

NEW VEHICLE CLASSES AT THE UPCOMING 13TH NATIONALS

The upcoming Nationals at Orange will see a few changes to the way we classify and judge the vehicles.

Historically, we have broken the cars into two groups: Stock and Modified. There has been a guide published in the Nats Rules and Constitution to help entrants determine which group their car should go into, with assistance available from their local Nationals Delegates. However, there have been a few problems with this approach over the years, and as time has gone by those problems have become worse. The definition of "Stock" back when those rules were first written is quite different to our understanding of the term now. Fifteen years ago, there were few cars on historic rego, and so most of the vehicles that were called "Stock" had improvements from what we might otherwise call "Original" or "Authentic", because they were seeing frequent road use. This is no longer the case. Through successive Nationals, the 'bar' has been raised significantly, and the "close enough is good enough" approach of the mid-90's no longer cuts it. This problem has been exacerbated by the use of a single judging system for all cars, irrespective of whether they are in the "Stock" or "Modified" group, which has seen instances of mildly modified cars winning "Stock" trophies. The "Top Ten" system introduced at Jindabyne - which was a giant step forward from the previous system - unwittingly compounded this problem, as all cars had to be judged on exactly the same basic Quality, Fit and Finish criteria, in order to determine the top ten highest scoring vehicles, irrespective of class.

At Orange, the most important change to the scheme is that there will no longer be a "Top Ten". Each class will have its own "Top Five", and there will be no attempt to commingle the Stock and Modified vehicles any more. Stock vehicles will only be



compared to other stock vehicles, and Modifieds only to other Modifieds. There will still be a Grand Champion in each group. A by-product of this approach is that we can use more judges: we can have one group looking at Stockies, and another adjudicating on the Modifieds, and it would not matter if one group are "harder markers" than the other. Trying to properly



*2008 Stock Grand Champion:
Kevin Woolard (NSW)
FC Station Sedan.*

evaluate 100+ cars in the time available with just three people was proven virtually impossible at Phillip Island.

Secondly, a new class will be introduced. In addition to "Stock" and "Modified", there will be a class in between, entitled "Street". This group is designed for the significant number of non-stock but mildly modified vehicles that appear at the Nationals these days. The style of car that this group is intended for includes:

- Improved Stock - *basically Stock, but with modern fittings (stereo, radiator overflow tank etc)*
- Period Modified - *the grey hottie: headers/extractors, twin carbs, mags etc*
- Minimally Modified - *engine replacement, such as 138/149 red, where there are few - if any - other modifications*



*2008 Modified Grand Champion:
Steven Johnson (SA)
FC Station Sedan.*

The working principle is that if the modifications require Engineer Certification, then the vehicle probably should be in "Modified", and not "Street". However, this isn't a hard and fast rule, as regulations vary from state to state, and the regulations themselves have changed over time.

Further to the issue of having multiple groups of judges, another advantage of completely separating the classes from each other is that each class can be judged on different criteria. One of the comments raised by participants in the Nationals – especially from those that have experience in similar events run by other clubs – is surprise at the lack of an award for "Most Original/ Authentic" at the FE-FC Nationals.

At Orange, each of the three classes will be independently judged using appropriate criteria:

- Stock: *Quality, Fit and Finish, plus Authenticity*
- Street: *Quality, Fit and Finish*
- Modified: *Quality, Fit and Finish, plus Engineering*

Rather than officials scrutineering vehicles, each entrant will select a class for their vehicle, and hence the system under which it will be judged. More detailed guidelines will be published closer to the event. Additionally, your Nats Delegates are able to assist you in classifying your vehicle if you are unsure which group it is best suited to. And of course, you still have the option to opt out of judging completely if you wish.

A future article will explain each of these new methodologies in greater detail.

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