

## NICASTRI THE NEW VICTORIAN LATE MODEL SEDAN CHAMPION

The first Victorian Late Model Sedan title managed by the LMRV Inc committee was run & won at North East Victoria venue Wahgunyah Speedway on Saturday night the 24th of January by visiting 22 year old New South Wales race driver Ben Nicastri. Young Nicastri led two Victorians, Graham Forte & Justin Pearson to the podium in front of an appreciative crowd who can't wait to see Late Model Sedans again.

A small yet strong field assembled in the pit enclosure ready to race, with four heats lined up in which each driver would compete in three of them.

Victorian Mick Hetherington; who hails from Ross Creek, began heat one on pole position with Nicastri alongside, then Liam Heaton from Canberra, Steve Vaughan, Scott McPherson, Chevy Edwards, Pearson & Forte completing the starting line up.

Hetherington at the green showed his intentions getting the run to turn one and lead Nicastri & McPherson (# 7 NSW – 410ci Mopar – Better Trailers Canberra/ACE Domestic) around on lap one. The top three settled on lap three with Nicastri taking the lead from Hetherington, McPherson & Heaton the top four. Behind the tail, four drivers moved around a little with eventually Forte moving into fifth place. Nicastri beat Hetherington with McPherson, Heaton (# 89 ACT– 430ci Chev – Masterlift Materials Handling/LA Racing Oils), Forte, Edwards, Pearson & Vaughan the order behind the winner.

Gary Bryans & Wayne Belk joined the field in the second heat whilst Tim Bink from Raymond Terrace in New South Wales didn't get past hot laps with engine valve damage to his car, unfortunately he had to sit and watch the rest of the evening's races as a spectator. The grid was Bryans, Vaughan, Pearson, Heaton, Belk, Nicastri & Hetherington.

Bryans led Vaughan & Belk through lap one to four. On lap four Nicastri moved past Belk (# 32 VIC – 420 Mopar – Belkblast/Clearview Towing Mirrors) into third & then on lap six Bryans dropped back with Vaughan & Nicastri passing him. On the final turn of the final lap Vaughan was on the wrong line and fortunately for him Nicastri was a little hot in the turn and made contact as he passed Vaughan before taking corrective action & letting Vaughan back into the lead as he headed to the finish line to win. In third place was Bryans (# 26 VIC - 434 Chev – Masterbilt Racecars/Kakoschke Transport), Hetherington, Belk, Heaton & Pearson.

Forte & McPherson began the third heat at the front of the field with Hetherington, Bryans, Edwards, Belk, Heaton & Vaughan (# 67 Sth AUS– 410 Chev – Performance Techniques/Rhemac) completing the grid.

McPherson was quick from the outside front row and first into turn one on lap one with Forte in tow. Hetherington made a pass on Forte on lap two and set about running down McPherson. Hetherington caught up, however passing was another issue. On lap eight Bryans pulled out of the race ill & requiring medical attention on a muggy 35 degree day.

On the last lap Forte passed Hetherington to get back into second place with McPherson crossing the line first from Forte, Hetherington, Vaughan, Belk, 18 year old Edwards (# 21ax VIC – 383 Chev – Lake Eildon Houseboat Sales/Edwards Motorsports) & Heaton.

The final opportunity to earn qualifying points to determine feature race starting positions was heat four with Pearson, Belk, Edwards, Forte (# 7F VIC – 413 Chev – G & M Irrigation/Forte Engineering), Heaton, & McPherson.

With no Bryans, who was now in the care of medical staff to rehydrate him from heat exhaustion, the field began with six starters & Victorian Belk led Nicastri & McPherson on lap one. This continued through to lap three, before Nicastri made a move on lap four into the lead.

Belk held on to second until McPherson got past on lap eight and Forte then moved into third on the last lap. Nicastri was the winner from McPherson, Forte, Belk & Edwards with Pearson (# 10 VIC – 454 Chev – Healesville Directional Drilling/Fast Freddie's Tyre Service) not finishing due to nose cone dragging along the race track & suspension issues at the front.

Lining up for the feature Nicastri (# 99 NSW – 430ci Cornett – Franks Auto Parts/Smithfield Diff & Gears) was the top qualifier with McPherson alongside then Hetherington, Forte, Vaughan, Belk, Heaton, Edwards & Pearson at the back.

The green unfurled and McPherson won the battle through turn one between he and Nicastri with Forte, Hetherington, Vaughan, & Heaton completing the early top five.

Coming out of turn four on lap three, McPherson's car came to a halt not even making it to the start finish line with the battery cable losing contact and cutting out the power to the engine. On lap

nine Edwards pulled infield when his seatbelts came undone risking his safety & he smartly pulled out of the race.

On lap nine Nicastri was leading, Forte, Hetherington, Heaton, Pearson, Belk, & Vaughan.

Pearson moved ahead of Hetherington on lap eleven shuffling Hetherington (# 40 VIC- 410 Chev – Wayne Horne Earthmoving/Phillips Grader Hire) back to fourth, then on lap seventeen the race finished for Hetherington when he snapped his tail shaft and it dropped on to the front straight of the race track.

Heaton's night come to an end with only 2 laps to go when he had to head infield with a broken brake caliper on lap eighteen.

The race reached its close with Nicastri still leading a fast finishing Forte who was closing in on the youngster, Pearson who was closing in on those two and then Belk & Vaughan.

After the race Nicastri was delighted on winning his first Victorian title. "What a place. Big & fast just how we like it in our cars. The track for the final was exactly what we needed to showcase our class & the club should be proud of themselves. It is an honour to be Victorian title winner under the leadership of the LMRV & I congratulate the other finishers & thank my crew, family & sponsors for their ongoing support. "

You can get involved with the Association by contacting either Rod Edwards the President on 0427 837 385, Justin Pearson the Vice President on 0408 356 729 or Lisa Edwards the Secretary on 0427 007 907.

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Written by

Dean Thompson

DMT SPORTS MEDIA

For LMRV Inc.