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Neil's Corner



I'm sitting on the 5th floor of my hotel in Abu Dhabi staring at the \$1.3 billion US dollar race track facility called the Yas Marina circuit.

It's built around a marina with an integrated 5 star, 500 room hotel laced into the design. (No I'm not in that hotel unfortunately!)

We've just wrapped-up races 1 and 2 of the 2010 V8 Supercars Championship Series.

The outlook here is surreal. Disneyland for grown-ups... Toy central for people with some serious coin.

Being a bit of a research nerd I wobbled around on the web looking for information about where we are working and what it all means.

I discovered that Abu Dhabi is home to a permanent population of about 890,000.

At the top of the wealth tree here the numbers are scary. So big, that statistically at least, the average Abu Dhabi resident has a net wealth of 17 million USD!!!

Getting the picture?

The Yas Marina complex is a giant construction zone right now. However, in a very short period of time, this precinct will become the tourism heart of the area and possibly the UAE.

I've been asked a lot why we are here. It's a good question.

The short answer is commerce. Supply and demand.

The category has been invited up here by two heavy-weight clients. The promoters of both the events here in Abu Dhabi and Bahrain.

To be selected from a world of alternative racing categories is quite a coup for our home grown V8's and the two promoters here have co-operated to share the costs and bring the circus to their towns.

We've built a product that people want to buy. It's that simple and the money we earn ultimately finds it's way to your favourite Team and keeps the whole Series buoyant.

The aim for the people of Abu Dhabi and Bahrain is to promote the region.

International airlines Emirates and Etihad have grown rapidly and they now draw '000's of people by the plane load, around the clock, from around the world every day.

It is part of a broader strategy to reduce their income dependence on oil.

In fact, more than 60% of Abu Dhabi GDP is non oil related. Mostly finance and tourism. The plan is working.

The girls love the shopping. The boys love the toys and there's no shortage of sunny days!

Anyway... what about the car racing?

Well Team Vodafone whacked everybody in their new Holdens. Despite a troubled test only several weeks ago at Queensland Raceway, Team Principal Roland Dane rounded up his troops and went to war to ensure they were competitive.

2 races, 2 wins and 1 Pole for Jamie Whincup... I'd say the reward equalled the effort.

Of the rest. Ford Performance Racing look good. Mark Winterbottom showed excellent pace in the Orrcon Falcon and so did Shane Van Gisbergen in the SP Tools Ford prepared by Stone Brothers Racing. James Courtney and Jim Beam Racing were on it too.

Frankly, the rest all looked a bit frayed one way or the other...

The tight turn-around from Sydney to now made for enormous pressure but I expect we'll see things settle down in the weeks ahead.

Onto Bahrain now. We'll be using the long GP circuit because we're sharing the event with the GP2 Series.

GP2 is the under-series for Formula 1.

I saw Lewis Hamilton drive the wheels off one of them in England a few years back at the British GP.

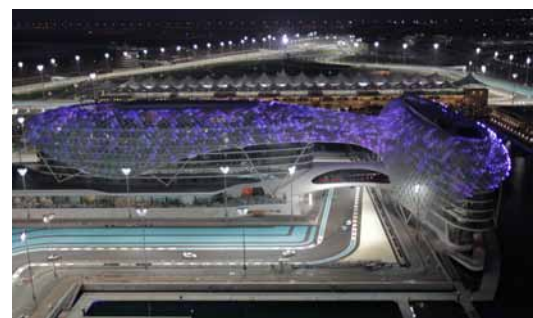
They're bloody quick. the better boys would get onto the back of the F1 grid.

Back to V8's. Look to HRT, Jack Daniels Racing and maybe the boys from Brad Jones Racing to make up for a tough weekend.

Meantime, I'm feeling that I might need to call a help line here to cope with a bad dose of asset envy.

A Global Express personal jet just flew past my window casting a shadow on some other blokes super yacht in the marina...

I'll keep it in mind next time I donate at the fuel bowser!



Straight advice, specialists you understand and... No Bull

