



I CANT AFFORD IT!

Having had a passion for motorsport since an early age, I had resigned myself to the fact that I would never be able to afford to compete in motorsport at any level. Being a motor mechanic did however present me with an opportunity to be involved in rallying as part of several service crews. The highlights of this were being service crew manager at 3 Telstra Rally Australia events in the late 1990s and as a member of Jeff Beaumont's team at 2 Classic Adelaide events. After starting work at Mobile Auto Care, I had another opportunity to service in the 2008 Classic Adelaide Rally for Michael Rohal. This is where I thought my involvement in motorsport would end. At this stage my mode of transport was a 1998 Mazda Astina with a 1.8 4 cylinder motor. I had always maintained that this car would benefit greatly from a suspension and brake upgrade. Thanks to Michael, I was able to fit a complete set of lowered sports suspension along with slotted rotors and a set of Hawk brake pads. After completing this work, Michael asked me if I was now going to do some hillclimbs or something with it. My reply to this was "I CANT AFFORD TO GO MOTOR RACING!" However, his question spiked my interest, and after researching hillclimbs on the net, I discovered that I COULD AFFORD IT! I was on my way.

Next hurdle to overcome was getting the approval of my wonderful partner, (now my fiancée) Lyn. To this end, I decided to show her the footage of the Audi Quattro driving up Pikes Peak. Not a wonderful idea. However, the following weekend saw the running of the 2008 South Australian Hillclimb Championships at Collingrove. On Sunday, Lyn, myself and Lyn's daughter, Vanessa all went to have a look at hillclimbing in South Australia. After viewing the complex, and watching a few cars drive the hill, Lyn turned to me and said "I can see you doing this". YES! Vanessa showed great interest as well and after talking to Sean Day about Daniel, she got very excited about the possibility of competing once she turned 14. Unfortunately, it looked like my first opportunity to compete would be at the next come and try day in April 2009. Such a long way off. Come November and I received news that the 3 guys that were meant to be travelling to Geelong, for the darts competition at the Australian masters Games, were no longer going to enter. As I had already paid my entry to the games, I decided to enter the hillcimb being held at Mt Leura as part of the Masters. It then became a rush to join the Sporting Car Club of SA and get my CAMS licence. These achieved, my entry was submitted. Next, a set of Federal 595rs R spec tyres, a sports seat and a harness were purchased and fitted., and impatience set in.

MY FIRST EVENT

February arrives and the car is checked over, a fire extinguisher and blue triangle fitted, rear seat and trims removed, and some stickers applied in appreciation of the business and people that helped make this all possible. The car is then sent to Graham at Bob Jane, Modbury for a wheel alignment adjustment. In the fortnight before the games major bushfires swept through Victoria, putting the event at risk. Eventually it was given the all clear, and final preparations were made.



This included a big yellow ribbon being made by Lyn's middle daughter, Jessica, to be affixed to the roof of the car in respect to all the victims and firefighters that were involved in the fires. The car was packed and I headed off to Camperdown to compete in my first ever motorsport competition at the ripe old age of 51. A pleasant and uneventful drive saw me reach my destination, mid afternoon on the Friday. A drive to the oval to scope out the venue, and gain some idea as to what to expect. Back to the cabin to unpack and settle in and up to the café to get some tea. Back to the cabin for an early night, although the nerves and anticipation made for a fairly sleepless night. Saturday morning couldn't get there soon enough, but eventually the time arrived to head to my first event. Documentation went without a hitch and the nervous wait for scrutineering began. This too went without a problem and I was now authorized to start. Having checked out the field, I gravitated towards 3 other South Australian entries and introduced myself to them. What a great bunch of guys! They did everything they could to settle my nerves and offer me every support. Thank you Peter Emes, Kym Ninnes, and Norm Goodall. Time for drivers briefing where I would finally find out exactly what I needed to do. At last it was time to get in the car for a practice run up the hill. WHAT A BUZZ! Now the competition starts. My very standard Mazda has been placed in Improved Production 1600-3000 class, which had 7 other cars entered. All of these were prepared race cars with full cages and no interior, so I decided to remove the passenger seat to at least save some weight. My first run saw a time of 45.65 seconds and placed me 6th in class. I then proceeded to improve my times consistently over the weekend, before recording a best run of 40.25 seconds on the final run. This put me in 4th position, less than 3 tenths away from getting the silver medal. What a wonderful initiation.

BACK IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Now it was time for my First season at Collingrove. The come and try day arrived and I drove out to the track bright and early. First driver to present for documentation and first car to get through scrutineering. A glorious day presented itself for us and after drivers briefing, it was time for my first look at the hill. Vanessa jumped into the car to ride up the hill with me and to film the track as we went. Unsteady hands and bumpy ride meant that this plan was not terribly successful. An enjoyable day and 6 runs later saw me improve my times from 49 to 46 seconds. The next day was to be my first competition at the venue and another good day of weather saw my times fall further to mid 43 second range. Heading in the right direction and giving me optimism at reaching a sub 40 second run in the future. A season of competing in all events held there was extremely enjoyable, with times continuing to fall. Down to a 42.2 by the end of it. In this period Lyn had purchased a 1996 Mazda Mx5 for us, and at the final multiclub event of the year, I decided to double enter and run both cars on the same day as a comparison. The Mx5 was over a second quicker, although I soon found out that with the rear wheel drive (compared to the front wheel drive of the Astina) maybe I shouldn't keep the boot in once I had understeered off onto the grass. A spin across the track at the bus stop and ending up down the



Hill, on my first run in the MX5, convinced me that a different driving style may be needed. The final Wintercup round of the season was postponed due to the pit area being in near flood, so a wait until after the South Australian championships was needed. This was then postponed again due to extreme heat and fire risk on the new date. The 2009 Wintercup would not be decided until the first Multiclub of 2010. The State titles would be the first event solely for the MX5. Unfortunately, at the come and try day for the MSCA at Mallala, on my first set of laps, a tapping noise stated to develop on lap 2. By the time I got to the start/finish straight, it had become apparent that a big end bearing was knocking. End of first day at Mallala for the car. As I pulled into the garage, Rob Jones from the MX5 club of SA offered me his car to take out and get some more laps in. I declined at this stage, as I felt that my mindset was not conducive to driving at speed around a racetrack. Towards the end of the day, I did take him up on his repeated offers and an enjoyable 5 laps were run. Thank you Rob. The car was sent to the workshop at work, the motor removed and stripped. No3 big end had pounded out, so a crank grind and set of bearings were all that was needed. HaHa! \$4500 dollars in parts and machining later, The motor was rebuilt and back in the car in time for the States. Once again huge thanks go to Michael Rohal. Without his assistance, this would not have been possible. A second hand set of Japanese lowered suspension, and another Bob Jane Modbury wheel alignment and we were all set to go. The state titles saw me reduce the track record for the 2F class from 44.10 to 41.25 seconds, and gave me my first medal in my very short motorsport career. State champion in my first year. What an unexpected thrill. This was followed by a class win in the 2009 Wintercup, once the final round was held. All expectations completely blown out of the water.

2010

The new year saw a racing seat being fitted. This meant that now Lyn could no longer get into the car, and she had to take over the Astina as her work vehicle. Sorry babe. After the first 2 events of the season and a supersprint at Mallala (at which I was very nervous, and kept hearing every noise in the car) I decided to enter the 6 hour regularity event. The MX5 club fielded 3 teams in this event, and I was teamed with Ian Duncan, his son Andrew and Michael Paterson. Ian was the only driver with much experience (it was the first season for the rest of us) so finishing mid pack was an outstanding effort for us. This event saw one use of the pace car, and I was the driver that the pace car picked up. Bugga! My nerves at having all those much faster cars directly behind me, were not helped when it started raining during the pace car period. The lights went out, I turned onto the star/finish straight and sunk the right boot. OOPS! Suddenly I was sitting on the infield facing the wrong way. Well I guess that was one way of getting out of the quick guys way. By the end of this event, my Federal tyres were shot. A few calls later and the decision was made to purchase some Silverstone FTZRRs. These Fitted soon saw my Collingrove times tumble, and at the first event on these tyres that sub 40 second was reached with a 39.52 best. The next event saw that reduced further to 38.88 seconds. WOW. This season also saw a great friendly rivalry begin between Peter Emes, & Angus Mitchell in 2F and Peter Smeets in his supercharged Toyota MR2 in marque sports. New records were set and times exchanged at each event. The state titles were probably my least successful and enjoyable event. Saturday saw times a second and a half off my best times. On reflection, it finally dawned. I had replaced a noisy lifter 2 days earlier, and I must have slipped with the timing belt when reassembling. Drive the car home that night and check. Yep. Valve timing retarded by one tooth. 30 minutes later



And all was resolved. Sunday saw me trying too hard and spinning off amongst the large moss rocks at the top of the hill, luckily without hitting anything. Recovery car called for and Lyn having a coronary in the timing hut, but all was good. My confidence, however was shot for the day, but still manage to finish second in class. My second season also saw the opportunity to compete at my first Australian Hillclimb Championships, at which I finished third in class behind Peter Emes and Angus Mitchell. The last run of the event saw me lower my best time to 38.53 seconds and for the first time, finish an event in front of Peter Smeets in the supercharged MR2. 2010 also saw the holding of the MX5 clubs National Meet in South Australia and in conjunction with this, an opportunity to compete in a hillclimb up Willunga Hill at Easter time presented itself. Too good an opportunity to pass up. A great morning and a finish mid field saw me go home quite content. After the Australian Championships, the presentation for the 2010 Wintercup were made and after being presented with my second place. I was completely stunned to be called up as runner up for the Wintercup outright trophy. Boy this motorsport experience is proving to be better than I ever thought possible.

2011

2011 sees some more changes made to the car, with KYB AGX adjustable shockers and adjustable Whiteline swaybars fitted front and rear, as well as a Mazda Torson limited slip diff also fitted. Tyre however, were a problem and budget restraints saw a set of 2005 production, 185/65/14 medium compound Yokohamas being fitted. They had gone very hard and the reduced contact area saw my best time at Collingrove to be .5 second slower. At the time of this going to print, a new set of 205/50/15 Yokohama 050A soft compound tyres were being fitted to my 15" rims. I cant wait to see what times I can set on these new sticky boots. Even with the older tyres I have had some success this year, After Michael gave me a free entry into this year's ASP Mt Alma Mile hillclimb, where I was put into Road Registered up to 2000cc class. This event is a cumulative time event and consistent running saw me win the class after my main rival had a spin on the first run Sunday morning.

Well that's the story of my foray into motorsport to this point and I must say that I really wish that I had being doing this for the last 35 years. What a great sport, but that is outweighed by the wonderful friendships that I have made in such a short period of time. The help, support and shared information that everyone involved is willing to passed on is unbelievable. A huge thanks again to my sponsors, Mobile Auto Care And Bob Jane Modbury. Thanks guys, I couldn't have done what I have without you.

But MOST importantly, My wonderful fiancée, Lyn deserves the biggest thanks of all. For someone that has no interest in motorsport or cars, to not only come out and support me at each hillclimb, but to volunteer as a timekeeper to help keep the events running smoothly, really blows my mind. THANK YOU!