

# ROUND 5: PUKEKOHE

## Lightening Strikes Twice

### Pukekohe Round 5

### Event Preview

Now that the GT1 and NZGT championships are entering the final stages of their inaugural year, this weekend will see their return to the historic Pukekohe circuit. It will be the second visit to the track after the third round in early December for the Thunder in the Park meeting.

This time around, the First Motorsport team will be looking to build on their impressive form from the previous round at Taupo, which saw both Ross Johnson and Colin Caldwell take a win apiece.

The team will also be boosted by the return of Ray Williams, who had missed the last round at the beginning of January due to other commitments. However his mighty 993 Porsche loves the Pukekohe circuit and will surely go well.

With both Ross and Ray not scoring any points for the GT1 championship at Taupo, due to the absence of Ray and Ross' change of class for that weekend, both remain static in points, Ross on 132 and Ray on 109. In NZGT, Colin managed to move up to 197 points and 15th in the championship.

Pukekohe always manages to provide fantastic racing and is sure to do likewise as New Zealand's wildest cars are unleashed once more.





# Ross to Continue in NZGT at Pukekohe

For the second race weekend in a row, Ross Johnson will be competing in the NZGT championship with his Targa car. His regular GT2 machine is still undergoing an engine rebuild but should be ready for the final round at Manfield.

"That's just motor sport" he told me prior to the weekend's action. But there can be no doubt that the car will come out fighting at the next round.

Even with the Targa car, Ross was looking forward to the weekend. "The car seems to be very well suited to the class" he states, "and also with the suspension that we have on the car, it will be well suited to the circuit if it stays wet." It is surely shaping up to be another great weekend of racing.







## *Cruel Blow Dampens Taupo Round*

After the fantastic end to the weekend at Taupo for round 4 of the NZGT championship which saw Colin Caldwell take his first win in the multi-class Porsche 964, the officials would dish out a 10 second time penalty for a break-out in the final race.

Such is the regulations that if a driver goes at least a second faster than the lap time which the handicap is based on a penalty is enforced.

Feeling somewhat robbed of his fantastic result, it left Colin to ponder on the nature of his penalty. But he would vow to try and make up for the disappointment at Pukekohe.



# The Hard Side of Racing

The introductions have already been made, Ray Williams' wallet has been officially introduced to both of his race cars. In recent times, Ray has been out doing what he does best, racing.

However, the results haven't been going the way that he would have liked. For the last two weekends he has been running the Ivory Beast 930 Turbo in a classic Sports and GT class. Despite putting the car on the front row for Pukekohe he would not finish any of the races due to mechanical problems. At the Taupo round, time would repeat itself. Except this time the damage was more serious.

A serious amount of money later the Porsche will be back on the track. This added to the cost of converting his regular Porsche back to leaded fuel it is turning out to be an expensive time of year for Ray.







# Qualifying Report

The weather on Saturday played a very important role in the qualifying sessions for NZGT and GT1. The NZGT field now thriving set out onto the track to be greeted with severely wet conditions. Ross started out well putting in some solid laps, however the session had to be red flagged as Colin Spun on the run up to the final corner. The 964 hit the wall on the rear and broke the rear bumper, muffler and an oil line. As the session was restarted only 5 cars lined up to go out; Ross was amongst them. With the track now drier but still very wet Ross improved his time to put him on pole position almost 8 seconds ahead of the second placed car.

In Gt1, the slightly reduced field for qualifying saw only 8 cars take to the track, with others still in pit lane. Ray loves the wet, and it showed, putting his car fourth on the grid. It wasn't all good news though as the car had developed a small misfire. "We could be another 2 seconds faster down the straight" he tells me. Nevertheless he will be taking the fight to the big transam cars when racing gets underway.



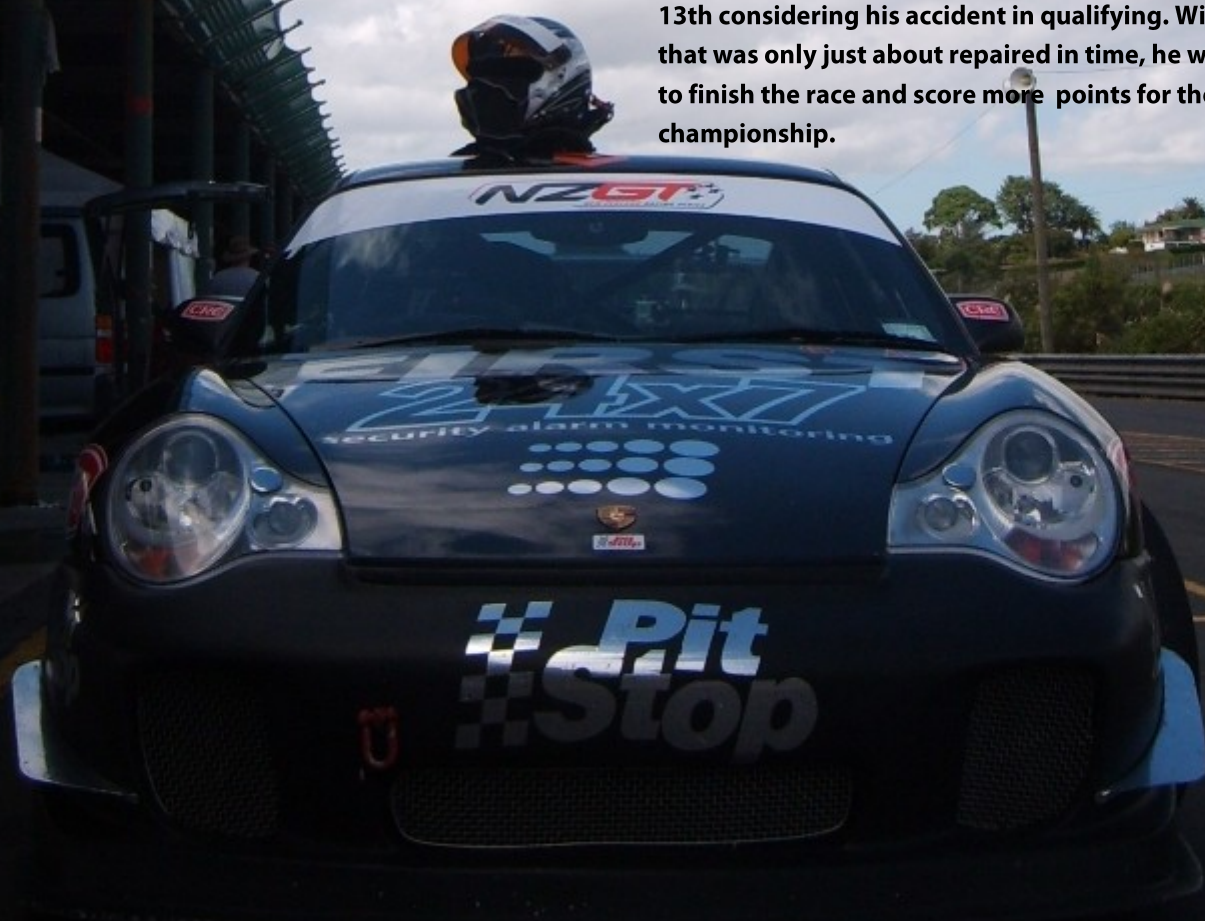
# Race 1

For the start of the NZGT race the organizers decided, due to the weather, to start the race single file from behind the safety car. Ross would start from pole with a nice clear view ahead of him. The Motorsport Services team would get Colin's car repaired in time for the race, which would be a boost after the disappointment of qualifying. As the race got underway, Ross got a great start and managed to get away from the second place car to pull a lead out on the first lap.

However the race would fall back into safety car conditions a lap or two later after the demise of Chris Coleman's Honda Prelude. When the field was released once more, Ross made another fantastic restart to put more space between himself and the very quick Nissan Skyline of Mike Thomson. From there he continued to pull out a very sizable lead and would lap a handful of cars before the end of the race. "I wasn't even sure if I had seen the chequered flag" he explained afterward, "I had to ask if the race was actually over". Nevertheless it would be another win in the class for Ross and his stand-in car. "It just loves the conditions" he told me, the four wheel drive working wonders in the wet. By the end of the race, Ross had opened up a 10.9 second lead. A truly dominant performance.

In GT1, Ray would start from fourth on the grid, after a strong showing in qualifying. However by now the rain had eased off and a dry line was starting to appear. Once again the race was started from behind the safety car with Grant Brennan starting from pole ahead of Carl Hansen's TVR. It was a clean start as the cars rocketed towards the first corner. By the end of lap two Ray would be up to third after Brennan hit trouble, causing him to slow. He would hold third until the tranzam of John Rae came through from the back. Despite being down on power, he managed to keep up with the leaders. He would later retire as the car ran out of fuel due to an unexpected amount of fuel consumption.

In Bridgestone Porsches, Colin would fight his way through difficult conditions to finish a very respectable 13th considering his accident in qualifying. With a car that was only just about repaired in time, he was able to finish the race and score more points for the championship.





Sunday morning brought the glorious sunshine that everyone had been hoping for. However with a now completely dry track, how would Ross get on against the Skyline of Thomson? As usual the second race of the weekend was a split reverse grid. Ross would start from 29th on the grid with a lot of cars ahead of him. Colin would start towards the front and would get underway in the first group. By the time they reached the first corner he was up to third on the road. Yellow flags were deployed after the second group as one car would pull to the inside with a mechanical failure. This would mean a yellow flag start for Ross. "I had my start all planned out" he told me after. Despite the yellow flag he managed a to get a good getaway to stay ahead of Thomson and set about cutting his way through the field.

The car was working well, but a slightly hot rear tyre was making life a little difficult over the top of the Ford Mountain. The gap to the runaway leaders proved too much and, although the skyline would get through towards the end Ross would bring the car home to a 5th place finish, and taking out the fastest lap in class for the week-end



In GT1, Ray would get a good start to push the leaders in the group into the first corner. He would fight hard with the RX 7 of Cameron Jones and the Luke Manson Skyline and was running well until he pulled off 5 laps in with a mechanical problem. Ray's hard luck continues.

## Race 2

For the second race in Bridgestone Porsches, Colin would be near the front due to the reverse grid from the first race. Now in the dry, he would have the confidence to push the car harder. By the end of the race he would end up 6th behind Kevin Etches. With two slower cars ahead of him he could have ended up in 4th with more laps but 6th would be a welcome result nevertheless.

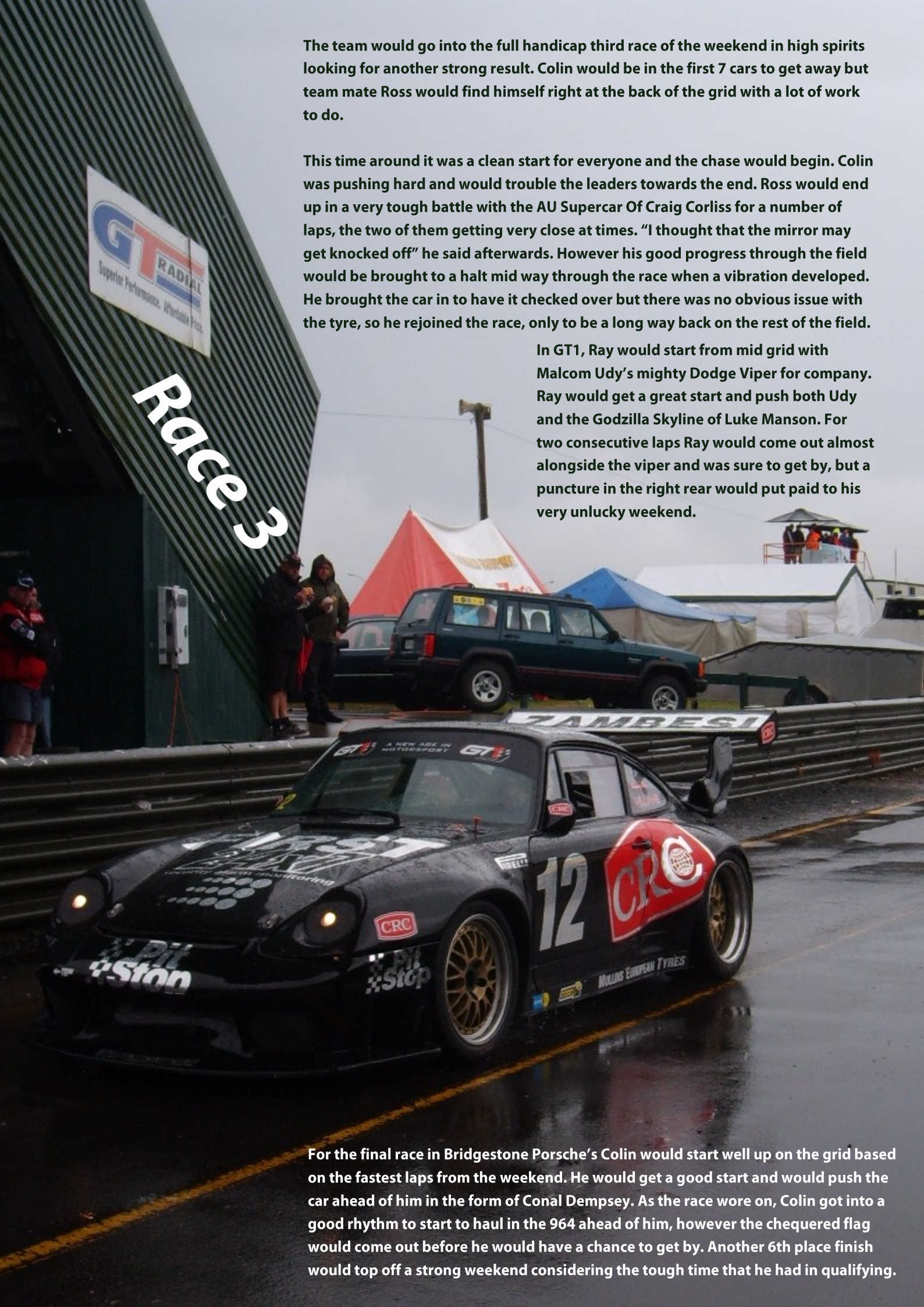


The team would go into the full handicap third race of the weekend in high spirits looking for another strong result. Colin would be in the first 7 cars to get away but team mate Ross would find himself right at the back of the grid with a lot of work to do.

This time around it was a clean start for everyone and the chase would begin. Colin was pushing hard and would trouble the leaders towards the end. Ross would end up in a very tough battle with the AU Supercar Of Craig Corliss for a number of laps, the two of them getting very close at times. "I thought that the mirror may get knocked off" he said afterwards. However his good progress through the field would be brought to a halt mid way through the race when a vibration developed. He brought the car in to have it checked over but there was no obvious issue with the tyre, so he rejoined the race, only to be a long way back on the rest of the field.

In GT1, Ray would start from mid grid with Malcom Udy's mighty Dodge Viper for company. Ray would get a great start and push both Udy and the Godzilla Skyline of Luke Manson. For two consecutive laps Ray would come out almost alongside the viper and was sure to get by, but a puncture in the right rear would put paid to his very unlucky weekend.

# Race 3



For the final race in Bridgestone Porsche's Colin would start well up on the grid based on the fastest laps from the weekend. He would get a good start and would push the car ahead of him in the form of Conal Dempsey. As the race wore on, Colin got into a good rhythm to start to haul in the 964 ahead of him, however the chequered flag would come out before he would have a chance to get by. Another 6th place finish would top off a strong weekend considering the tough time that he had in qualifying.



**Upcoming Rounds of the GT1 and NZGT Championships:**

Manfield 28th - 29th March

Hamilton 17th April 2009 - Part of the Hamilton 400 V8 Supercar event.

Taupo 9th—10th May

**Upcoming Rounds of the Bridgestone Porsche Championship**

Manfield 28th - 29th March



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