

That rather old, very yellow PRB Clubman is Paul Barnes' dream come true.

(A personal story from Paul Barnes)

I have enthused about the clubman style of car for as long as I can remember. This enthusiasm was sharpened in 1966 with the construction, on a dis-used World War II USAF air base next to my boarding school in Norfolk, of the Lotus factory. As both the school and the factory were far removed from any centres of population, nobody at Lotus objected if a schoolboy wandered through the workshops examining the various Formula One cars, Lotus Elans and Series 2, then Series 3 Lotus 7s. This last car, the Series 3 Lotus 7 was, in my opinion, the finest bit of motoring kit to grace the world's tarmac. The only slight downside was its delicacy. If you put a quick engine in it, it broke.

So keen have I always been on the clubman concept, that when I migrated to Sydney in 1987 one of the features of the town that I drew comfort from was the presence of the PRB. It looked just like a Series 3 Lotus Seven – except it was newer, stronger, and had a decent engine. To hell with the endless rain, this was a town I could live in.

One of the lasting attractions of all clubman cars is the 'four-wheeled motorbike' aspect – in other words, the acceleration. When the traffic lights go green, soundly beating performance cars costing twice as much as my PRB is an unquenchable thrill for me. That a clubman will also go round corners is a further bonus – and demands that the car be taken to the track.

Unfortunately, until recent times, children and other unnecessary financial burdens thwarted my purchase of any type of race car. However, during 2006 I was allowed to enter my aging BMW 325i in the BMW Drivers' Club Super Sprint series, and although I achieved only modest results, I had a lot of fun. I also got to meet Michael McCosker.

Michael McCosker was in many ways a disappointment to the NSW BMW Drivers' Club. For one thing, he never drove, or considered driving, a BMW. The other problem was that he kept winning the best prizes – in his PRB. Now, you might accuse me of being fickle, but I found myself more interested in Michael's PRB than I was in my BMW. So, when the 2007 PRB Race Series was announced, I had to be in it.

The PRB Race Series has been the joy of the decade for me. After four events I am beginning to remember which corners are to be found as which circuits - quite a challenge for a bloke with a memory like mine. I have also discovered that I am racing with people who can successfully tread the narrow path between gentlemanly conduct and outrageous competition. At the last event I overheard one spectator say to another 'we must watch the next PRB race, 'cos they really get

into it.' Which is true. We have delivered the closest and most exciting racing at all of the events we have attended – plus, we overtake each other. Formula One, take note.

Another huge feature of the PRB Series is the support. Peter B; Mike B; Chris B; and Peter G all make unselfish contributions to the enjoyment of the rest. This support ranges from tedious administration, through the provision of parts, to emergency overnight re-builds. Just astounding, and without it, a newcomer like me would never get started.

My rather old, very yellow PRB has exceeded my wildest dreams. I like everything about it – and so does Sarah, my wife. At least, that's what she says. I believe that the truth is, unlike every other decent toy I have owned, I feel no urge to replace it. For me, the need to replace is especially true of motorbikes and conventional cars - the other man's grass is always greener. But my PRB is just fine. I twiddle with it from time to time, personalise it a little (fluffy dice and a sub-woofer etc) but basically, it is as good as it can be. It looks like a Series 3 Lotus Seven, but it really works – and keeps on working. Long may it last.

See you at the next event.