

How To... BECOME A RACE-CAR DRIVER... ON THE CHEAP

Words Nick Smith

As a boy from Bathurst, Lindsay Yelland was a typical fanatical rev-head. He devoured auto mags, watched the V8s take on the mountain each year and waited trackside for Larry Perkins to flash his lights for the crowd as he took on bends. He also dreamed about one day getting behind the wheel of his very own Supercar.

Motor racing is dominated by dynasties and dollars, so Yelland always knew achieving his dream would be no mean feat. But having discovered the world of race-car leasing, and by networking with the right people, at 32, he's landed the opportunity to run in the Development Series, one down from V8 Supercars. How did he get into pole position? Follow Yelland's five easy steps, and you too could be burning up the track.



Brunker, was a good guy. He referred me to Gary Bonwick, who holds the lap record for the Gemini in Queensland, and then Gary referred me to Rod Dawson, who runs V8RACE, which leases racing cars in the Development Series. All these guys were very pro motorsport and are in it for the right reasons. They're keen to help out someone who's playing by the rules. You've got to be humble enough to listen and take advice when someone experienced is willing to help you. If I'd been a cocky bastard, I would have ended up off the track, like half the field."
Cost: Your ego

STEP 4: LEARN THE TRACK AND PERFECT YOUR SKILLS

"Experienced racers can pass down valuable information on any given track. At Oran Park, there are a lot of little nuances that you need to understand. For example, the third-last set of corners are a chicane. If you go through those too fast, you don't set yourself up for the corner going into the straight. If that happens, the straight will be slow and you'll be slow going up the hill, which has a massive knock-on effect. If you go slower and tighter through the chicane and get a really good run up the straight, you'll keep good time all the way around. That's 10 years of experience condensed into one lesson."
Cost: Invaluable

STEP 5: TIME TO GET DOWN TO BUSINESS

"As long as Rod, at V8RACE, approves your driving, you can lease a car and crew to compete in the Development Series. The vehicles are Supercars that are four or five years old, so they might have a Perkins chassis and an HSV engine, but considering that lap times peaked a couple of years ago, they are almost as fast as the Supercars."
Cost: "You're looking at \$40,000 for a weekend, and there are eight weekends of races, so do the math. This is when you'll need to be bankrolled by sponsors. I'm a partner in a financial planning firm, and we sponsor a V8RACE car. If you wanted to buy one outright, you'd be looking at \$125,000 for a rolling chassis with no engine. An engine costs up to \$100,000. Work your way to one of these and you will have started your own racing dynasty. Then just add kids and more cars to expand your empire." 

STEP 2: WORK THROUGH THE CLASSES

"I go racing at the Queensland Gemini racing meets. There are lease packages where you basically arrive and drive. You pay your money and they provide the crew, the car, the mechanics. Your job is to turn up, practise, qualify and race. Depending on how you go in qualifying, that's where you end up on the grid. They are only short races - 10 or 20 laps. In my first race, there were about 26 cars on the grid. I qualified 22nd. It's only Gemini, but you'd think you were racing for sheep stations. There's a lot of bumping and barging and that sort of thing - very exhilarating. It's a race of attrition. If you finish the race, you're doing pretty well."
Cost: A Gemini racing weekend costs around \$2500. This includes car, fuel and tyres, but excludes any panel damage you might incur. Price includes accommodation. You need to compete at five Gemini races to get off your Ps.

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STEP 3: MEET THE RIGHT PEOPLE

"If you're not from a rich family, it's important to meet a few good people in motorsport. The first guy I met in the Gemini, Russell

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Safety first: Don't trip up once you've got behind the wheel of a V8.



STEP 1: GET YOUR CAMS LICENCE

"To race you need a provisional CAMS (Confederation of Australian Motorsport) licence. CAMS is the governing body controlling motorsport in Australia. For this you complete a two-day driving course, learning about braking, cornering, race safety, racing lines, driver awareness, qualifying, starting and finishing protocols, as well as all the flag signals."
Cost: \$1000, once the additional medical tests are factored in. Get more info at www.cams.com.au