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Neil's Corner



The 2010 Clipsal 500 was the best I've witnessed since the V8 version of the event roared to life back in 1999.

Big statement I know...

The SA government and the SA Motor Sport Board have a knack of creating memorable events and this year was their finest effort to date.

The racing was superb. The off-track entertainment was world class. The city leapt to life. Pubs, cafes and restaurants were buzzing. The event is a proper example of how a street based race event should really work.

The bottom line to my message here. If ever you consider visiting one of our events, place this one very high on your short list.

Now we're 6 races down and we have a contest! There's just 57 points between Jamie Whincup and Mark Winterbottom.

Garth Tander and the Toll Holden Racing Team made a welcome comeback to form earning a Pole and two race wins while Jamie copped one of those weekends all drivers endure from time to time.

Saturday wasn't great for Whincup when the crew accidentally put 2 tyres on the car when it needed 4. However, Sunday's race was the source of the real pain. JW was hit from behind by James Courtney at Turn 9. The shroud surrounding the fuel cell broke away and he received a mechanical black flag requiring a pit stop and an inspection for safety reasons.

Of course there was nothing to see so the stop was in vain. Officials maintain they are duty bound to inspect the car for public safety and the Team says bull-dust!

It revealed a tiny flaw in our judicial process. If our officials had better knowledge of the car-build maybe this would not have happened?

If, but, maybe... three little words that get a big run in motorsport!

I concede it's a hard one to call but it made a material difference to the Championship points table. Time will tell if the impact of the decision changes the course of the Series.

So far Holdens have done all the winning but as the leading Ford man Mark "Frosty" Winterbottom is only a whisker from success.

I was fortunate enough to drive Frosty's car in Adelaide. What a beautiful device. Making judgement calls about car behaviour when you're not at 100% can be dangerous. Race cars really only function properly at 100% but the underlying feeling in the #5 Falcon was a car that begged to be driven hard.

Matching cars to uneven and awkward street circuits is part science and part black-art.

Frosty has just been reunited with his V8 Development Series Championship winning Engineer, Campbell Little.

Campbell, as you may know, did a successful stint with Team Vodafone at 888 Race Engineering with Craig Lowndes before briefing holding the role of V8 Championship Series Technical Director.

The latter appointment proved to be short-lived after being mauled by internal politics.

All the turbulence associated with that mess was Ford Performance Racing's gain.

Campbell brings with him life-long Australian Touring Car engineering expertise and a head filled with a fare share of Team Vodafone's race-winning I.P.

This knowledge is serving FPR well.

In fact, if you look at the top 3 in the Championship - Whincup, Winterbottom and Courtney, all those cars have 888 Race Engineering DNA in them.

Next stop for us is the non-championship Australian Grand Prix support event (March 26-28) followed by another street circuit chase in Hamilton, NZ mid April.

The industry currently has it's collective tongues hanging out trying to get from one to the other. It's peak hour right now in motorsport. Hope you're enjoying it.

Bring it on.



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