

In this difficult year, there was a glimmer of hope and happiness for Historic Touring cars.

Supercars invited our category to compete at the 2020 Supercheap Auto Bathurst 1000 event, and although it was to see our Group N cars run along with other Historic categories (Groups A and C), the spectacle was all about Group N, and HTCA NSW was wonderfully represented, at the front and through the mid field of competing cars.

It was pretty clear from the two practice rounds on Thursday 15 October 2020 that Tilley Racing went to the event with serious intent, as did Ben Wilkinson, and John Harrison. It was also great to see Mark Le Vaillant back on track after a long spell, in his XY Falcon. Peter O'Brien also made the journey in his immaculate XY Falcon, along with Dale Parry in his Mustang.

Tilleys Auto was also well represented by Adam Walton, in his beautifully presented Ford Mustang – his first time at the Mountain. It was a highlight that Group Nb cars, as well as Group Nc cars, were well represented.

HTCA NSW members with smaller horsepower cars also made the journey – Steve Shepard in his Mazda RX2, Quentin Bland in his Ford Carpi, and Mark Lenstra running his Ford Escort.

Evergreen, Greg Toepfer, also turned up in his Ford Mustang, and Michael Terry returned to racing in his Holden Torana GTR XU1. Vince Harmer made the trek from the ACT to run his Volvo 164E and William Colton got his Ford XY Falcon out of the shed at long last.

Race 1, conducted on Friday, saw Brad and Jamie Tilley turning on a compelling display of driving, eventually taking first and second spots in the seven-lap event. Ben Wilkinson was the next Group N car home, with Peter O'Brien and John Harrison not far behind.

Steve Shepard's Mazda RX2 had a good run with Mark Lenstra's Ford Escort, pipping him at the post.

TV commentators commented many times on the magnificent presentation of all Group N cars, and they were a spectacle – the standard of presentation was extremely high, and the sound effects were, as always, irresistible.

Race 2, run early on Saturday, again saw domination from Brad and Jamie Tilley and Ford Mustangs. Brad set his fastest race time for the event of 2:30: 8017, and Jamie getting his best event lap time of 2:32:2224. Mark Le Vaillant and William Colton then came home in the seven-lap event in their XY Falcons, with Ben Wilkinson and Peter O'Brien running up third and fourth spots. Adam Walton and John Harrison came next. Steve Shepard and Mark Lenstra finished in that order. Dale Parry, having experienced some drive-train problems, was not to start again. Greg Toepfer had some electrical issues and completed six laps before the gremlin occurred. Michael Terry got a full seven laps done in his Torana.

Race 3 was cut down to five laps, due to event time constraints. Again, Brad and Jamie Tilley dominated, followed by Ben Wilkinson, then Peter O'Brien, Adam Walton and John Harrison. Race 3 saw everyone complete five laps, except for Michael Terry, who had a tyre deflate during the first lap and parked up at Corner 2 of the circuit.

Feedback from HTCA NSW members about the event was very positive. Organisation by Supercars was excellent, and camaraderie was high. Members commented positively about the opportunity to compete at Mount Panorama, and also mentioned the unforgiving nature of the circuit – if there is a fault in your car, that is the place that will expose it.

Whenever Group N ran, they were compulsory viewing – everyone in the corporate suites along Pit Straight turned out to watch the category!!

Thanks goes out to David Noakes for his efforts in getting Group N to this event, and for enabling HTCA NSW to let TV viewers know, with prominent windscreen signage, that we are celebrating our 40-year anniversary.

We now turn our focus to the next Group N event at Mount Panorama – April 2021 – when we can get back there, with interstate competitors, and “talk to the Mountain” again.