

GIANTS BATTLE IT OUT ON THE TRACK.

Saturday, the 3rd of March 2012, was a major day for motor racing in South Australia. The third Cittaslow Goolwa Gopher Festival was back in town.

Goolwa was abuzz with activity as gopher riders honed their skills prior to going through their paces.

This year, the event was held in the Alexandrina Council car park, with Council as the major sponsor. Lions Club of Goolwa assisted.

The Festival started at 11:00 am with an introduction by Compere, Richard Kleinig of Alex FM and Edward Booth, the organiser. Richard stood in for Peter Goers who was unable to attend at the last moment.

There were 20 entrants aged from late 80s down to about 20.

The first event was the Gymkhana, where riders had to thread their way through obstacles against the clock.

The event had two sections for three-wheel and four-wheel gophers. The first was taken out by Jarrad Hewett, while the second went to Dave Schubert. It was significant that the fastest time overall was Jarrad's on an old machine.

The Cittaslow Garden Group catered for lunch with a barbeque, and local cafes and bakeries filled any culinary gaps.

While lunch was being taken, the F1 drivers took a few practice laps to familiarise themselves with the new track, and provide some colourful entertainment. The Renno entry suffered electrical problems, and there was a flurry of action in the pits to fix it.

Auntie Mary and Uncle Harry of Alex FM fame arrived, and enlivened the afternoon with their unique entertainment.

The flag race involved business with golf clubs, and was won by Dave Schubert on his big Shoprider.

Lap events followed, with Dave Schubert again dominating the times. Carol Coventry took honours in the three-wheeler class.

The final event for the day was the Formula 1 Grand Prix. Five teams battled it out for top honours. Fiori driven by Carol Coventry, Red Ball driven by Eric Rodda, Merciless-McLarry by Steve Rhodes, Renno by Edward Booth, and, just to see what happened, Dave Schubert on his standard Shoprider! Speeds upward of 30kph were reached as drivers pushed their machines to the limit. The winner was Edward Booth (Renno), followed by Carol Coventry (Fiori), Eric Rodda (Red Ball) and Steve Rhodes (Merciless-McLarry). Fifth place went to Dave!

Flagman, Scott Woodsmith flagged home the winner as his last colourful duty of the day.

The F1 Gophers must be constructed on a commercial scooter frame, using an original scooter motor. The rules allow constructors to modify the electrical and electronic components to achieve greater speeds, and the bodies can be anything within set size limits and weights.

The Festival closed at 2:30pm with thanks to the sponsors, participants and helpers, and a spontaneous vote of thanks from the participants.

In spite of the gloomy weather forecast, it was a perfect warm day for Goolwa seniors, who not only had fun, but learnt to be better riders too. The seniors did what they do best. Win or lose, they had fun.

Edward Booth, March 2012