

Master of Mac Park
Race Results
by L.W. Fox

McNAMARA Park road racing was back to its best last weekend when a huge 32 event program signaled the return of the prestigious Master of Mac Park contests after missing out in 2002 due to delays with track repairs.

The action was all that the top class entry list promised with strong fields in almost all classes, plenty of fast racing and a new lap record.

Unassuming off the track, Adelaide's David Johnson showed the benefits of his successful 12 month stint in Great Britain, fulfilling his dual aims of winning the solo Master of McNamara Park title for 2003 and setting a new outright lap record of one minute and 12.9 seconds, shaving 0.4 of a second from the figure set by Michael Clunie last April.

Run over two 10 lap legs on Sunday, the solo Master of Mac Park event saw Johnson lead both races from start to finish, always with a safe margin in hand but with no room for error, hotly pursued each time by former winner Michael Brenton from Adelaide and Karl Schmidt who rides for Mount Gambier.

With these three in front, the first race settled down after the early laps to see Adelaide's former top motocross rider turned road racer Brendan Roberts going extremely well in fourth followed by Michael Ellis, Jeff Thomas, Darren Willis, Jamie Videon, Ken Onus, Victorian Andrew Brooks and Mount Gambier's Bill Smith holding off the rest of the 20 strong field.

With the exception of Videon and Willis swapping places, the finishing order was the same with the entire field showing very good speed and no riders lapped despite the long ten lap journey.

The final race of the two days, the second leg saw Johnson quickly away closely followed by Brenton and Roberts for two laps when Roberts came off without injury bringing Schmidt into the placings but only just clear of Ellis, Videon, Willis and Smith going very well in front of Brooks and fellow Victorian Brendan Green.

A very talented rider, Brenton tried all he knew but could not close on Johnson who, setting the new lap record in the process, went on to win safely from Brenton, Schmidt, Ellis and Videon while Smith improved even more to be sixth ahead of Willis, Brooks, Green and five other finishers.

This made the overall placings Johnson, Brenton and Schmidt while Smith took the Garry Clarke Memorial trophy for the highest placed local rider.

Johnson also had two clear wins in Saturday's combined superbike and thunder bike races, finishing clearly ahead of Schmidt in each of the six lap events.

With the 600cc bikes of Brenton, Roberts and many others not eligible for this class, the way was open for other big bike riders to make the placings and in race one Willis held third until the last lap when he was just pipped by Ellis with Jeff Thomas from Adelaide fifth ahead of Smith, Graeme McLaren, Green, Shane Zakelj and 10 other finishers in the big field.

With Johnson and Schmidt setting the pace, the second race saw Ellis and Thomas in a race long battle for third to finally finish in that order almost side by side with another close tussling pair in Willis and Smith next ahead of Green, McLaren from Mount Gambier and Zakelj.

A third race for this class was run on Sunday and brought another victory for Johnson with Thomas going very well placing second ahead of Schmidt, Ellis, Smith and Green while Willis dropped out of the 20 contenders with bike trouble after being well placed in the early stages.

For anyone who might have thought that Johnson needed a clear run in front for his ability to win, his performance in the A and B Grade scratch race on Sunday would have quickly dispelled that notion.

A six lap race, the field was partly disrupted when early front runner Brenton came off on the first lap leaving Willis in the lead from Schmidt, Ellis, Videon, Brooks, Mark Sandford and Peter Scott with Johnson near the tail of the 11 strong field.

From a seemingly hopeless position, Johnson carved his way through to be up to fifth at half distance and from second with a lap to go was able to move ahead of Willis and take the flag.

Schmidt was third followed by Ellis, Videon, and Brooks.

Another of the more important classes, the very well supported 600cc class had three scratch races, two on Saturday and one on Sunday.

With 23 entries and all riders, including 13 Victorians, on almost equally powered 600's of the four major Japanese makes, some extremely keen competition was expected and produced.

Right from the start of race one it was obvious that Adelaide's Michael Brenton and Brendan Roberts were going to dominate and while Brenton held the front from start to finish there were many moments when Roberts was right on his wheel and the two finished almost together.

Ken Onus from the Hartwell club moved past fellow Victorian Andrew Brooks at half distance to clinch third with Brooks fourth just clear of Jamie Videon and Hartwell riders Craig Nicholson and Dave Nicholson, Sandringham's Darren Chandler and more Victorians, Ashley Roe and Paul Coleman.

Brenton set the pace again in race two but after leading for two laps, came off without injury at pine tree corner handing the race to Roberts who won safely from Videon, Onus, Brooks, Craig Nicholson and Victorian Rod Johnston.

Run on Sunday, the third race saw Roberts set the first lap lead but Brenton found a way past and, despite a terrific challenge from Roberts for the rest of the race, held on to just win with the two drawing clear of Videon, Brooks, Onus and Johnston.

With so many closely matched machines there were many tussles down the field in all three 600cc races and spectators were delighted with some of the keenest competition seen at McNamara Park for some time.

Adding to the spectacle of the big solo events, the four sidecar races also kept onlookers enthralled despite the non-appearance of lap record holder Terry Goldie, apparently unable to prepare his machine in time.

Neville Lush with passenger Martin Scott showed why he is this year's Australian champion, winning all four races on the program.

Local star John (Reg.) Francis with Rowan Biram in the sidecar tried his utmost but had to settle for second in each event while former national champion Doug Chivas with Christine Williams achieved some good placings in his first appearance at McNamara Park.

Two preliminary scratch races were held on Saturday and the two legs of the sidecar Master of McNamara Park on Sunday.

Lush was never headed in Saturday's first race while Vince Messina and Chivas disputed the minor placings for two laps while Francis made up ground after making a slow start.

Up to third at half distance, Francis was on Messina's tail going into the last lap and managed to slip past for second at the flag followed by Messina, Chivas, Portland's Tim Campbell going very well on his Post-Classic outfit with young motocross rider Nathan Bell as passenger, Geoff Grant from Adelaide, Adam Propfe, Trevor Palmer from Bordertown and newcomer Walter Preisij from Keith.

Starting quickly in race two, Francis tried to hold Lush but could not match the champion and had to settle for second while Chivas enjoyed a keen duel with Messina, just holding him at bay until the last lap when Messina ran wide at the s-bend and hit the tyre barrier, leaving Chivas a safe third ahead of Campbell, Grant, the restarted Messina, Propfe, Palmer and Preisij.

Showing determination, Francis led Sunday's first race for a lap but Lush soon found the front and moved away for a clear win over Francis while Chivas displaced Messina from third after a four lap battle and was actually closing on Francis at the flag.

Messina was fourth with Grant next after Campbell ran off at the end of the main straight and finished behind Propfe.

The second leg of Sunday's Master of Mac Park contest saw Francis again make a super start and lead for a lap before Lush took over and drew away to clinch the title.

Francis finished second ahead of Chivas with Campbell going very well this time next in ahead of Grant and Propfe while Messina dropped out with bike trouble on the first lap.

This gave Lush the sidecar award from Francis and Chivas while Campbell took the post class trophy.

There were several other races for modern machines including two C grade events on Sunday.

In division one for the larger bikes and with the largest field, 25, of the meeting, Mount Gambier's Bill Smith went very well to finish a most creditable second to Brendan Roberts with Victorians Brendan Green and Ashley Roe next followed by Mount Gambier's Graeme McLaren, Hartwell club riders Rod Johnston, Ken Onus and Dave Nicholson and Adelaide's Brian Clow.

Division two for the smaller bikes brought an all-the-way win for Craig Browne from Adelaide over Victorians Lachlan Hill and Craig Nicholson, Mount Gambier clubmen James Doddrell, Daniel Cutting and Brett Doddrell who had a great three way tussle on their 125's, and Mark Boag from Adelaide.

There were three races for the group known as the formula Mac Park, an assorted variety of machines that brought some good competition.

Race one went to Tim Inkster on his 125 over Craig Browne on a 250, Victorians Peter Scott, Ryan Taylor and Lachlan Hill all on 125's and Graham Rootes on a production 250 from a good size field of 20.

Browne turned the tables on Inkster in race two with Scott again third ahead of Taylor, Craig Nicholson, Hill and Rootes but in Sunday's third race Inkster held Browne at bay from start to finish with Mark Sandford from Adelaide third ahead of Hill, Scott, Taylor and 14 others.

A special consolation scratch race for riders who entered for the solo Master of McNamara Park but were excluded because of the large number of nominations brought out many of those who contested the formula Mac Park events and brought another win for Craig Browne who was able to head Tim Inkster after four laps.

Mark Sandford was third ahead of Richard Ramsey from Adelaide and Victorians Paul Coleman and John Collins.