



(LEFT TO RIGHT) PAUL MARINELLI, NICK FRY, DAVID RICHARDS

## CELEBRATING MORE THAN 25 YEARS OF SUCCESS

*From working as a school kid in his father's sales and service workshop for European vehicles in Lygon Street, Melbourne, to sharing a commentary box with the late Murray Walker at the Adelaide 500, PR man Paul Marinelli is celebrating 26 years in a unique automotive and motorsport career.*

**H**e established his automotive aftermarket and motorsport public relations and marketing services company, Marinelli Motorsport Pty Ltd in Melbourne in February 1995.

**Marinelli started his broadcasting career in the late 1980s as a radio announcer and reporter in Melbourne.**

He became the motorsport reporter for 3UZ providing news bulletin and program updates from Australian and international motor racing events.

At Australian motor racing events team sponsors and suppliers would request Marinelli's help to promote their products to the trade and beyond.

He identified a niche to combine automotive aftermarket and motor racing industry specialised PR services.

"It was a very exciting time when I decided to set up my business" he says.

"The Australian Grand Prix was just about to move across to Melbourne. The Australian Touring Car Championship also got its act together and successfully became V8 Supercars

shortly after.

"A number of the companies who sponsored my radio reports and programme updates on 3UZ came along for the ride.

"They believed in my idea to provide motor racing reporting services to radio stations nationally, while also taking advantage of my PR services to promote their products directly to the trade and to consumers."

**Within a year, Marinelli Motorsport was supplying news to more than 25 national capital city and their regional affiliate radio stations.**

The first Marinelli PR (automotive aftermarket) client was the SAAS Manufacturing Company, which produced racing and automotive aftermarket vehicle seats and steering wheels, established by former AAAA President, **Terry Mahoney**.

"Terry was more than a client; he was my mentor and a dear friend. He helped me through the difficult initial years with excellent advice and support," Marinelli says.

The opportunity for Marinelli Motorsport to work with motor racing categories and teams to handle their media communications came soon after.

One of them was with champion V8 Supercar driver **Glenn Seton** and his Ford Credit Racing team for the 1996 season.

"It was a big jump," says Marinelli. "There were more than a few people who thought that I wasn't up to the job, but the media coverage that I generated quietened them down pretty quickly.

"It was also the start of a friendship with Glenn that would span more than 25 years and would find us working together again..."

Marinelli joined forces with Formula Holden in 1998.

"I'll never forget organising media interviews for then 15-year-old Kiwi driver **Scott Dixon** along with the many other drivers who went on to find major success in Supercars and other international categories," Marinelli says.

to page 15...

...from page 14

"Getting the front page of the Herald Sun with an onboard Formula Holden shot at the 1998 Australian Grand Prix was an incredible achievement."

Marinelli was then approached to help privateer Supercar team, Lansvale Racing, at the Bathurst 1000.

**"The Lansvale Racing period through the end of 2001 and the full 2002 season was a fantastic time, as I was working with a small team of the most passionate and hard-working motor racing people that I had ever met," he says.**

In late 2002 he was recommended to Prodrive, for a PR consultancy role with its soon to be established Ford Performance Racing V8 Supercar team.

This was an opportunity to work with a brand-new super team running three V8 Supercars, one of them being driven by **Craig Lowndes**, along with old friend **Glenn Seton** and newcomer, **David Besnard**.

Prodrive owner **David Richards** was actively involved in the project as was the CEO of the time, **Nick Fry**, and the role included being their publicist during their frequent visits to Australia.

The next four years saw the FPR team face major challenges, but Marinelli maintains that it was still an incredible experience to be a part of.

"There were a great deal of issues throughout the initial FPR years, but to say that I didn't love my years there would be a lie," he says.

"Working with Lowndes and Seton (again) was fantastic when it came to gaining media coverage as they were such polished performers.

"Publicising international star racers like Alain Menu, ex F1 drivers **David Brabham** and **Mika Salo** and being reunited with ex Formula Holden pilot **Matt Halliday** was very memorable," Marinelli says.

"My only regret, as a life-long Formula 1 fan, is that Prodrive's plan to enter Formula 1 as a customer team for the 2008 season didn't happen," he says.

By the end of the 2007 season and after five years with FPR, a call came from Supercars, seeking a new circuit commentator for the 2008 season.

"My first gig that season was at the Adelaide 500, alongside **Murray Walker**. I had to pinch myself several times that I was calling races with this man whom I had listened to commentating F1 since I was a kid," Marinelli says.

The Bahrain circuit organisers invited Marinelli back to call Formula 1 and Supercar races at the venue after Supercars raced there in 2008, and that continued across the next decade.

From that came work with ESPN Asia,



India's STAR Network and the hosting of an international Formula 1 television programme called GP Racing for three years.

Marinelli also gained assignments with the Spanish and Singapore Grands Prix in future years and continues as the commentator for the UIM XCAT World Championship offshore powerboat racing series.

Marinelli Motorsport also gained a who's who of blue chip international automotive aftermarket PR clients over the years.

**They included Monroe Australia, Dayco Australia, Hella Australia, ZF Asia Pacific, Schaeffler Asia Pacific, Bob Jane T-Marts, Coventry, Repco, GUD Group, Pennzoil, Hella Australia OEM and Aftermarket, Holden Engine Company, SEW Eurodrive and several smaller companies.**

Marinelli says it was never his intention to be a sole charge operation for so long.

"I had employed some talented people over the years, but they were quickly snapped up by other much larger companies or they were not willing to put in the effort required," Marinelli says.

"Whether I liked it or not, the formula to continuing as a successful business was to be small and very highly specialised.

"I also never accepted any work that conflicted in any way with the products or services of any existing clients."

Another facet to Marinelli's business portfolio includes athlete management. The highest profile of these was Supercar driver **Mark**

**Winterbottom**, who joined forces with Marinelli from 2009.

That alliance resulted in several new major sponsorships, ambassadorships, television appearances and helping to land the Supercar driver a cameo role in the blockbuster Disney Pixar animated film, *Cars 2*.

"I'd like to think that the work that we did together during those years helped set up Mark for life, and that's a very good feeling," Marinelli says.

He continues to manage the career of driver **David Russell** and has played a smaller role in the careers of several others. He also managed Winter Olympic gold medallist Lydia Lassila.

Marinelli remembers his years working alongside **Bob Jane** as some of the fondest.

"He was the first major Australian franchiser with his T-Marts empire, and he invested millions in motorsport, race drivers, cars and venues over the decades.

"Bob was also a human publicity generating machine. Anything we did together for the press worked brilliantly because he understood the power of PR so very well. He built a successful business empire on mastering his own PR."

**Marinelli's current client list includes Bapcor Limited, Dayco Australia and Capricorn Limited, with motorsport involvements with several teams and drivers through sponsorships and marketing consultancies.**

He heads into a future where reliance on PR and marketing consultants remains stronger than ever.

"The demand for editorial content in line with the digital media explosion is greater than ever and with media organisations forced to reduce their journalistic resources, the reliance on PR content still remains very high."

Marinelli says the disruption of 2020 shows that companies who did nothing lost out, while those who continued to communicate with their customers experienced growth in the automotive aftermarket sector.

"The disruption gave people the time to sit down and re-evaluate their business, including their suppliers, equipment, premises -everything in fact.

"Customers could more closely look at the information that we were distributing.

**"Three of my clients achieved record financial results during 2020, while several others within the same industry were complaining about how bad things were," Marinelli adds.**