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Neil's Corner



The Jamie Whincup factor. Sounds like the title of a crook TV show huh!

I've been curiously watching the V8 Supercars Championship Series unfold this year and with every passing week I'm seeing more and more of the "Jamie factor".

What the hell I hear you ask?

Jamie is a bit special right now. He's enjoying a career phase that only the elite periodically enjoy.

Previous recipients reads like the who's who... Allan Moffat, Peter Brock, Jim Richards, Mark Skaife, Craig Lowndes....

It's not a particular, tangible, sensible thing, it's a certain something that makes them a bit teflon, a bit invincible, a bit special.

Clues:

They're always in the right place at the right time.

Luck seemingly falls their way.

If there's a rain cloud, it lobs onto someone else.

If there's gold at the end of the rainbow - they're onto it first.

I don't know what it is - it just is.

How do I arrive at this whacky conclusion? Simple...

8 races down and Jamie has won 6 of them. That's very cool but it is not the key factor in making this determination.

The 29 car/driver field has never been stronger. The talent depth is world class. The competition is so close it's actually highly stressful for entire teams, drivers and sponsors.

The difference between win or bust is marginal.

A knife edge of time fractions sorts the difference between rooster and feather duster and Jamie is nearly always playing rooster right now.

However, statistics and tough competition are still not the big factors in arriving at this conclusion.

My decision that Jamie is a freak right now (I mean that nicely) is based on some known quantities around him.

Jamie is belting Craig Lowndes, Russell Ingall & Greg Murphy. He's also clobbering others with access to 888 Race Engineering products like James Courtney and Steve Johnson.

I rate Craig as a huge talent. We all do. Greg and Russell are also serious over-achievers in this business too.

And yet despite their obvious talent they can't lay a glove on Whincup right now.

Worse still they have precisely the same equipment and I mean precisely.

The #51 Castrol, #39 Supercheap Auto and the #888 Team Vodafone cars are all identical to Jamie's.

Same design DNA, same nuts and bolts, same everything in fact. They even have access to the all important set-up and driving data that car #1 generates.

I asked Greg Murphy about this last weekend and frankly he's bewildered.

They all have the same car, they all have the same data, they can all adopt the same highly important settings but still the Jamie factor prevails.

That's why I'm firmly convinced that Whincup is just amazing right now.

Take Jamie out of the points table and the Championship is wide open. No clear ruler or Team. Place Whincup back into the mix and it's a one-sided affair.

He's a sharp young Champion but a damn pest right now. I admire his talent and his achievements but I wish the others could claw back some ground.

Last year at Queensland Raceway Will Davison put one over the locals on the Sunday during the longer race.

This year, we've got the added twists of smaller fuel tank cells and the Sprint tyres.

The Sprint tyres must be used all weekend. That is going to create a bit of mayhem I expect.

If Whincup still prevails against that backdrop then they should knight him or let him run the country...

Next stop. Races 9 & 10, Queensland Raceway, Ipswich, April 30 & May 1 & 2.



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