

STATEWIDE FEATURE RADICAL AUSTRALIA CUP

A RADICAL RESURGENCE

THE EMERGING RADICAL AUSTRALIA CUP IS ABOUT TO STEP UP A GEAR FOR 2012, WRITES GARRY O'BRIEN



TO PURISTS, something called a Radical may not produce a groundswell of enthusiasm. But once seen in the metal and at speed, a flying Radical conjures up thoughts of sportscar racing as it used to be. Great, in other words.

Having just completed its first championship on a national program – at Morgan Park last weekend – the Radical Australia Cup with its supersteak, fast cars, has already grown a profile and fan following, with expansion plans already in place for 2012.

Last week the category announced that an exciting new car would be available, the Radical SR3RS CUP, which was devised and developed by Radical Australia in conjunction with the UK-based Radical factory.

The vehicle's specifications have been carefully considered to produce the best overall bang-for-your-racing-buck in the 2012 Radical Australia Cup.

The car boasts cosmetic changes, specifically to the nose, dive planes,

modified side pods and alterations to the rear louvre section. All cars will come with a twin exhaust system and be eligible for competition alongside the existing SR3 vehicles that have been the mainstay of the category this season.

There will be an expanded program of seven rounds with at least six under the Shannons Nationals. The likely calendar format will include three events at Eastern Creek, two at Phillip Island and one each at Sandown and Wakefield Park. The series will continue to feature a variety of racing formats, including the ProAm arrangement introduced this year, in which professional drivers compete with amateur co-pilots in up to two of the scheduled rounds.

Three former Australian Formula Three champions took on co-driver duties at the recent Eastern Creek round – Tim Macrow, James Winslow and Ben Barker – while Barton Mawer, a runner-up in both the Australian and British F3 titles, filled a similar role at Phillip Island.

Next year driver seeding will take on

the UK-based system of a three-tiered structure, with drivers classified as Pro (paid racer/instructor), Elite (national champion or past RAC-winning amateur) and Amateur.

The Radical competition concept began five years ago with Radical Down Under Track Days – two-seater cars with dual controls for drive days – and is co-owned by Greg Smith, Chris Medland and Peter Opie.

"Originally, people who came through our corporate track days loved the cars so much they bought one," Opie says. "Then we took them through tuition and track day programs to help them get more out of their cars. The natural progression then became racing, and those gentlemen racers originally formed the basis of the series. Now, we're getting tremendous interest from drivers in other categories to join in."

There have been around 65 Radicals brought in to Australia, of which around 40 are now racing in some form. Most have been brought up to the SR3RS

spec or near enough to. The beauty is that you don't have to write the biggest cheque to be the fastest.

In its maiden year at national level, and on the Shannons National program, Radical Australia Cup raced a variety of models upped to SR3-spec, but the standout has been the new SR3RS.

The Radical weighs just 570kg and is powered by a motorcycle derived powerplant. The newest currently in use is the 1500cc Powertech (now RPE) version, which is a re-badged and stroked version of the hugely powerful 1300cc Suzuki Hayabusa. The four cylinder double overhead cam powerplant is good for around 191kW and comes sealed from RPE in the UK, where it also returns periodically for inspections and tuning.

The SR3 gearbox is a transverse six-

speed sequential unit that delivers drive through a torque-biasing Quaife limited-slip differential. Standard vehicles have the mid-mounted sequential stick shift, but most RS models – including the 2012 Cup spec cars – have the F1-style paddle shift option. Both offer clutchless shifting, while the paddle shift cars enjoy an ignition cut for flat upshifts and an 'auto-blip' feature allowing mid-corner downshifts with no reported reduction in vehicle stability.

Bodywork kits are available in carbonfibre or the far less expensive and only marginally heavier fibreglass. Radical uses a patented Nik-link suspension front and rear as well as unequal length top and bottom wishbones mated to adjustable coil-over shocks. But as with the brakes, there are upgrade packages scheduled for

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