

Round 5
Sydney Motorsport Park, 29-30 October 2022
Race Report

Victorian young gun Jesse Lacey had a dream debut in the penultimate round of the AGI Sport NSW Formula Cars Championship at Sydney Motorsport Park, steering his AGI Sport Mygale F4 to victory in all three races. The 'AGI Academy' seems to have an endless pool of talent, introducing two impressive youngsters this round, with Christian Estasy overcoming some problems in Saturday's first race to be the main challenger to Lacey on Sunday in a close one-two finish.

Even when they weren't racing they were winning at AGI! Nathan Gotch was not on driving duties this weekend, but his 9 race wins from the previous rounds are enough to give him an unassailable lead and wrap up his fourth championship victory ahead of the final round at Phillip island in November.



Three from three, Jesse Lacey had a perfect start to his wings and slicks career.

Snapshot

Podium



1. **Jesse Lacey**
2. **Christian Estasy**
3. **Doug Barry**

Photos



Natsoft Results



Standings



Nathan Gotch	325
Doug Barry	248
Costa Toparis	230

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Pre-Race

With several competitors opting to focus on Phillip Island in just a few weeks' time Formula Cars were down on numbers this weekend.

AGI were down three drivers from the previous round – both Gianmarco Pradel and Costa Toparis were on overseas duties, and series leader Nathan Gotch was deputising for brother Adam in the Team Manager role. However the team barely skipped a beat, with 4 Mygale F4's entered in Class B - promoting two new drivers Lacey and Estasy into the 'young guns' seats vacated by Pradel and Toparis, and with Tim Boyle and Mark Wilson also continuing their campaigns.

In Class A it was a case of 'the usual suspects'. Doug Barry in the Reynard 92D Formula Holden was the closest championship contender to Gotch and looking to capitalise on recent good form.

Rob Rowe (Dallara F310 Toyota), Lawrence Katsidis (Sydney Photo Booths Dallara F304 Renault), Greg Muddle (Dallara F305 Opel Spiess) and Rodney Baker (Dallara F399 Opel Spiess) completed the Class A runners, with both Rod Brincat and Ron Coath missing from the previous round. With Nathan Gotch on the sidelines Class A looked wide-open to a number of competitors.

Class C entries were once again led by Glenn Lynch (notionally in the F397 Dallara Fiat, although he leaves a final decision on which car to use quite close to the commencement of racing to keep the rest of us guessing), with Shayne Morrow (Dallara F397 VW), and Rob Sviderskas again hoping to have the very tidy AF2-spec. Cheetah Mk7 VW on track, having sold his Dallara F304.

A small field but expected likely to put on a good show.

Qualifying

1. Greg Muddle; 2. Jesse Lacey; 3. Christian Estasy

Pole time: 1:28.635

Perfect conditions – dry clear and cool for our early start on Saturday morning. No rain in sight for a change!.

Lacey and Estasy had looked good on the Friday and set the early pace in a short 15 minute session. That time was interrupted with a red flag to remove Rod Baker's car which was stranded at Turn 16 with a fuel problem (fuel inevitably being a problem when you don't put it in the car). When Baker was towed-in and the session resumed it effectively became a F1-style one-hot-lap scenario.

Muddle was able to capitalise on this, despite a slight misfire, putting in a good time in the 'new' car (can we still call it new three race meetings in?) to claim a clear pole position.

Lacey had the upper hand in Class B, making the most of the one-lap flyer to steal second spot from Estasy.

Barry was another to improve his position after the break, even though the Reynard usually prefers a couple of laps to dial in. It was good enough for fourth. With Lynch and Rowe close behind that looked promising for some close racing across the weekend.

Boyle qualified 7th ahead of Katsidis, who was struggling with tyres, followed by Wilson, who couldn't quite find the very good pace he had on Friday, and then Morrow who was distracted by a possible oil pressure issue.

Rob Sviderskas appeared briefly and did enough to qualify, and Baker had a couple of trips to the Clerk of Course to get permission to start after failing to complete a lap.

Race 1

1. Jesse Lacey; 2. Greg Muddle; 3. Rob Rowe

Fastest Lap: Muddle 1:29.850

Warm and dry as Muddle led the cars onto the track for what would ultimately be an 8-lapper.

All eyes were on the young duo having their first race start - would nerves or a trick clutch get the better of them - but ultimately, perhaps inevitably, it was the seasoned mistake-makers in the field who had difficulty at the start. Rowe pulled up in the wrong grid box, which brought out the 'Delayed Start' board, but the man in charge of the start was having none of that and continued with the start process anyway.

Muddle made a complete hash of it and stalled, Lynch uncharacteristically did the same, and Wilson behind him did the same for good measure. No hint of nerves or inexperience with the youngsters however, with Lacey making a clean getaway ahead of Estasy and both leaving the normally express-starter Barry in their wake. Rowe made a couple of places to be ahead of Katsidis, Baker, and Boyle, then Wilson eventually, Sviderskas struggling with an off-song Cheetah, then the medical car.... and then some way behind, Muddle.

Unfortunately for Lynch his starter motor decided that was a good time to give up the ghost, and the safety car came out so that he could be towed away.

At the restart it was Lacey leading away Estasy, both gapping Barry as the big Reynard hadn't really had time to warm up. Rowe was hounding the Big Dog and Muddle was thankful that the safety car had done a lot of the work to close the gap for him, passing the rest of the field to move into fifth at the end of the first lap under racing conditions.

Muddle accounted for both Rowe and Barry on the following lap, and with Estasy slowing and pitting that gave him a clear run at Lacey about 6 seconds down the road. It was a near thing, Muddle caught Lacey around Corporate Hill on the last lap but he drove a good defensive line for the remainder of the lap to hold out for the race win.



'No, not getting up the inside there' – Muddle looks for non-existent options as Lacey works hard for a race win.

Rowe kept working away at Barry until he found a gap and took third, both drivers matching the times of the Lacey and Estasy, which was promising for the races to come.

Baker took a couple of laps to get the better of Katsidis, who was still struggling with tyres and consistently locking at Turn 6, which was quite spectacular but not the quickest way to get around. Boyle was never far away in 7th, Morrow improved his times in 8th, as did Wilson who was having a good run before a spin late in the race but he recovered for 9th.

Rob Sviderskas made a pit stop to fix a rev-limiter problem and then returned to the circuit. The officials failed to recognise the enormity of the effort required to do this in a 15-minute race and refused to classify him as a finisher – rules, they are there to be applied (unless you're the Starter).



Smokin' – Lawrence Katsidis finding that flat spot, again.

Race 2

1. Jesse Lacey; 2. Christian Estasy; 3. Doug Barry

Fastest Lap: Estasy 1:30.070

Overnight we had lost Sviderskas, who decided to park the Cheetah with some not-quite-right noises coming from the engine. Lynch had worked hard to get the #55 car running, but on Sunday morning decided to pull Goldfinger out of the trailer instead. As the cars rolled out of the dummy grid Muddle was missing, the car simply refusing to start.

At the start it was Barry who was back to his characteristic lightening start to lead Lacey into the first corner ahead of Rowe, Baker gaining a place over Estasy who had a poor jump, and was left fending off Morrow and Lynch, both of whom had made up several spots. Wilson had a spin early on at Turn 15, he recovered, but not before the safety car was deployed to do a brief tour of duty.

At the resumption Lacey was looking for a way around Barry and finding, as many of us have, that from behind the Reynard looks enormously wide. Barry's car developed a smoke trail on about lap three, with spectators waiting for the big 'boom' but as it turned out it was an axle seal and not a terminal engine issue. Rowe was also in the mix and before Lacey eventually got enough of a run at Turn 1 to pass Barry as the cars started Lap 5.

By this time Estasy had joined the party and there was a great three-car tussle for second with the youngster taking both places from both Barry and Rowe on lap 6 and setting out after his team mate. He was clearly closing and set the fastest lap of the race on lap 8, but there was not enough time and Lacey held on for his second win of the weekend.

Rowe was charging hard but over-cooked it at the Turn 15 hairpin on lap 6. Baker and Lynch were elevated into 4th and 5th respectively, Baker had been showing good pace and starting to gap Lynch, but ran wide at the top of the circuit and gave up the place to Lynch to finish where he started, in fifth.



The Sunday grid, from Rowe back.

Morrow held onto the places he made at the start for a few laps, but then came under significant pressure from Boyle and had to give up 6th. Having conceded one place he was not keen on giving up another, and managed to hold out Katsidis for the second half of the race, with Wilson the last finisher in 9th.

Rowe managed to recover from his lap 6 spin but managed to repeat the same move at the same corner two laps later – practice makes perfect – but was unable to get going again before the race was declared. Once again the official rule-sticklers declared a 'DNF', not swayed by what was for the most part a good drive and clearly a significant contribution to the overall entertainment value of the race.

Race 3

1. Jesse Lacey; 2. Christian Estasy; 3. Doug Barry

Fastest Lap: Lacey 1:31.415

In the Trophy Race Lacey recorded a lights-to-flag win to complete a perfect scoresheet for the weekend, but there he had to work hard for his win.



Lawrence Katsidis around the outside of Tim Boyle early in Race 3.

Barry once again got the jump at the start, but this time couldn't make it stick and the two youngsters quickly established a gap at the front. The two were never separated by more than a few car-lengths, and Estasy made several attempts to pass with the slipstream into Turn 1 but was repelled each time.

Lynch was pushing hard and passed Barry for third on the second lap. Katsidis had a great start to launch into 5th, but the car was still a handful and he gave up that place to Baker on the second lap.

Rowe had made a slow start from the back of the field but worked his way up to 6th on lap 3, with Lynch, Barry, Baker and Rowe in a 4-way tussle for third. Rowe had the momentum, and by lap 7 it was Barry, with Rowe, then Lynch and Baker. Unfortunately Lynch had an engine failure going into Turn 2, resulting in a small fire, a stranded car and the deployment on a safety car that eventually led the field across the finish line.



*On fire – Lynch was figuratively 'on fire' early in the race, only for things to get all too literal later in the race.
Hoping that we can see the Goldfinger back on track next year.*

With first and third positions being strongly contested before the safety car it was a disappointing end, both contests looked like there were further moves to be played out in the closing laps.

Baker completed a trio of third places for the weekend, leading home Katsidis, ahead of Morrow and Wilson – both of whom improved their time significantly in the last race. Boyle was the last of the finishers, having been as high as 6th at one stage and ahead of Katsidis a late mis-adventure saw him fall to the back of the field.

Consistent speed and a seemingly endless pool of talent delivered another great weekend for AGI. Making it 15 wins from 15 this season albeit with three different drivers.

Another consistent display from Doug Barry sees him in a solid place to take 2nd in this year's championship. Muddle and Rowe showed good speed at times but were unable to capitalise this time out,

Next Round – Phillip Island on 26 & 27 November

Short Bursts

Welcome Back: Nice to have **Rick Hughes** back in the Loz's garage after a three year absence. If anyone needs any grinding work done Rick has an extensive photographic portfolio of his work and would be happy to share that with you.

Pointy End: We're getting down to the pointy end of the battle for the minor places, with **Nathan Gotch** already having clinched the main prize. Assuming AGI find extra seats for Costa Toparis and Gianmarco Pradel at Phillip Island, the scenario's look to be:

- Doug Barry highly likely to finish second, mathematically Rod Baker can still catch him but that's looking unlikely
- Costa Toparis' third place is under threat, Baker needs 43 points to displace him.

Everyone else is just there to look good and make up the numbers. Some of us struggle on both accounts.

2023: Stay tuned for more news on our 2023 calendar, we still in the process of finalising but a March start at Winton in on the cards. We had a couple of potential new competitors show interest at the last round, so hopefully some new cars (and some old ones out of the sheds as well) will see us start with a healthy grid.



Jeff Senior, still on the wrong side of the cockpit, helping Rob Rowe get it together.

Top Tens

QUALIFYING			Lap	Gap
1	Greg Muddle	Dallara F305	1:28.635	
2	Jesse Lacey	Mygale F4	1:30.461	+1.826
3	Christian Estasy	Mygale F4	1:30.790	+2.155
4	Doug Barry	Reynard 92D	1:32.293	+3.658
5	Glenn Lynch	Dallara F397	1:34.106	+5.471

6	Robert Rowe	Dallara F310	1:34.758	+6.123
7	Tim Boyle	Mygale F4	1:36.892	+8.257
8	Lawrence Katsidis	Dallara F304	1:38.074	+9.439
9	Mark Wilson	Mygale F4	1:38.678	+10.043
10	Shayne Morrow	Dallara F397	1:40.128	+11.493

RACE 1 – 8 LAPS

Gap

1	Jesse Lacey	Mygale F4	
2	Greg Muddle	Dallara F305	+0.128
3	Robert Rowe	Dallara F310	+7.827
4	Doug Barry	Reynard 92D	+8.762
5	Rodney Baker	Dallara F399	+27.632
6	Lawrence Katsidis	Dallara F304	+33.675
7	Tim Boyle	Mygale F4	+35.852
8	Shayne Morrow	Dallara F397	+51.456
9	Mark Wilson	Mygale F4	+62.893
10	Christian Estasy	Mygale F4	- 1 lap

RACE 2 – 9 LAPS

Gap

1	Jesse Lacey	Mygale F4	
2	Christian Estasy	Mygale F4	+1.146
3	Doug Barry	Reynard 92D	+7.905
4	Glenn Lynch	Dallara F398	+22.431
5	Rodney Baker	Dallara F399	+29.477
6	Tim Boyle	Mygale F4	+37.123
7	Shayne Morrow	Dallara F397	+41.855
8	Lawrence Katsidis	Dallara F304	+42.279
9	Mark Wilson	Mygale F4	+46.766
10			

RACE 3 – 9 LAPS

Gap

1	Jesse Lacey	Mygale F4	
2	Christian Estasy	Mygale F4	+0.926
3	Doug Barry	Reynard 92D	+2.823
4	Robert Rowe	Dallara F310	+4.827
5	Rodney Baker	Dallara F399	+5.738
6	Lawrence Katsidis	Dallara F304	+7.666
7	Shayne Morrow	Dallara F397	+8.766
8	Mark Wilson	Mygale F4	+8.984
9	Tim Boyle	Mygale F4	+1.681
10			

CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS

	Driver	Car	Pts
1	Nathan Gotch	Dallara F307	325
2	Doug Barry	Reynard 92D	248
3	Costa Toparis	Mygale F4	230
4	Rodney Baker	Dallara F399	188
5	Greg Muddle	Dallara F305	166
6	Gianmarco Pradel	Mygale F4	153
7	Robert Rowe	Dallara F310	149
8	Lawrence Katsidis	Dallara F304	126
9	Tim Boyle	Mygale F4	116
10	Glenn Lynch	Dallara F397	113

The following drivers have scored points at 5 rounds and would therefore need to drop their lowest scoring round to improve after Round 6: Barry (38 pts), Muddle (17) and Lynch (12)