

Dear supporters,

January has been an awesome month for me. It started spending the Lady Wigram Trophy race weekend helping my supporter Ken Smith as he tried to claim a record 4 wins of the prestigious trophy. Unfortunately a clash early in the 15 lap race ended his hope of victory.

A few days later I was aboard a flight to Invercargill for the third round of the 2009/2010 Porsche GT3 Cup Challenge to get amongst it with the Triple X Motorsport team. We arrived at the track early Friday morning. It had been a couple of years since I had been to Teretonga so it was great to get back to the worlds southern most race circuit. The team had a pretty good weekend with David Reynolds taking the round win. After Sundays last race we packed up under the unusual Invercargill sunshine as quickly as possible so we could get on the road to Queenstown as part of our break between the following weekends racing at Levels, Timaru. I took the trip in the Triple X van with South Australian Adrian Kroemer nick named 'Cosmo', we shared some good stories.

We arrived there to find that we were staying in the Crowne Plaza, by far the best place I have stayed in. Our time in Queenstown was cool, we spent most of it chilling out, but I still managed some training running up the super steep gondola track. On the Monday evening the whole team went down to Glenorchy on the luxury Foxtime coach that the team hires for each meeting, Michael Morton (team owner), Craig Baird (team driver), Graham Fox (bus driver) and myself prepared and cooked a barbeque dinner on the lake shore using The Mad Butchers superb meat range while the rest of the team spent time socialising and skimming stones across the crystal clear water. After that we had a bus trip back to Queenstown. It was an entertaining night and one I will remember for some time. Most of the team left for Timaru on Wednesday morning and I was meant to go as well but unfortunately I SLEPT IN and had to travel up the next day on the bus with the rest of the team. Instead I spent Wednesday with the Baird family in Wanaka and had a great time. Thanks Craig and Louise for letting me come along.

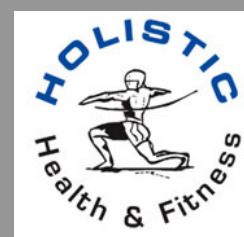
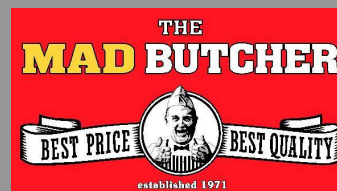


In Timaru I tried to work as hard as I could to make up for my mistake and think I did enough to keep the team happy. Triple X had the best weekend results wise, with Craig winning the first two races and Courtney Letica winning the reverse top-6 final heat, Craig won the round with Daniel third. Thank you to Todd Bickerton, Ian McNabb, Shane McKillen and Michael Morton for giving me the opportunity to learn and be apart of your team, I really enjoyed my ten days away, it was a fantastic experience, thank you very much.

Best regards,

Tom Barker

PARTNERS



After the trip with Triple X Motorsport I turned my attention to my part time job at the Canterbury Motor Racing School where I broke the news that I had raised the funds to complete my race apprenticeship programme in association with Andy Neale and the school. I spent most of the week getting back into the driving rhythm, completing various laps at a road going pace to refresh myself with driving a manual race machine.

On Tuesday 2nd February I completed my first one on one advanced driver training day with Andy Neale in the Mazda RX7. I really surprised not only my self but also Andy with how quick I went. In the first session (The first time I had driven a race car in anger) I posted a 1 minute 52.07 second lap time and Andy completed a 1:46.21 lap. The next session we tried to step it up another gear, I was pushing hard and a small mistake at the fastest corner of the track (named Pothole) sent me spinning, luckily I didn't hit anything and damage the car. After that I put my head down and tried again banking a time of 1:48.48 which was way beyond any expectations considering it was on only my 19th lap of thrashing a race car. For the next run Andy did the initial laps and dropped his time to a 1:43.94 one of his best times he has done in the car. Then it was my turn, each lap I was shaving around 0.5 of a second off my times until the best I could manage for now was a 1:47.17.

"A brilliant time for an inexperienced race car driver." Andy reckoned.

He also said that I have formed a good base to build on and will definitely be ready for my Formula Ford club race meeting next month if I can continue at this rate.



What was even more pleasing was when we over looked the data in the debrief session and I was mirroring Andy's lap from the end of the front straight and through turn one up till the braking point at pothole and other sequences of the track as well. I was losing little amounts of time in my gear changes and through the right left infield section. I am trying hard to perfect that and I will hopefully make up more time in those areas on the next coaching day on February 16th where I will do 30 laps in the Mazda then 20 laps in the Formula Ford which will be awesome and I am really looking forward to it. Thank you very much Michael Morton for giving me this fantastic opportunity and I hope you realise how grateful I am.

It was a month to remember from having a legend in the form of Kenny Smith have dinner at my house, working with New Zealand's best Porsche team and drivers as well as building a strong relationship with them and best of all getting the opportunity to develop and prove my skills as a driver.

Thanks for your time guys and I will keep you posted on my progress

Regards

Tom Barker

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