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Neil's Corner



Last time we chatted I noted the 2010 Clipsal 500 was the best "Clipsal event" since the V8 version of the event was created back in 1999.

This week I'd like to back-up with a similar statement. The 2010 Formula 1 Qantas Australian Grand Prix was the best F1 show I've seen since the event came to Melbourne in 1996.

Wanna know why?

To explain myself I'll borrow a line from my colleague Mark Skaife. He trotted this out when we ran our cars at Sydney Olympic Park last year.

In order to create the kind of motor racing entertainment we all enjoy; circuits must have consequences.

He's right. Adelaide and Melbourne are circuits that make stuff happen.

By contrast, the Hermann Tilke designed circuits that hosted the first 2 V8 events (Abu Dhabi and Bahrain) and the first F1 event (Bahrain) this year generate average racing.

What's the difference?

Simple. The Tilke circuits are too clinical. Massive open run-offs. Billiard table smooth. Silly corner shapes that discourage passing. Inexplicable humps mid-corner... And if weather arrives, which it did, all these factors amplify.

Mark and I drove our first lap of Abu Dhabi and looked at each other at the end of it and used short-sharp very Australian language to describe the layout.

Make no mistake, overall the facilities are beyond first class but as decent racing circuits they are average in the extreme!

This I might mention is not only my view but as many of you know the entire F1 world went into a frenzy about how boring the first F1 event was. Bahrain was chronic.

These consequences are all the outcomes that result from the following menu? Walls. Bumps. Kerbs. Surface variations.

All this stuff makes action. In Abu Dhabi and Bahrain a driver mistake involves a brief detour and not much more. In Adelaide or Melbourne a driver mistake is punished with damage or loss of many placings.

Actually seeing the cars react and the good drivers handling these reactions is another important aspect of trackside and TV spectator enjoyment. It's also a greater engineering and set-up challenge.

File note to Hermann. Corners with a constant or tightening radius don't work. Stop drawing them before all events on your circuits become medical prescriptions for people who can't sleep!

The Australian Grand Prix was an amazing race.

Weather, incidents and some wild driving all contributed to an upbeat race in total contrast to the opening Round.

Smart strategy and incredibly smooth and balanced fast driving delivered Jenson Button his first win of 2010, his first win for McLaren and his second successive win on the streets of Melbourne.

The V8 events were not quite as wild but the racing was intense.

Garth Tander did another great job and might now be swinging the tables back to offer some serious resistance to Team Vodafone.

Another pleasing aspect of the AGP V8 events was the breakthrough win for Ford by James Courtney in the first of the three sprint races.

We need James, the rapid and exciting Shane Van Gisbergen and Mark Winterbottom in the game to keep those Holden blokes honest.

Next stop. Hamilton, NZ April 16, 17 and 18.



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

