

Classics take a spin on track

Marc Greenhill

Rivalries will take a back seat when a clutch of Christchurch's prominent Stewart family hit the track at the Skope Classic motorsport event this weekend.

Seven of the family, owners of heating and refrigeration company Skope, will be among 300 competitors at the two-day celebration of historic, classic and vintage motor racing at the Ruapuna raceway.

Skope founder Robert Stewart, a regular at the event since 1994, will be joined by brothers Peter and Todd, sons Guy and Marcus, nephew Soren and son-in-law Richard McGowan. Daughter Alexandra will miss this year's event because of pregnancy.

Skope began supporting the event when former sponsor PDL Industries was sold in 2001.

Robert Stewart said the event was too important to Christchurch to let it fold.

"We brought some stability to it and hope to keep sponsoring it," he said.

"It's the best and easily the most organised race meeting in New Zealand. We get more races than at any other meeting because everything runs like clockwork."

Marcus Stewart said the family's competitive rivalry was put aside for the weekend.

"It's not about first place and it's not about trophies," he said. "It's about utilising the cars for the purpose they were designed."

The Stewarts have a long history with motorsport, especially at Ruapuna.

The late Sir Robertson Stewart was a motorsport enthusiast who owned a Ford Mustang.

Robert Stewart raced a Sunbeam Alpine at the track's opening in the early 1960s.

Stewart took an enforced break from the track after a crash wrecked his car. The bank was not keen to finance rebuilding the car.

"The bank wouldn't lend me any more money for Skope if I kept racing."

He bought a Jaguar C-type reproduction and returned to the track in 1994.

He has not missed a Skope Classic since.



Family affair: Members of Christchurch's Stewart family will race in the Skope Classic this weekend. Behind the wheel of his Jaguar Proteus C-type is Robert Stewart, with sons Guy, left, and Marcus and daughter Alexandra behind.

Photo: KIRK HARGREAVES