

CRAILLSY: Record 31 Porsche Paynter Dixon Carrera Cup Australia grid for historic 2022 season opener

04/04/2022 Richard Craill, the voice of Porsche motorsport and sportscar racing in Australia, provides his form guide for the 2022 Porsche Paynter Dixon Carrera Cup Australia.

The last time the Porsche Paynter Dixon Carrera Cup Australia had such fundamental change to its make-up, the Championship didn't even exist.

That might sound strange, but there's an argument to be made that Australia's top one-make category hasn't seen this much revolution in an off season since the category itself was launched nearly two decades ago.

Carrera Cup Australia launched at the Phillip Island Grand Prix circuit in 2003, a field of 26 Type 996 GT3 Cup Cars launching what has now become nearly two decades of Carrera Cup competition in Australia – and one of the most competitive championships of any around the world.

Season 2022 represents wholesale change, not only with a host of new faces appearing on the scene, but a complete re-boot with the biggest upgrade to machinery the series has had.

While the evolution from 996 through 997 and ultimately 991, the brand-new Type 992 GT3

Cup Car represents a significant upgrade from the previous models.

The 4.0-litre flat six may remain normally aspirated, but Porsche Paynter Dixon Carrera Cup Australia has become supercharged in 2022.

Here's how.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE..

There are familiar names throughout the 31-strong entry list this year, but all of them will be on a level playing field with the new 992 generation Porsche 911 GT3 Cup Car that represents a significant upgrade from what we've all known to this point.

For starters, the opening round at the Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix will set a record for the largest ever launch field for a Carrera Cup Championship in this part of the world, with 31 cars entered for Round 1.

That trumps the 26-car field that raced at Phillip Island in 2003 and the same number of then-new 991.2 models that raced for the first time in 2018.

The 2022 calendar looks different too – starting at the Australian Grand Prix for just the second time in its history. Winton is next on the calendar, followed by a welcome return to Darwin then Townsville, before more traditional highlight rounds at Sandown, The Bend Motorsport Park, Bathurst 1000 and finally the Gold Coast to conclude the eight-round championship.

996 Debut - Phillip Island 2003 (26 Cars)

997 Debut – Adelaide 500 2006 (22 Cars)

997.2 Debut – Australian Grand Prix 2011 (22 Cars)

991 Debut – Adelaide 500 2014 (23 Cars)

991.2 Debut – Adelaide 500 2018 (26 Cars)

992 Debut – Australian Grand Prix, 2022 (31 Cars entered)

NEW NAMES

Five drivers will make their Carrera Cup debut at Round 1, while some familiar faces are also making a racing return this year.

Ryan Suhle, Bayley Hall and Matt Belford all make the step-up from Porsche Michelin Sprint Challenge Australia, proving the ongoing success of the Porsche Pyramid in Australia.

Suhle and Hall were both Pro Class contenders across several Covid-19 interrupted seasons, while Belford was a proven Morris Finance Pro-Am competitor in the second-tier series and clearly has the pace to continue that form in the main game.

Victorian Angelo Mouzouris makes the switch from Super2 to Carrera Cup in the next progression in his career, while the experienced Brad Shiels is a fascinating addition to the grid.

Shiels' background is in Sports Sedans, Time Attack and more recently in TCR Australia. He has been fast in all of them and his rate of development in Carrera Cup will be a key story this year.

Dylan O'Keeffe is another to forgo a Super2 slot for a crack in a new Cup Car: the 2018 Hidden Valley Carrera Cup winner was 3rd in the 2019 championship and will consider himself a title contender this year, surely.

Returning to the series, Tony Quinn will make his first Carrera Cup starts since the 2007 season. One of the championships' originals – he was on the grid at Phillip Island in 2003 – Quinn will be a Morris Finance Pro-Am Contender this year.

Speaking of contenders, 2019 champion Liam Talbot is back for another title attempt and while he was able to claim the Morris Finance Pro-Am Championship three seasons ago, he did it without winning a round – surely that will be a key goal this year amidst a highly competitive Pro-Am fight.

A late addition to the entry list, but arguably one of the most noteworthy, is Rodney Jane in the Morris Finance Pro-Am Championship. Piloting one of his three Bob Jane T-Marts entries run by the championship-winning Sonic Racing Team, Jane's progress this season will be fascinating to watch, given his pedigree as Champion in 2006 and 2007, as well as recording 10 round wins and holding the distinction of being the only driver in the Pro-Am class to have recorded 12 consecutive race wins.

STEPPING UP

With the likes of reigning champion Cameron Hill and the ever-rapid Cooper Murray, plus other key contenders from the last few years making the move abroad, there are a host of young guns ready to step up this year and make their mark in the Pro class.

Chief among them is Harri Jones, who was third in the championship last year and delivered race wins at Mount Panorama at the end of the season. On paper and on form, he's probably the early 2022 favourite.

The list of young contenders is long however: Fast Kiwi Callum Hedge made his debut late last season for Earl Bamber's team and was speedy out of the gate. South Aussie Max Vidau has moved to Queensland to embed himself with TekworX Motorsport after showing plenty of form for that team, and before that Sonic Motor Racing, in part-time campaigns recently.

Christian Pancione showed his potential throughout his part-time 2021 campaign, the Porsche Michelin Sprint Challenge graduate another young gun keen to show his title credentials, while former Sprint Challenge Champion Simon Fallon will look to build on his debut Carrera Cup Season last year with a strong 2022 in the Sonic / Bob Jane T-Marts squad alongside Aaron Love. The latter returns for a one-off race at the Australian Grand Prix before a full-time assault in Carrera Cup France.

THE GUNS ARE BACK

One of the best things about Carrera Cup is watching young, upcoming talent strut their stuff against those who have been doing it successfully for a lot longer. That chance to benchmark their performances against the proper Porsche gurus is always a strong storyline – and this year will be no different.

We start, of course, with David Wall: The 2017 champion has never finished lower than fourth in the championship, his 65 rounds netting 4 victories and 19 race wins – as recently as Bathurst last year. Furthermore, the change to a platform more akin to the GT cars he's used to racing could suit the Sydneysider even more than his existing ride.

Never, ever count out the only former champion amidst the Mobil Pro ranks.

That, however, is just the start: old rivals Michael Almond (departing Sonic for a new environment at GWR this year) and Nick McBride remain locked together on 54 rounds apiece.

Duvashen Padayachee will use all of his 40-rounds of experience on his first starts in many seasons, while David Russell will hope his new partnership with EMA Motorsport will see him break his duck and score a maiden round win: having finished second on a record five occasions previously.

Dale Wood is back with another stunning Timken livery and a new team and will take confidence in the fact his last round win came at the location of the 2022 season opener: Albert Park.

MORRIS FINANCE PRO-AM BATTLE

The key about Carrera Cup racing is that if there's not a battle for the lead, there will likely always be one somewhere amidst the field – and there's nothing like the fight for the Morris Finance Pro-Am Class.

Last year delivered a dramatic and controversial finale at Mount Panorama as Sam Shahin and Geoff Emery took their season-long title fight right down to the final corner, of the final lap of the final race of

the year. Ultimately, after plenty of discussion by Motorsport Australia, Shahin was crowned champion – but retaining his crown will be a challenge for Shahin; aside from Emery, who will unquestionably be just as fast as ever, he will have to deal with three-time Pro-am Champion Stephen Grove and 2019 champion Liam Talbot in his bid to go back-to-back.

And that's before we talk about Tim Miles, who is a three-time round winner.

Dean Cook returns for another season and will join old sparring partner Tony Quinn – that pair were both on the grid at the series' first ever round in 2003 and will pick up their rivalry nearly two decades later.

Ben Stack, Drew Hall and Scott Taylor are all also back on the grid in the ever-feisty fight within a Carrera Cup fight.

PORSCHE MICHELIN JUNIOR FIGHT

The Porsche Michelin Junior Championship remains one of the most coveted – and potentially lucrative – in Australian motorsport, and you can bet that the field of Juniors this year will battle hard for the right to represent Australia in the annual Shootout in Europe later this year.

The Porsche Motorsport Pyramid remains one of the most complete, proven young-driver pathways in global motorsport and the ongoing success of Aussie graduates like Matt Campbell, Jaxon Evans and Jordan Love prove that to be true.

WE'RE READY

As you may have realised by now, there's plenty to take in when it comes to the 2022 Porsche Paynter Dixon Carrera Cup Australia. However, and for all the changes, you can be assured one thing will remain the same: A full field of Porsche 911 GT3 Cup Cars, going quicker than ever, with the deepest field of contenders across the two classes in series history.

Proof, then, that the more things change, the more they stay the same..

WHERE TO WATCH?

Every race this year will be shown live on Fox Sports 506 and Kayo Sports.

The races at the Australian Grand Prix will be shown live on Channel 10, while the remainder of the season will see a mix of live and highlight coverage on the screens of Seven.

For more Porsche Paynter Dixon Carrera Cup Australia news and content follow the Porsche Motorsport Australia social pages: Instagram - @PorscheMotorsportAU / Twitter - @PorscheMspAU / Facebook.com/ PorscheMotorsportAU

ENTRY LIST: Round 1 – Australian Grand Prix

#	Name	Surname	CLASS	SPONSOR
4	Stephen	Grove	Pro-Am	Grove Racing
5	Ryan	Suhle	Pro	SP Tools / EBM
6	Angelo	Mouzouris	Pro	Sonic Motor Racing / PitBox
7	Tim	Miles	Pro-Am	Miles Advisory Partners / N2C
8	Nick	McBride	Pro	Porsche Centre Melbourne
9	Marc	Cini	Pro-Am	Hallmarc
11	Jackson	Walls	Pro	Objective Racing
12	Harri	Jones	Pro	Hastings Deering / Mackellar Group
13	Sam	Shahin	Pro-Am	The Bend Motorsport Park / HTFU
14	Matthew	Belford	Pro-Am	ID Land / Porsche Centre Melbourne
17	Callum	Hedge	Pro	Team Porsche New Zealand / EBM
22	Dean	Cook	Pro-Am	Zonzo Racing
25	Michael	Almond	Pro	Petrol Services Australia
27	Liam	Talbot	Pro-Am	Wash It / Paynter Dixon

28	Bayley	Hall	Pro	Printech
38	David	Wall	Pro	Monochrome / Paynter Dixon
45	Duvashen	Padayachee	Pro	Rentcorp Hyundai Forklifts
48	Geoff	Emery	Pro-Am	ASM
53	Luke	Youlden	Pro	TekworkX / Hire A Hubby
72	Max	Vidau	Pro	TekworkX / Tyrepower
74	David	Russell	Pro	EMA Motorsport
76	Christian	Pancione	Pro	VCM Performance / HP Tuners
77	Rodney	Jane	Pro-Am	Sonic / Bob Jane T Marts
86	Drew	Hall	Pro-Am	Wall Racing
88	Dylan	O'Keeffe	Pro	Dexion / RAM Motorsport
100	Dale	Wood	Pro	Timken Racing
101	Tony	Quinn	Pro-Am	Local Legends
222	Scott	Taylor	Pro-Am	Scott Taylor Motorsport
333	Brad	Shiels	Pro	Royal Purple Racing

777	Simon	Fallon	Pro	Sonic / Bob Jane T Marts / Bremtech
999	Aaron	Love	Pro	Sonic / Bob Jane T Marts

BROADCAST SCHEDULE: Round 1, Australian Grand Prix

Thursday April 7, 2022

11:45-12:05 – Practice

14:20-14:40 – Qualifying

Friday April 8, 2022

11:00-11:30 – Race 1

17:15-17:50 – Race 2

Saturday April 9, 2022

12:00-12:25 – Race 3

Sunday, April 10, 2022

11:05-11:35 – Race 4

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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