

5 Minutes With **John Bowe**

RLR recently caught up with motor racing legend John Bowe after watching him race to victory in the Biante Touring Car Masters Series at Winton.

RLR: What do you consider to be the highlight of your racing career and why?

JB: Looking back on it, I guess the highlight of my racing career would be my victories at Bathurst.

At the time they were not as important as they seem now. I remember a sense of relief after the first win on the mountain because I'd already secured a couple of second places and a top ten finish in my first three attempts.

I also derived a huge amount of pleasure from winning the Australian Drivers' Championship, the V8 Supercar title and lots of other races I was able, and fortunate enough, to win.

In fact, I still love racing (and, when possible, winning) as you saw at Winton.

RLR: Which driver has inspired you the most during your career and why?

JB: As a kid I was a massive fan of Jim Clark. I was a teenage boy when he was killed and it had a profound effect on me. His easy, smooth style also influenced how I drove, I think.

Later on as I raced more, my dad was friends with John McCormack who was a top Aussie driver of the seventies and early eighties. He also had a big effect on how I prepare mentally.

As far as rivals go, I really only wanted to do better than they did. I did respect some rivals more than others though, Jim Richards being the driver who has commanded my greatest respect, although Alain Prost was the only driver who I drove against where I thought, wow, that bloke is special! He subsequently proved to be.

RLR: You are currently driving a 1969 Camaro in the Biante Touring Car Masters Series. What is the biggest difference, in terms of 'drivability', between a car that old and a current V8 Supercar?

JB: Racing an historic Camaro is something I am doing for fun and for the profile. The best way to compare the '69 Camaro against a current V8 Supercar is that the handling of the '69 Camaro has mind of its own.

The brakes in the Camaro are pretty average and it only has four gears in an 'H' pattern. The Camaro is a car I just 'wing it' with; I don't bother spending too much time on minor set up changes as I would for any modern race car.

As long as it's not a screaming pig, I just drive what I have. It's more fun that way and that's what happened on the day, so it's true to what racing should be.

RLR: Drivers now place significant emphasis on 'out of the car' fitness training. Are older drivers at a disadvantage in this regard, or do their skill and race experience trump what would be expected to be the greater fitness of the younger drivers?



JB: When I first started racing nationally I did not give fitness a second thought. As I became more involved in racing, my interest in fitness increased. I enlisted the help of a sports scientist who helped me to develop specific programs for the types of cars I drove. Part of this was also general fitness and cardio training. As I became older I trained more solidly, so I honestly feel that I was as fit as anyone in the field in my later career. I still try to train regularly but it's not to the same intensity nor do I have the same motivation.

RLR: **Can you see Australia producing another Formula 1 driver in the near future and if not, why not?**

JB: I think Australia has every chance of producing another Formula 1 driver, but it is more difficult than in most other countries because of our distance from England, the centre of motor sport.

Australia has never had any shortage of talent but there is a severe lack of opportunity. Unless a young driver has extremely wealthy parents or is incredibly well-connected they have very little chance. It is, at least, a five year program. Going through the ranks of Formula Ford, Formula 3, GP2 and so forth is a path that young drivers must follow and most run out of money or enthusiasm (or both) long before they make the grade.

That said, there is a young Aussie driver in England who is doing very well. His name is Daniel Ricciardo and his family has made a massive commitment to get him to his current level (Formula 3). He is our best chance for Formula 1 in the next two or three years.

RLR: **There has never been a female V8 Supercar series champion. Why do you think that is?**

JB: I don't think there has been a female V8 driver because up until now there wasn't one with enough resolve to go through the hard yards. Talent behind the wheel is only one part of the puzzle.

I feel that Leanne Tander is now ready for a V8 career; she has served her apprenticeship and has all the 'ingredients'. But it will still be tough for her even if she can secure a full time drive next year. It must be looked upon as a three year program at least.

RLR: **If there were one piece of advice that you would like to give to aspiring drivers, what would it be?**

JB: If you have the God-given ability don't ever give up your resolve to make it to the top of your chosen category. Don't let the ups and downs of life, and sport, spoil your focus. Nothing worth having comes easily and you get rewarded if you really put in. Life is like that! So is motor racing!



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