



Tips for beginners ... marquees

Derek Wilson

Buying a racing car is like buying a horse.....the initial expense is definitely not the last. Like a horse, a race car needs a trailer, a range of bits and pieces to keep it running and, after a few meetings without one, the purchase of a marquee has a certain appeal. So it was with me and thus began a whole new dimension of experiences.

Andy Neale cautioned me not to buy an expensive marquee, "Sooner or later they all blow away!" Well I'm quite happy to buy a *Trademe* bargain at the best of times and \$450 for a 6x3 example, delivered to rural Mid-Canterbury, fitted the bill nicely. The intention was to have some practise at putting it up but all that amounted to was getting it out of its cardboard box, on the back of the truck and then we were off to Levels.

The first job for my mechanic big Graham and me was to put it up. Shouldn't be a problem; the sales blurb said 2 people should take 3 minutes. Oh yeah, well good luck with that! After about 10 minutes of heaving from corner to corner, the thing had raised about a metre. Technically you could slide a Formula Ford under that but those of you who know my mechanic will appreciate ... he would have no show of doing the same.

A couple of obliging passers-by were co-opted to yank on the remaining two corners but still hopeless. We had got to the stage where I either had to read the instructions or get Mark Collins. I chose the latter; Mark's good with stuff like this. He bought a couple of helpers as well so we had seven; one on each corner, one on each centre pole, and one in reserve in case of injuries. Eventually it succumbed to numbers and to be honest has been well behaved since. Mind you it does pay to replace the guy ropes come shoelaces with decent ratchet strops and the light little pegs with some decent 12mm rod replacements. Nonetheless there have been times when in the midst of a howling Teretonga southerly, or Ruapuna nor'wester the nerves are tested far more by keeping an eye on the marquee, than they are out on the track worrying about selecting the best line!

A wedding, a handy friend and a deep marquee

The other advantage of having a marquee is to be able to get good qualifying times. I was severely compromised at a Ruapuna meeting, when I was invited to compete, along with some other FFs in the wings and slicks class because so many had fallen by the wayside (what's new). The problem was, we had to qualify which clashed nicely with when I was supposed to make an appearance at my son's wedding in Ashburton. This required some careful thought. Theoretically, if I averaged 140kph to Ashburton and got changed into my suit on the way, I could fit the qualifying session in and still make the wedding. I dwelt on it too much and this proposal seemed a bridge too far. There had to be another way and there was.

This is where the marquee and handy (cryptic clue there) friend who can drive a racing car, came into play. While I was in Ashburton, the aforementioned friend, using the deeper confines of the marquee so no one could see, slipped into my race gear. The next part of the story ran like this ... He then swanned out for qualifying, peeled off half a dozen quick ones (laps), came back in early (while everyone was watching the track), found once again the deeper confines of the marquee, changed back into his own cloths and then ... outta there! Job done. All the while I was in Ashburton attending to my family responsibilities. Wouldn't have been possible without a deep marquee.....go and get one now!!

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