

# RICHARDS TEAM *MOTORSPORT*

Saturday dawned wet but was forecast to clear by 10.30 am which coincided with the first practice session. After two to three laps of the first practice session Clark was showing that he loves the slippery stuff, close to a second faster as anyone else. Although he had a few excursions of the track there was no damage to the car. The session was cut short when a car went into the tyre barriers.

The second practice session was just two hours later, putting the pressure on to make the necessary improvements to the car. The drizzle continued and Clark was again well ahead of the field. Small changes continued to be made throughout the session, improving handling further. Towards the end of the session the track started to dry and, satisfied with the car's performance, we decided to bring it in to save the tyres.

The track was dry for qualifying and we had no idea how the car would behave. The first part of qualifying was used as a test session where we evaluated tyre pressures and brake temperatures for the first race. The car set up didn't work in the dry and Clark was only 14th, enough to go through to the next session but drastic improvements were needed. We brought Clark in early to make some changes and he went back out just before the end of the session. After two laps there was some improvement but not enough so more changes were made and Clark had time to put a lap together to finish sixth. In the second qualifying session Clark was running fifth and we again brought the car in early to put on the tyres on for the top 10 shoot-out and get them up to temperature. While this was happening we dropped back to ninth so were the second car out in the final qualifying session. Clark put together a great lap, improving his time by over half a second and qualifying fifth.

Sunday was dry and sunny and we had questions on how the car would behave in these circumstances. The first race determines the grid for the second race so we had to be conservative and focus on a result. The car set up wasn't ideal and Clark fought the car for the whole race, losing only one position to finish sixth.

We decided to take a calculated risk and set the car up in a completely different fashion for race two. The result was a car that was a lot easier to drive, however two positions were lost at the start. Making passes on other cars with similar performance is getting very difficult in this class and Clark brought the car home in eighth.

Approximately half an hour before race three (reverse grid) the sky darkened and the rain started. The team rushed to get back to wet tyres and undo all the changes we made for a dry setup. An eventful race followed with two safety cars and a red flag. Clark worked his way up from 17th to third then got hit while making a pass for second, resulting in damage to the steering. This caused him to slowly drop back through the field, finishing sixth.

The car finished fourth overall for the weekend which was a great result and we have the feeling that more is certainly possible. Clark has moved up to ninth in the championship with plenty of opportunities for further improvements. The next round is at Teretonga Park in Invercargill on January 16 and 17 with Timaru just one week later.