

Round 2
Sydney Motorsport Park, 9-10 April
Race Report

Nathan Gotch made it two victories from two rounds, lifting the David Choon Memorial Trophy with another lights-to-flag win in the second round of the AGI NSW Formula Race Cars Championship at Sydney Motorsport Park. However it was the young guns in AGI's Formula 4's that provided the highlights for the round, showing tremendous skills in the wet on Saturday and taking it to the more powerful Formula 3 cars when the sun finally came out on Sunday.

Nathan's win sees him open up a commanding lead in this year's championship and the rest of the field will have some work to do when we resume racing at Wakefield Park in May.



Nathan Gotch was untouchable when the sun came out on Sunday.

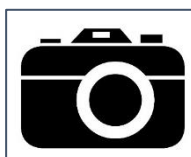
Snapshot

Podium



1. **Nathan Gotch**
2. **Costa Toparis**
3. **Graeme Holmes**

Photos



Natsoft Results



Standings



Nathan Gotch	172
Greg Muddle	97
Doug Barry	88

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Pre-Race

A week out from the race meeting and a grid of 20 cars – our largest in years – looked a possibility... but then flood, pestilence and *cartastrophe* (i.e., race cars that just won't go back together as quickly as they should) saw us drop back to 14. Rob Rowe was missing, which was a shame given his pace in round 1. Class C was meant to be boosted with a couple of Australian Formula 2 cars and Rod Anderson's 1989 Reynard F3, but sadly that will need to wait for a later round. We did however get to see Malcolm Oastler's ex-John Smith Ralt RT1 which was a welcome addition to the field, even if he was just using the weekend to test front wing modifications.

The F4 class saw young drivers entered – Gianmarco Pradel, who was a winner last time out in December and Costa Toparis, another karter taking the wheel of Adam Gotch's machine. Tim Boyle and Mark Wilson were both absent for this round leaving Phil Morrow as our sole 'gentleman' driver, but we are hoping to see a full complement of F4 cars line up next round.

Graeme Holmes (Dallara F304 Opel Spiess) was making a return to defend the David Choon Memorial trophy, together with Rod Brincat (Dallara F304 Opel Spiess) who hadn't run with us in nearly two years.

Apart from Adam Gotch the top 6 drivers from Round 1 were all entered in what promised to be a keenly contested round.



On Saturday it was WET. Graeme Holmes (21) on the 'dry' line while Doug Barry gives his big wets the full workout.

Qualifying

1. Costa Toparis; 2. Gianmarco Pradel; 3. Graeme Holmes

Pole time: 1:46.326

Conditions were already wet but a shower as we sat on the dummy grid sealed it, and that was followed by patchy rain at various times throughout the session.

Pradel and Toparis had the advantage of youth, loads of miles in karts, and the relatively tractable power of the Formula 4 – I could go on about how advantaged they were but clearly loads and loads of talent was what evidently set them apart. Toparis took pole on his first competitive outing in a wings and slicks car, edging out his more experienced (one race meeting) rival.

Daylight would have been third, except it was in very scarce supply. Holmes was some distance back, edging out Gotch. Rod Baker (Dallara F301 Opel Spiess) was the only other F3 to get close, but sadly had a spin coming out of Turn 5 and although there was only minimal damage as a result it was enough to sideline him for the weekend.

Baker did earn bragging rights over stablemate Greg Muddle (Dallara F399 Opel Spiess) who had to settle for 6th ahead of Doug Barry (Reynard 92D Formula Holden) who Phil Morrow (Mygale F4 EcoBoost), Rod Brincat, Lawrence Katsidis (Sydney Photo Booths Dallara F304 Renault), and Rob Sviderskas (Dallara F304 Opel Spiess) but it was slow and steady from everybody just trying to get through the session.

Glenn Lynch (Dallara F397 Fiat), Shane Morrow (Dallara F397 VW) and Malcolm Oastler all failed to record a lap time – in Shane's case not for want of trying, having incurred the wrath of officials for inadvertently going out at the back end of the previous Formula Ford session.



Pradel was quick off the line in Race 1 and was able to control proceedings from there.

Race 1

1. Gianmarco Pradel; 2. Costa Toparis; 3. Nathan Gotch Fastest Lap: Costa Toparis 1:48.365

No let up in the rain as 11 cars rolled out Saturday afternoon for Race 1, Sviderskas and Oastler electing not to start (no wets an impediment for the Ralt) and Baker unable to repair damage from the earlier session.

The two young F4 drivers quickly cleared out and were in a class of their own, lapping everyone except Gotch in third and Holmes in fourth. Gotch was the only other car to break the two minute mark. Pradel had the jump from the start, having the advantage of a previous race meeting, and drove a well-controlled race to lead all 10 laps. He was under enormous pressure from Toparis, who set the fastest lap and who was barely two-tenths of a second behind when they greeted the chequered flag.

Gotch had a fairly solitary drive to lead home Holmes. Muddle was within striking distance of Holmes for the first part of the race but gradually tailed off. He was followed home by Phil Morrow who had to work hard to see off Barry and Brincat early in the race. Behind Barry and Brincat, Lawrence Katsidis was the last of the finishers in 9th, having made a good start but then spinning in the early stages of the race. Shayne Morrow and Glenn Lynch both parked their cars early.

Race 2

1. Nathan Gotch; 2. Costa Toparis; 3. Graeme Holmes

Fastest Lap: Costa Toparis 1:32.686

Sunday morning saw clear skies and warm temperature, a welcome change from the previous day, but there was still water on the circuit in several places.

Gotch was able to make the most of a good start and lead Pradel, who had jumped slightly and would later be penalised, Toparis, Barry, Holmes and Phil Morrow away from the line, Muddle losing spots to Barry and Morrow but pulling one back on the run into turn 2. Katsidis and Brincat also muscled their way past Morrow on lap 1, however Muddle was caught out by the water at Turn 15 and spun off into the bog, necessitating a safety car.

When racing resumed Gotch maintained his lead however it was Toparis in second as Pradel struggled with power issues in the Mygale, eventually conceding places to both Holmes and Barry. Katsidis had settled into 6th, not able to run keep pace with Barry and with his hands full staving off an attack from a hard-charging Glenn Lynch and Rod Brincat.

Shayne Morrow was having a good contest with Rob Sviderskas, th two swapping places on two occasions before Morrow also spun at the same place that Muddle had previously exited the track, bringing out the safety car for a second tour of duty.

That's the way it stayed until the chequered flag. Gotch had the win from Toparis, Holmes and Barry; Pradel was fifth across the line, but his penalty relegated him to 9th, behind Katsidis, Lynch, Brincat and Morrow. Sviderskas was the final finisher in tenth, Muddle and Morrow having been towed home and Oastler parking the Ralt after finally getting to test the front wing and finding it was not to his liking.

Race 3

1. Nathan Gotch; 2. Costa Toparis; 3. Graeme Holmes

Fastest Lap: Nathan Gotch 1:30.939

In the trophy race Gotch and Toparis led the field away with Doug Barry making a typically flying start to jump ahead of defending title-holder Holmes with Lynch moving up into 5th. We are accustomed to seeing a feisty opening lap effort from Glenn but this was a throwback to his championship winning form of more than a decade ago, hanging with Barry and Holmes deep into the race before a spin at the Turn 9 hairpin.

Lynch wasn't the only car on the move. Oastler was among the quickest on track, progressing from 12th to 6th by half distance and then moving into the top 5 when Lynch left the circuit.

Katsidis probably would have been able to keep pace with Oastler but had his hands full defending from Brincat. This became a very close three way contest when Muddle eventually made up ground, and Katsidis kept them both at bay until lap 10 when Brincat was finally able to make a passing move stick, with Muddle able to get past on the following lap.

Gotch progressively opened the gap to Toparis, and Holmes, free from the threat of Lynch was able to pass Barry to claim third in the closing stages of the race. Oastler held onto 5th with a comfortable margin over Brincat, Muddle and Katsidis. Lynch recovered from his spin to finish 9th, while Sviderskas held off Shayne Morrow for 10th. Pradel had struggled in 8th in the early stages of the race before retiring the Mygale with a recurrence of the engine issues he had experienced earlier in the day.



"From here I can see second..." Barry contemplates a move around the outside but eventually had to settle in behind Toparis.

That concluded another excellent weekend for the AGI Team, with Nathan Gotch now in a commanding position in the Championship. There were great performances from the F4 runners, Wakefield Park has been a great performance leveller in recent years so we expect Nathan will need to work a lot harder for the result next round.

Next Round – Wakefield Park on 14 & 15 May

Short Bursts

Big Banana Pole Position ...This time the award went Costa Toparis on his FRCA debut. (unfortunately, in between problems with my car and trying to retrieve Rod Baker's car from the recovery truck the moment for a Big Banana presentation passed me by. Next time....). Pole on FRCA debut has been relatively rare and apart from our very first race meeting where *anyone* was going to make the list (Muddle – April 2011) only 4 others have achieved this: Graeme Holmes (June 2011, although he already had 'elder statesman' status technically it was his first outing with FRCA); Nathan Gotch (March 2012); Nick Filipetto (in the same car three years later, April 2015) and most recently Noel McDermott (April 2021).

Blast from the past ...Talk of pole positions does bring to mind the all time greatest pole position in FRCA history, Lawrence Katsidis' incredible 3:18.905 in perfectly dry conditions at Sydney Motorsport Park in August 2020. In a disastrously interrupted session, it proved the worth of getting out of the dummy grid quickly and putting down a banker lap no matter how slow it is.

Fun Fact This round marked the first time in FRCA history when the combined age of the front row was less than the age of any other competitor in the field.

Wet Weather specialist... Glenn Lynch had all bass covered on Saturday. Nobody was fazed when Glenn still hadn't arrived 30 minutes before practice, that's become the standard drill, but we didn't realise until later that he'd made a quick dash to Wollongong (just down the road...) to pick up a jet ski – almost as practical as a new set of wets in the conditions. Lynchy made the transition from wet to dry with no problems, putting in an epic effort chasing Graeme Holmes on Sunday afternoon.

Top Tens

QUALIFYING			Lap	Gap
1	Costa Toparis	Mygale F4	1:46.326	
2	Gianmarco Pradel	Mygale F4	1:48.613	+2.287
3	Graeme Holmes	Dallara F304	1:55.334	+9.007
4	Nathan Gotch	Dallara F307	1:56.353	+10.026
5	Rodney Baker	Dallara F301	1:57.886	+11.560
6	Greg Muddle	Dallara F399	2:01.550	+15.223
7	Doug Barry	Reynard 92D	2:04.937	+18.611
8	Phil Morrow	Mygale F4	2:10.096	+23.769
9	Rod Brincat	Dallara F304	2:11.656	+25.329
10	Lawrence Katsidis	Dallara F304	2:12.769	+26.443

RACE 1 – 10 LAPS			Gap
1	Gianmarco Pradel	Mygale F4	
2	Costa Toparis	Mygale F4	+0.197
3	Nathan Gotch	Dallara F307	+5.457
4	Graeme Holmes	Dallara F304	+59.887
5	Greg Muddle	Dallara F399	-1 lap
6	Phil Morrow	Mygale F4	-1 lap
7	Doug Barry	Reynard 92D	-1 lap
8	Rod Brincat	Dallara F304	-1 lap
9	Lawrence Katsidis	Dallara F304	-1 lap
10			

RACE 2 – 9 LAPS			Gap
1	Nathan Gotch	Dallara F307	
2	Costa Toparis	Mygale F4	+0.631
3	Graeme Holmes	Dallara F304	+1.555
4	Doug Barry	Reynard 92D	+1.993
5	Lawrence Katsidis	Dallara F304	+3.254
6	Glenn Lynch	Dallara F397	+4.241
7	Rod Brincat	Dallara F304	+4.959
8	Phil Morrow	Mygale F4	+5.766
9	Gianmarco Pradel	Mygale F4	+7.471
10	Rob Sviderskas	Dallara F304	+37.013

RACE 3 – 12 LAPS			Gap
1	Nathan Gotch	Dallara F307	
2	Costa Toparis	Mygale F4	+5.412
3	Graeme Holmes	Dallara F304	+21.182
4	Doug Barry	Reynard 92D	+24.068
5	Malcolm Oastler	Ralt RT1	+36.720
6	Rod Brincat	Dallara F304	+44.637
7	Greg Muddle	Dallara F399	+47.988
8	Lawrence Katsidis	Dallara F304	+50.277
9	Glenn Lynch	Dallara F397	+82.575
10	Rob Sviderskas	Dallara F304	-1 lap

CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS

1	Nathan Gotch	Dallara F307	172
2	Greg Muddle	Dallara F399	97
3	Doug Barry	Reynard 92D	88
4	Lawrence Katsidis	Dallara F304	82
5	Costa Toparis	Mygale F4	75
6	Adam Gotch	Mygale F4	72
7	Graeme Holmes	Dallara F304	63
8	Glenn Lynch	Dallara F397	52
9	Phil Morrow	Mygale F4	46
10	Rodney Baker	Dallara F301	40

FRCA CLUB POINTSORE

QUALIFYING			
1	Nathan Gotch	Dallara F307	28
2	Glenn Lynch	Dallara F397	22
3	Lawrence Katsidis	Dallara F304	20
4	Malcolm Oastler	Ralt RT1	19
5	Doug Barry	Reynard 92D	18
6	Rodney Baker	Dallara F301	17
7	Phil Morrow	Mygale F4	17
8	Greg Muddle	Dallara F399	15
9	Tim Boyle	Mygale F4	14
10	Adam Gotch	Mygale F4	14