

# mxtra

1/2011

[www.mx5vic.org.au](http://www.mx5vic.org.au)

THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE MAZDA MX-5 CLUB OF VICTORIA INC.

# Happy new year!



## **In this edition:**

**Why an MX-5? | Club points system explained  
Interstate challenge | Ben Sale's 'My Ride'**



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### Cover image:

*The lookout at Eaglehawk Neck at the top of Tasman Peninsula, south of Hobart, looking over Pirates Bay towards Cape Hauy*

Photo: John Waldock

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# Murray's Corner ...

■ Murray Finlay – President

## Happy New Year!

I hope that Santa brought you all you desired (or at least deserved!) and that your new year's resolutions are not too outlandish or onerous ... and are still in place two weeks in!

Hopefully the first thing you will have noticed in this edition is an updated look for the MX-TRA magazine. Editor Don has been working with our resident designer (and my good lady wife) Alyssa to revamp the masthead on the front cover so that the title is more readable (it's amazing how many people call this publication the "MX" or even the "TRA"! ) and a choice of new fonts for headings etc. There will be more updates and improvements to the layout as we progress, but these will be more evolutionary than revolutionary. It ain't broke, but we felt it needed a freshen up. Feedback is welcome.

There's not much to report at this time of the year; things are always pretty quiet on the Club front.

On my own front as President, though,

the next few weeks are full on.

This last weekend Will Campbell and I spent a day starting to standardise/simplify a whole lot of practices past NatMeets as the basis for future national events, followed by our annual committee BBQ/kick-off meeting.

Next weekend Alyssa and I are in Tasmania for three days visiting the North Tassie and Hobart Chapters.

Then there's the re-scheduled "Cars of the World" event the following Sunday, 30 January, followed by my President's Run on Sunday, 6 February.

I'll be going back to work for a rest!

*(By the way, contrary to the December flyer, there will be no dirt road driving on the President's run!)*



I mentioned "Cars of the World" coming up on 30 January. This show'n'shine event was moved from last Cup weekend

when the venue, Rochford Wines in Coldstream, found itself waterlogged after a substantial deluge.

Last time we had about 25 cars committed to represent the Club – we're one of four featured marques for the event – as well as a few helpers for the event start point, and I hope that all of those will be available to come along for "Take 2" this month.

Of course, there's always room for more, and it's certainly not too late to sign up.

It's a great chance to showcase both the MX-5 and the Club. The entry cost is \$25/car, but the Club will refund \$15 of that (if you decide to claim), as the money goes to a worthy charity. See this month's flyer for all the details.

**Until next time, look up, stay back!**

*Murray*



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# Motor Sport Torque



■ Robert Downes – Club Captain - Motor Sport

## *Interstate Challenge / Phillip Island – 12 December 2010*

An absolutely fantastic day of racing with 56 MX-5s competing in the annual **Interstate Challenge** with the MX-5 Club of NSW (24 drivers from NSW and 32 from Vic). At the end of the day the "Challenge Cup" is back in our hands!

The standard of driving and the level of competition are continually improving with five of the seven Club class lap records again being lowered and indeed 29 Victorian drivers setting "personal best" times for the Island. With most of the NSW drivers having little and in most cases no previous experience at Phillip Island, there were some very impressive times posted by some of them. But importantly, they were all smiling at the end of the day.

Approximately 50 people enjoyed themselves at the RSL in Cowes on the Saturday night and there was a long queue at 7am at the track entry gate on the Sunday morning.

We must thank our friends at the Alfa Club for yet again carrying off a professionally-managed event. I would also like to extend a big thank you to the many people associated with our Club and the NSW Club who assisted either with entry processing in the morning, scrutineering, flag marshalling in either the morning and/or the afternoon, organising the Saturday evening venue and driver instruction during the initial practice sessions. I know the Alfa Club and all competitors appreciate your assistance in helping the day run smoothly and on time.

I would especially like to thank Russell Garner who processed Entrant Declaration Forms from each of the NSW drivers prior to the meeting and, on race day, completed the timing data entry and result processing so that the presentations could take place soon after the completion of racing. In addition, I must thank Sam Gumina for devising a "scoring system" that meant each competitor played a part in the result and took into account any discrepancy in the number of competitors from each State. I am confident that it will be used at future Challenges.

In the **Open Class**, Daniel Deckers and Steven Cook finished 1, 2. Although Steve smashed the Club lap record, I am sure there is plenty "left on the table" from that driver/car combination.

In the **Restricted Open Class**, Randy Stagno Navarra pipped Phil Ashton of NSW by 0.2 seconds. Both bettered the previous lap record and went sub two minutes. Kim Cole, in his supercharged car and in a welcome return to MX-5 Club racing, kept them honest.

In **Modified Class** with 17 entries, Russell Garner held out Mark Hellmund (NSW) by 0.3 seconds followed by Mick Hicks (NSW). In his first outing at the Island, Mark's performance was very impressive and will give him plenty of confidence to improve on his return.

In **Clubman Class**, we saw four drivers better the existing Club class lap record, however Peter Phillips smashed his existing lap record to edge out Teruo Delacroix. Special mention to young and inexperienced Ben Sale who posted a fabulous 2.04 lap to edge out six-time Club Champ Sam Gumina.

In **Standard NC**, Colin Denman-Jones was a clear winner and established a new class lap record.

In **Standard NB**, just 0.1 second covered the first three drivers with Bob DeBont edging out Max Lloyd and Brendan Thomas (NSW).

In **Standard NA**, four drivers bettered the existing lap record including Bryan Shedden (NSW) who only got to complete half a dozen laps of the track in his past visit to the Island. His drive was a tremendous effort and I look forward to driving against Bryan at Wakefield Park next year. I was pleased to set a new class lap record of 2:06.15.

For the "Challenge Cup", points were allocated in each Class as per our Championship System (10, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 1, 1 etc) and the total team points were divided by the number of drivers.

**Victoria edged out NSW 4.94 to 4.25!**

Our special thanks go to all the members of the NSW Club and their partners and friends who made the long trip to Phillip Island. I trust you thoroughly enjoyed yourselves and for some, you can now cross "race Phillip Island Grand Prix track" off your "bucket" list.

I have earmarked Sunday, 23 October, 2011, for the next Interstate Challenge against NSW at Wakefield Park.

## *"Racecraft" Training Day - Winton – 5 March, 2011*

This day is designed for people who are presently participating in our Motor Sport Program and are looking to improve their driving skills and lap times or for those that are about to start racing. It is **NOT** aimed at those who are looking for the one off opportunity to drive their MX-5 on the track at speeds exceeding those that are legal on a public road.

Furthermore, participants already need to be competent drivers.

*The Alfa Club has 10 spots for MX-5 Club members and it and I reserve the right to reject "unsuitable" entries.*

## *Annual Motor Sport Meeting – City Mazda, Friday, 8 April, 2011*

Greg McPherson and Daniel White from City Mazda in South Melbourne have generously offered to host our next annual Motor Sport meeting. Please let me know of any items you wish discussed so I can put an agenda together. An updated wording of the Championship Rules is scheduled for release by the end of March so that it can be discussed and agreed on at that meeting.

## *Motor Sport Program for 2011*

Please note there have been a couple of changes to the program and the Club has a day organised at DECA in Shepparton on 19 June, 2011. The new dates are all on the Club website.

**Until next month ...  
"drive responsibly at all times"**







# Membership

■ Will Campbell – Membership Officer

Current membership count:

416



## Welcome to 2011!

Membership continues to grow steadily with the count now at 416. Of course, whilst an increasing membership base is a good indicator of an organisation's health, a club is all about participation.

In the past year, most members attended a number of events and enjoyed the ensuing fellowship. I encourage you to continue this fine tradition and take pleasure in all that the best and most affordable sports car in the world has to offer.

A glance at the Club calendar will show you that there is already an impressive collection of events listed for the coming year – ranging from the President's Run in February and a mid-week tour of the Goldfields and Spa country areas in May, through to driver training in March, June and August, and the Winton 6-Hour in October. *Something for everyone!*

With this in mind, I would like to welcome the following enlightened folk who have joined our ranks this month:

» Douglas Haig	2007 Galaxy Grey NC
» Katie Molloy	1999 Twilight Blue NB
» Dean Monik	2000 Black NB
» Gwenda Parkinson	2010 Brilliant Black NC
» Alan Peet	1997 Grace Green NA
» Carol Timbrell	2000 Classic Red NB
» John Hayhurst	2002 Classic Red NB
» Peter & Anita Silver	2010 Aluminium NC
» Salman Sharmi	1997 Grace Green NB

See you out and about ...

*Will*

Good day Don,

Thanks for posting the MX-TRA magazine through; it sounded like you all enjoyed your trip.

Thanks again for your donations; the brigade has been buying furniture for the station so that the next time you come up there will be some comfortable chairs to sit on.

Hope that you and the MX-ers have a great 2011.

Regards,

**Gary Hendy and Strath Creek / Reedy Creek Rural Fire Brigade**

### Mr Don Nicoll

At an emergency meeting of the *SUNSET GOLD MX-5 OWNERS' CLUB* the following resolution was passed unanimously:

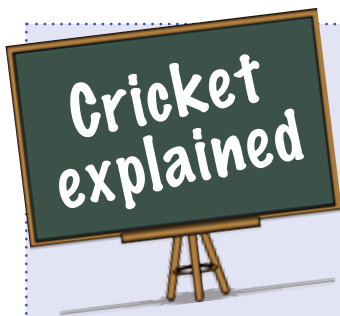
- » Membership of this exclusive club would be denied to you for a period of at least 10 years
- » It was deemed fortunate that you were unable to purchase one of these exclusive and desirable cars
- » Any further public denigration of this fabulous car would result in the application of Clause IX in our constitution
- » As a penance you should be forced to have a picture displayed on your computer to remind you constantly of your errors.

A picture is enclosed that should be set as the wallpaper on all your computers.

Thank you,

**Sunset Gold Owners' Club**

*Ed: where has all this "gold" stuff come from? Mazda called this colour "Sunset YELLOW"!!*



*With our dismal showing in the Test cricket this summer, we thought it might be time to revisit the basics ...*

*You have two sides, one out in the field and one in.*

*Each man that's in the side that's in goes out, and when he's out he comes in and the next man goes in until he's out.*

*When they are all out, the side that's out comes in and the side that's been in goes out and tries to get those coming in, out.*

*Sometimes you get men still in and not out.*

*When a man goes out to go in, the men who are out try to get him out, and when he is out he goes in and the next man in goes out and goes in.*

*There are two men called umpires who stay all out all the time and they*

*decide when the men who are in are out.*

*When both sides have been in and all the men have been out, and both sides have been out twice after all the men have been in, including those who are not out ...*

*... that's the end of the game!*

**Got it now, boys?**



# Scene about ...



In an effort to reach a wider cross-section of the MX-5 Club membership and provide more user-friendly event updates, the Club set up a Facebook page a number of months ago.

**Recent correspondence to the Club indicates that perhaps the page isn't as visible or as easily accessible as it could be.**

If you already have a Facebook account, follow these steps and you should be able to find the page. On the home page click on the search bar and type in "MX-5 Club of Victoria" and hit enter. The Club's group should come up (the full group title is "Official Group of the Mazda MX-5 Club of Victoria Inc.") The group's main picture is the Club's logo. Now that you're there all you need to do is open the group link and join.

The Facebook page's event section is updated regularly and members will receive invites to all Victorian Club events. It also offers members the opportunity to share Club event photos and links with other enthusiasts.

If you have any issues please don't hesitate to ask me any questions.

**Ben Sale, Club Facebook facilitator**





# Club “points system” explained

■ Coral Campbell, Points Secretary

As the Points Secretary, a committee position I have held for several years, I decided that it was time to give Club members a reminder of how the championship points are allocated and how determinations of annual champions are made.

The actual information for Club Championship can be found on the website, but I know that sometimes people do not trawl the site looking for things.

However, I must digress into recent past history. Prior to 2000, presentations were made annually to the Motor Sport Champion, the Club Champion and to the team which had contributed significantly to the Club in the previous 12 months. The Motor Sport Championship was clear, in that there was an actual competition and obvious winners. However, the Club Champion and team championship was determined by the committee based on the degree of participation in Club activities.

Back in 2000, the committee decided to formalise the giving of presentations and developed the current Club Championship Competition, still based essentially on participation in Club activities. The three previous awards were widened to five: Club Champion, Competition (motor sport) Champion, Teams Champions, New Member Champion and Social Champion. The award of Social Champion was replaced by the existing perpetual trophy for “Outstanding Achievement Award”, which in turn was replaced in 2008 with the “Jinba Ittai Award”. For those not familiar with the term, “Jinba Ittai” translates to “horse and rider as one”.

- » **New Member Champion:** based on attendance at any Club events by a member who has joined in the current membership year. Only those who accrue 50 or more points are eligible, with the winner determined from the average monthly scores obtained, and at the discretion of the President.
- » **Teams Champion:** based on participation in any Club event as a couple when travelling in the same vehicle.
- » **Jinba Ittai Award:** selected by the President, and awarded to the person/s who has/have shown outstanding commitment to, and involvement with, the Club.
- » **Motor Sport [Competition] Champion:** based on the level of success in designated motor sport events.

- » **Club Champion:** based on participation in any Club events.

Participants in Club events receive 10 points/day for being at the event. Organisers receive 20 points/day, and helpers receive a proportional 15 points/day for the development and running of any Club event. However, if the organisation falls within that person’s designated committee role, then they do not receive points. For example, the Motor Sport Captain doesn’t receive points for organising an event, but would receive normal participation points. Similarly, the Social Captain doesn’t receive points for organising the social calendar.

Those who contribute to MX-TRA receive points (10) for writing an article (or a significant portion of an article) as well as for providing photographs (5). Committee members do not receive points for reports published in MX-TRA which relate to their specific roles.

[In addition, we have an annual **MX-TRA Award**, which is a non-points based award selected by the MX-TRA editor for the best contribution to the Club magazine.]

**Motor Sport Championship points** are awarded separately by the Motor Sport Captain. However, all participants, organisers, helpers and spectators of motor sport events receive attendance points which count toward the Club Champion, Teams Champion or New Member Champion categories. All participation points are kept on an excel file which is supported by the accumulation of the paper participation material collected at each event. This allows a double check on the accuracy of the file and means that at any point, I can refer back to the original material if a query is made.

There are a couple of things to note here. As the Points Secretary, I cannot allocate points to people who do not have their names on a participation list. At all Club events, there is a requirement for people to sign up which then covers them with insurance. However, I am sure that some of those who attend motor sport to assist or even just to watch, miss out on points as they do not ensure that they are registered for the day. It is not the responsibility of the event organiser to chase people to ensure they are

registered – haven’t you noticed how busy they are? It is your responsibility to sign up. If you cannot locate the participation list, you can always email me separately and I can then confirm with the event organiser that you attended. I would prefer not to work this way as it is less efficient than adding in the points from a completed participation list.

Another point of note here is that any member of the Club has the right to declare him or herself ineligible for any Club award. This has occurred in previous years with some of the Presidents declaring themselves ineligible and currently some of the Chapter Conveners removing themselves from the competition to allow others to take out prizes.

As the keeper of the points, I am the only one on the committee who has any idea of who is likely to take out the various Championship awards. It has been suggested that I give a formal regular report to the committee on who is moving up the list and may possibly win an award. However, I have vigorously opposed that recommendation as it means that committee members who may be in the running for an award would not only be in a privileged position, but would have the surprise of winning diluted by prior knowledge. At the end of the financial year, I send the information regarding the winners of the awards to the Club President only.

After the above information, hopefully you will have a better understanding of how points are allocated and how the Club Championship Awards are determined. Sometimes, particularly towards the end of our year and before the presentations, I find it challenging to just ‘keep my mouth shut’. I am so excited for those receiving awards. It is the culmination of many hours of participation in the Club and deserves to be recognised.

That said, there are always many people who have contributed to the Club and the success of its events. Not all can be given awards, but I will take the opportunity now to congratulate each and every one of you for helping to make our Club the strong successful club that it is. ■



# The first run of summer



■ Words: Nick Viner ■ Photos: Ron Macdonald & Wendy Clark ■ Event organisers: Grant Butler & Saeko Fujiki

It was Saturday afternoon when I looked at the date and thought it was about time for another Club run.

I looked at the Club calendar and realised they had not one but two runs on for the weekend: one from Ballarat, and Grant and Saeko's "First of the Summer" from Berwick.

Now we have a lot of fun with John and Noellene's mob in Ballarat doing the western runs and have been doing a fair few of them. However Grant and Saeko were doing a run through the green, green lands of Gippsland.

We hadn't been to Gippsland for quite a while so, sorry John, we have defected for a day. We left home at 7.25am and had a really good run up the highway to our meeting point at Berwick MacDonald's at 8.55am.

We topped up the camel next door at the servo and found we had only used 12.5 litres of fuel all the way from Lethbridge. I really think the new cruise control helps in the fuel savings department. Then we topped up ourselves with a coffee at Maccas.

A good bunch of people and 22 cars were waiting for Grant's run notes and safety talk. Then we were off, with us as sweep car.

First it was toward Phillip Island and to the turn off to McDonald's track. Up the twisting track we went and into the beautiful green foothills.

In Poowong we lost the first car of the summer, all because of the same old reason ... **someone did not wait on the corner.** I know I'm starting to sound like a broken record but ... everyone knows the deal.

*We never did find that car until we got to Inverloch. I know it is hard to navigate when solo but it is so important to wait for the next car.*

After turning off at the Poowong Hotel we cruised down to our smoko stop in Loch Village which is a pleasant quiet little place.

The weather had started out warm enough to have the hood down all the way from home, and it just got better as the day progressed.

It is great to be a part of that colourful

caterpillar of MX-5s zooming through such beautiful country. We passed a solitary red NA going the other way and got a cheery wave from him. I bet he wished he was with us all on our run.

On we went through Krowera and Wonthaggi to Cape Patterson and then along the coast road and finally into Inverloch. Wow, what a lovely little town this is, situated on the edge of an inlet of crystal clear waters.

I first saw this inlet from the air when flying into Melbourne from Launceston 10 years ago. I had often wondered what that inlet was on the western side of Wilsons Prom. Now I know. There were a couple of catamarans and lots of kite surfers skimming across the beautiful inlet.

We bought great fish and chips for lunch and ate them sitting in the sun on the beach with the rest of the group. *It was really good to get out for a day with good company.*

That was a run which only those without a pulse would not have enjoyed!

Our mates June and Dennis Barry accompanied us for some of the way home. About half way from Inverloch to Melbourne we pulled over to raise the hood as enough sun is enough and we were way too hot. The air con blasting away soon cooled us down.

The rest of the way home was the same old cruise up the M1.

Our thanks to Grant and Saeko for all the trouble they went to in making this run happen. These run notes don't just write themselves; the course has to be driven BEFORE we all get to enjoy our day out.

Still, I guess Grant gets twice the fun that way.

**Happy new year everyone! ■**



# The “auld mug” returns!



■ Words: Brendan Beavis  
 ■ Photos: Chris Schlaghecke, Roger Loveless

Results - Round 4	1st		2nd		3rd	
Standard NA	Robert Downes	» 2:06.15 <sup>1</sup>	Robert Heritage	» 2:08.20	Brendan Beavis	» 2:08.70
Standard NB	Robert DeBont	» 2:08.35	Max Lloyd	» 2:08.42	Patrick Hamakers	» 2:08.14
Standard NC	Colin Denman-Jones	» 2:05.81 <sup>1</sup>	Lindy Anderson	» 2:15.26		
Clubman	Peter Phillips	» 2:02.71 <sup>1</sup>	Teruo Delacroix	» 2:03.91	Ben Sale	» 2:04.43
Modified	Russell Garner	» 1:57.92	Craig Healy	» 2:03.19	Phil Munnings	» 2:03.29
Restricted Open	Randy Stagno Navarra	» 1:58.08 <sup>1</sup>	Kim Cole	» 2:00.27	Daniel White	» 2:05.73
Open	Steven Cook	» 1:49.62 <sup>1</sup>	Christine Boak	» 2:02.19	David Moore	» 2:14.01

<sup>1</sup> New Club motor sport group lap record

## Championship standings after Round 4 - Phillip Island Sprints, 12 December 2010

	1st		2nd		3rd	
<b>Overall Champion</b>	<b>Russell Garner</b>	<b>» 37</b>			<b>Robert DeBont</b>	<b>» 34</b>
	<b>Peter Phillips</b>	<b>» 37</b>			<b>Robert Downes</b>	<b>» 34</b>
Standard NA	Robert Downes	» 34	Brendan Beavis	» 29	Robert Heritage	» 23
Standard NB	Robert DeBont	» 34	Max Lloyd	» 27	John Downes	» 23
Standard NC	Colin Denman-Jones	» 40	Lindy Anderson	» 13	Mark Davies	» 7
Clubman	Peter Phillips	» 37	Sam Gumina	» 29	Teruo Delacroix	» 23
Modified	Russell Garner	» 40	Chris Baska / Craig Healy	» 14		
Restricted Open	Randy Stagno Navarra	» 40	Daniel White	» 20	Kim Cole	» 7
Open	Steven Cook	» 27	David Wilken	» 10	Christine Boak	» 7



**Vic-NSW Interstate Challenge / 2010-11 Championship | Round 4  
Phillip Island Sprints ~ 12 December, 2010**



For details and overall results, see *Motor Sport Torque* on page 5.





# Why an MX-5?

■ Words & photo: Ron Macdonald



*I had always wanted a two-seater roadster but as a father of four on a working man's wage, that was never going to happen!*

Many years later, as the kids (and the wife) left home I decided it was time to become self-indulgent. My initial thoughts went to the roadsters of my youth: the MGB, Triumph Spitfire and the Austin Healey Sprite. Nothing on the road could compare with these classic 1960's British machines, or so I thought. However, during my investigation I came to the sad realisation that these lovely little cars are now old and suffering from a few too many miles on the clock (just like me!).

Feeling a little despondent I started searching in the used car guide for a possible replacement for my MG. I soon discovered that the Japanese had been flirting with roadsters in a serious way; this might be an option for a newer, lower mileage "toy". My first Japanese consideration was the Toyota MR2. I quickly realised this was more of a coupé with the roof cut off than a serious roadster; this was *definitely not* what I was looking for.

**The more research I did** the more the name MX-5 seemed to pop up. Maybe this is the direction in which I should be looking (yeah I know, not the sharpest tool in the shed!). Knowing bugger all about the MX-5, it appeared that there were three models to choose from: the NA, NB and NC (I had no idea of the intricacies of these marques; some would say I still don't!). This was quickly narrowed down once I checked out the prices; the NC was a tad too rich for my blood, so then there were two.

On seeing a few photos of the NA, this looked like the one. With lovely lines and pop up headlights it was very reminiscent of the Lotus Élan (which I also couldn't afford) and at what I thought to be a very reasonable price. I should say that at this point I was still looking for a British roadster "clone". I have no loyalties to any Japanese make and simply saw this as an opportunity to buy a "pretend" MG at a much lower price and in better condition. Anyhow, I went searching for road tests and forums on this NA, only to be very disappointed with what I found. It has been said by more intelligent persons than I that "a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing" and a little knowledge is exactly what I had on the NA. One subject seemed to keep rearing its head in the forums: short crank issues. Hmm

... aging car + high mileage + a dodgy crankshaft does not sound like a match made in heaven, so the NA was dropped from the list too.

I have of course since realised that the short crank problem only affected a small number of early '90s cars but, at the time, I had "assumed" (always a dangerous thing to do) it was a common problem across the model.

**So then there was one, the NB** – and now the search could begin in earnest. I found several road test videos on the net which provided much of what I wanted to know. The first of these was from the British TV series *5th Gear*. In this clip the presenter said he liked the MX-5 NB so much that the one he was road testing was his very own car. I then tried their opposition, *Top Gear*; the presenter in this clip was Jeremy Clarkson. Now anyone who watches Clarkson will know he is usually very critical of the cars he tests, especially if they are not British-built (or at the very least European)! However, in this clip he praised the Mazda, saying it was great fun and had the feel of a true roadster, and all at a very affordable price. He concluded by giving the car 5/5, qualifying that the only reason he gave the MX-5 five stars was *because he couldn't give it 14!*





**Problem solved** (or was it just beginning?), my car was to be an MX-5 and a second generation NB. I had decided that I had neither the time nor the inclination to do the whole private sale bit, so it was time to hit the yards. Fortunately my job as a sales rep. gets me around a fair bit so this gave me the opportunity to view dozens of cars all over the Melbourne metro area. I saw NBs with trashed tops, torn seats, battered bodies, huge mileage, and inflated prices ... everything I didn't want. After looking at a good 50 cars I gave up; obviously my expectations were bigger than my pocket book, so maybe I would buy a motor bike instead.

Several months had passed when my drive home from work took me past a local car yard (less than 2km from where I live) and a shiny green thing caught my eye. A quick U-turn (not an easy thing to do in a 100 series Cruiser!) and I found it to be a dark green 1998 NB MX-5. Closer examination showed her to be in pretty good nick for her 12 years on the road and with 122,000 odd on the clock, fairly reasonable mileage too. The only thing I didn't think was reasonable was the asking price, but then again what car yard expects you to pay the ticket price? I drove home to consider my options, but this consideration did not last too long. The next morning I was back at the yard and took the girl for a spin (not literally). OK, I have to come clean here: I actually gave her quite a flogging and she came up trumps on every challenge. Acceleration, cornering, comfort, driving experience, overall "feel" of the car – a tick in every box. So it was, with a very big smile on my



face, I returned her to the car yard (some 40 minutes later!). Discussion followed on the price and the salesman finally advised that he would part with the car for a tad over \$1K less than the asking price. Again I went home to consider my verdict (would be a good name for a TV show). Next morning I was at the car yard bright and early to sign the paperwork and leave a deposit on my new shiny green toy. The very next afternoon *Gracie* came to live at my house.

**When I first started** this journey I was looking for an MG or MG clone; however, now nothing could be further from my mind. It only took one decent-length drive in *Gracie* to turn me into a 100% dyed-in-the-wool MX-5 man (*Gracie* would live inside if I could get her through the door). I have, of course, not driven every sports car ever built, but to me there would not be a better sports car on the road. Well, maybe the DB9 that I am going to buy with the (pending) lotto win, but then again that is a different style of sports car.

The headline of this article asks "Why an MX-5?"; the answer I think is best



summed up by a quotation I saw on the internet during my deliberations: *"If you want to experience the exhilaration of a ride in a 1960s roadster but without the rattles, squeaks, draughts, leaks, unreliability and prohibitive maintenance costs – buy an MX-5".* ■

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# The MX-5 Club Grill



Introducing...

## Alistair Dennis

**Name?** Alistair Dennis, The middle name? Classified

**Age?** Old enough!

**Born?** Yes, I was born, contrary to popular belief! Otherwise, it was in Burnie on the wild north-west coast of Tasmania

**Current abode?** Greensborough

**Profession?** Assistant Service Manager at the best Mazda dealer in Australia ... Otherwise known as Max Kirwan Mazda. Biased? Me? Never!

**Partner?** Partnered to the most patient man in Melbourne. Club photographer and all round nice guy Rodney Laitt. Has to be patient to put up with me

**Pets?** Only the fish

**Fave food?** Gee, too hard. Good Italian, Indian, Vietnamese, Thai, French ... as long as it's good

**Can you cook?** Ask Rodney. He says I don't cook, I reheat. He mutters something about me breaking a nail on the microwave. Otherwise, Matteo's in Brunswick Street is good for a spoil

**Favourite tippie?** Wine. Wine and more wine. Champagne as long as it's French is a good start. Good quality Pinot Noir is a particular favourite especially if it's Tasmanian. Anything from Craig Healy's cellar is a good place to start

**First drive?** Driving my mother's Mazda 808 wagon around the local college before I got my learner's and her telling me to be careful because there was a lot of power there. (It was a 1.3 litre ...)

**First car?** 1967 EJ Holden sedan 138 grey motor and three-on-the-tree

**First fender bender?** Stuck the EJ into the bush and got it bogged.

*I was trying to slide the tail and my ambitions and abilities got somewhat crossed ... and so did the car*

**Everyday driver?** Currently my work car is a Mazda 3 SP25 Luxury sedan. Manual, of course

**Current MX-5?** Black 2002 SP Turbo

**MX-5 improvements?** Tien Suspension, Guru LSD and an SE front lip spoiler

**MX-5 dislikes?** Whaaaaaaaaaaat?

**Why an MX-5?** Best value and best handling fun car for the money

**Fluffy dice (or any dangly things)?** Not as yet ...

**Passions besides the MX-5?**

**Music.** Seeing live bands with my band mates. **Eating out,** especially on Victoria Street Richmond. Friends and laughter. **Scaring** my mate Tim in the MX-5 is also a good passtime, about which you'll read more in a later issue of MX-TRA

**Favourite TV show / movie / book?** TV, Shameless on SBS of course. Top Gear before Channel Nine came along and bastardised it

**Dream wheels (money no object)?** White Porsche Boxster S, manual with black leather. A Lamborghini Muira, an Audi R8 V10; a Ferrari; an Aston Martin DBS ... manual of course. Too hard, but I lust after the Porsche

**Would you drive a Daewoo or SsangYong?** Are you out of your mind?

**Favourite other Mazda?** Mazda 6 MPS, in Crystal Pearl White thank you very much

**If not a Mazda (gasp!) what?** Golf GTi. A manual one in white thanks

**How long in the Club?** Sometime around 2002 or 2003. Rodney and I were in the Clare Valley at Easter in 2002 when the

MX-5 clubs were having a NatMeet there. All these cars driving around the vineyards and I just kept saying how much I wanted one. I was working at a Toyota dealer at the time

**How many MX-5 Club runs?** Too many to mention



**Favourite Club run?** The Alpine Way was brilliant, the Reefton Spur is a favourite as well as Chum Creek Road near Healesville

**Funniest thing seen on a Club run?** Our first weekend getaway in Lakes Entrance, a certain Club member who shall remain nameless telling his partner that he had to drive the car ... to the toilet ... in a hurry ... instead of walk ...

**Done DECA?** Ooooooh, yeah baby yeah

**If yes, how many times?** Too many to remember

**Ford vs Holden?** Ford all the way

**What's playing in your MX-5?** JJJ on the radio. CD player: The Pixies - Surfa Rosa, Placebo - Without you I'm nothing, The Cult - Pure Cult, Silversun Pickups - Swoon, The White Stripes - Icky Thump, Eddy Current Suppression Ring. The joys of six-disc players. Then there is the all my music on the iPhone that can be played through the Bluetooth

**Footy team (AFL/NRL/Soccer)?** Prefer the rugby, Melbourne Storm (we were robbed!); Geelong in the AFL ... Soccer? What's that?

**Final comments (rage or praise)?**

**Praise:** to the people that take the time to contribute to the workings of this Club; the committee and folks that write articles, the people that turn up and take part. I have met so many people through this Club that I am proud to say are my friends. **Rage:** that people don't support when the committee put on social events, but then sit back and complain that the Club isn't doing enough things!



# Chapter news ...

## Summertime! (and the living is easy)

12.12.2010 | Hobart ■ Words & photos: John Waldock ■ Run organiser: John Waldock

So, the last run of the year and time to enjoy the sun and fresh air.

The chapter met at the Waldocks' house in Lauderdale, where we welcomed Peter and Anita (green NA) on their first MX-5 Club run.

Departing from sunny Lauderdale, we travelled towards Sorell and onwards to the Tasman Peninsula ... which provides some interesting driving roads with lots of curves that allow the mighty MX-5 to slip smoothly through in second or third gear.

We were headed through to Nubeena (our lunch stop) and our curvaceous route provided some spectacular views over Norfolk and Adventure bays. Mercifully, our general progress was unimpeded by cyclists, wood trucks, camper vans or members of the caravanning fraternity.

Our lunch break provided the opportunity to talk about cars, though a new topic was provided by Allan Pryer and myself, who have gone out on a limb and purchased together a 1962 Austin Healey Sprite (Monza Red, no less). This gave the Chapter an opportunity to discuss the merits (or otherwise) of older cars, British cars and their upkeep. This provided a welcome change from the usual topic (NA vs NB vs NC) which has been explored and expanded upon to its fullest extent.

As usual, the time flew and before we knew it, co-pilots were making noises about departure (probably a sign the car discussions had gone too far, again) and we made our way back to Lauderdale (not without a few holdups for cyclists, caravanners and their ilk).

Upon our arrival back at the Waldock household, we commenced the real business of the day- a BBQ and wine tasting. There were 12 wines on offer, but this being a "blind tasting", no one knew what they were and we were asked to give each a rating out of five. The tasters were encouraged to try to pick the local wine against wines from elsewhere. It will come as no surprise to learn that all the wines slipped past the palate easily, none more so than the Tasmanian Pinots. (Ed. John identified no winners, which probably suggests that everyone was too happy to care!)

An enjoyable end to an enjoyable year's motoring and socialising. Looking forward to an even better year of events in 2011. ■







# The North Tasmanian Christmas get-together

19.12.2010 | Northern Tassie ■ Words: Bruce Harvey ■ Photos: Trish & Rob Bryant



The North Tasmanian Chapter Christmas get-together was hosted by Trish and Rob Bryan at their beautiful house in the Launceston suburb of Devon Hills. Their street was renamed for the day and, despite the dull weather, everyone had a wonderful day.

Special thanks to the newest members, Deborah & Gary Ridge from Scottsdale (whom none from the Chapter had met before), for the wonderful desserts of pavlova and cheesecake which they prepared for the group to enjoy.

Trish and Rob are also to be thanked for organising the day and providing photographic evidence of the participants enjoying themselves.

Cheers, *Bruce*

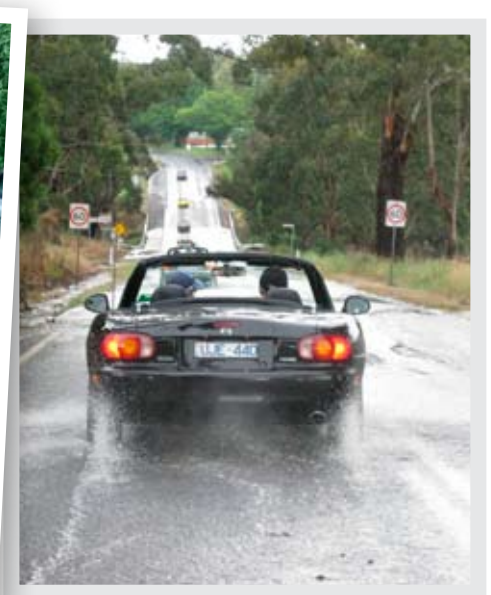




# Chapter news ...

## Christmas cheer comes flooding in!

■ Words: Jeff Woolf ■ Photos: Pamela Race, Steve Cleve, Richard Morrison ■ Run organisers: Gleesons and Jardines



The day started with a call from our leader John Gleeson – he needed help reorganising our meeting place, as a swimming meet had pinched all of our parks.

I did point duty redirecting to a school park and sent others to collect some stragglers in another park. The story had begun for John the previous night after he had done a test run over our course [I think all of us enjoy the test run] and found some of the roads were ripped up with road works and repairs from the rain. He had to remap the run notes and select alternative MX-5 roads, and what a job he did. Our run notes for one section said "Follow John!" and of course we did.

We had assembled 16 beautiful topless and shiny MX-5s of all models, with most colours and variants represented; well worth drooling over. We welcomed a prospective member, Pamela Race and her partner, Darcy (who happened to take some fantastic action shots), as well as members from the Geelong, Bendigo and Melbourne areas all craving for some MX-5 fun. The weather was perfect, but I did comment about a strange white bushfire-like cloud developing and rolling around like a science fiction movie, while listening to the run instructions? Little did we know what would eventuate.

We were hoping to beat our record number on the last Christmas run but were competing with another Club run east of Melbourne and other members' social and wedding commitments.

We headed east, criss-crossing the train line through Dunnstown and Gordon. Steve Dunlop's SP in front of me taking it easy over the tracks as there didn't seem to be much daylight underneath ... probably because his boot was chock-full of lovely merchandise. It didn't seem to hamper his acceleration though ... my car went like a Morris Minor in comparison (apologies to any Morrie fans!). The countryside and towns seemed to flash

past, the roads very windy and narrow at times. Just after Ballan we cruised on to the Western Hwy past a full Pykes Reservoir. We then powered north through the Blackwood Forest and old-fashioned Trentham where we passed a full-size replica of an elephant and other wild animals on a truck; amazing! Two thirds of our group pulled up in Kyneton for a cuppa and met up with Neville and Faye Pryor. John redirected some lost adventurers back from Woodend and reinforced to the group the convoy rules at turn offs. We were all well behaved thereafter.

It was becoming overcast and that cloud was developing into a monster. I stashed my speedster top into the boot in anticipation of a downpour and, heading west through Lauriston, it came down. All tops were up in a jiffy.

John and Noellene were flashed by a truck and wondered if he was just fooling around before hitting us all with his spray, but it was a warning the monster had struck.

Around the corner there was a creek-sized raging torrent beside the road; it had washed away all the gravel onto the road which was 15cm underwater. We were all taking evasive action around the worst of the stones and the deepest sections; by crikey it must have struck with a vengeance. We all took it quietly, frequently applying our brakes and hanging back for safety.

We made it through several sections of water over the road and arrived at our destination, the Yandoit Mayoral residence of John and Natalie Jardine who had also been struck by the storm and were hastily moving the saturated tables into an enormous shed. As we tucked into our picnic lunch we were visited by a thin Santa and his Elf helper (John and John) who distributed Christmas cheer. We were all in hysterics at these characters and their antics. The poor Elf had a bandage on his pointy ear and Santa was complaining of sore teeth as he probably bit off more than he could chew. Speeches and thanks were made to all, then we all headed home after enjoying a fantastic and exciting day. I can't wait for the next run. ■

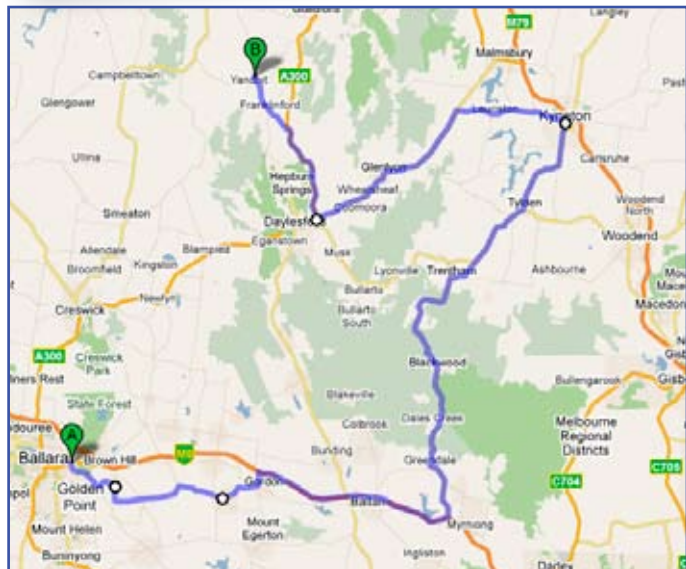




## 5.12.2010 | Ballarat & Western Victoria



Map by Google



**Footnote:** Jeff was presented with a small gift by Noellene for being with us on every run since our group was formed in April 2009.

John & Noellene would like to thank all our members (friends) for their support and wish all a happy and safe 2011.

## Molly goes swimming

### ■ Lachlan Story

It is December – after 12 years of drought – and it is raining – and raining – and raining. Horsham, near my home in Mockinya, received 110 mm (nearly 4.5 inches) in just 24 hours.

I have been at the 5 December Club run to Gippsland. I am now trying to get home from Melbourne. Other than some truly biblical storms, all is well until I leave the Western Highway for the Laharum Road. This takes me past Mount Zero towards home without having to go via Horsham. The sign says “Water Over Road”. Fair enough. Not a problem. Then I see the water and remember I left the Land Rover at home and I am in Molly.

The first two crossings were relatively easy. Stay on the high point of the road and ease through. I must say though, the speed and therefore the force of the water, is greater than anticipated. Still no dramas and Molly takes it all in her stride.

Then I hit the third crossing. I sit there looking at the fence that had been pushed over, and how little there was of the roadside posts sticking out of the water and how much detritus there is caught around the trees. After a few moments a Toyota Hilux comes from the opposite direction and, after he has crossed, the driver offers to wait and make sure I get through.

So I ease myself into the fast-flowing water and set a speed that creates a small bow wave giving me a dip in the water just in front of the car. The water isn't that deep but still comes half way up the doors and I can feel the sideways pull on the car.

I get through without any problems and not even a drop inside the car. I wave my thanks at the other driver and complete my drive home, arriving safe and dry.

Once I get home I go down to the creek that runs through the back of our place and she is in full flood. There is no delineation between the dam, paddock and the creek. Just a mad rush of water flowing very very fast over our bridge.

I have never seen the water this high. ■



### Footnote:

Driving through floodwater can be dangerous – or worse! – and we don't recommend it! Lockie knows these roads very well, and had the “safety net” of a fellow road user in a 4WD there to watch his progress. However, experts say that modern cars will float in as little as 0.5 metre of water, and warn never to drive through flowing water.



# My Ride ... The journey of my white 1990 NA6

■ Words and photos: Ben Sale



## Growing up I had always had a soft spot for MX-5s.

**I loved the look, the notion of a perfectly-balanced rear-wheel drive chassis and the emphasis that was placed on handling prowess over brute power.**

So I started working towards earning the money to buy a car, and on 11 November 2007 I bought my MX-5: a white 1990 model with a hardtop, aftermarket sound system and 16" wheels off a 2002 NB8B being the only modifications. I was instantly smitten by the car; she and I shared the same build date (April 1990) ... *although arguably she was in better condition!*

My initial plans for the car were actually quite simple. I feel that Mazda did a great job of getting the MX-5 right in the first place and I didn't want to mess with that too much.

**My first modifications** were mild cosmetic ones: a set of brushed aluminium vent rings brightened up the interior and a brushed voodoo gear knob improved the gear shift feel. The early NA series have a strangely-sized radio surround fascia which means that when you replace the stereo with a single DIN head unit you are left with an ugly gap in the console. To fix this I purchased a new surround which is what Mazda fitted to the last of the NAs (1996-97). It has a smaller opening, meaning no ugly gap, and it is recessed allowing the head

unit to sit flush with the console. These three minor modifications did a world of good for the interior, really improving the look of it. Other interior mods are limited to a nicer shift boot, a road flare from a Japanese MX-5 and a 350mm (20mm smaller) Momo steering wheel to allow my knees to fit better. I've also made a series of small modifications such as installing a buzzer that goes off if I leave the lights on, modifying the headlights so that they pop up when you pull the high beams similar to the later NAs (on an NA6 the lights go on but don't pop up when you pull the high beam lever), and I altered things like the ashtray to fit more things and act as a cup holder and the interior lights to output more light. I've also made a few interior modifications which relate more to performance which I will go into later.

My **exterior modifications** were initially very limited: I fitted a set of clear indicators and reflectors which look fantastic on a white car and a shorter aerial to replace the standard item which made the car look a bit like remote control car ... A while later, at the same time as lowering the car, I also fitted a Mazda front lip spoiler which was fitted to the R-Spec NA8s in America and later made up a mesh grill to protect the radiator from rocks and bugs which I hide behind the bumper bar supports

so it's not noticeable. Perhaps one of the nicer modifications I've made to the car is fitting an NB glass window soft top. My NA plastic-windowed roof was getting quite ratty and thanks to the generosity of a Club member I was able to get a NB roof with a broken glass rear window for nothing. Through the generosity of an interstate member I was able to source a window for the price of shipping. I got the two pieces put together and now have a roof which I can actually see out the back of, doesn't leak and looks much nicer too. For people's reference the NB roof, frame and all, is a direct bolt-in to an NA series MX-5. If you have the frame it shouldn't take more than an hour to swap the two over, although there is a ridiculous number of bolts to undo and you have to be somewhat of a contortionist to reach a few of them!

As long as I've been old enough to hold a driver's licence I've been a member of the Club and, as a result, have been on many Club runs. I also started attending track days to take photos and became very keen to participate myself.

However funds didn't really permit it and I was hesitant about driving my only car on the track. I did the driver training day up at Winton, which was an amazing day that further whet my appetite, but I decided to wait. I did however start to modify the car to improve its



performance, specifically aiming to improve the already amazing handling capabilities.

The first thing was the fit a good set of **tyres**, at the time some *Bridgestone Potenza RE001s* (although I now have some *Dunlop DZZ1s* on my track wheels from Club sponsor **Stuckey Tyre Service** which are in another league (more on them later) and a good **wheel alignment**.

MX-5s are very, very sensitive to wheel alignment settings. Mazda's tolerances are quite big and if you take your car to a normal tyre shop for an alignment you could either get settings which make the car handle terribly or brilliantly. Both are possible within the settings Mazda advises. The best thing to do is find someone who really knows what they are doing in relation to alignment and talk to them about what you use the car for and how you drive it and go from there. My current alignment on my (lowered) car is as follows [*keep in mind I do track days so these settings are more aggressive than you'd typically run on a road only car*]: my front camber is set slightly over  $-2^\circ$ , I run a little toe out (0.2mm each side) to assist turn-in ... although this means the car tramlines a bit and follows road camber if you're not careful (on a street only car you'd probably want at least 1mm toe in each side) ... and the castor angle is at  $5^\circ$ . The rear has  $2.2^\circ$  negative camber and 0.4mm toe-in each side and again that is reasonably aggressive. You don't want to run toe-out at the rear as this would cause the car to oversteer a lot; the more toe-in the less nervous the car will be. I would say 1mm each side (2mm total) toe-in would be a good minimum for a street-driven car.

The next aspect I started tinkering with was **chassis bracing**. The only real change Mazda made to the MX-5 chassis between 1989 and 2005 was to make the car stiffer. Through additional bracing to an early model, you can significantly improve rigidity and handling capabilities. The braces which made the most difference were the two sub-frame braces I fitted. The front one crosses the sub-frame in the same location as the NA8s and NBs. The rear brace I have bolts on to the camber adjustment and sway bar bolts on to the rear sub-frame; this one made a monumental difference to the car. The other braces I've fitted are a strut brace which made a minor difference and firstly a bar behind the seats which was then replaced by a half-

cage roll bar. The roll bar made a bit of a difference but if you want to stiffen up your early MX-5 look at fitting sub-frame bracing. More extreme bracing such as a frame rail or a butterfly brace, which is similar to what Mazda fitted to the last of the NBs, are available as well but are more costly and not as necessary.

Next I upgraded the **suspension**; there are dozens of options out there for MX-5 owners ranging from original equipment replacements through to fully-adjustable coilovers. Budget didn't permit me to go all out so I went with a set up comprising of Bilstein shocks with King Springs which lowered the car by 30mm and stiffened it up to the point where it is a little harsh but still drivable on bad roads without being back-breaking. Due to short suspension travel MX-5s rely heavily on their bump stops as part of the suspension, particularly at the rear of the car. It is an aspect often overlooked by most people who lower their MX-5s. A lowered MX-5 can often ride terribly and have some unpredictable handling traits due to the car coming in contact with the bump stops quite easily, making the car bounce when it hits a bump and feel quite unsettled. My car is fitted with *Fat Cat Motorsport* bump stops which are shorter and progressive, which means you are less likely to hit them ... and when you do it's not as jolting or unsettling as the standard stops. (~Ed: more on this in next month's *MX-TRA*.)

I have also modified the **brakes** slightly. The first thing I would recommend is to change your brake fluid regularly; the fluid absorbs water and over time deteriorates at the detriment of brake performance and pedal feel. (~Ed: see *Robert Downes' article on this subject on page 24*.) At a minimum the fluid should be replaced every two years; I change mine every six months. I am currently halfway through upgrading my brakes. The rear disks and calipers are the larger ones off the NA8 and NB8A and the front are still the smaller NA6 spec. I have a set of *TWR Lucas* pads fitted to the NA6 brakes which were recommended to me by a Club member. Having bedded them in properly they don't fade on the track so



I figure I won't fit the bigger front brakes until the pads wear out. At some stage I hope to fit an adjustable brake bias-proportioning valve to give slightly more rear brake bias.

At this point I was in a better position to afford to do a few track days (it also helped my confidence that I now have a second car). ***I can't recommend track days highly enough; it is a ridiculously fun way to spend a day!***

After a few track days I figured out what was left to do as far as modifications were concerned, while ensuring that I made none which would make the car "illegal" in the Clubman class (the Club's limited Modified class for street-driven cars on road tyres). I fitted a set of *Whiteline* adjustable swaybars. The amount of body roll these removed from the car is phenomenal. As it doesn't alter the ride quality I would recommend a set of thicker sway bars to any MX-5 owner as a great way of improving the handling. The *Whiteline* bars are 24mm thick at the front and 16mm thick at the rear with three holes each side to adjust the stiffness of the bar. Standard NA6 sizes are 19mm front and 12mm rear. I've set my bars to full stiff at the front and soft at the rear. Upgrading sway bars can quite dramatically affect the handling balance of an MX-5 and too stiff a rear bar can make the car oversteer. Setting the rear bar to soft means that the car only oversteers slightly more than the standard set up.

A really cheap (free!) modification to make is to remove some of the foam out of your **seat** so that the side bolsters do more to hold you into the car. The fabric covering the seat back is held in place by four clips; when you cut these off you can slip the fabric off. When this is off you will find a piece of foam on the front part of the seat back; this comes straight out. Remove it and see what you think, it

## My Ride continued ...

made a big difference for me. However, an even bigger difference came in fitting the car with a four-point **racing harness**. If you do track days I can't recommend it enough! Being held in the car and not fighting against cornering forces and not having to brace yourself in the car is, in my mind, worth at least a second a lap. The biggest improvement in lap times would have to have come from **tyres** though. I fitted a set of *Dunlop DZZ1* star specs prior to the last track day and the difference is astonishing! These are still classed as a road tyre but have comparable grip levels to semi-slicks; in fact I found at Phillip Island my cornering speeds were a lot quicker than many of the guys running semi-slicks! Other modifications include a freer-flowing cat back **exhaust**, intake and I've advanced the **ignition timing** and played with **spark plugs** and gaps to pick up a few extra much-needed kilowatts. The only planned future modification is fitting the limited slip differential I have sitting in the garage.

I'm sure I've bored you all enough so I'm going to finish before I think of more things which I've done ... I should add that this summation of bits and pieces by no means defines my car for me. For me the most important part of MX-5 ownership has been the adventures I've been on and the people I've met through the three-and-a-bit years of owning the car.

The numerous Club runs, track days, long-distance drives and even just a run to work have all been great fun! It's been a great journey – one I look forward to continuing! ■



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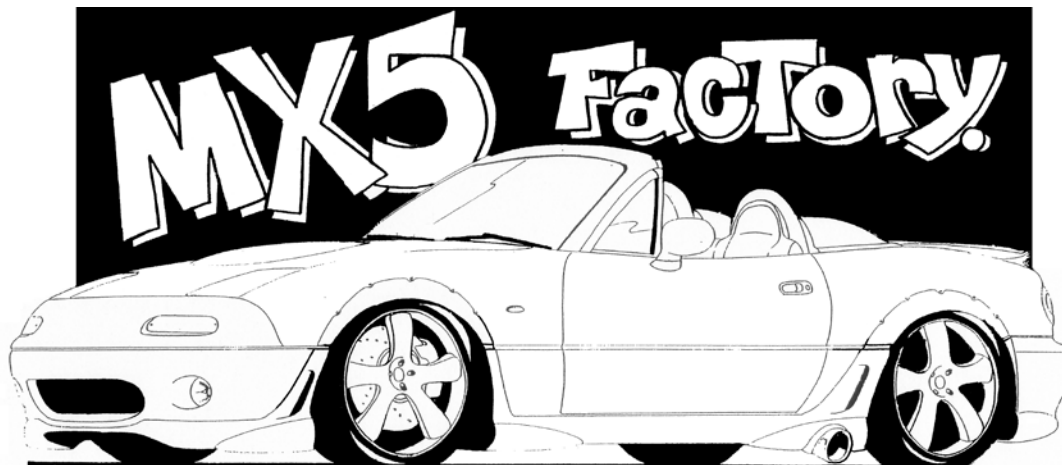
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