

CAMS Historic Commission

Replica Vehicles and Australian Historic Racing

Proposals for the acceptance of replica vehicles as eligible to compete in Australian historic racing events have been a topic under regular consideration by the Historic Commission and its predecessor, the Historic Car Committee, ever since the commencement of historic racing activity in Australia on a formal basis in the 1970's. Although reviewed frequently the Commission's approach has now been maintained on a consistent basis over an extended period. The issue has recently been the subject of a heightened level of public discussion and this paper summarising the Commission's approach is intended to assist that process.

The term replica could be regarded as limited in application to those vehicles which precisely replicate an original. In the context of historic racing however, the term is often given much broader application and the Commission's considerations have encompassed the full range of vehicles commonly referred to as "replicas".

1. Authentic and Original Historic Racing Cars

Historic motor racing in Australia is fundamentally structured around rules providing for competition between authentic cars with a competition history within the relevant group period and presented in a specification consistent with that in which they originally appeared. The Commission has consistently sought to maintain the highest practical levels of authenticity and originality and is dedicated to the integrity of that concept with variances from it accepted only where dictated by practical necessity.

2. Reconstructions/Recreations

The rules governing vehicle eligibility provide for the substantial replacement of original components, where necessary, in the reconstruction of authentic historic racing cars and, in some circumstances, the total recreation of a significant vehicle where the original is known to have been destroyed beyond possibility of reconstruction. It should be noted in respect of such vehicles that:-

-They do not increase the original production numbers of any vehicle type as they replace and assume the identity of original vehicles no longer in existence;

-They are required to be totally original in specification; and

-"Reconstructions" employ as many components as possible from the original vehicle and "recreations" are approved only in respect of original vehicles of some historic significance.

The Commission therefore does not regard such "reconstructions" or "recreations" as comparable in concept with "replicas" which are of non historic period construction and clearly replicate authentic original vehicles still in existence. The clear point of distinction is that "replicas" are additions to the total original production numbers of the particular vehicle type and have no historic period identity or racing history of their own.

3. Replicas of Authentic Historic Racing Cars

Vehicles commonly referred to as replicas fall into two categories:-

-"Precise replicas" -those which precisely replicate the original specification of an authentic vehicle; and

"Replica style vehicles" -those which resemble an authentic original in appearance and general specification but which vary from the original in areas of detail.

3.1 Precise Replicas

Examples of such cars are the Cameron Miller 250F Maseratis and the Ford GT40's, Bugattis, Cobras, Chevron's and Lola T70's built in recent years to the exact original specifications sometimes by the original manufacturer. These vehicles sometimes incorporate components from the original production stock but they represent additions to the original production numbers of the particular vehicle type. Despite the originality of their specification, cars in this category are of recent manufacture, do not have a period racing history and cannot be regarded as authentic, historic racing cars. They simply do not meet the requirements for eligibility under our rules.

Any variation to that approach would be regarded by the Commission as a threat to the integrity of the base principles of authenticity and originality which could impact adversely on the "value" of the authentic vehicles for which the rules are intended to provide. The potential "value" impact would be both in monetary and intrinsic terms. The Commission's prime concern, however, relates to the intrinsic, historic value arising from the existence of a period competition history which no recently constructed car can have. It is the relative scarcity of authentic historic racing cars which attracts attention to them and the Commission wishes to protect that intrinsic value component and meet its fundamental charter objective to ensure the preservation of genuine historic racing cars.

Some cars in this category have contested Australian historic events as short term visitors to this country under a policy adopted many years ago providing for the acceptance of visiting vehicles conforming to their "home country" eligibility requirements. All vehicles staying for more than one or two events are required to meet Australian eligibility requirements and permanent eligibility status has never been granted to any visitor not in full compliance with our rules. This policy has been effective in encouraging international visits by some noteworthy cars which have mostly been totally authentic and original and there have been no major problems arising from the appearance of a minority of visitors with questionable credentials.

The Commission has, periodically come under pressure from Australian resident owners of replicas in this category but has consistently declined applications for their classification within any of the 5th category groups. It is worth noting that the

Commission's approach is receiving increasing international acceptance with most overseas historic racing regulatory authorities now adopting similar approaches.

3.2 Replica Style Vehicles

Examples from the range of replica style vehicles in Australia include the Sam Johnson Ferrari Dinos and various AC Cobras, Jaguar C and D Types produced by a variety of constructors to widely divergent standards. In addition to the absence of any period competition history their ineligibility arises from their non original specification which commonly includes components of more recent manufacture and often more technically advanced design than those of the original vehicle replicated.

The issues outlined above in respect of precise replicas are also relevant to these vehicles but other significant reasons for the Commission's strong view that such cars should not be accepted are: -

- The potential threat to the integrity of the specification of authentic, original historic racing cars which are eligible;
- The fundamental inequity of mixing the two vehicle types in competition; and
- The possible threat to various regulatory concessions enjoyed by the historic racing movement.

The threat to specification integrity would arise from acceptance of vehicles commonly employing more modern components than the authentic cars they would compete with. It would clearly be difficult for eligibility officers to justify an insistence on maintaining the original specification of authentic historic racing cars if they were required to compete with "look alikes" which employ more modern, cheaper and higher

performance components. To do so would establish a competitive inequity and there would be no practical barrier to destruction of the integrity of an authentic, original car if a competitor chose to maintain its competitive position by updating the specification and renaming the car as a replica.

The various historic racing groups enjoy a wide range of concessions exempting them from compliance with design standards and safety equipment requirements which are mandatory in modern motor racing. Those exemptions are accepted as justified because of the threat the requirements can present to the integrity of the specification of a genuine, authentic historic racing car. In the face of increasing pressures from insurers and regulatory authorities, maintenance of those exemptions would, however be much more difficult in respect of vehicles with no historic identity to justify retention of the original specification.

There has been some pressure periodically for the Commission to consider acceptance of replicas in this category within the historic racing groups or competing alongside them but the conclusion reached has been that acceptance would be potentially damaging to the fundamental concepts on which the historic racing movement is based. When considering the possible basis for acceptance of such cars it has, in any event, not been possible to resolve an acceptable set of regulations which would provide for the acceptance of the more notable and well built local replicas while excluding those of a less acceptable standard.

The Commission's approach towards these vehicles is again generally consistent with international attitudes. While some events are regularly run in the UK catering specifically for replica style vehicles, the events are not components of the historic racing movement. They are part of the very wide range of event types catered for within the broad scope of club motor racing in the UK.

4. Specials Constructed Using Period Components

From the time of introduction of formal rules governing historic racing in Australia there has been provision within groups J and K for the acceptance of recently constructed cars which used major components dating from the relevant group period. Such cars are required to be built in the general likeness of authentic period vehicles but some variation in specification to distinguish them from authentic, original cars has been required. The Commission has endeavoured to ensure that these cars each have an identity of their own and could not be mistaken for or misrepresented as authentic, original cars. They are not, therefore, considered to be definable as replicas.

The rules covering these vehicles were designed to accommodate "vintage specials" constructed in the post World War 2 period in accordance with guidelines set down by the Vintage Sports Car Club. When formal rules were first developed in the mid 1970's there was a need to provide for these cars which had been an accepted component of the historic racing events run up to that time. A further motive for inclusion of these specials was and still is the need to ensure that J and K fields are viable in size. It is a mechanism which provides a capacity to ensure continued provision for the few still competing authentic, original J and K cars while also providing a competition opportunity for people interested in cars from that era but unable to acquire an authentic car.

Although it has frequently been suggested that similar provision for period specials should be included in the regulations for later groups (L in particular) the fields of authentic cars in those groups fortunately remain of viable size and the Commission has therefore seen no valid motive to include specials in the later groups. The opinion has been expressed that provision for specials in groups J and K has actually discouraged the appearance of authentic original cars. While that is difficult to confirm, the Commission certainly sees no reason to take any action which might possibly reduce the numbers of authentic cars competing in the later groups when there is simply no current need to do so to achieve viable competitor numbers.

5. Groups N and S - Cars Without a Racing History

These groups provide for production cars of period types which are not required to establish a specific period racing history. Provision for production sports and touring cars within historic racing is appropriate as they have an important place in the history of motor sport. To ensure viable fields, however, it has not been

possible to limit eligibility to cars with a racing history as there are simply inadequate numbers of identifiable survivors.

This situation arises because, at the end of their racing days, production cars have commonly been disposed of on the used car lot with all evidence of their competition career removed. Their identity is then lost with little prospect that they could be recovered for use in historic racing.

While cars without a racing history in groups N and S are intended to be generally representative of the type of vehicles competing in the relevant group period, there is certainly no intent that the vehicles be represented as authentic historic racing cars except in respect of the minority of genuine survivors. In this context the replica issue is not considered by the Commission to be relevant to groups N or S.

It is recognised that some of the higher specification group N and S cars are upgrades of lower specification models (Morris 850 to Cooper S or Ford Cortina to Lotus Cortina) and that such cars could be regarded as replicas. Such upgrades are, however, reflective of period practice and can, in any event, be almost impossible to detect. The Commission has therefore chosen to accept the practice but has recently started to identify the upgrades in eligibility paperwork where it is possible to do so.

Conclusion

The issues arising from proposals to allow replicas to compete in historic racing events are wide ranging and complex. Whatever the approach taken by the Commission there will be some groups within the sport who will disagree with the action taken.

While recognising that some replicas are of high quality and some represent original vehicles which we will never be likely to see, the Commission remains of the view that there is no valid case for replica vehicles to contest historic events alongside authentic and original cars. Event promoters may well have sound reasons to provide for the appearance of some such cars in some capacity at historic race meetings. The Commission is, however, of the view that such appearances should be totally independent of historic racing events providing for authentic, original cars. Replicas are not historic racing cars and any regulations which might be developed to facilitate their appearance should not be part of the 5th category rules.

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