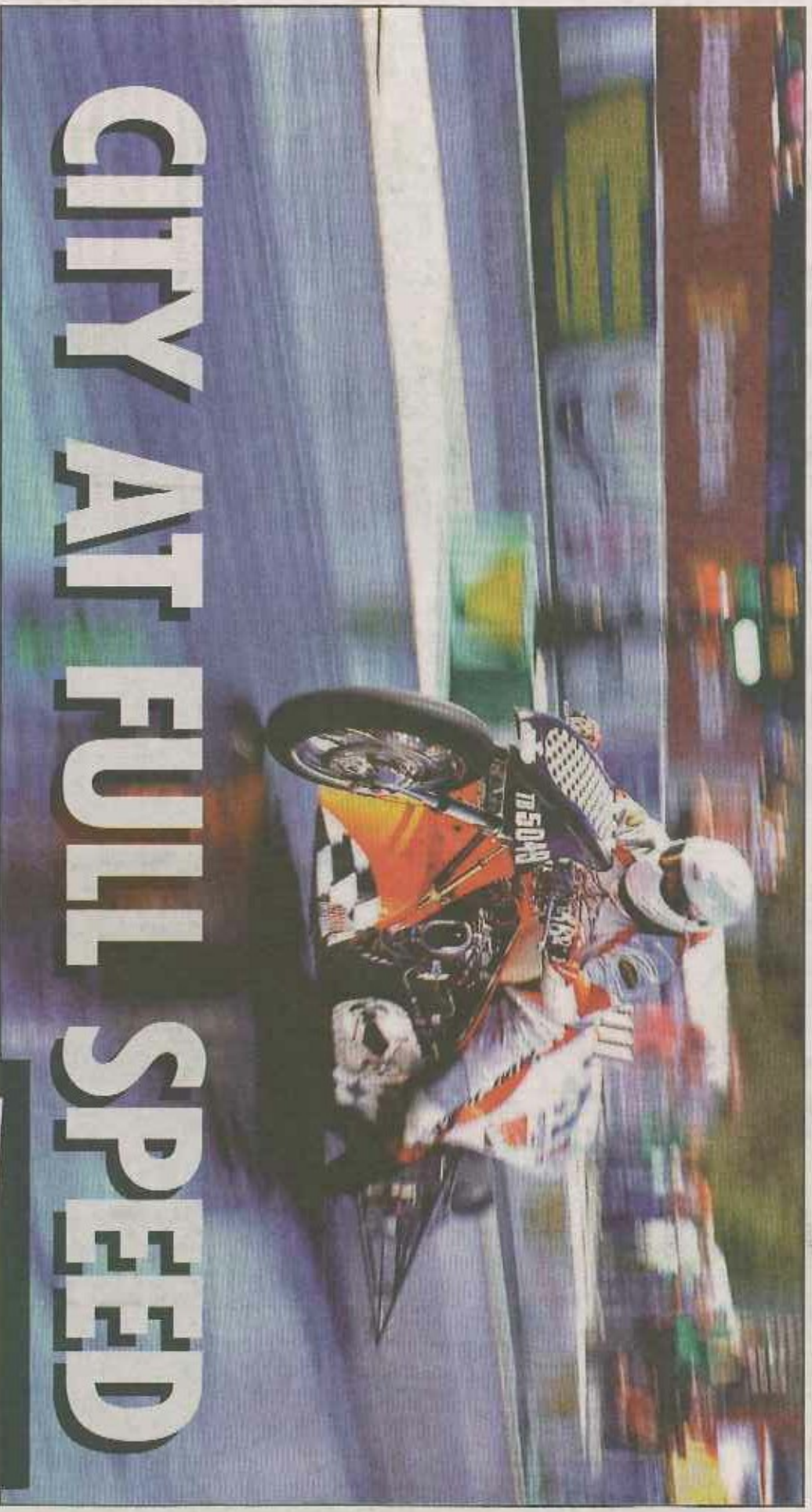


Ipswich set to cash in from drag racing spectators



CITY AT FULL SPEED

TEGAN TAYLOR
tegan.taylor@qt.com.au

THE Winternationals at Willowbank Raceway is more than just ear-piercing noise and the smell of burning rubber – it's a cash injection for Ipswich and its benefits are spreading to the rest of the state.

Willowbank Raceway general manager Steve Bettes said the growth in motorsport popularity meant the Winternationals were becoming an international tourist attraction, not just for Ipswich, but all of Queensland.

"The people that come into Queensland for the Winternationals come from the US and we have an amazing attendance from New Zealand," Mr Bettes said.

"We have competitors pack their bikes and cars up months in advance to put them on ships to compete in the Winternationals."

He estimated the event brought at least \$1.7 million dollars into the Ipswich region each year.

Former Ipswich Chamber of Commerce president Tony Russell said local businesses looked forward to the cash splash that came with the Winternationals.

"It's certainly one of the highlights in the sporting calendar and something Ipswich benefits off," Mr Russell said.

Accommodation and hospitality were the obvious industries cashing in on the influx of visitors but the event helped the whole of Ipswich in the long term, he said.

The Winternationals showcased the Ipswich region and could lead to visitors deciding to return either for future holidays or to relocate here for good, Mr Russell said.

Smart scheduling of events helped Ipswich harvest more tourist dollars

by keeping people in the region for longer, he said.

"Planning of the Winternats and mixing with the Ipswich Cup (the following weekend) creates a destination for people," he said.

One drawback for the region was a shortage of accommodation.

Mr Bettes said Willowbank Raceway's main travel agent said beds were booked solid from Ipswich to Mt Gravatt in Brisbane for the Winternationals' weekend.

Mr Russell said the new International Hotel added to Ipswich's capacity but more hotels were needed to keep visitors spending their money locally.

Mr Bettes conceded it was uneconomical to demand hotels for just one weekend of the year but said the boom in motorsport competitors and fans would eventually see a greater demand for accommodation year-round.

Anything can happen on track

ADRENALINE junkies were out in force at yesterday's Winternationals warm-up at Willowbank Raceway.

Among them were brothers Richie and Dave Maddern who came to watch friend Tony White race and check out the competition ahead of next week's action.

Richie helps maintain and race Dave's LX Torana at street meets and said the qualifying was often as exciting as the actual race as the cars were so super-powered "anything could happen, anytime".

"There are 20 cars vying for an eight-car field so it's usually pretty good qualifying, they've got to be at the top of their game," Mr Maddern said.

"You can see a few prangs, especially at Winternats, because they're running at the maximum limit.

"All it takes is the tyre



SPEED FREAKS: Brothers Dave (left) and Richie Maddern check out the horsepower ahead of next weekend's Winternationals.
Photo: Michelle Smith JN0406MP

pressure to be a little bit lower in one tyre and then they can't control the car.

"I get a lot of enjoyment and fun out of it but the main thing is the adrenaline rush –sometimes you get nervous (when you're racing) but it's such a big rush."

He explained how the cars had to meet strict specifications to assist safety – theirs and everyone else's.

Drivers even had to pass a medical exam and obtain a doctor's certificate to ensure they were fit and to reduce the chance of accidents.



BUILT FOR SPEED: Cars take to Willowbank's track in preparation for next weekend's Winternationals.
Photos: Michelle Smith JN0406M0

ON YOUR BIKE: Warming up at Willowbank.
JN0406M1H



Drag Masters

The grudge has just begun

By Greg Stokes pics from Mal Bain & Mike Ashton

DRAG MASTERS, an event billed as the absolute V8 vs Import shootout left a lasting impression on both racers and spectators alike. There was much curiosity as to who would end up with egg on their face. V8s and Imports were paired up based on predicted elapsed times and speeds. In total there were 18 vehicles on each team.

With a handful of comp cars on hand, a great turnout of support racing as well as a burnout competition, it was fair to say that Drag Masters was the most well organised and smooth running event that Champion has hosted for a long time. Despite the oil-downs of a greater number of import cars, the entertainment for the crowd was maintained with stunt bike riders and burnout demonstrations.

The racing was close and the consistency of the V8's was very high. The closest race of the day was between Chris Tynan in Laurie Urlich's Camaro against Reece McGregor's Skyline. The crowd went wild as 8.56 and 8.57 times were posted. Chris Tynan cut a near perfect light to trounce the hottest Import! The final score after three rounds of continuous racing was 15 to 7 to the V8's. However, it is worth noting that a number of import cars could be strong contenders next year if their reaction and 60 ft times were improved. The greatest thing to come out of Drag Masters is not the fact that the V8s beat the imports, it's the fact that Champion Dragway has made an honest attempt to bridge the gap between the two factions and has done it well, creating real passion along the way. The future of drag racing in New Zealand will continue to grow at a rapid rate.

RESULTS

Import competitor	vs	V8 competitor	Score
Reece McGregor	vs	Laurie Urlich/Chris Tynan	0 3
Rod Harvey/Terry Bowden	vs	Kevin McGregor	0 3
Tony Bateson	vs	Roger Binnema	0 1
Glen Suckling	vs	Graham Carter	0 3
Zoheb Razak	vs	Graeme Bates	0 3
Andre Simon	vs	Scott Campbell	0 3
Brian Connell/Brent Curin	vs	Gavin Oram	0 3
Nyle Buckley	vs	David Tynan	1 2
Dean Hargreaves	vs	Dave Levine	0 3
Simon Dudding	vs	Ron Olsen	0 3
Jeremy Abbott	vs	Darren Saunders	0 3
Stuart Lawton	vs	Brett MacDonald	0 3
Tony Markovina	vs	Gary Bogaart	0 3
Ben Cox	vs	Paul Smith (Dave Tully repl.)	1 2
Warren Overton	vs	Craig Wall	2 1
Graeme McDonald	vs	Martyn McSweeney/Peter Druitt	0 3
Adam Wilson	vs	Wayne Ilich	0 3
Bryce McEwan	vs	Phil Edgcombe	3 0
Team Totals			7 45

For more results and info go to <http://dragmasters.co.nz/resultsF.html>



Dean Hargreaves stole the show with his wheelstand of the day in his Mazda. MA



Dave Levine got in on the act and pulled a monster wheels-up launch as well. MB



Not to be out-done Gavin Oram sky-hooked as well. MA



Watch out for stock appearing RX3 in the traffic. Jeremy Abbott posted a 9.641 ET...no kidding! MA.



Athol Williams posted a blistering 7.51 at 161mph. MA.