staged by the Mount Gambier Motor Cycle and Light Car Club, the two day program attracted riders from as far as New South Wales and Tasmania as well as strong representation from Victoria and South Australia.

With some fields filling the starting grid to capacity, the numbers were good for almost every race and, aided by ideal weather, brought plenty of keenly contested events.

As the throttles were turned the riders' ages seemed to roll back and, even in the oldest groups, there was little to distinguish the speed and action from most of that seen at open events.

The 27 races catered for almost every conceivable combination of rider and machine with classes based on bike age and capacity, on riders' ages and on a combination both.

To complete the mix, there were also scratch and handicap events for sidecars.

The 11 races held on Saturday were repeated on Sunday with final placings calculated on overall points before racing concluded with five special cup events.

The oldest bikes, periods one and two, ran concurrently with the four 125cc classes, each having its own awards.

On a modern 125, Hartwell's David Anderson was a clear winner of race one with fellow Victorian John Lawrence on a modern 125 coming through to displace Brian Gray on a 1938 BSA for second followed by Dave Mason from New South Wales and Victorian Ron Matthews on 125s and Terry Duggan on a 100.

Leg two on Sunday brought another win for Anderson from Lawrence with Mason third ahead of Gray, Matthews and Duggan.

While obviously not able to match the more recent machines, Ian Corlett's 1912 TT Triumph completed both races, attracting much interest and plenty of applause.

For period three classic models up to 350cc, Saturday's second race was hard fought.

Quick starter Richard Metcalf from Adelaide kept his 7R AJS in front for two laps before having to give way to Victorian Calvin Merlo on a similar model while early second Tony Tildesley finished third on a 350 Honda ahead of his Adelaide clubmate John Whallin, Hamilton's Les Toohey and David Wain, all on 350cc BSAs.

Leg two saw Metcalf lead throughout from Tildesley, Merlo and Toohey while Manx Norton mounted Con Desyllas and Whallin came through at the expense of Graham Rowley as next best.

In the first over 350cc race for bikes of the period three era, Metcalf, now on a 500cc Manx Norton, came through to score from Victorian Russell Craddock on a 650 Triumph and Adelaide Norton rider Bob Jolly in a blanket finish, clear of Richard Rake, Danny Ahern and Toohey on his larger model BSA.

Sunday's second leg brought another win for Metcalf with Jolly this time too good for Craddock who just held Victorian John Maher at bay, then coming Ahern and Toohey in the big field of 25.

The Period four and five post-classics ran concurrently with another field of over 20.

Leg one saw Glenn Crutchley's first lap lead on his 1000 Kawasaki soon displaced by NSW's Dave Mason on a 650 Ducati with local club member Andy Baird settling into third on his Ducati followed by clubmate Duncan Macartney on another Ducati, Paul Walker with a 400 Yamaha and Suzuki 500 mounted Nick Clarke from Adelaide.

In Sunday's leg Mason led for a lap but was headed by Baird who held on to win despite continual challenge from Mason who was a close second just clear of another tussling pair, Macartney and Clarke, who finished in that order ahead of Walker, Victorian Brian Gray and local Bill Fielding who snared the 350cc award.

For riders of 45 and over on a big field of modern bikes, event five brought a top effort from 600 Yamaha mounted local Allan Rigby in his first seniors meeting, up to second in race one behind clubmate Graeme McLaren on a 1000cc model but not able to bridge the gap before the flag.

Hartwell's David Andersen brought his TZ250 Yamaha into third ahead of Adelaide's Philip Wilson, Martin Armstrong on a 600 Kawasaki and John Snoad on a 600 Suzuki.

Leg two on Sunday brought a repeat win for McLaren, taking over from Rigby at half distance with Armstrong third followed by Mick Engberg on his 850 Yamaha, Andersen and Snoad.

The 65 years and over riders' class had a field of 12 with race one bringing a well deserved win for classic bike arch enthusiast Ken Lucas on his 1000cc Norvin.

Brian Clarke from Bendigo was second on his 525 KTM followed by Hartwell's Keith Jolly on a 500 Suzuki, John Whallin, Adelaide's former motocross sidecar champion Murray Williams on a 650 Yamaha and Fred Greeneklee from the Atujara club.

With Lucas having to leave early, Sunday's second leg went to Jolly from Whallin, Tom Kingston on a 600 Yamaha, Williams, Clarke and Ron Matthews on a 125.

Riding his 750 Suzuki, local club member Alan Smith was too good for his rivals in the 55 to 64 years age group, winning Saturday's race from Bob Jolly, Mike Retallick on a 1080 BMW, Hartwell's David Sinclair on a TZ350 Yamaha, Richard Metcalf and John Maher.

Smith repeated the effort on Sunday, beating Jolly, Paul Walker, Retallick, Sinclair and Maher.

With a huge number in the 45 to 54 years group, the field was divided into those with bikes of up to 500cc and those with the larger capacity models.

Even so, the 500cc section brought a maximum field of 29 to the line with resulting top action right down the line.

Despite the many challengers, Victorian David Anderson had no peer, running away to win race one from Nick Clarke from Adelaide, local Bill Fielding, Les Toohey, Curt Tebbutt from Melbourne and Calvin Merlo.

With the first two the same in Sunday's second leg, Fielding was unlucky to strike bike trouble on the last lap when third handing the place to Tebbutt with Merlo next ahead of Toohey and Victorian Michael Telford on a 400 Yamaha.

From a slightly smaller field, Saturday's over 500cc section brought a win for Martin Armstrong on his 600 Kawasaki, just holding off strong challenges from Graeme McLaren, Andy Baird and Mick Engberg who finished in that order ahead of Philip Wilson and Mason from NSW.

With Sunday's leg the decider, McLaren made a great start and, despite the efforts of his challengers, held on to beat Armstrong, Wilson, John Snoad, Mason and Baird.

For bikes of all ages, the sidecars had two scratch races as well as handicaps.

The full field of 10 started in race one where newly qualified local John Francis was never headed on his modern machine, his main challenger, Bill Stoyel, stalling at the start and then dropping out after a lap.

Adelaide's Geoff Grant finished second ahead of Hartwell's Max Hooper using local David Jones' machine, Graham Wagland and Ted Dexter.

In Sunday's second leg, Francis went out after a lap in the lead leaving Stoyel to score from Hooper, Grant and Terry McBride on his classic 500cc BSA, the rest all dropping out with various troubles.

Sunday's solo racing concluded with the four special cup races where qualifying is determined by the combined ages of the rider and machine.

In the 45 plus cup with 16 starters, Mount Gambier clubmen Graeme McLaren and Allan Rigby headed the field followed by Victorians David Anderson and Martin Armstrong, Mick Engberg and Adelaide's John Snoad.

The slightly smaller 70 plus field brought victory for local Andy Baird on his Ducati, beating visitor Mason and Alan Smith in a tight battle, well clear of Brian Gray, David Sinclair and Max Hooper on his 820 EML.

The 85 plus cup saw Sandringham's Russell Craddock and his 650 Triumph best of the 22 starters, heading Bob Jolly, Nick Clarke, Paul Walker, Calvin Merlo and Keith Jolly.

With a similar size field, the 100 plus cup brought reward for long time Mac Park follower John Maher from Victoria, leading throughout on his 700cc Norton to beat Richard Metcalf, Richard Rake, Les Toohey, Tony Tildesley and Brian Gray.

The sidecars also had three handicaps, the last their cup race.

Saturday's handicap went narrowly to limit rider McBride from Victorian David Wain, Wagland, local Dennis English and Dexter with all 10 starters finishing.

A depleted field of five started in Sunday's first handicap with McBride again just winning, two seconds ahead of Grant, Hooper and Stoyel while Wain dropped out.

The cup race handicap brought a great finish with McBride just holding on to beat Wain by less than half a tyre's width and Stoyel only a metre further behind, half a second ahead of Hooper.

Without exception riders were generous with their praise of the event at the prize presentation and all vowed to return when the next over 45s meeting is held.

Dave Mason from NSW said he would like to be able to wrap up the club and track and take it back to Newcastle while the Tasmanian riders, Allan Leslie, David Bell and Chris McCausland, who raced at Mac Park in 1976, were delighted with the weekend and glad they made the trip.

There was a slight air of sadness at the end of the meeting as it brought to an end the 40 year use of the pits in the centre of the track and the start and finish on the main straight.

With the next major meeting the Master of Mac Park in October, it is expected that the new pits and start and finish opposite the clubrooms will be operational as required by Motorcycling Australia.

Full details of the official results of all events, including concurrent classes, will be included in next week's report.
