



Harrington (16) chases down AUSCAR Series leader Brad Jones (8).

HARRINGTON – NEW HOLDEN HERO

Young Tasmanian driver Steve Harrington has emerged as the new star of AUSCAR.

Harrington has driven his 3TT Holden Commodore to two wins in three races during the hard-fought Goodyear AUSCAR Summer Series, and goes into the May title finale as the only serious challenger to points leader Brad Jones.

A former Touring Car driver, Harrington made the switch to AUSCAR last year and, after an acclimatisation period, came on strong at the Calder Park Thunderdome's December meeting.

On the Thunderdome's high-banked oval Harrington ran among the leaders all day, and with just a handful of laps left in the field was sitting pretty right on the tail of the first lady of AUSCAR, Terri Sawyer.

Just as it seemed the two would fight it out to the line, Sawyer slowed with suspension problems which resulted in a spectacular blow out, leaving Harrington comfortably clear of Mark Smedley's Commodore.

Harrington's win – his first for 10 years – was made all the sweeter because AUSCAR's dominant driver and series leader, Brad Jones, had retired his Coopers Tools Commodore earlier in the day with mechanical problems.

The AUSCAR action then switched to the short oval track at Adelaide International Raceway in late January, where Jones returned to form to win all four races off pole position.

Harrington hung in there all day, unable to match the pace of Jones, Jim Richards (Falcon), Marshall Brewer and Rod Macleod (Commodores), and Mark Seaton (Falcon) but grabbed an eventual sixth overall to keep himself in the hunt for the title.

Returning to the Thunderdome in March, Jones had the opportunity to wrap up the series with one round still to run – all he had to do was win again.

Things began badly, though, for both Jones and Harrington, the points leader crashing heavily on his qualifying run while his challenger blew an engine – and promptly borrowed one from Jones!

Raceday saw Jones start from the back and grab a mid-field

Despite mid-field placings in the first two ATCC rounds, Englishman Win Percy is happy with progress at Holden Racing Team.

"We've only been operating about ten weeks, and we're right on the pace with the more established Commodore teams. The car has been running excellently and we're trying to get a solid, professional effort together for the endurance races later in the year.

"We've hired some good men to date and the team is starting to shape up nicely," Percy said.





finish in race one, while Harrington missed the event altogether while the engine was being changed.

Heat two brought the two Holden racers together and it was action all the way.



Steve Harrington wins the trophies, but Brad Jones gets the girls!

Jones started mid-field and Harrington off the back, but by late race the pair were slogging it out for victory. It was a real nail-biter, the two Holdens swapping places several times before Harrington led past the chequered flag by a nose.

Jones blasted away to a clear lead in the final but Harrington kept his head down and chased hard; helped by a couple of restarts, it was soon Jones chasing Harrington but the Tasmanian kept his cool and the lead to grab a decisive victory.

Second went to Jones, ahead of the similar Commodores of the spectacular Mike Oliver, Rob Burns and Rod Macleod.

With the May finale to go, the Goodyear AUSCAR Summer Series pointscore is: Jones 307, Harrington 283, Macleod 272, Brewer 252.

SUPPORT FOR FORMULA HOLDEN

The Australian Drivers Championship for Formula Holden cars has attracted increased financial and media support for 1990.

Our premier open-wheeler racing car series, the Australian Drivers Championship (for the CAMS Gold Star award) will be raced over six rounds beginning at Phillip Island (Victoria) on March 25.

The series has attracted \$250,000 in sponsorship from a number of automotive industry suppliers, the first \$60,000 of that prizepool coming from Automotive Components Limited (ACL) for the opening three races.

A national television package has also been negotiated, details of which are to be announced shortly.

ACL already has a strong connection with the ADC as developer of the fuel-injected 3.8 litre Commodore V6 engine used exclusively by Formula Holden.

"This formula is the basis for developing future World Champions in the mould of Jack Brabham and Alan Jones," Confederation of Australian Motor Sport motor racing manager Tim Schenken says.

"ACL's major cash injection into the 1990 Australian Drivers Championship will certainly go a long way towards guaranteeing the success of the series."

With the first race just days away, Neil Crompton starts early title favorite aboard the Dulux Ralt, though he'll come under strong pressure from fellow Touring Car stars Mark Skaife, Brad Jones, John Smith and Drew Price.

For Nissan man Skaife (Spa), AUSCAR hero Jones (Shrike) and Toyota team driver Price (Ralt) this will be their debut Formula Holden season, though old hand Smith (Ralt) has already run several races.



Mark Skaife.



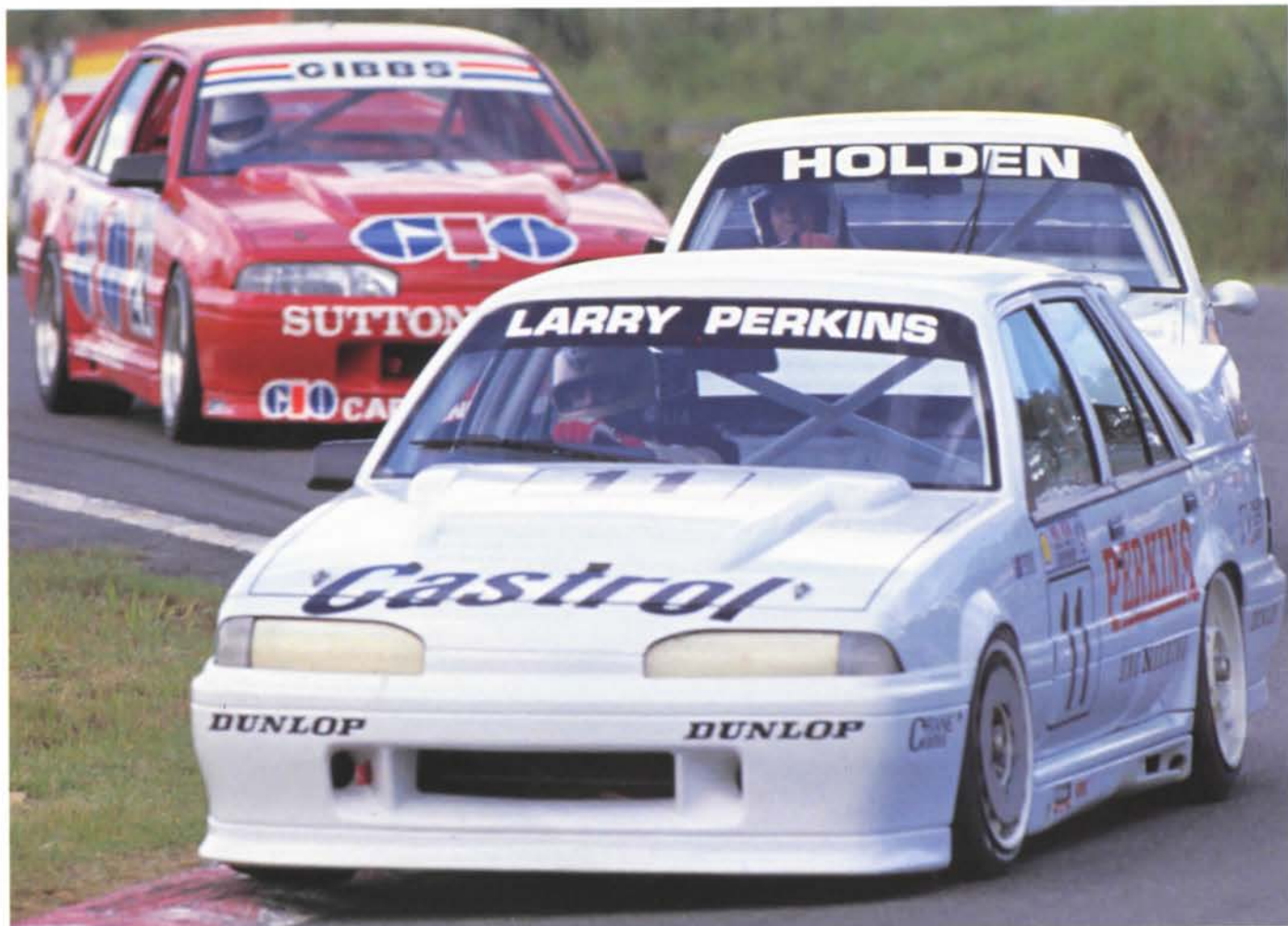
Neil Crompton.

John Briggs (Ralt) and Simon Kane (Ralt) were front-runners at different stages last year, and it'll be interesting to see how they go against former Formula Mondial ace Richard Davison, who is making a welcome return to racing in a Ralt.

'89 series competitors Chris Hocking (Hocking), Mark Poole (Shrike), Tony Blanche (Ralt), Ray Cutchie (Ralt), Roger Martin (Ralt) and John Hermann (Ralt) are back, while international sports car racer Neil Crang is a possible starter in the second Hocking entry.

As a further boost to the 1990 series, the Holden Engine Company will offer an extra \$5000 prizemoney for drivers finishing first, second or third using one of its factory lease engines which are prepared by Larry Perkins.

The Australian Drivers Championship dates are: Phillip Island (V) 25 March; Winton (V) 8 April; Lakeside (Old) 6 May; Mallala (SA) 10 June; Oran Park (NSW) 15 July; Amaroo Park (NSW) 5 August.



Perkins, Percy & Gibbs – Holden's hopes for '90.

HOLDEN ON

On the form seen in the first two rounds of the 1990 Shell Ultra Australian Touring Car Championship, new rules designed to even-up competition between the turbocharged Ford Sierras and the V8 Holden Commodores have not been as successful as anticipated.

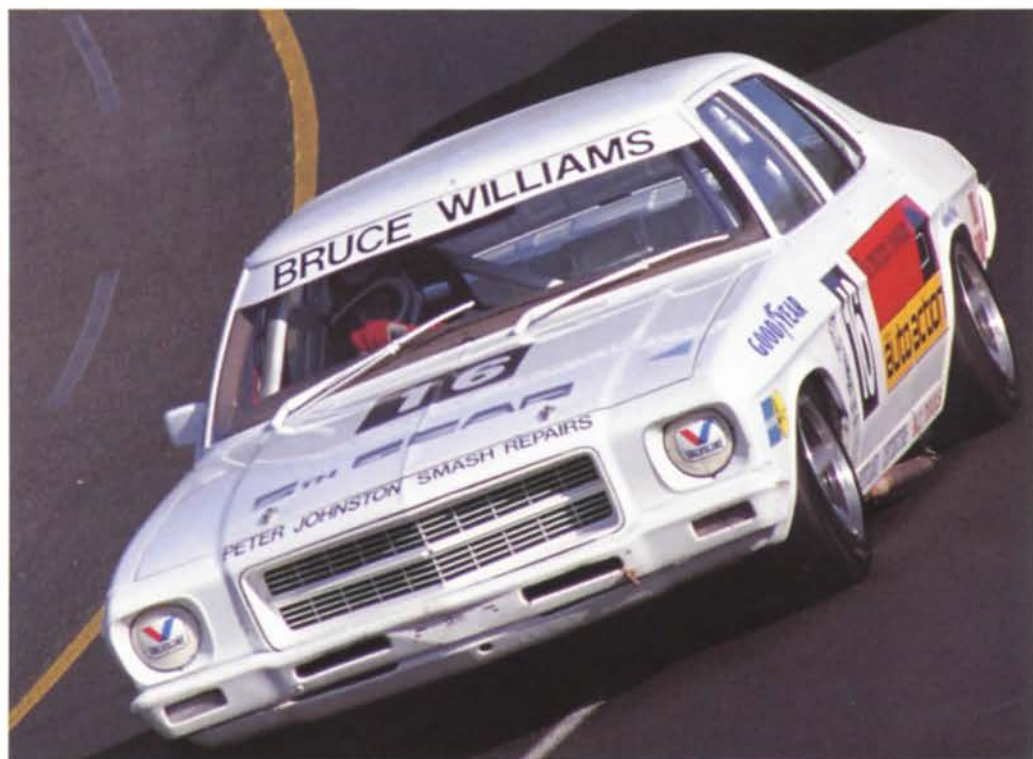
Despite having to carry an extra 85 kg, the turbocars are still proving hard to beat – though the good news for Holden fans is that thanks to their combination of strength and reliability, the V8s are in real good shape come the long-distances races, later this year.

At Sydney's Amaroo Park talented youngster Mark Gibbs was first Holden home in his smart GIO sponsored Bob Forbes Commodore, while Larry Perkins (Perkins Engineering) and Win Percy (HRT Commodore) were 11th and 14th after tyre stops.

Jim Richards certainly caused an upset at the Amaroo opener, his Nissan Skyline turbo downing the hordes of imported Ford Sierras.

Down south for round two, at the fast Symmons Plains circuit near Launceston, Percy won the Holden race this time with ninth overall, one spot ahead of Perkins; overall victory there went to the Sierra of defending champion Dick Johnson.

The next race in the eight-round national championship is at Phillip Island (Victoria) on March 25.



Bruce Williams is the man to beat in the popular new HQ Holden racing category. Whether it's a road course or an oval, and in the face of strong challenges from several opponents, the Ballarat driver has emerged as the man to chase in the low-cost category.



HOLDEN CREATES HISTORY

Holden's VN Commodore has created history in December by becoming the first non-American car to win an official Winston Cup style NASCAR race.

Debuting his brand new Australian-built NASCAR Commodore, Allan Grice took a hat-trick of wins at the Calder Park Thunderdome over visiting American star Rodney Coombs.

Grice powered away from Coombs' Oldsmobile Delta in each of the three races, the slippery shape of the Commodore perfectly suited to the high sustained speeds of the banked super-speedway.

These two spreadeagled the small but good quality NASCAR field, which included another new Commodore racer being debuted by former speedway star Fred Seery.

Seery bounced back at the next meeting, however, grabbing pole position on the short paved bowl of Adelaide's International Raceway road course.

With Grice and Coombs missing from the equation, interest was injected by the debut of another Australian NASCAR, the new EA Ford Falcon driven by Jim Richards.

Richo started off the back after various troubles and was never a contender, while Seery's Commodore took a close but unmatched series of four wins.

Back at the Thunderdome in March the glory was much more evenly spread with Grice's Commodore, Robin Best's Chevy and Richards' Pontiac (substituted for the Falcon, crashed during qualifying) all taking wins, while Barry Graham (Oldsmobile) and Seery's Commodore both had shares of the lead as well.

This broad spread of success has set up a big finish for the .05 NASCAR series finale in May, with the consistent Graham leading on 624 points from Robin Best on 620 and George Elliott on 618 – any of the three can take the title.



Jim Richards – overall winner in the March NASCAR meet.

Robin Best, Barry Graham and Geoff Munday come to grief at Thunderdome.





Peter Fitzgerald's Commodore leads the pack up the hill at Amaroo.

NEW ERA FOR AUSSIE PRODUCTION CAR RACING

Production Car racing has entered a new era with the start of the '90s.

In keeping with its original intention to create a class for mildly modified mass production models, CAMS has framed new rules to outlaw the expensive sports cars and coupes which have dominated the racing for the past few seasons.

Under the new regs, Australian models like the Holden Commodore and Ford Falcon now compete head-to-head with similar models from the Japanese manufacturers.

Aside from being much more economical to buy and race, these cars have far greater attraction to spectators and sponsors – and by nature, provide close, more spectacular action.

The sensible and popular rule change encouraged a number of new faces into Production Car racing, brought about the return of several others, and has seen most of the front runners from 1989 back in action again.

An eight round Australian Production Car Championship is being staged, and already the signs are that the competition will be very close between the Commodore and Falcon.



Terri Sawyers, Australia's only woman racing driver, is set for a big break racing NASCAR in the U.S.A. Sawyer, 21, won Australia's first AUSCAR event in 1988 driving a Holden Commodore. Known for her 'show no mercy' driving style around Thunderdome, Terri will travel to Charlotte, North Carolina, for a special three week driving course.

Her aim is to compete at Charlotte Speedway's NASCAR rookie preliminary to the World 600 main event on May 27th. She will depart AUSCAR ranks to concentrate on NASCAR full time, running a current model Pontiac in the 90/91 local season.

Win Percy at Amaroo – the affable ex British Touring Car Champion, Spa Francorchamps winner and Le Mans stalwart is competing in the Shell ATCC this year for the first time.



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For further information contact Tim Pemberton (03) 699 3470