A Haymarket publication

18 March 1976 18p

GRANITE CITY RALLY - GENEVA SHOW - PRIVATE EAR

AUTOSPORT

Full report of sensational Race of Champions

AUTOSPORT

BRITAIN'S MOTOR SPORTING WEEKLY

March 18, Vol 58 No 12

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Seen at Brands Hatch!

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Published every Thursday by Autosport, Haymarket Publishing Ltd, Regent House, 54-62 Regent Street, London W1A 2YJ. Tel: 01-439 4242, 01-439 9133 (Editorial), 01-439 9339 (Advertising). **Telex:** 23918 Haymarket LDN. **Subscriptions and back numbers:** Craven House, 34 Foubert's Place, London W1. Tel: 01-439 4242 (subscriptions); 01-437 3272 (back numbers).
Annual subscription: Home: £16.50; Overseas, surface mail: £16.50; Airmail, Europe, £24.00; Airmail, USA and Canada, £34.00. Other airmail rates on application. Text printed in England by QB Ltd, Sheepen Road, Colchester, Essex. Cover printed by B. R. Hubbard Ltd, Callywhite Lane, Dronfield, Sheffield. Registered at the PO as a newspaper.
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ABC

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EDITORIAL

"The generally unacceptable volume of advertising on racing cars" was the reason given by the BBC in the middle of last week for not televising the weekend's excellent Race of Champions meeting. After intervention by Jackie Stewart following the statement, the decision was reversed and the cameras turned up at the circuit. Just an hour or so before the Formula Ford race on Saturday, which the BBC had specifically requested for the Grandstand programme, the cameras were taken away without any official word being given to the management.

It was not, claimed the BBC, because of any one car in particular — it was thought that they merely objected strongly to the Durex sponsored Surtees — but no — the amount of advertising at the heart of the action — on the cars — "is unacceptable."

Durex themselves, who it will be remembered were the centre of a similar controversy last year, offered earlier in the week to cover up their logos. The geriatric BBC bigots droned on: "We appreciate this (Durex's) offer and are encouraged by it, but this only affects one car and we have already made it clear that our action is not intended to discriminate against any one sponsor. The controversy over the Durex brand merely highlighted a problem we've been concerned about for some time."

If the BBC have been so concerned about all the cars for some time, then why is it that they only take action after the Durex sponsorship was announced, and then only after discovering that the car would be at the race they were televising.

Boxing Day was the last time the bumbling Beeb televised a meeting; the British Grand Prix was the last time they showed Formula I cars — if they are so concerned why do they go to the considerable expense of planning the coverage and getting their equipment to the circuit. Our State-owned TV Corporation is running at a vast loss (surprise!), subsidised by the taxpayer, yet the management are still allowed to vacillate, pontificate and finally decision make in the most patronising, despotic and thoroughly odious fashion.

A request was made to certain teams to reduce the size of their logos on the cars and naturally enough they refused. Each year the RAC sell Open Trade licences for £85 which allows the holder to display his name on the cars virtually in any way he likes. The BBC claimed that the restriction introduced with the advent of commercial sponsorship in 1967, of 55 sq inches per logo, still applied — if it did and was enforced, then they would be happy to televise proceedings. If they did think that this was so, and it is unlikely because since the new licence came into being they have televised at least three F1 races, then the RAC should have informed them.

Sponsorship is vital not only to motor racing but to many other sports. If the BBC's concern is over the "generally unacceptable volume of advertising" then other sports must be in danger of losing TV coverage. The sponsors obviously would not be interested if there was no possibility of TV; without them, sport in Britain would suffer, perhaps irreparably.

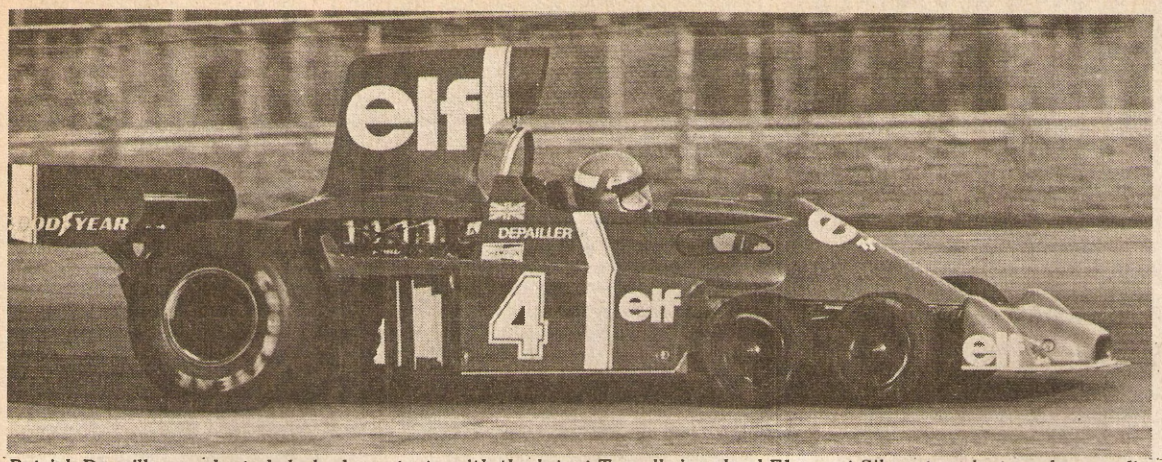
The question of last weekend's decision doesn't really concern the morals of advertising contraceptives; (although why the BBC should be so concerned about this aspect is beyond anyone's comprehension) but the immediate effect on outside finance for motor racing (and possibly other spectator sports like football, if the BBC are to continue this policy towards other televised leisure activities which surely they must), could well be disastrous.

It's easy to say to the BBC "we don't want your unsatisfactory coverage anyway, if this is your attitude," but because in the long term we do need it. The RAC must take immediate action to negotiate with the BBC and thrash out the whole problem once and for all. Whatever happens they must not be allowed to dictate to the sport in such a high-handed fashion what is and is not acceptable.

Motor racing is doing well to thrive in the commercial world of 1976, while the blinkered BBC's hypocritical, Victorian squandering brings them a multi-million pound loss at the same time. If they opened their tiny minds to the world a little more they could perhaps provide the entertainment that the British public subsidises them to do, and furthermore requires them to do.

our cover picture

Alan Jones and the Durex Surtees made their debut at Brands Hatch last Sunday and led half of the race in sensational style. Pete Lyons' superb report of the event starts on page 10. Photo: David Winter



Patrick Depailler conducted shakedown tests with the latest Tyrrell six-wheel F1 car at Silverstone last week, recording a rapid 1m 18.2s lap in the process.

Six-wheel F1 challenge

Following a concentrated programme of development over the winter with the prototype six-wheel Elf-Tyrrell Project 34 experimental Formula 1 car, Ken Tyrrell has, as expected, announced a new six-wheel Elf-Tyrrell conforming to the 1976 F1 regulations and testing started last week. The race debut for the new car will be at the Spanish Grand Prix, held at Jarama on May 2. It had been hoped to have two cars ready, for Jody Scheckter and Patrick Depailler, but Jody's Brands shunt last Sunday has put back the build programme of his car as a replacement 007 series chassis will now have to be built up for the forthcoming Long Beach Grand Prix on March 28.

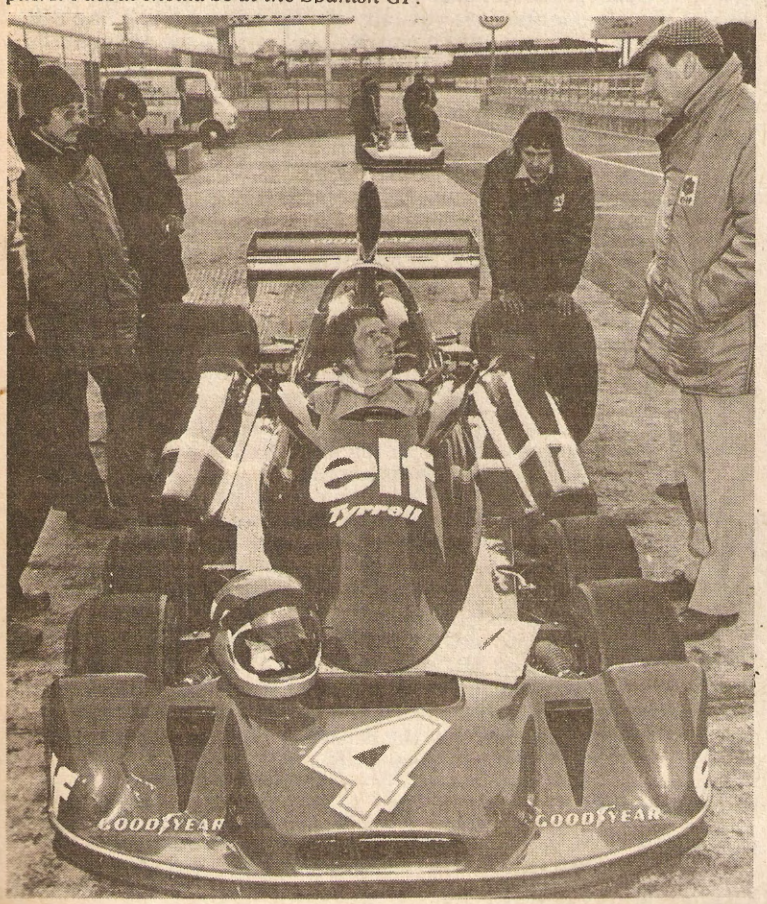
The new car will be known as an Elf-Tyrrell Project 34 and not Type 008 as Derek Gardner feels the design concept is completely new and beyond the theme of his conventional double-zero cars which began with the 001 model for Jackie Stewart in 1970.

Patrick Depailler began testing with Project 34/2 at Silverstone early last week and, according to reports, lapped at a scintillating 1m 18.2s last Thursday. This is just 0.1s slower than the best testing time to date set up last November by Tom Pryce's F1 Shadow DN5. The new car has revised bodywork and is ten inches shorter than the prototype in overall length. The front track has been made slightly wider, the oil radiator is now front-mounted, the water radiators have been increased in size and the fuel capacity has been increased from 13½-gallons for test purposes with the prototype to full race tankage of 42 gallons.

Ventilated disc brakes built in conjunction with AP Racing have replaced the solid front discs used on the prototype. Titanium has been used in several areas and Project 34/2 weighs 80 pounds less than the prototype.

The decision to design and build a completely new six-wheel car based on the prototype Project 34/1 was taken just before Christmas and Elf-Tyrrell Project 34/2 was being tested at Silverstone twelve weeks later.

Now in a proper Grand Prix guise, the six-wheel Tyrrell sits in the Silverstone pits. It's debut should be at the Spanish GP.



Cale Y scores

The fifth round of this year's NASCAR Grand National series took place at Bristol, Tenessee, last Sunday in the form of the Southeastern 400. Victorious for the first time this year was another of the NASCAR legends Cale Yarborough who averaged 87.377 mph over the 400 laps of the 0.533 mile circuit in his Holley Farms Chevrolet. His winning margin over Darryl Waltrip (Gatorade Chevelle) was over a lap. Benny Parsons, Dave Marcis, Bobby Allison and Dick Brooks took the next four places.

Richard Petty dropped out while second on the 65th lap, with a spin which caused a five car pile up, while Buddy Baker led for 63 laps from pole but retired with a blown clutch. Dave Pearson didn't start as he doesn't do short track events.

● Despite the superb showing of the debutant Durex Surtees TS19 in the hands of Alan Jones last Sunday at Brands, John Surtees said that its next race will still almost certainly be at Silverstone next month. Surtees is not a member of the Constructors Association and can only afford to take one car which naturally has to be Brett Lunger's American financed car.

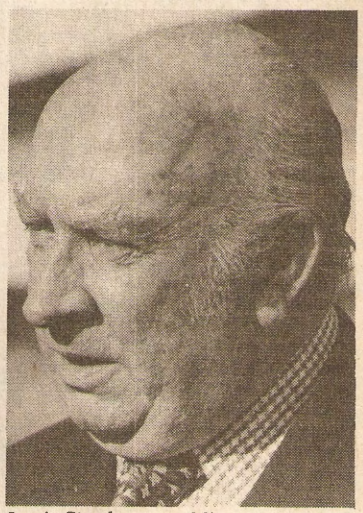
Stanley-BRM folds?

It was widely rumoured at Brands Hatch over the weekend that the non-appearance of the Stanley-BRM car was because the company had been wound up at the end of the week. Managing director Louis Stanley was elusive during the weekend but was finally tracked down at the Dorchester Hotel on Monday when he categorically denied that his racing team and engineering company were in financial difficulties.

Adding fuel to the allegations was the fact that long-time BRM chief mechanic and latterly team manager Alan Challis had left the company to join Lotus on the boat transmission side. Rumour has it that a large number of other employees were made redundant last week leaving just eight men, including engine man Aubrey Wood and gearbox engineer Alex Stokes, to tidy up the operation and prepare the cars for the Owen Organisation Museum.

Stanley said in a typically pompous manner: 'Financially we paddle our own canoe as far as sponsorship is concerned for the racing team, the engineering company has to earn substantial sums to justify it. We enjoy motor racing and we have to pay for our enjoyment. The engineering side will provide the £350,000 needed for the racing programme this year and further orders for North Africa and the Middle East will be announced in a few days. We have turned away commercial sponsors because they want to influence the way the team goes racing.

'The reason we didn't go to the Race of Champions last week was that following Larry Perkins completing 98 laps in testing at Snetterton with the car, the oil pressure started to fluctuate so there was an element of doubt about whether it would last. We will be racing again when the car is competitive.' (Rumoured to be with a new car at Monza!)

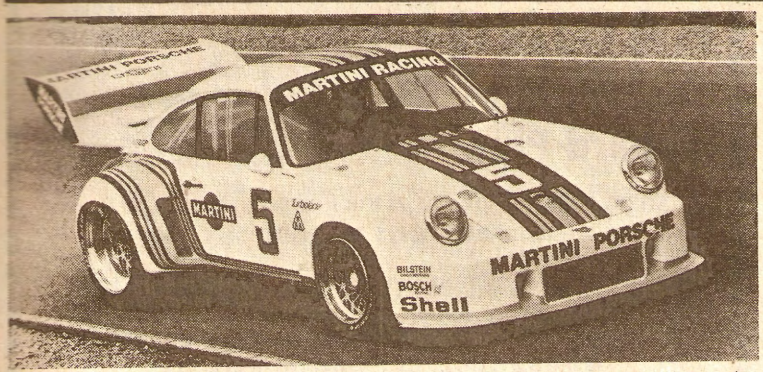


Louis Stanley – paddling

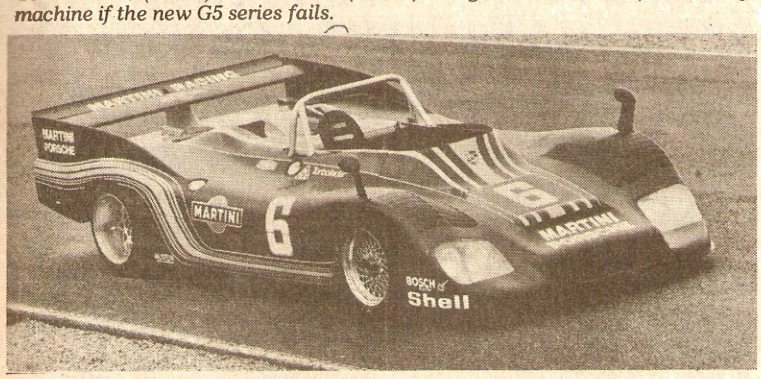
It's a story we're heard many times before from Stanley, full of flannel and promises which, in the past, have come to nothing.

During its 26-year history BRM has had its ups and downs but the last three years, and more especially since it became Stanley-BRM early in 1975, their performances have been a rather sad joke. Stanley's latest statements will do nothing to restore any faith or pride to one of British motor racing's legendary names.

● Tom Wheatcroft is taking two of the Donington Collection cars to Long Beach for their historic race supporting the Grand Prix. Richie Ginther will drive his front engined BRM while Jack Brabham will be in his Cooper Climax.



Porsche challengers for 1976. The factory will be pinning their hopes on the G5 "Carrera" (above) while the G6 (below) is regarded as more of a back-up machine if the new G5 series fails.



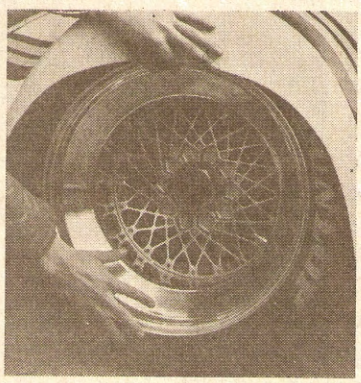
Porsche and Martini unveil their turbo charged G5 and G6 sports cars

At a press conference at their Weissach test track near Stuttgart on Monday of this week, Porsche took the opportunity of outlining their competition plans for this season with their new G5 and G6 turbocharged sports cars. There was nothing really new to add to the stories that many already knew, except that it gave the press an opportunity to see the striking looking cars in action, resplendant in their Martini and Rossi livery, and to discuss Porsche's plans competition plans in greater detail.

After a year's lay-off the factory are concentrating their efforts this year on the World Championship for Makes (ie G5/Silhouette) with their newly developed Martini Porsche type 935. They will contest the World Championship events with a single factory car for "rational reasons." A second car could be added should the course of events demand it.

The G5 racers must be descended from production cars and, as Porsche's racing manager Manfred Jankte outlined emphatically, it is because of this that the company retains an interest in motor racing. As a rule G5 cars stem from G4 competition cars (minimum production run of 400) or G2 models (minimum 1000) which are modified further to suit more liberal G5 regulations. Thus the Martini Porsche 935 is based on the road-going Porsche Turbo with its basic components related to the Turbo RSR competition version (G4) available to customers. The 935 will not be for sale, although Erwin Kremer's team (of Hans Heyer and Bob Wollek) have built up a copy, but reserved exclusively to the factory team.

In the G5 Porsche the six-cylinder boxer engine with exhaust turbocharging has an actual capacity of 2.8-litres. Under the sporting regulations it will run in the 4-litre class, based on the 1.4 handicap factor for supercharged engines. With an output of 590 bhp and 2140 lb weight the Martini Porsche offers a performance index of 3.63 lb/hp.



Yes, they really are 19in diameter wheels.

The driver line-up will be Jochen Mass and Jacky Ickx. As both have Formula 1 contracts and some races clash with Grands Prix, Mass will be replaced by either Gijs van Lennep, Rolf Stommelen or Manfred Schurti.

Ickx, according to Porsche personnel, will drive for the team at the non-championship Le Mans 24 Hour race where two cars will be entered, probably the G5 and G6 cars. This means Ickx will not be driving for Frank Williams at the Swedish Grand Prix, a fact confirmed by Frank last Monday evening.

Commenting on which car Ickx would drive at Le Mans, Jankte said "whichever has the best chance to win!" Which car would Ickx prefer to drive? "If it's raining the coupe and if it's sunny the G6 . . ." replied the cool Belgian.

The G5 car, which will run exclusively on Dunlop tyres, had fitted the large 19 in. diameter German BBS rear wheels which they had been testing down at Ricard. Mass told us that they were an improvement over the smaller 16 in. diameter wheels but hoped it wouldn't rain as Dunlop had yet to make a set of wets.

The 6-cylinder boxer engine utilises the regular Bosch mechanical fuel injection system with the KKK exhaust turbocharger. Maximum power from the engine is quoted as 590 bhp at 7900 rpm, with torque at 60 mkp at 5400 rpm. The two valves per cylinder configuration is still employed, Jantke explaining that they had tried a 4-valve design in the past but, with an air cooled engine, they had run into heating problems.

Porsche described the G6 type 936 car as their "secret weapon" and "a product of unpredictable sporting politics." The history of the car provides an insight into the pitfalls of modern motor racing politics and the difficulties facing a firm engaged in automobile racing.

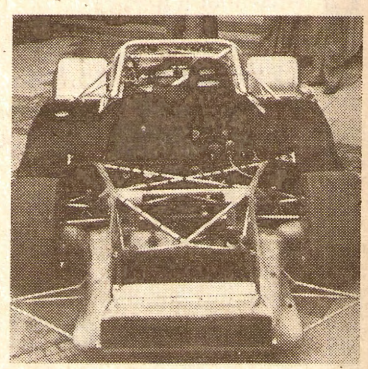
While the Martini Porsche G5 project was a long term one, development of the type 936 began in 1975, based on the uncertainty surrounding the new World Championship for Makes embracing G5 cars. Although announced by the sport's ruling body in 1972 for implementation in 1975 this class was postponed to 1976 on short notice, following conflicts of interest within the sport, and to the detriment of Porsche which had prepared ready to begin in 1975. However the sports-political timetable was delayed by certain firms who preferred to continue racing their sports prototypes.

This situation became totally opaque when the FIA then took refuge in a "diplomatic" solution, to Porsche's great surprise. Parallel to the World Championship for Makes, dedicated for G5 cars (which gets underway at Mugello in Italy this weekend) they prescribed a World Championship for G6 sports cars as well.

During this phase Porsche began development of the G6 car. Alerted by earlier sports-political backlash – such as short-term rejection of the victorious Porsche 917 in 1972, a ban for this new car category as early as 1973 and 1974. They said they were on the superior CanAm Porsche in 1974 after only two race seasons, the postponement of this production-based World Championship from 1975 to 1976 and the barring of the new G4 Turbo from 1976 IMSA races, against all regulations, because they feared its superiority – Porsche wanted to take no chances this time. To avoid finding themselves suddenly backing the wrong car, they took up development of the G6 machine in addition to the largely ready G5 car.

Development of the type 936 took place in the usually short time of a few months so it had to be done rationally. This was made possible by falling back on available 917 and 908 parts plus the use of the six-cylinder turbo-charged engine of the same species used in the G4 and 5 cars. Due to the G6 regulations limiting engines to 3 litres of nominal capacity, the actual capacity is 2.14 litres (times the 1.4 turbo factor, giving 3 litres). With an output of 520 bhp the 1,545 lb car has a performance weight of 2.97 lb/hp.

The space-frame G6 car was rude looking in appearance but very functional in practise.



There is no programme for the G6 car at present since the World Championship for Makes (G5) seems quite promising and Porsche are favouring that series. The 936 has reached the stage of initial driving tests which suggest great promise. It is highly likely that the car will be entered at Le Mans and perhaps at the Nurburgring race on April 4 which, as it happens, clashes with a G5 round at Vallelunga.

Unlike the G5 car, the mini-Can Am type 936 sports prototype will run on Goodyear tyres.

Rear end styling on the G5 car is a sight British racegoers will see in May.

Oaten's Cannon blast

An exciting addition to the Shellsport 5000 grids this season will be Canadian domiciled Briton John Cannon, who'll be driving a Bartz Chevrolet powered March 751 under the Richard Oaten Racing with John Lane banner starting at Mallory Park this Sunday.

Cannon will be remembered in this country for his performances in his fast but often fragile March-Oldsmobile F5000 car in 1972 and before that a strong showing at the Easter Thruxton F2 race in 1971.

Since then he's been racing back in the USA in F5000 (he was champion in 1970). The March, sponsored in America by John Lane was cobbled together last year "from a box of bits, I don't suppose March even know of its existence." It features a new 1973 F1 monocoque, 1975 F1 front suspension, 1976 F1 bodywork and "our own back end." Cannon ran the car in the last three US F5000 races last year finishing with a good fourth at Riverside and in the recent Australian "Tasman" series was on the front row three times and scored one win.

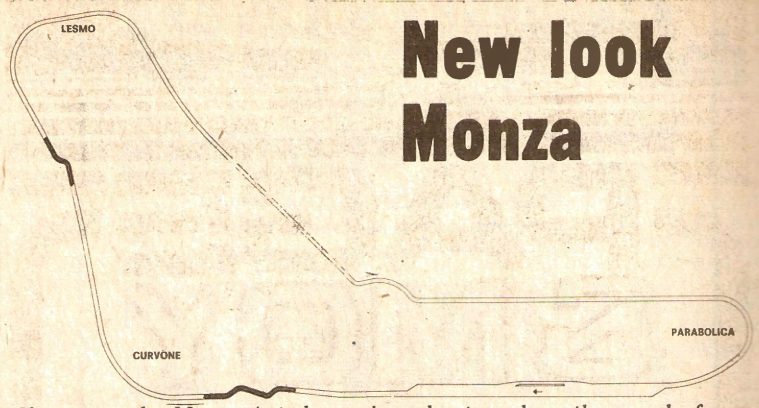
John Cannon – likely winner

Cannon says that he hopes to develop the car further in England and, depending on progress in the championship itself, may do the whole series here.

Both Cannon and Richard Oaten, who arranged the deal while with David Purley in Australia, are "very disappointed" there's not more F5000 cars running this year, "but we hope our participation and hoped for success will entice others into it. We want to resurrect F5000 over here having seen just how good it can be in Australia."

Oaten's plans also include rebuilding the Lola T330 crashed down under by David Purley and has mentioned that he'll be giving at least one prominent Australian a test run in it. "They're all keen to come over and if we do well we may see some cars coming too," said Oaten.

New look Monza



Changes to the Monza Autodrome in order to reduce the speed of cars through the Curva Grande and Lesmo were approved last week. Because the local authorities won't allow the track to deviate into the surrounding parkland, Mickey-Mouse chicanes have had to be the answer.

McGuire's F1 Williams confirmed

Having taken charge of the entire Hesketh 308C project last November from which to base his attack of the Formula 1 World Championship, Frank Williams has been able to conclude a deal recently whereby he has sold his existing F1 stock (the John Clarke designed FW series cars) to Australian Brian McGuire.

The transaction was arranged by Mike Smith, who until recently was Richard Oaten's racing manager. He has now left Oaten to concentrate on business activities elsewhere but will

Brian McGuire – big plans

retain an involvement with McGuire's new project.

McGuire, who for the last two years has raced in F5000, now intends to contest the Shellsport 5000 (G8) series and the British Grand Prix with the F1 Williams which will be based in Brentford, Middx. A second car will also be prepared to be made ready to race, although no driver has been mentioned as yet.

McGuire won't be at Mallory this weekend as the car has only just been rebuilt and hasn't had a chance to go testing.

● Vince Woodman has been able to arrange a deal with a Swedish driver Bo Emanuelsson whereby Vince's G1 Camaro and Bo's ex-works Koln Capri RS change hands. Vince will race the Capri in Supersaloon events.

Magee's F1 RAM

RAM boss John Macdonald confirmed at Brands Hatch last weekend that Damien Magee would be driving the third Tissot/Thursdays Brabham at the *Daily Express* Graham Hill Trophy race at Silverstone on April 11.

The team, which caused a few raised eyebrows among the regular F1 circus by its smart turn-out over the weekend, will therefore run all three of their cars, two BT44Cs for Loris Kessel and Patrick Neve and the BT42, which Kessel used in the Race of Champions, for the underated Irishman.

Magee has only had one F1 outing before, driving for Frank Williams in the Swedish Grand Prix last year. He is also no stranger to F1 Brabhams, having carried out quite a lot of testing in a works BT44B last year while under the wing of Brabham boss Bernie Ecclestone.

Magee is expected to be out at Mallory Park this weekend in the RAM/Thursdays F5000 March-Ford V6 although last minute arrangements to get the car run under the banner of a reputable London sports car dealer are currently in progress and the outcome won't be known before the weekend.

As to Patrick Neve's future, it now looks as if he'll become a fully fledged member of the RAM team for this year, their Grand Prix season starting in Spain on May 2.

Yip backs F1 Marches

March Engineering's Max Mosley has arranged a one-off sponsorship deal for Ronnie Peterson and Hans-Joachim Stuck at the US GP (West) scheduled to take place at Long Beach at the end of next week.

As neither of their works cars has any commercial sponsorship commitments, Teddy Yip has stepped in "to make it worth our while" and Peterson's March, like Stuck's, will be white for the American race with Theodore Racing and "funny Chinese writing" written all over them.

Yip, as many will know, sponsors Vern Schuppan in the works Eagle F5000 team and is backing Alan Jones' Sid Taylor run F5000 Eagle in America this year.

Changes at Marlboro

Speculation at Brands Hatch last weekend suggested that there had been a few changes at the Philip Morris Group headquarters (*ie* Marlboro) in Lausanne recently. Reports that Pat Duffeler had been replaced as head of the group by Englishman John Hogan weren't exactly denied by a Marlboro official during a telephone call earlier this week.

We gather that one of the reasons for Duffeler's "move" surrounds the Japanese Grand Prix which is due to "take place" on October 24. Apparently we have heard that the Japanese organising club, together with various local newspapers, are spreading the word that the race will definitely take place, having signed a contract with Marlboro Europe and thereby guaranteeing a representative field of cars.

However the Formula 1 Constructors Association haven't any such agreement with Marlboro Europe allowing them to organise events on their behalf or without proper consultation.

Therefore it looks as if Japan are "counting their chickens" so to speak. Although the F1CA have expressed a wish that they do not want three end of season races (Canada, USA East and Japan), a sensible attitude taken by the Canadians following the legal hassles last autumn might grant them a "reprieve" and Japan therefore would lose out. We wonder where the FIA have been during all this? After all, they are supposed to be the "governing body" of motor sport.

Bobby Unser pips Pancho at Phoenix

The long hard USAC trail began last Sunday at Phoenix, Arizona, with the Bryan 150 taking place round the one mile oval track. And what a turn up it was. Running seriously for the first time the Parnelli-turbo Cosworth DFV took pole position in the hands of Al Unser and led for some 38 laps before tyre problems caused a pit stop and dropped it down to fourth at the end. "I think a lot of people will review their engine contracts this year," said one prominent American we spoke to on Monday. Incidentally, Cosworth, who didn't approve the project initially, were in attendance at the race.

Victory eventually went to Al's brother Bobby in the Cobre Tire Eagle by just two lengths from Pancho Carter's Jorgensen works Eagle (car/driver pairings were the other way last year). A further two lengths back was Gordon Johncock's Wildcat. The close finish was brough about by a yellow flag incident seven laps from the end. It was withdrawn on the last lap to create a superb sprint finish. Fifth and sixth were Mike Mosley (Sugargripe Prune Eagle) and Johnny Parsons (Ayr-way Eagle) respectively.

Wally Dallenbach led for 24 laps before his Wildcat struck engine trouble; A. J. Foyt went out early with no oil pressure; Johnny Rutherford with a blown engine in the works unsponsored McLaren while Tom Sneva's Penske entry retired with a blown tyre at half distance.

Evans retained by JPTL

Having completed his two races for John Player-Team Lotus, the terms of his original agreement, Bob Evans will be retained on the team's pay-role and will partner Gunnar Nilsson at the US (West) Grand Prix at Long Beach next week. Evans showed up well driving the Lotus 77 in both South Africa and at Brands and it is expected that Lotus will offer him a full contract shortly.

Work continues on a new Lotus (or John Player Special as we've courteously been asked to call it) which, we gather, will incorporate a novel 6-speed semi-automatic gearbox among other interesting features. The gearbox, we hear, is of Porsche origin although other sources indicate that Lotus may purchase a smilar project which is threequarters completed at BRM.

The current Lotus 77 is due to test this week with conventional outboard brakes.

Drama over Long Beach

Rumours wre rife at Brands Hatch over the weekend that all was not well between the Formula One Constructors Association and the Long Beach Organisers for the Grand Prix on March 28.

"We lodged £265,000 with the SCCA last week which will be paid to the Constructors on the arrival of cars and drivers next week," said organiser Chris Pook, when we spoke to him on Monday. Was there any trouble? we enquired.

"Yes, they wanted it paid in England today and we said no way. Why should we pay them until we know they're actually here. It's not for them to pay freight charges (as a non-F1CA member suggested it might be) either because we pay those. Anyway, it's all settled now and they'll be arriving next week for a full programme of promotional activities."

Sebring's redevelopment

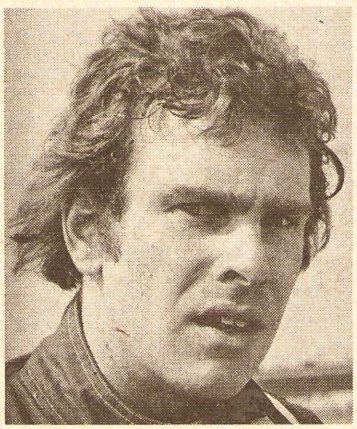
After this Sunday's Sebring 12 hours IMSA race, the airfield circuit which has seen many classical races in its time, will be the subject of a much proposed redevelopment scheme. IMSA race star John Greenwood has found the backing for this year's race (a national event as in the past three years) and from his home town Detroit come stories of a 1.6 mile test track for the manufacturers to develop cars to new federal rulings and at the same time "possibly within a year" a new three mile race circuit which would enable the circuit to regain its former international status. Incidentally, this weekend's meeting will have the Hon Gerald Lascelles as Grand Marshal.

Peter Gregg's ex-works BMWs head the entry list for Gregg/Hurley Haywood, David Hobbs/Benny Parsons. Greenwood will be sharing his Batmobile Corvette with Al Brockman with the rest of the field consisting of mainly Porsche Carerras.

Wentz tries Boxer

Seen giving Brian Lewis' Boxer a run at Silverstone last week was American Ted Wentz. The American is, contrary to reports, without a drive for this coming season. Many thought he was an automatic choice for a works Lola drive in Formula 2 having driven the prototype in testing late last year. However, the works are unable to run a car without backing and as Wella are no longer sponsoring him, the American is out on a limb.

Ted Wentz – no F2 Lola



The opportunity to test Lewis' car came because Brian "wanted to go for some competitive times." The car, which has recently been driven by several drivers in Formula 2 trim (Bob Evans and Alex Ribeiro to name but two) has now been converted into Formula Atlantic specification, again using one of John Dunn's Swindon BD-series engine.

Wentz performed well in the car and Lewis was encouraged, certainly enough to go back this week for further tests.

As to whether the car will appear in the British Atlantic races is not certain. Lewis says he naturally wants to win, which he feels a driver (such as Wentz) would do over here. He would also like to take in "about half a dozen F2 races" but the whole project depends on finance which, sadly, hasn't been forthcoming.

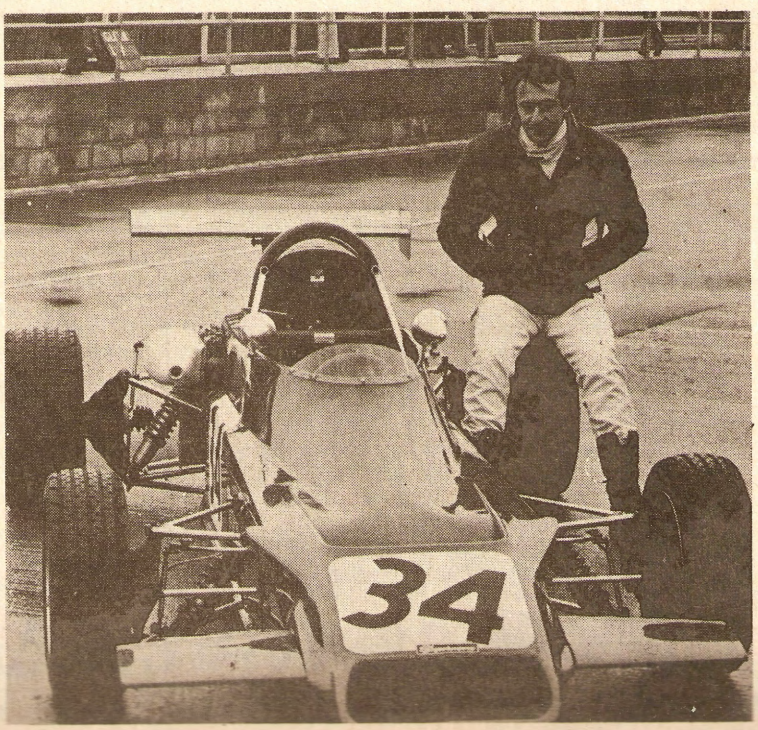
Paper thin Capris?

The presence of a couple of somewhat thin bodies on Capris at Sunday's opening round of the Keith Prowse RAC Touring Car championship caused one or two raised eyebrows at Brands, not the least from RAC scrutineer Peter Jowitt. The bodies originally came from Cologne, where they had been destined for Group 2, but when the G2 plans were dropped, rather than leave them lying in the yard, they were shipped to Britain, and both Chris Craft and Vince Woodman were using them on Sunday. They both found that such metal bends rather easily.

Although the bodies didn't mean that Capris were underweight, Peter Jowitt still took a keen interest, and dropped one or two hints that he might be bringing a gauge to measure the thickness of sheet steel to the next round. However, a Ford spokesman said "what's the problem, we make so many Capris that some are bound to go through a bit thinner than others, it's the tolerance allowed in sheet steel". He added that if the matter were blown up too big, then Ford were ready to look at other competitors in the series.

Supernova F3 debuts

First appearance at Silverstone last Sunday was the neat Formula 3 Supernova SF3 car driven by Corsican Claude Cuicci. The car finished sixth having been fourth at one stage.



Briefly....

● Correction department from South Africa. Dave Charlton holds the Kyalami F1 record at 1m 17.05s, set up in his McLaren M23 in October, 1974. Also Lauda's fastest lap has been altered to 1m 17.62s.

● Brian Henton was due to start testing the new F2 Wheatcroft-Abarth / Holbay in the middle of this week round the Donington loop. The bodywork won't be finished until Friday when a full circuit test programme will begin.

The car will be painted British Racing Green with a red stripe acknowledging the Italian engine and probably run as a BRT (British Racing Team).

● The Chris Williams Memorial Trophy and £100, awarded each year by Chevron Cars for the best performance by a driver in a Chevron, has been given to Bill Brack for his fine effort in winning the Player's Canadian Formula Atlantic championship for the third year running. Brack was, of course, driving his STP-backed Chevron B29.

● The Sid Taylor/Teddy Yip works backed V8 F5000 March, destined for America, will not be ready for the opening two British G8 races. However, driver Alan Jones hopes to debut it at the scene of his recent triumph, Brands Hatch, on Easter Monday.

● Ian Ashley, without a drive in Formula 1 following Stanley-BRM's alleged withdrawal from competition, is currently trying to arrange a top-line ride in occasional F3 and possibly a couple of races in F2.

● Irishman Eddie Jordan, who suffered a big accident in the Formula Ford race at Mallory Park last year, was due to have his first drive in Ken Fildes' Formula Atlantic Lotus 69 at Mondello Park yesterday (Wednesday). Jordan hoped that a good showing would get him the regular drive he is looking for.

● Has Bernie Ecclestone made another shrewd move? Rumour has it he has 30 plus DFVs tucked away for a rainy day and it just so happens that demand in America for blocks to be converted for USAC use is likely to increase following the Parnelli's strong showing last weekend at Phoenix.

● Anything you can do we can do better department: the normally staid USAC rulers allowed a woman to race for the first time last Sunday at Phoenix, Arlene Hiss, estranged wife of Mike, broke all traditions when she started the season's opening race. After being black flagged for being too slow she was eventually classified 14th, 22 laps behind. How about a transatlantic match race?

All your weekend sport

MALLORY PARK

The Mallory Park season opens this Sunday, a fortnight later than usual, and to welcome in the new year is the opening round of the new Shellsport European 5000 championship. Conforming to FIA G8 regulations the entry list shows it as a super *libre* event with an interesting selection of cars, with six F1s, five F5000s, eight F2s and three Atlantic cars among the entries.

Variety was what was wanted and variety there is; full grids were wanted and a full grid there will almost certainly be. The rest is very much unknown.

Although there are six F1 cars entered one must take them with a small pinch of salt as, with one exception, none of the drivers can be called experienced and, to be truthful, we haven't even heard of some of

Damien Magee—3.4 March.

them. Nevertheless they may be stars in the making who knows — Sunday will tell. Those that we know are Brian McGuire, who'll be in one of Frank Williams' old cars and who ought to be able to make a strong impression on the race, and Divina Galica, who certainly doesn't lack forcefulness but this debut outing in the Surtees will probably be a quiet one. In the others we have former 850 Imp driver Roger Springett (Shadow DN1/6A), Luigi-Mimmo Cevasco (Jolly Club Brabham BT42 as raced by various odd bods in 1974), Spaniard Emilio Vilata (Bob Howling's ex-Nicholson Lyncar) and a certain Rikky Pierce (Surtees TS16). Not quite Race of Champions stuff but interesting all the same.

The F5000 category could well provide the winner. There's been much friendly rivalry in the past few days between the two Ford V6 powered teams: the RAM Team (Damien Magee's March), and the Lec team (David Purley's modified Chevron) about whether certain testing times have or have not been recorded. As they say in the classics, "when the flag drops . . ." For fear of having to pay a Lec mechanic to streak or stave off Irish retribution we'll not make any predictions here, except that the battle'll be very, very tough.

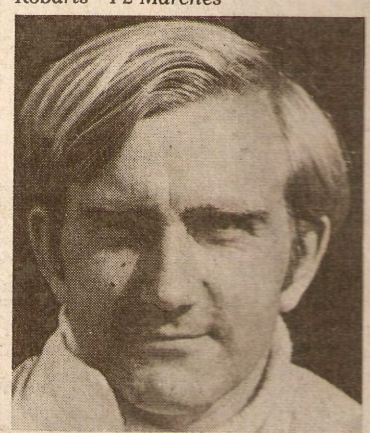
Opposition to these British lads will come from Canadian domicilied Briton John Cannon who'll be returning to these shores to campaign the March-Bartz Chevrolet which served him well Stateside last year and down under in the winter. He's never seen Mallory Park before and we suggested he might get a shock. "It can't be as bad as Australia . . . . can it?" was his reply to our inquiry. He's a tough, professional runner though and he'll be more than competitive. We don't think we can say the same about Sig. Livio Ponzone (with a name like that we're not certain about the driver's sex either) who will treat us to the debut of the Italian built, rarely raced F5000 Dywa-Chevrolet. Yet more intrigue. Bobby Howlings is known of old as is his Chevron B28, the combination is unpredictable.

The Davids of this predicted Goliath beating clash are the nimble F2 cars. We'd have a flutter on Ray Mallock's Lola-Swindon BDX but it has proved to be a fragile product in testing — if it holds together it must be a strong challenger, the driving talent's there we know. Ray's former sponsor John "Wingers" Wingfield is taking his F2 Ralt as well as his teapot and can be relied upon for a solid performance. (Rumour has it that he may even have some clean overalls, but this could not be confirmed at press time.) Restaurateur and recent deputy for Robin Hood in nearby Sherwood Forest, Val Musetti has hung a nose bag of spaghetti on his March this year and is really flying. With four successive wins behind him, he'll take some catching.

Bill Gubelmann returns to British single seater racing in his 1973/74 F2 March for the first time since winning the 1972 Atlantic championship. Good to see you back Bill, let's hope form comes with you. Richard Robarts returns too with a pukka F2 March which could be interesting while Alo Lawler and Brian Robinson also have F2 machinery. Brian Lewis' Boxer is entered also and with the right *pilote* could be very much the dark horse.

Atlantic cars are unlikely to get much of a look in (we trust they'll

Val Musetti (above) and Richard Robarts—F2 Marches



look in their mirrors though) unless it rains, nevertheless Jeremy Rossiter and Norman Dickson are both hoping for the gods to put a dampener on proceedings.

The supporting cast is good too with rounds of the Radio 1 saloon, APG FF2000, Debenhams Escort championships plus a Polydor Special Saloon and BRSCC Modsport races.

The Radio 1 series is looking really good this year with battles for outright victory fierce among the Capris and BMWs. Further down there are some tremendous Vauxhall Magnum and Mazda inter-make battles while the Honda Civic just has the edge on the bargain boys for the moment.

The FF2000 race is worth seeing just to watch Britain's next big time graduate Tiff Needell although the experienced Ian Taylor will be out to try and catch him plus local boy Geoff Friswell and promising newcomer Richard Piper.

The Escorteers don't seem to have learned much while locked in their cages over the winter and panel bashing aplenty is promised on this track. Watch especially for rallying sensation Ari Vatanen making his debut.

All the races have more than capacity entries and if you pop along on Saturday there'll be G8 practice plus three heats and final of the BRSCC Dunlop FF Novices championship which will be a good place to play spot-the-potential-superstar.

The Club house will have a discotheque on both Saturday and Sunday, open to all, while members of the Slade pop group will also be around on Sunday.

Mallory Park is just off the A47 Hinckley to Leicester road and close to junction 20 on the M1 and we're told facilities are much improved for this year.

Racing begins on Saturday at 2.30 and Sunday at 1.45 pm.

CROFT

The Nottingham Sports Car Club are opening their season with Croft's second meeting of the year on Sunday. There's a nicely varied programme with races for FFs, Modsports, MGAs, Special Saloons and *Libre* cars. Likely winners must come from John Bright, Mick Starkey and Peter Harrington (FFs), Mike Smith (Modsports), Keith Bowmarker and Doug Niven (Special Saloons) and Andy Barton *(Libre)*.

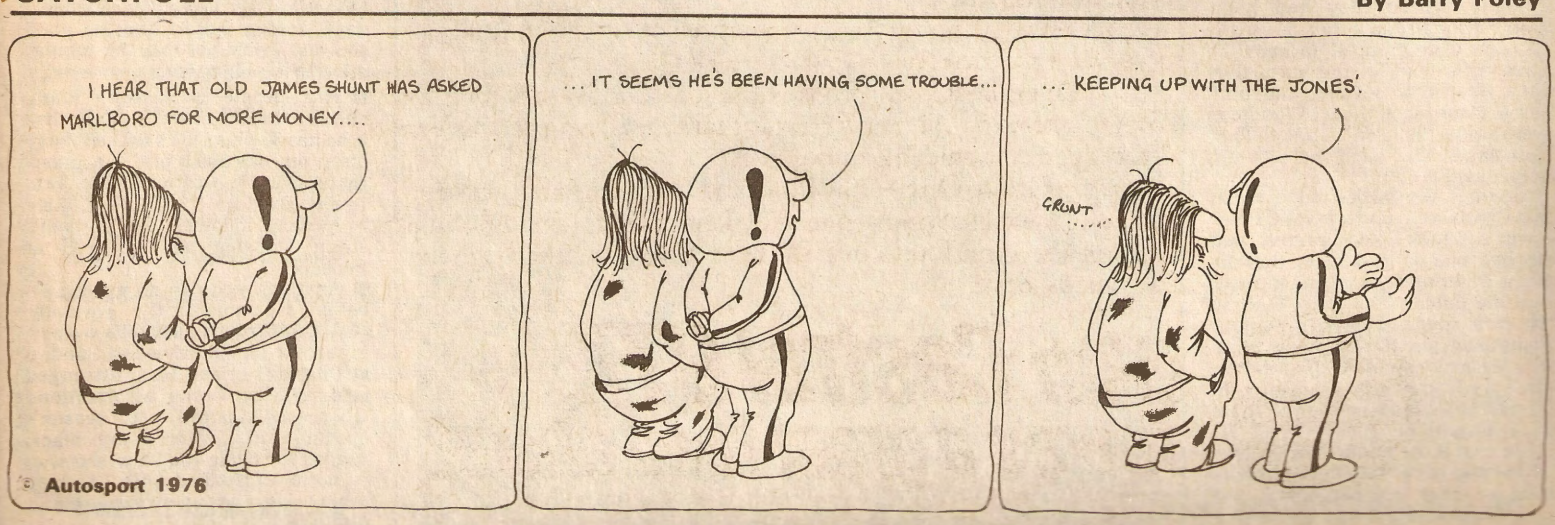
Croft is near Darlington, Co Durham and racing starts at 2.30 pm.

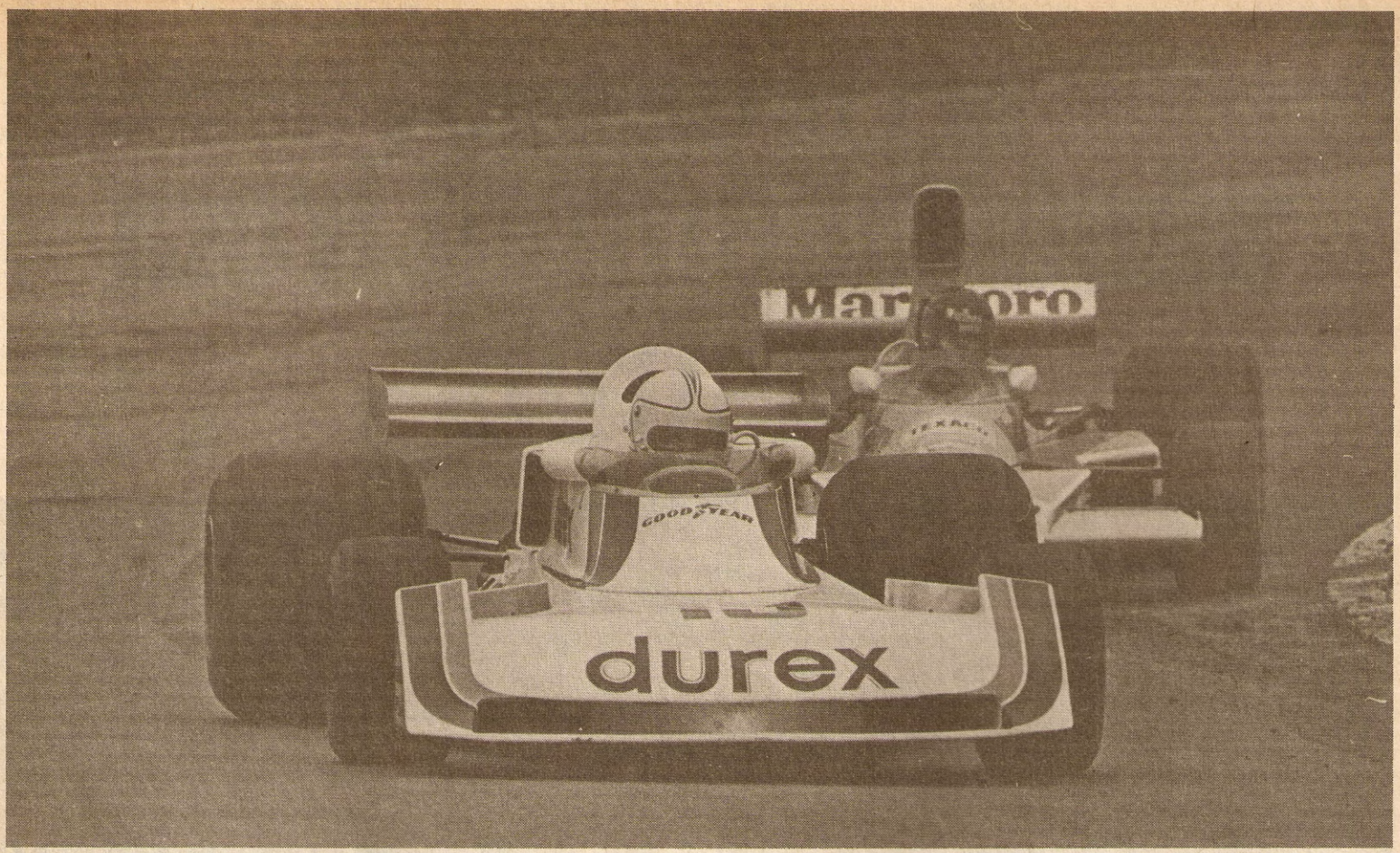
● The Jaguar Drivers' Club are in charge of a non-championship meeting at Silverstone on Saturday with races catering for old rather than new machinery. Categories include Thoroughbred Sports, Post Historics, Historics, Modsports, Classic Saloons and a challenge race between Aston Martin, Ferrari and Jaguar Drivers' Owners Club members.

It will be a lot of fun and racing starts at 1.30 pm.

CATCHPOLE

By Barry Foley





For nearly half of the race Alan Jones led the race with the Durex Surtees under constant pressure from James Hunt's Marlboro McLaren

RACE OF CHAMPIONS / BRANDS HATCH

Auntie you should've seen it

By PETE LYONS **Photos by DAVID WINTER**

A LETTER TO MY AUNT

Dear Auntie,

Sorry not to see you at Brands Hatch on Sunday. Of course, we all realise you don't actually enjoy motor sport — do you actually enjoy anything, Auntie? — and possibly too the chill weather might have been a bit hard on your old bones. But really, you missed quite a good one.

The thing you were so afraid of happened; yes! That car with that awful name got into the lead of the race and led for lap after lap! There would have been no way for you to avoid televising it — not even had you concentrated on the car which ran along in second place much of the way. It also had a bad name painted upon it, and it won the race! Somewhere along there in the 40 laps you would have been forced to focus on one or the other, so all in all you were probably right not to come along, feeling as you do.

However, knowing that you do like to consider yourself sort of a person-of-the-world and since you do after all maintain a news department to keep yourself informed of the doings on the Outside, as it were, we've taken the liberty below of giving you a brief outline of what took place.

Don't thank us; shucks, it's just our job.

ENTRY AND PRACTICE

There were supposed to be a total of 20 men on the grid for the Race of Champions, Auntie, but in the end only 16 came (Oooh — does that word offend you Auntie? Sorry). Chief among them, of course, was the reigning World Champion Niki Lauda with his Ferrari. Everyone was agog, we can tell you, to see this new car, and very handsome it looked too. The low-line airbox arrangement over the engine, mandated by the rules which are to come into force in May at Spain (it's nice there, Auntie, we'll try to remember to send you a postcard so you don't feel such a shunt-in) umm, where were we, oh yes, the line of the car is very much more sleek to look at. It's a very satisfying car altogether, and one almost thinks it will be a pleasure this summer watching it win all the races. It's that pretty. This was the first of the 312T2s, with chassis number 025.

It did not have the long-awaited De Dion rear suspension. The appropriate bits did come along in a box, and the intention was to fit them for the second practice session, on Saturday afternoon. However, the weather was so cold, so grey and bitter cold, that the racing tyres could not be made to come up to proper operating temperature. You see, the, uh, er, the, umm, that is — please don't flinch — the rubber, there's just no other word for it Auntie, sorry, it has to operate at a certain temperature, above about 160 degrees Farenheit, in order to properly grip the road.

There are various tricks the racing men can play on the chassis to get the tyres warm. They can adjust in more toe-in, more camber angles, less roll stiffness so the tyres will lean more; they can also of course, lower the tyre pressures a little so that sidewall flexion will occur more readily. Of course, the drivers themselves can drive more abusively, sliding the tyres out on the road surface in a way they would never dare to do in warmer conditions.

Apparently the Ferrari team did all this, along with every other team, but there was just no way to get the rubber working properly. As it would seem the De Dion suspension holds the rear tyres more perpendicular to the road surface, and hence the treads work more efficiently than with a conventional independent suspension geometry, there was no point in trying it.

Practice was therefore, with one exception we'll get down to in — Auntie, you simply must stop fidgeting — down to in a minute, kind of a chapter of funny incidents, or frustrating incidents depending upon your point of view. As everyone slipped and skidded across the road, trying to overpower the cars without actually flying off the edge, Niki became merely the best of a pack of not very satisfied racing drivers. That's all right, we're pretty well used to seeing that Ferrari as quickest; it really looked as if even in these conditions it was "all the same for everybody" and class would tell relatively even if not absolutely. If you see what we mean.

However that person Jody Scheckter was spoiling the theory. For some reason which nobody else professes to really understand and which Ken Tyrrell is trying to keep them in the dark about, Jody was getting his tyres up to operating temperature. Auntie, it was just fabulous to watch!

That blue Elf Tyrrell (it's all right to mention it, Auntie, we're not on the air) was simply hurtling around that circuit. It would come hunching down into the corners gripping really hard, and go through with the driver's foot hard on the throttle and his hands just a blur on the steering. A really good place to watch was the old, altered Bottom Bend (which they've renamed after good old Graham Hill now — did you have anything to do with that?) with its pinched exit line; there is a distinct drop-off onto the new bit of tarmac (called Cooper straight) and the combination of drop-off and new, "green" surface made for some spectacular spectating, we can tell you! A lot of the chaps were trying very hard and getting into frightful oscillations through here, but Jody would just bring your heart to your mouth. Foot hard down, back wheels hanging out, whole car waggling like a happy puppy; ah, it was super.

Good viewing

Incidentally, it was good to see that for once the altering of a circuit wasn't the ruination of it. In an era when slow corners are being eased and fast corners are being tightened with silly chicanes, the men at Brands Hatch have managed to alter the line of their circuit (for good and sufficient reasons) without spoiling its character. Indeed, this new Graham Hill corner is tricker thanks to its exit and the entry through the next one (Surtees Bend) is both tricky and seemingly more inviting for drivers attempting to overtake; similarly the line down Paddock Hill is more cramped and the dip at the bottom is even more severe — several cars were striking bright metalic flashes from the road there. Good viewing.

Anyway, Jody with his tyres operating at something approaching normal temperatures was far and away fastest of everybody during both sessions. In the morning practice, two hours long, he struck off a lap at 1m 25.27s; pretty slow, seemingly, but the circuit was in fact a little damp and muddy and altogether slimey, and he was 0.87s quicker than the next man, James Hunt. Lauda was doing only 26.83s at the time.

In the afternoon when he got warmed up properly, Jody got all the way down to 1m 20.42s. Good heavens, that was 2.35s better than Lauda could do! Such a margin is completely unheard of in F1 these days. It just illustrated the general absurdity of the weather conditions. That, and the fact the Tyrrell was working properly, alone of all the cars there.

One was tempted to wonder if, sort of philosophically speaking, here wasn't a case of a car that had proven to be inferior at other circuits benefitting now from its inferiority. That is, could it be that because the ageing 007 design was so unsteady in Brazil and South Africa, it was now putting such an erratic load upon its tyres that they, happy day, were warming properly?

Not so, said Jody from out of the middle of the first big smile on his face in months. "It's good even in the first lap or two when they're cold.

"We've gone back to the suspension geometry we had developed for Brazil, and Ken has tried some new springs and bars. Suddenly it's all clicked. I need a car with a back suspension that works. I can turn the power on now and get it down to the road, without the car doing OLLEGGHH!"

That's now a bad word, Auntie, just difficult to spell.

Anyway, there was our pole position. On the face of it, there was hardly any point in beavering the other 15, they were so slow by comparison. Their actual grid positions seemed more a matter of lottery than any intrinsic speed. Certainly there appeared to be some funny people in some funny places — no disrespect, begging your pardon, but we weren't used to seeing them there.

The World Champion, Niki (come to think of it, the only World Champion in the Race of Champions; drôle thought, eh?) tried his very hardest, you could see him doing it, twitching and sliding and opposite-locking even, but he just couldn't get into the same ball park. At the end of the day he started muttering about his engine, as drivers will at this sort of moment, and asked to have it changed for the morrow. "It's not good over 12,000." We should all have such trouble, said someone within earshot.

Nilsson sensation

Not far from the end of that second session — it was 90 minutes long, and had been interrupted earlier for ten minutes by a sprinkle of rain, it was that sort of a day — one had the engaging sight of Gunnar Nilsson blowing off the (why, Auntie!) the Champion. (Auntie, you must really sit down.)

Over a period of about three laps the young Swede in his young Lotus was catching up the Ferrari, and when he finally got right up its chuff Lauda waved him by into Druids. That was quite a sight. "I just can't get the tyres warmed up," said Niki.

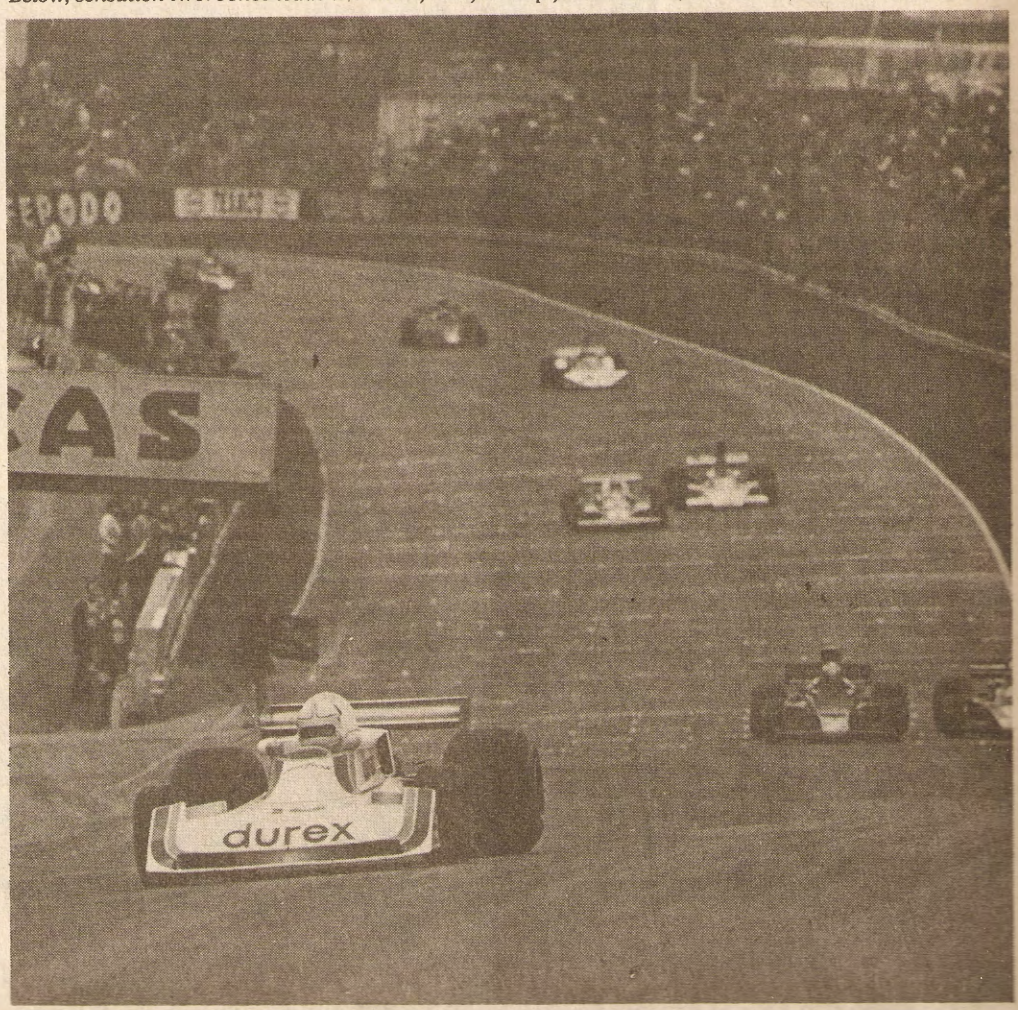
"The car is beginning to feel really good," said Gunnar. He looked like a fellow basking in some kind of sun. Third place on the grid was the kind of thing you write home about.

We are allowed to call the Lotus a Lotus for this race, incidentally. You'll remember, Auntie, that John Player & Sons agreed at the end of last year that for British races they would play fair with the Government and your own self and remove their cigarette advertising from the cars. They did so. The type 77s were black and bare at Brands Hatch, you could've televised them without offending anyone.

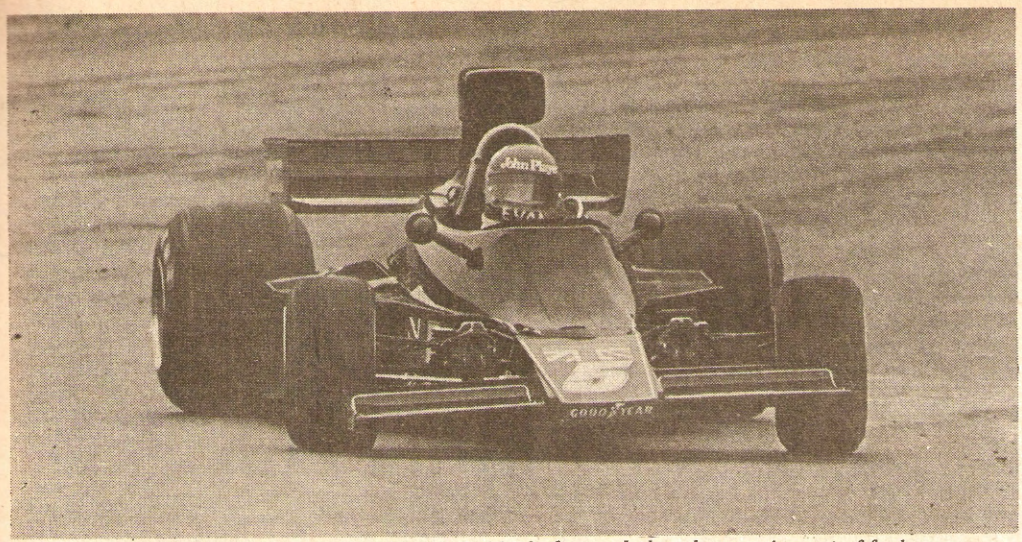
They also were fitted, clever old Colin Chapman, with tyres an inch narrower than normal. The less rubber the warmer, don't you see.

It wasn't all sweetness and light all day *chez* JPS. Nilsson missed the most of the morning with a repeat of one of his Kyalami dramas, gears jumping out of mesh, while teammate Bob Evans reported, and this is a good quote, "A touch of the old no brake pedals into Clearways." But things were generally looking up; Bob wound up on the fourth row.

Fourth place overall was a bit of a happy surprise: one Jacques B. Ickx in what we are trying to remember is a Williams now. Back onto its rubber springs, and with its front suspension geometry altered in the frantically short time since South Africa, it didn't look particularly the steadiest car at Brands. "It's a bit wiggly, its got a strange steering ratio," said the driver, who however was retaining quite easily his accustomed impish good humour. If any bystander found himself thinking that in a way his driving looked like that of a man who had been given just one more chance, Frank Williams says he cannot think where such a rumour has come from. "Not at all, nothing to it. Personally, I think it's just that



Above, sensation one: Gunnar Nilsson leads the field round Graham Hill bend on the first lap; Lauda, Jones, Evans, Scheckter, Ickx, Watson, Hunt, Pryce, Pace, Kessel, Amon, Brambilla, Ertl and Neve follow. Below, sensation two: Jones leads the end of the first lap from Nilsson, Scheckter, Lauda and Hunt.



Bob Evans drove superbly in the JPS only to be robbed of a good place by running out of fuel.

he's remembered that this is Brands, and he's supposed to be a bit of an ace round here!"

James Hunt, your own rapidly developing National Hero, came next on the line up and frankly he looked lucky to do that well. Nothing wrong with him, you understand, that part of the package was really fine. It was his car, or cars rather. He had two of them and could really have done with a third.

The Marlboro McLaren he intended to race was a revamped version of good old 23/9, ex-Fittipaldi chassis, brought up to new-regs somewhat with a sturdy dash hoop around the instruments.

One of the McLaren's bright sparks had been doing a bit of thinking about this part of the car, and he'd asked himself just what information a driver really does need. The answer was, revs, oil pressure, and water temperature. Two gauges were left on the miniscule panel to give this, and at the back of the car, atop the gearbox, were fitted two more. One gave oil temperature and fuel pressure, and the reasoning was that this gen is required only during practice and only by mechanics; therefore the gauge would be removed for the race. (It actually wasn't, but there's probably a good McLarenesque reason for it.)

The other gauge was designed to give air pressure readings, and was incorporated because on this car was fitted the air starter system seen in practice at Kyalami.

M23/8 was brought along as a spare, and a good thing too for it was needed. The other machine first gave an electrical problem and then blew up, showering bits of crankcase all over itself. (When mechanics, hardened souls, are really impressed with a blow-up they put fragments in their shirt pockets to show people.)

Then in the afternoon engine two gave up. "Yes this one too. There's swarf in Number Eight." That made it evens, and 23/9 went to the starting grid as intended.

(Auntie, if you happen to see a photograph of James driving round Brands without a windscreen, that's because they only had one Hunt-model windscreen available. After Denny Hulme and Jochen Mass, you might not credit it, but James is bigger than his McLaren and his screen has had to be extended and cobbled to fit. When the car blew up and he had to run back to the pits for the other one, he had to drive round and stop at the first one to get his screen. Twice.)

Now Auntie, here's where we run into a problem. We're just going to have to face up to it, like it or not, sorry. It's about That Name. Yes, it comes in here on the grid sheet.

Auntie, look, have you quite realised what you yourself have been talking about on the news programmes these past weeks? About that man in the political sphere, about whom certain things have been alleged — yes, him. Auntie, it is a fact that there have been certain words that *you yourself* have used to describe quite exactly the allegations which have been made.

You have expressed your concern about the potential mental distress which could possibly have occurred should certain of the more sheltered members of your television audience happened to have tuned in your coverage of the Race of Champions, and been confronted with a certain Brand Name.

Hypocrite

Auntie, are you quite sure that that Name is more potentially distressful, even in these nineteen seventies, than that Word?

Auntie, are you not a hypocrite?

It is the Durex Surtees we're talking about, and the Durex Surtees never turned a wheel before Saturday morning practice. In fact it had not so much as sat on its wheels before, and it missed one hour and twelve minutes of first practice simply because the Durex Surtees crewmen were still screwing it together. Alan Jones had but three quarters of an hour to shake it down for its first run, to settle up the gear ratios and the spring rates and all that as well as could be on the peculiar track surface. Due to not fitting the cockpit he had trouble with the gearlever and buzzed the engine to 11,000 plus, but an oil change showed no damage.

His first impressions were very favourable. "It's fantasticly predictable, and it seems to get the horsepower down nicely. We had a small oil leak onto one of the discs in the back, and that made it feel nervous under braking, but really, I think it's going to be good." And it was good. Sixth best overall was a damn fine job of work, Auntie.

Maybe you ought to pay attention to good things like this. To be blunt about it, Auntie, Britain's international motor racing industry is one of the few segments of your troubled economy that is really going well. It seems a shame not to back it to the hilt.

Good for Alan Jones, good for John Surtees, and good for Durex!

The rest

To continue, the rest of the grid went like this. John Watson was alongside Evans for 8th, using the newer PC3 Citibank Penske. Hunt's first blow-up sprayed oil on the road at Westfield and Watson crunched the fences, damaging the nose and a rear corner. Repaired for the afternoon, he found it still felt odd, "as though a rose joint might be sticking, something like that."

Tom Pryce, last year's winner, had like Hunt, two cars and needed them both. One engine blew up in the "1976 spare car" in the morning, putting Tom into the South African car for the afternoon. It had to be shifted over to long wheelbase configuration first, and even then he felt "it isn't nice, it's twitchy."

Carlos Pace was having another go in the Martini Brabham Alfa, fitted now in an attempt to improve its fuel consumption with the bulky SPICA fuel injection system again. Again it didn't work well, and finally actually broke internally — leaving no time or performance either to try to sort the chassis.

Niki Lauda 1m 22.77s	Jody Scheckter 1m 20.42s
Jacky Ickx 1m 23.72s	Gunnar Nilsson 1m 23.65s
Alan Jones 1m 23.81s	James Hunt 1m 23.80s
John Watson 1m 24.26s	Bob Evans 1m 24.05s
Carlos Pace 1m 24.50s	Tom Pryce 1m 24.32s
Loris Kessel 1m 25.98s	Chris Amon 1m 25.08s
Harald Ertl 1m 25.67s	Patrick Neve 1m 26.39s
Vittorio Brambilla 1m 30.23s	Giancarlo Martini 1m 27.75s (dns)

Chris Amon was in the older model Ensign again, John Day Model Cars painted on the side. There was a mod to produce less anti-squat in the rear suspension, which indeed gave more traction at the back after the Kyalami troubles but which in turn produced severe understeer.

Loris Kessel and Patrick Neve in the RAM Tissot Thursday's Brabhams were busily finding out all about F1; both had shunts before the race, the former's happening on Saturday and so badly crumpling the front of the chassis he needed the old BT42 for the race. Neve had his moment on race day, on the warm-up lap, with unscrubbed tyres, and although he was able to take the start the handling was somewhat deteriorated.

Harald Ertl, his Hesketh benefitting from suspension and aerodynamic work since Kyalami, and a leaner mixture setting, was goint better but troubled, among other things, with his clutch pedal going away.

On the back row was the newcomer with the ex-works Ferrari, Giancarlo Martini who after a failure of a brake cylinder was 15th. Next to him was Vittorio Brambilla, the only driver unable to get into the 20s and it was for the very good reason that he shunted his car in practice. A brief shower of rain sent him off at Clearways, that is to say "Clark Curve" and some new suspension bits

Jacky Ickx returned to form with a good visorless drive to third place in the Williams.

and a ding in the belly of the tub had to be put right all during the rest of the afternoon.

RACE

Sunday, while not sunny, was a distinctly better day. The rawness was off the air and the forecast was amazingly British: "Milder, temperature 41 degrees F, with the possibility of bright intervals."

Like a GP meeting, the morning warm-up was only 20 minutes long. That was enough for Pace to come to a silent coasting halt down Paddock with what turned out to be dirt in the fuel injection unit, and for Nilsson to feel his engine tightening and to shut it off.

Drivers reported that the track was very slippery; Hunt, otherwise looking chirpier, said, "It's covered in mud, it's wet, it's in a terrible state."

It was still slippery 2½ hours later when at about 14:20 hrs everyone came out for one single lap to the grid. So slippery that Martini lost the Ferrari going up to Druids — he said the rear brakes had locked — and shunted the barriers on the left. A moment later Brambilla went sliding up the road in his tracks, fortunately not hitting anything, and Neve did his little thing at the new Surtees corner.

Merciful heavens, Auntie! One out, one damaged, and one shaken, all in one lap. Maybe your sense wouldn't actually matter at that, a few laps into the race itself – there might not be any cars left to televise!

"he cocked it up"

Only 15 strong, then, they came to the line and waited for the Union Jack. "Oh, the man with the flag, he cocked it up," said Gunnar Nilsson. "He held us too long." That was his way of explaining why he dropped his clutch on his own personal timetable, thrust the Lotus between the cars blocking his way on the front row, and bounded over the top of Paddock Hill into the lead of the Race of Champions! The World Champion was merely second over the crest, and working hard to keep from losing that dubious honour to Alan Jones who was charging up on the inside. Scheckter, having churned his pole away in wheelspin, was fifth behind the second Lotus of Evans, who had started seventh.

Obviously the form shown by the practice times didn't mean any more here than any form shown by the first two races of the year. We were just going to have to stand back and let *this* race on *this* day sort itself out according to its *own* peculiar rules!

It started to do that immediately. Nilsson, only a couple of corners of glory later, suddenly started lagging as — would you believe it — a plug lead came off. Jones whipped around Lauda and passed the stricken Lotus, and at the end of the lap the Durex Surtees came flashing around onto the front straight leading the race. Scheckter was just shaping up to pass into second from Nilsson, while Lauda was dropping back behind Hunt. Watson had taken over from Evans for sixth.

At Dingle Dell on the second lap Scheckter threw it all away. "It was going along well, and I turned into the corner normally, and nothing happened and I went straight off the outside," he said when he walked back to tell Ken. "I just don't know what it was."

"It was cold tyres," Tyrrell retorted shortly, and turned his back on him.

At the end of that second lap Hunt was up to second behind Jones. Nilsson, his engine sounding ragged on seven cylinders, was third still but obviously Lauda and Watson were going to overwhelm him any mile now. Evans was staying with the leading group so far, and Brambilla (who had jumped the start as well, nearly creaming at least one other car as he flung himself up from the absolute rearmost starting position) had latched onto them too.

Behind the March there was already a gap to the second bunch, which consisted of Ickx, Pryce, Pace, Amon, Kessel, and Ertl. Neve had made a bad start and was 14th.

In another couple of minutes the leading bunch was four strong, for both Lotuses had dropped back to battle. The race thus settled into a question of who was going to be able to beat the amazing Alan Jones: Hunt, Lauda or Watson.

Not the Penske man. Closing up hard on Lauda's tail Watson put a wheel just enough off line to fall victim to the dampness still clinging to the track and whipped into a shunt with a catch fence. Nose and tail damaged, he was out.

Not the Ferrari man, either. The metal pipe to the rear brake system fractured at a union and Lauda vanished too.

That left only Hunt to deal with the Durex Surtees, and surely it was only a matter of time. Who, after all, is Alan Jones, and what odds have ever gone onto a Surtees? James Hunt and Marlboro McLaren are the rightful leaders of such a race, wouldn't you say?

Isn't it grand the way racing isn't the way we expect it to be! Alan Jones didn't give one Australian stuff about the name of the bloke in his mirrors. This was *his* race, see, and he was going to hang on to it with all his might. He wasn't blocking anybody, he was simply going fast. Surtees' cars, of course, have often gone well at Brands — Watson finished a decent second in this same race last year — but the new TS19 was visibly something special. It seemed to have exactly the right combination of characteristics to suit the track, and Jones was getting the most out of it. The white car came around in the lead lap after lap after lap, looking neat and steady and *quick*.

"I thought I might be able to push him into a mistake," said Hunt afterwards, "and I kept waiting for him to make one, but he just wouldn't. He really was driving magnificently; I was getting worried!"

Change of weight as the fuel load lessened did the job where the driver wouldn't. "We took a last minute gamble on the settings," Jones put it, "and she began to understeer fairly badly about halfway through . . ."

He held off the McLaren as long as he could, once in particular shutting the door at Druids hairpin firmly in James' face, but as time ran out so did his luck. The Marlboro car finally squeezed by and ran away; running and handling perfectly it gave him the fastest lap near the end and a victory (only his third in F1 in 3 years) by 18.42 seconds.

In spite of you, Auntie, Hunt's following in Britain is idolatrous — he's a sort of Golden-haired Hope, rapidly getting to be a household name — and the Brands spectators cheered him mightily, but the loudest shouts were for Alan Jones. Everything about his drive was magnificent, and he was thrust up onto the victory rostrum to help James spray his champagne and then he was whisked away to do interviews into microphones.

Great stuff. What television it would have made.

Another happy result was Jacky Ickx coming into third place at the end. His Williams (ex-Hesketh) back on rubber springs and himself really back on form, he'd qualified fourth quickest and for a while in the race was setting fastest laps. Then the kind of luck struck him that usually visits Chris Amon or Dan Gurney — his helmet visor, perhaps due to the cold (it was a thinner gauge, older pattern visor) simply split in half! His eyes naked to the breeze, Jacky pressed on with his head ducked into the bubble of still air behind the screen. Not even the sight of the redoubtable Brambilla, nosepiece already crumpled from a nerfing match with Evans, 2½ seconds behind could put him off his pace, and to Ickx goes a special clap on the back for a fine performance just at the point in his career he most needs it.

Amon, his timing slipped so as to give him only 9,300 rpm, was fifth a lap down. Pryce, after a pit stop to try to cure a bad misfire, was sixth. Neve, settled down after his early misadventures, put in a workmanlike job of work to cap his F1 debut with a finish at least. Nilsson, his opening lap burst long since eaten up with no less than three pit stops to have the same loose plug lead put back in place no less than three times, was driving just as hard as ever even at the end. People have been wanting to see him in an F1 car and he was determined to show his stuff. He was actually by this time last running car on the road, and his one minute penalty for start jumping, like Brambilla's, had no actual effect on his finishing position.

Team-mate Evans, after "finding out why they call him the Monza Gorilla — he looked right over at me and drove into me!" ran out of fuel at the end anyway. Kessel, DNFed with his engine blown. Ertl retired his Hesketh with severe overheating, while Pace, just as in practice and just as in the morning untimed warm-up, suffered from fuel injection trouble (dirt in a piston) that silenced the Alfa engine after only seven laps.

It was a short, sharp race that ended just when it should've: not a GP but a good F1 race and the crowd loved it. A good day's sport, and yes Auntie it really *is* sport. The various commercial sponsors are indeed in it for their own gain but they give full value in return, and motor racing is the better for their help.

We all hope they can somehow carry on without your blessing.

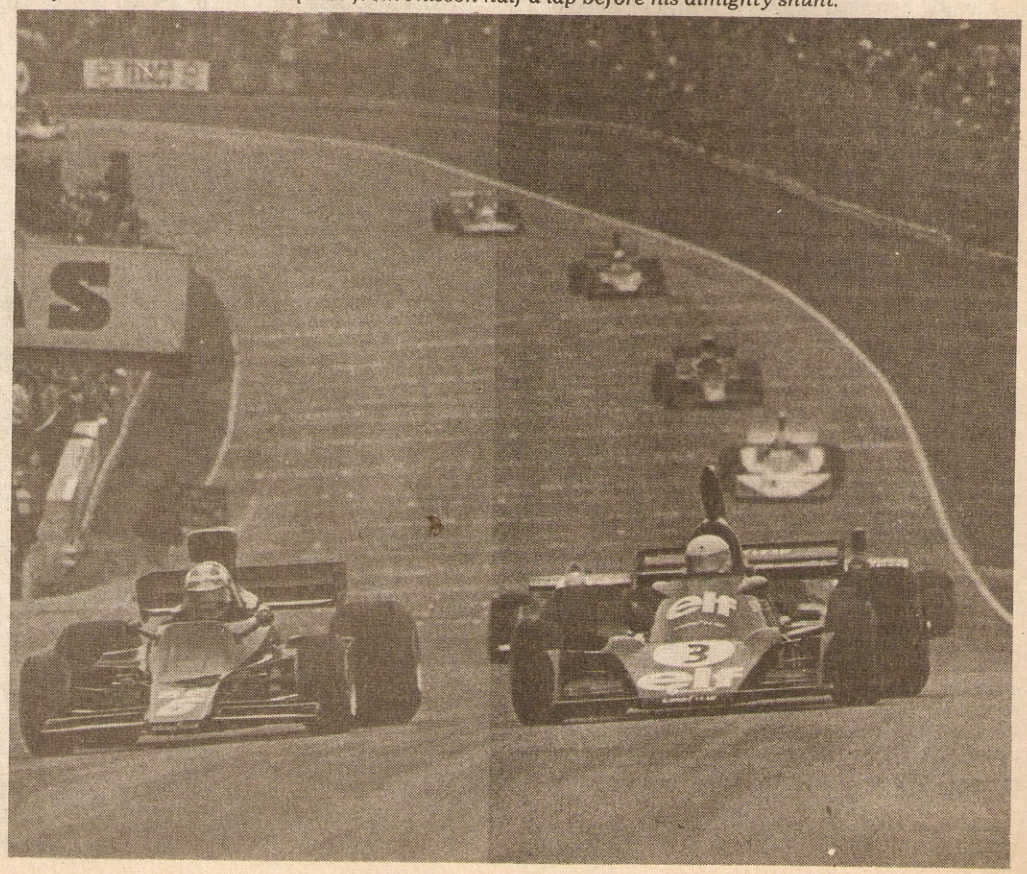
Daily Mail Race of Champions
Brands Hatch, March 14
40 laps

1, James Hunt (Marlboro McLaren-Ford M23C), 58m 1.23s, 107.96 mph;
2, Alan Jones (Durex Surtees-Ford TS19), 58m 19.65s;
3, Jacky Ickx (Williams-Ford FW05), 58m 24.40s;
4, Vittorio Brambilla (March-Ford 761), 60m 26.92s (inc 1m penalty);
5, Chris Amon (Ensign-Ford N174), 39 laps;
6, Tom Pryce (Shadow-Ford DN5B), 39 laps;
7, Patrick Neve (Brabham-Ford BT44B), 39 laps; 8, Gunnar Nilsson (JPS Lotus-Ford 77), 38 laps (inc 1m penalty); 9, Bob Evans (JPS Lotus-Ford 77), 36 laps, not running, out of fuel; no other classified finishers.

Fastest lap: Hunt, 1m 23.78s, 112.15 mph **(Establishes record).**

Retirements: Giancarlo Martini (Ferrari 312/T2), 0 laps, crash on warm up lap; Jody Scheckter (Elf Tyrrell-Ford 007), 1 lap, crash; Carlos Pace (Martini Brabham-Alfa Romeo BT 45), 7 laps, fuel injection; John Watson (Penske-Ford PC3), 11 laps, crash; Niki Lauda (Ferrari 312/T2), 16 laps, brake pipe; Harald Ertl (Hesketh-Ford 308D), 16 laps, engine; Loris Kessel (Brabham-Ford BT44B), 30 laps, engine.

Jody Scheckter takes second place from Nilsson half a lap before his almighty shunt.



Gordon Spice showed magnificent form on his return to racing to take a fairly comfortable win in the Wisharts Capri; reigning champion Andy Rouse follows.

KEITH PROWSE RAC TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

Ford win, Vauxhall surprise

If there wasn't much going on down the field, for sixteen of the twenty laps there was one hell of a tussle going on at the front of the opening round of the Keith Prowse RAC British Touring Car championship. Both the Capris of Gordon Spice and Brian Muir led at one time, but while the latter dropped out of the running with a shredded fan belt, Spice, making his racing come-back after his F5000 shunt at Mallory last year, had his mirrors full of Andy Rouse trying every way to get round the Capri in Leyland's Triumph Dolomite Sprint. But before he managed it, Rouse's throttle pedal broke causing a large moment at Hawthorns, so Spice cruised home to a resounding Capri victory. Chris Craft, despite a first lap tangle then inherited second place taking the class lap record after a tigerish drive from Holman Blackburn's Hermetite Capri, and the 1600 cc to 2300 cc class winner Gerry Marshall in a well worn, DTV entered Vauxhall Magnum. Win Percy came home seventh overall to take a lonely class victory, while a hoard of Alfas will have a bit to do to catch Bernard Unett's Mopar entered 1300 Avenger in the small class, Unett winning the class easily. The entry, while good, was mostly untested, so the race was largely a test session for many, but it showed promise and with a good gap to the next round, Silverstone should see a very good race.

ENTRY AND PRACTICE

The new look Camaro- and V8-less RAC British Touring Car championship got underway at Brands Hatch with a healthy time for practice on the Saturday afternoon, and race over 20 laps late on the Sunday. With backing from the theatrical and now sporting booking agency of Keith Prowse, the series, is, with a little doubt, for cars in four different classes: 2300 to 3000cc, 1600cc to 2300cc, 1300cc to 1600cc and up to 1300cc. The doubt is in the 1300cc to 1600cc class, where only Win Percy's Team Toyota Celica was officially entered, and was joined by Barrie Williams in Bill Sydenham's Radio One championship car as his Toyota Publica 1000 was not ready. The other classes, however, while mainly dominated by one make of car in each case, were well supported: there were ten cars out of the eleven entered in the 2300cc to 3000cc class, eight of them Capris, the only non-arrival being Richard Lloyd's Chris Marshall Opel; a full entry of seven out of seven in the 1600cc to 2300cc class, four of them Dolomite Sprints; just Win Percy until joined by Barrie Williams in the next class; and seven out of the eight turned up in the baby class, five of them Alfa Romeos of various sorts, the non-arrival being a Renault Elf Renault 5TS which wasn't ready.

The main pre-practice complaint was that no one had done enough testing. Everyone boasted two or three days at the most, apart from those with old cars such as Brian Muir's Norman Reeves entered old style Capri, and Stuart Patterson who had his ex-Marshall Wingfield Opel Commodore last year.

However, there were few dramas in the hour's practice session on Saturday. Fastest, as everyone suspected was Andy Rouse in Leyland Cars' Ralph Broad prepared Dolomite Sprint. Rouse set a 1m 47.30s in his brand new car which had only had one day's testing. Ralph Broad had eked a little more power from the engine due to attention to porting, but that was all the change. The big problem was to stop the cars, now with almost double their standard bhp and still with their puny discs.

Alongside Rouse was the first of the Capri challenge: Gordon Spice and Tom Walkinshaw, both on 1m 48.04s. Spice's MM Plant Hire sponsored car was another new machine, built up by fellow MM sponsored driver Pete Clark from Ford parts and bits left over from Bill Gubelmann's 1975 car at Stan Robinson's Garage, Wisharts. The engine is by Racing Services. Spice was having his first competitive drive in a racing car since his horrific Mally Park shunt, so it was a most commendable effort to be sitting on the front row, especially as Spice and Clark had to share a carburettor during practice. As with most of the Capris, the MM cars were fitted with newly homologated ventilated disc brakes, and 32mm choke in the carbs, but not the new close ratio gearbox, most of which were supplied by Les Blackburn's Manns Garage.

Walkinshaw's Capri was again sponsored by the London Sports Car centre. Bill Shaw had prepared it having forsaken British Leyland although the engine was also from Racing Services. Walkinshaw was one of those to have the close ratio gearbox, and he was well pleased with it.

On the second row was Chris Craft in another Capri, this one built up by Tivvy Shenton's Specfab concern, but now tended by Tricentrol at Luton and sponsored by Hammonds Sauce. One again, the story was the same: little testing, and an engine from Racing Services. Craft, who ran occasionally last year, set a 1m 48.34s although badly geared but using one of the light bodies from Cologne. John Miles, the former Lotus GP driver, was on hand offering advice.

Beside Craft was Leyland Cars' second driver, Steve Thompson in the second Dolomite Sprint. Once again it ran with little problem gaining a time of 1m 48.71s, despite little previous testing.

The third row held three different types of cars in the 49s mark. The first, on 1m 49.51s, was Brian Muir's Norman Reeves' old style Capri, but with newly homologated parts. This year, forecast team patron Jeremy Nightingale, would be that of the engineer, and for their part, they had Dave Stephens of Reeves to do the engine. Beside them was Stuart Patterson in his ex-Peter Hanson Commodore. Opels are now allowed bigger valves which pushes the bhp from 220 last year, to 234 this year — but only if Ralph Broad is doing your engine. Patterson, who set a 1m 49.62s, is sponsored for the season by his firm, Nu-Luxe Foam Products.

Completing the row was Les Blackburn in a Hermetite Capri II prepared by his Manns Garage. Naturally Les had a close ratio box and a Racing Services engine with which he had had quite a bit of testing in comparison to other people, some four days in all. He set a 1m 49.72s.

The fourth row held Gerry Marshall and Vince Woodman. Marshall, on 1m 50.90s, was in last year's TT DTV Vauxhall Magnum while another is being built up, but apart from handling problems, which made him look typically spectacular, Marshall was quite happy. Vince Woodman, a Camaro refugee, had one of the "lightweight" Capris, totally prepared by his own VMW Motors and sponsored by Esso. Once again, he'd had little testing and felt that he'd fitted the wrong struts as the front was too high and the car was understeering. However, Vince, set a 1m 51.20s.

There were two old cars on row five, and one new one. Martin Thomas was back in a Dolomite again, only this time the ex-Brian Muir car from last year and heading the row on 1m 51.28s. He'd not done any testing, and only updated the car a little, but it seemed to be going well. Beside him was Thomas Hunt in Barrie Williams' old Mazda RX3 who acquitted himself well on 1m 52.14s with Win Percy in Samuri's brand new Toyota Celica GT on 1m 53.07s, virtually the only man in his class, and suffering from a slight lack of power to be remedied by the next day.

Behind them were two more rows of 2300 cc to 3000 cc and 1600 cc to 2300 cc cars. Pete Clark in the second MM Capri, this one with a Neil Brown engine, was on 1m 53.17s, and former Radio One challenger Paddy Loughnane was on 1m 53.58s in his Dolomite Sprint. A row back were Dave Brodie in his new and totally untried Mazda RX3 with Racing Services engine on 1m 53.63s, Rod Birley in his ex-Spice Capri on 1m 54.44s and Barrie Williams in the Radio One Toyota Celica raced by Percy the previous week.

Holger Knudsen, from Holland, running a dead standard Opel Commodore headed the next row on 1m 55.46s, before nearly a 4s gap to the first of the up to 1300 cc cars, the Mopar Avenger GT of Bernard Unett. The 1974 champion had received lots of help, including getting his 1974 car back from Chrysler, while their spare parts system, Mopar are the sponsor, but Unett has to look after the car himself. He'd only done a few laps of MIRA, so the car was very new.

The last two rows held nothing but Alfa Romeos: four Alfasud Tis and Peter Hilliard's 1300 GT Junior. The Tis are all-waiting for high lift cams from Autodelata, but even the quickest has to find over 2s on the Avenger GT. However, the team is formidable. John Lepp, in his Mario Delotti Ltd example — they're the importers for Birmingham — was not surprisingly the quickest on 2m 1.84s, although all the Tis were hoping to fit wider tyres. Simon Kirkby's Campari sponsored Alfa Romeo Dealer Team example was next on 2m 3.09s, some 1.3s off Lepp's time, but happy with the car, while Peter Hilliard's 1300 GT Junior, sponsored by Alfa's car delivery people, Dependable Delivery and unpatriotically painted white, was third on the row, a car built up from an ex-Leo Bertorelli shell, and again, scarcely tested, the driver reacquainting himself to racing after a long lay-off.

Filling the back row were Jon Dooley in another Campari Team Sud on 2m 5.46s although the car was cutting out, possibly due to the distributor, and Malcolm Wayne's Westune example on 2m 6.65s, although he looked decidedly strange after having driven a Camaro last year. The car was the ex-John Myerscough TT model. The engines on all the Campari Dealer Team cars are by John Goodchild of Hammersmith, and Brian Rouse of Alfas. So that was it, thin in parts, competitive in others, and sounds of walkovers in others. We would see.

RACE

The race, the last of the day, took place over 20 laps, and what a first round it turned out to be. For a start, things were decidedly rough over the first lap. First of all off the start line there was a certain amount of paint swopping, with Marshall, Blackburn and Craft particularly involved, while at Surtees, as they went onto the GP circuit, John Lepp spun and was narrowly missed by, but involved, Dooley. Then, with Spice leading Muir and the tables then being reversed, with Rouse next, Craft came charging down the grass to Stirlings, hoping to stop and nip inside Woodman, but the brakes didn't work as well as he'd hoped, and the west countryman, much to his anger, had a doorfull of Craft which spun him round and caused everyone to have phenomenal moments of avoidance as he went backwards across the track, Martin Thomas managing to catch him lightly as he went.

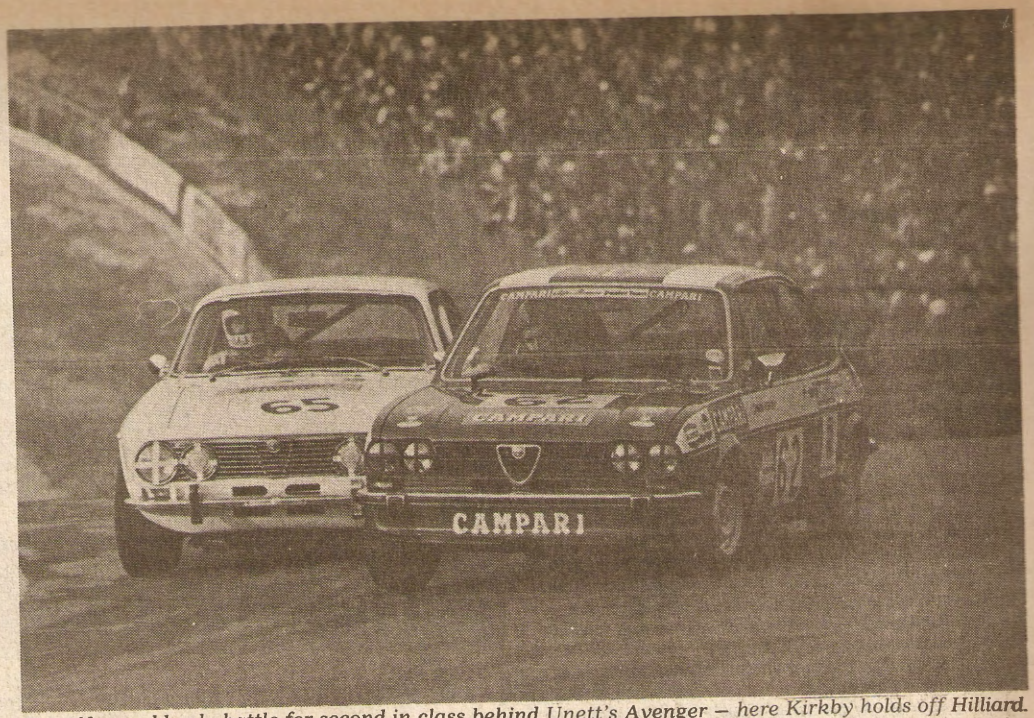
Unfortunately, this meant that the field was a bit strung out, but at the front, Muir, Spice and Rouse were all well in touch, with Walkinshaw next, then a gap to Blackburn, Thompson and Marshall, then Craft, dented, Thomas, Loughnane, Percy, Brodie, Birley and the rest with Unett leading the Alfas already.

The next time around, Spice had got by at Westfield, and Muir lead Rouse with Blackburn next, for Walkinshaw had stuck in second gear and his race was run. Marshall was already a lonely fifth, followed by Craft and Thompson who had suddenly slowed having lost third gear.

On lap three, the race really took on its picture, for Rouse took Muir and closed on Spice, and Thompson went into the pits for a swift check before continuing. Muir slowly dropped away from a frenetic dice for first place between Spice, obviously relishing his position back in the driving seat, despite the Capri losing oil from an undisclosed source, and Rouse, ducking in behind the Capri, dodging one way and another, and seeming almost to come into Gordon's door a couple of times, but having much too much restraint and good manners for that. On the eighth lap, Rouse seemed to have got it together to slip inside Spice at Surtees, but the accessory king shut the door and that dropped Rouse, so that they were a little farther apart on lap ten when the steadily dropping Muir pitted with chronic overheating after the fan belt had shredded and the water pump ceased to work. This put Craft in third having overhauled Blackburn at Westfield on lap nine, while Marshall was in fifth place. Thomas, having one of his best races was in sixth and Percy was next, in front of the two Mazdas, Brodie's having resorted to the old complaint, cutting out round the corners.

The second half of the race saw Rouse close that gap of a few yards back up to Spice, but never quite get in front. Then on lap 16, the car slid impossibly wide onto the grass out of Hawthorns, kissed the barrier, and stopped. Rouse jumped out to inspect under the bonnet, and jumped back in. What happened was that going up to Hawthorns, the throttle pedal broke and jammed under the brake so he had cornered impossibly fast, hence the moment which Rouse skillfully controlled. After verification, Rouse was running again, but now Spice was without rival, Craft was second, then Blackburn still, Marshall and Thomas, all having rather lonely races, although Craft closed on Spice towards the end. Sixth might well have been the classwinning Toyota Celica of Win Percy but Brodie just pipped him on the line after a troublesome run, but Percy had no rivalry as Williams had stopped early on with a broken halfshaft. Hunt, Rouse, Birley and Woodman completed the unlapped runners, after Loughnane shunted going up to Druids and damaged the front, and Clark also had a small moment.

The small class was a runaway victory for Bernard Unett who'll be a difficult man to beat on this form. Simon Kirkby had a troublefree run for second in class over Peter Hillard after both Dooley and Wayne had pit stops for tyre changes.



The Alfas could only battle for second in class behind Unett's Avenger — here Kirkby holds off Hilliard.

BOB CONSTANDUROS

Keith Prowse British Touring Car championship
Round One, Brands Hatch, March 14
20 laps

1, Gordon Spice (3.0 Ford Capri II), 36m 30.99s, 85.77 mph; 2, Chris Craft (3.0 Ford Capri II), 36m 32.93s; 3, Holman Blackburn (3.0 Ford Capri II), 36m 49.63s; 4, Gerry Marshall (2.3 Vauxhall Magnum Coupe), 37m 24.47s; 5, Martin Thomas (2.0 Triumph Dolomite Sprint) 37m 27.40s; 6, Dave Brodie (2.3 Mazda RX 3 Coupe), 37m 43.70s; 7, Win Percy (1.6 Toyota Celica GT), 37m 43.81s; 8, Thomas Hunt (2.3 Mazda RX3 Coupe), 37m 53.34s) 9, Andy Rouse (2.0 Triumph Dolomite Sprint), 37m 57.02s; 10, Rod Birley (3.0 Ford Capri II), 38m 10.92s.

2300 cc to 3000 cc: 1, Spice, 85.77s; 2, Craft; 3, Blackburn; 4, Birley; 5, Vince Woodman (3.0 Ford Capri II); 6, Pete Clark (3.0 Ford Capri II). **Fastest lap:** Craft, 1m 47.47s, 87.43 mph (**Establishes record**).

1600 cc to 2300 cc: 1, Marshall, 83.73 mph; 2, Thomas; 3, Brodie; 4, Hunt; 5, Rouse; 6, Steve Thompson (2.0 Triumph Dolomite Sprint). **Fastest lap:** Rouse, 1m 47.90s, 87.08 mph (**Establishes record**).

1300 cc to 1600 cc: 1, Percy, 83.01 mph; no other finishers. **Fastest lap:** Percy, 1m 50.97s, 84.67 mph (**Establishes record**).

Up to 1300 cc: 1, Bernard Unett (1.3 Hillman Avenger), 77.84 mph; 2, Simon Kirkby (1.2 Alfa Romeo Alfasud Ti); 3, Peter Hilliard (1.3 Alfa Romeo 1300 GT Junior); 4, John Lepp (1.2 Alfa Romeo Alfasud Ti); 5, Jon Dooley (1.2 Alfa Romeo Alfasud Ti); 6, Malcolm Wayne (1.2 Alfa Romeo Alfasud Ti). **Fastest lap:** Unett, 1m 57.95s, 79.66 mph (**Establishes record**).

FORMULA FORD

Opening proceedings on Brands' new track, both in the practice and race sense, was the John Player Formula Ford Trophy race, a ten lap affair on the club circuit to be run on Saturday afternoon, purely for the benefit of television. However, due to their other wrangles, the BBC cameras were well on the road back to London when it all started, so it was purely enjoyed by the spectators.

Practice on the new circuit was held in the damp and so no real times were discovered. Mike Blanchet, in what must be the most successful Lotus currently on the tracks, took pole position, some 0.5s quicker than Derek Daly's Van Diemen, tended on this occasion by Ralph Firman himself. Completing the front row was fellow Irishman David Kennedy in the Group Waterworks Crossle, 0.09s down on Daly. The second row held the first Englishman, John Bright, in his Royale RP21, on this occasion powered by one of Alan Smith's FF engines and Rad Dougall's similar car. Row three had Rick Morris, Bernard Devaney — also with a Smith mill — and Frank Bayes, while other notables further back included Miki Dee, Bobby Scott, Fred Sigafoos, Wil Arif (not happy with the track), and Rob Wicken, who had the throttle linkage break.

The track was dry for the FF ten lapper, and almost before the flag had dropped, Derek Daly made a fantastic start. He was lucky not to be penalised, but proceeded, over the next ten laps, to gently pull away from his pursuers and finally take an impressive, cool and calm 2.32s victory, much to the delight of mechanic Firman. Royale's answer was to make nearly as good a start, John Bright absolutely shooting between Blanchet and Kennedy to follow Daly for a lap and half, before he felt as though something had broken behind him, which spun the car around out of Druids. It finished his chances and his race, although, much to the Midlander's chagrin, nothing could be found wrong with the car. Blanchet thus inherited second place, but a couple of small mistakes at Paddock (perhaps the Lotus knows the old circuit too well) cost him his place to Rick Morris and David Kennedy on lap three. These two then scrapped until lap seven when Kennedy pulled away to his certain second place leaving Morris in third. Blanchet got involved in another tussle for fourth but first of all had to give best to Rad Dougall on lap eight and then Frank Bayes' Image on the very last lap, ending up a rather ignominious sixth after a good start to the day. A tremendous tussle for seventh for half the race was led throughout by Rob Wicken, although Mike Taylor's Alta, Bobby Scott's Merlyn and Neil Israel's Hawke were all within the second. Incidentally, some saving grace for Blanchet was that he's the first holder of the Brands FF record at 51.29s, showing that the course is fractionally faster.

John Player Formula Ford Trophy (10 laps): 1, Derek Daly (Van Diemen-Minister RF 76), 8m 46.50s, 82.05 mph; 2, David Kennedy (Crossle-Minister 30F), 8m 48.82s; 3, Rick Morris (Hawke-Scholar DL 15), 8m 50.77s; 4, Rad Dougall (Royale-Scholar RP21), 8m 52.95 mph; 5, Frank Bayes (Image-Minister FF2B), 8m 53.42s; 6, Mike Blanchet (Lotus-Minister 61M), 8m 53.85s. **Fastest lap:** Blanchet, 51.29s, 84.23 mph (**Establishes record**).

Pure magic from Needell

Tiff Needell on his way to his most impressive victory yet in the McKinstry Hawke FF2000 (above). Derek Daly (left) and John Bright lead off the FF1600 field.

A Magical Mystery Tour is the only way to describe Tiff Needell's opening lap of the first 1976 APG FF2000 championship. Starting from pole position the young Weybridge civil engineer took the lead of the first ever race lap round the new Brands Hatch circuit halfway round Paddock Bend on that opening lap. Having practised on wets he was now on slicks for the first time on a treacherously greasy circuit and his driving from then on was just pure magic. He left the 23 pursuing cars standing at the rate of nearly two and half seconds a lap. Mac McKinstry's Hawke was struggling to get out of his grip at every opportunity, yet he held it beautifully throughout with delicate use of the throttle and subtle fistfuls of lock. It was his sixth successive FF2000 victory and undoubtedly his most impressive and, in front of exhalted company, his most important. This man deserves to be in a much higher class of racing *now* and there's not one of his fellow competitors who wouldn't wish him the earliest opportunity to get out — if he stays they might as well give up now.

As the winning margin of 38 seconds shows there really wasn't much in the way of a race. The conditions were rather nasty and, in fact, the first corner nearly got rid of all the front row men. Needell's only flaw really was his start as the two alongside him, Ian Taylor and Richard Piper timed it perfectly and were side by side into Paddock, Needell came charging up the inside a shade too fast and shot across the front of the other two onto the old circuit! Taylor, driving a brand new Ken Hensley Dulon completed just that morning, slid wide too, while Piper whipped his neat Sark to the inside, fractionally in the lead. Needell came back onto the track and chopped Piper as they headed towards Druids and then proceeded to disappear. Piper lost ground and dropped to fourth as Taylor scrambled into third behind one of his team mates, David McPherson (running Taylor's old car). That's the way it stood at the end of the first of the 15 laps with the third Hensley Dulon of Frank Sytner fifth. Numerous people fell off early including Jock Robertson who broke a driveshaft when involved with Oscar Notz.

During the second lap Taylor moved up to second at Westfield while Sytner took fourth as Piper spun down to tenth. It was the latter's climb back up through the field to fourth place by lap 10 which drew as much justified favourable comment as Needell's performance — for a man who's barely done a dozen races it showed great skill but unfortunately a punctured rear tyre three laps from the end robbed him of a placing. Taylor and Macpherson were never far apart for most of the race but both men had their own problems in taking second and third; Taylor's unsorted car in all sorts of typical troubles while Macpherson had run out of oil by the end. After Len Brammer started to drop back from a strong fifth place Bob Jarvis moved up in his Palliser and finally took a good fourth from Frank Sytner. Following Roger Orgee's wheel bending incident at Surtees Bend, Chris Fearon took sixth just .2s ahead of Tony Vroster, both a lap behind. Other notable retirements were Frank Bradley who crashed his Elden spectacularly on Cooper straight and Geoff Friswell who had a sticking throttle problem on his very new Hawke.

Although the FF2000 event may not have got the huge crowd wildly excited the Shellsport Escort SPARKS race more than made up for it. After cricketers John Snow and Alan Knott had destroyed two cars during practice just 13 cars started. Divina Galica took pole position and it was very soon apparent that she has become the darling of the Brands crowd who proceeded to cheer her every move during the race. Chris Baldwin took the lead at the start from Divi, Jonathan Woodall, Tom Percival, Ann Moore, Brian Close (Cricket) and Richard Walker. It all seemed quite tame until they began their third lap. Divi tried the outside into Paddock as Woodall looked down the inside of the leading Mr Baldwin. He checked his mirrors and spun at the sight and collected the very close following Divi. Baldwin nipped through to lead from Percival, Walker and a rapidly recovering Divina. The lovely lady then showed what she is really made of. First she picked off Walker on the inside at Druids on lap four, next time round she caught Percival and tried the same thing. He wasn't game though, so she gave him a sharp nudge on the exit which sent him off and left her a few lengths behind Woodall.

Despite a heavily dented car, Divina then carried on her pursuit helped on by the roar of the partisan crowd. By lap seven she was right behind Woodall who then suddenly became very wide along the straights. She tried all the normal manoeuvres to get past and one could sense her desire to nudge the leading car out of the way. She takes up the story: 'The faster I get the less articulate I become, and my heart rules everything—it told me to nudge him and I had two opportunities to do so. Just as I thought I would, the image of the MCD cash register appeared before my eyes; I thought about it for a lap and then tried again but the image came back and somehow I stopped myself.'

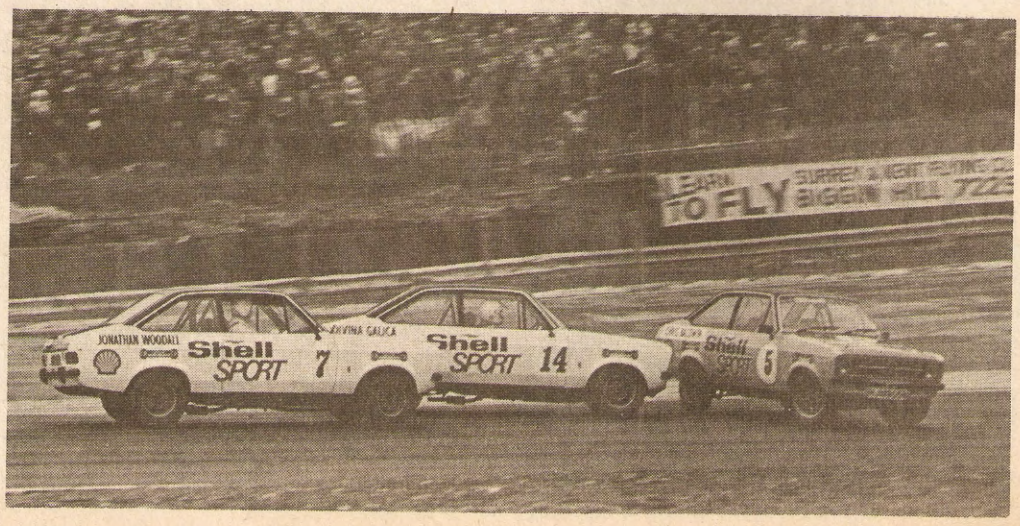
Mr Woodall ran out the winner by just .1s, in what must have been one of the best celebrity events ever, while Divi took home a new lap record and the admiration of some 30,000 people. Percival took third after a giant nerfing session with Walker.

IAN PHILLIPS

Allied Polymer Group Ford 2000 championship (15 laps): 1, Tiff Needell (Hawke-Holbay DL14), 27m 25.75s, 85.64 mph; 2, Ian Taylor (Dulon-Nelson MP18), 28m 3.26s); 3, David MacPherson (Dulon-Nelson MP 18), 28m 27.84s; 4, Bob Jarvis (Palliser-Rowland WDF3), 28m 57.28s; 5, Frank Sytner (Dulon-Nelson MP18), 29m 0.87s; 6, Chris Fearon (Titan Ford Mk 10), 14 laps. **Fastest lap:** Needell, 1m 47.76s, 87.19 mph **(record)**.

SPARKS Shellsport Escort Celebrity race (10 laps): 1, Jonathan Woodall, 11m 27.04s, 62.88 mph; 2, Divina Galica, 11m 27.23s; 3, Tom Percival, 11m 39.20s; 4, Richard Walker, 11m 40.26s; 5, Chris Baldwin, 11m 45.10s; 6, Brian Close, 11m 55.62s. **Fastest lap:** Galica, 1m 5.71s, 65.74 mph.

Shellsport Escort race leader Chris Baldwin throwing it all away in front of Davina Galica and eventual winner Jonathan Woodall.



PRIVATE EAR

NICK BRITTAN

Racing to war

The life of a Fleet Street motoring correspondent isn't all gin and tonics in air-conditioned press towers as *Daily Express* man David Benson discovered at Kyalami. Phoning his practice story through to London he was interrupted by his News Editor.

"David you're the nearest staff man we've got in that part of the world, rush up to Mozambique and do us a depthy colour piece on the war. Thanks."

Exit one breathless Benson showing white through his tan. From motoring man to war correspondent in one swift move.

Fellow scribes around the lunch table at the Kyalami Ranch, the elegant watering hole used by press and drivers as a residential base for the GP, sensed that all was not well as the lanky and normally ebullient Benson approached stoop-shouldered and ashen faced.

"I've got to go to the war and I can't get a bloody visa," said Benson presenting his first excuse. "But you'll enjoy Lourenco Marques," volunteered Eoin Young, "it's a resort town."

"Ah, but it's not called 'Lourenco Marques' any more," said Benson reaching for his notes. Silence. Riffle, riffle, grope, grope.

A scene of mild panic ensued and it became apparent that Benson had lost the valuable piece of paper on which was written the phone number of the British Embassy and the new name of what used to be Lourenco Marques.

We reminded the reluctant Benson that it was here in South Africa that Winston Churchill, as a young man, had made his name as a war correspondent for the *Times* filing action-packed copy that thrilled the nation. Here was his chance.

And what had he done? He'd lost the name and address of the war!

The piece of paper finally reappeared and we learnt that LM was now Maputo. Benson was visibly rising to the challenge and recruited the services of photographer Charles Knight. "Don't worry," volunteered Mike Tee, "you never see the bullet that hits you."

Would-be hero war photographer Knight suddenly remembered that he was staying with friends in town and they were out at work and his passport was locked in their kitchen and there was no way etc-etc . . .

Exit Benson carrying with him the good wishes of the lunch table along with rejoinders that . . . "you'll probably find Bernard Cahier up there issuing press passes for front seats in the trenches . . . by the time you get there you'll probably find that Marlboro are sponsoring the war . . . and Anthony Marsh is doing the commentary . . ."

And so the saga of the war correspondent who nearly failed to do his job because he lost the address and 'phone number of the war came to happy conclusion.

Benson got in, spent half a day in jail, got out, collected his facts, flew back to Johannesburg, filed his story which made a splash on the front page of the *Express* and received 'phoned congratulations from his Editor for being the first and only British journalist to cover the war from the inside. The race, by comparison, he said was "bloody dull."

Non-existent sponsor

Tough, blunt speaking, muscular, former rugger player and South African millionaire Louis Luyt sponsored the Grand Prix in the name of his still shrouded in mystery and yet to be launched new newspaper *"The Citizen."* And so, reasonably enough, the event was known as *The Citizen* Grand Prix.

At the prize-giving, Jackie Stewart who had been imported as Luyt's guest observed, "It's the first time I've ever been to a Grand Prix sponsored by something that doesn't exist."

Bobby Carlos

What was Carlos Pace doing at Kyalami strutting around the pits in overalls carrying the name Bobby Deerfield. And why was he effecting that terrible mid-Atlantic accent?

Because he is starring in the new Faye Dunaway, Al Pacino $7 million Hollywood epic love story titled Bobby Deerfield. Well, starring may not be quite the right word. Bobby Deerfield in the film is a race ace, among other things, and is played by Godfather and Dog Day Afternoon star Pacino. Carlos is doubling the racing scenes for Pacino, who, let it be said, looks not unlike our swarthy Brazilian racer.

Carlos Pace – mid Atlantic accent and a new name.

Carlos was not forthcoming on just how much of the $7 million budget was coming his way. Mr Ecclestone, however, stood smiling in the background looking well pleased as the cameras zoomed in on his US-flag carrying Martini Brabhams which also naturally enough have a star role in this Columbia Warner Brothers epic.

Inevitably there are to be scenes of good guys and bad guys rubbing wheels up the straight and fighting over wives/mistresses as they step miraculously unharmed from the debris of their steaming smouldering wrecks. But that's Hollywood.

Tony Maylam who is shooting the racing scenes is already busy working on the technical details of crashing a pair of F1 Martini Brabhams at high speed at Brands. The script calls for the crash into a tree to be filmed from a driver's eye viewpoint. Getting the car to crash into a tree with a camera mounted on the roll-over bar is no problem. I sensed that Maylam was more concerned with how he was going to retrieve his valuable camera from the wreckage.

Stewart's new game

All the years that he was motor racing Jackie Stewart had contracts which prohibited him from going snow skiing. All to do with insurance and broken legs.

Recently he and fellow Scot Sean Connery of Bond fame hightailed it off into the French Alps for a nine day introductory course in the gentle art of rushing down the slippery slopes.

Stewart admitted that people found it a little amusing that such luminaries as James Bond and the former world motor racing champion were being taught to ski.

But there was more to it than Jackie just skiing

The Snow debutants: Stewart enlightens Connery on his driving techniques at Silverstone. They were both learners recently in the Alps.

because he'd never done it before. He was due to exercise his dulcet brogan tones doing the winter Olympics commentary for the American ABC TV network.

"How do you commentate on a sport without knowing how to do it yourself?" he said with his usual disarming logic. "There was no way I could have felt confident interviewing Franz Klammer until I'd fallen over a few times trying to do what he does."

How had he fared with his new sport? Certainly his finely tuned sense of balance had helped a lot and he'd obviously made rapid progress for a first timer. "But I'll tell you it's a bloody dangerous sport," he said pointing to skinned knuckles and still healing blisters on his right hand. "I did that in one day's skiing and in all the years I was in motor racing I never saw the colour of my own blood."

His continuing ski programme? "I'll fit in a lot more training before the next Olympics." Commentating or participating, I asked. He said nothing, but smiled and winked. The trouble is that with a man like JYS you never know.

Long term talk

How fares Bob Evans with his Lotus prospects? Originally signed for only two races Bob reports, "Peter Warr took my helmet away to have a microphone fitted to make manager/driver pit lane conversations easier. So I guess it would be reasonable to assume that Colin at least has long term plans to carry on talking to me."

All tickets please

It has taken the energy and enterprise of travel man Rod Sawyer to drag ticket selling for motor races up to the standard set by the Victorian music halls at the turn of the century.

Sawyer recently merged his travel firm with Keith Prowse and quickly convinced them to set up two "Sports Centres." These centres handle advance bookings for seats for sporting events of all sorts all round the world.

"You want a ticket for a squash tournament in Kashmir, a baseball game in New York or seats for the Spanish GP, we get them. Just like we get theatre tickets all over the world," says Sawyer.

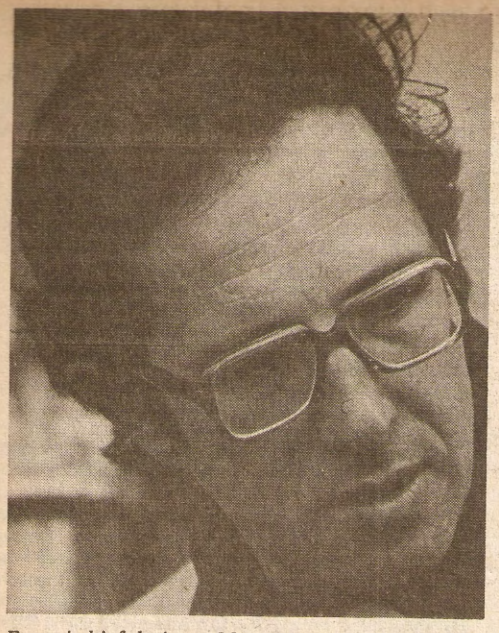
"More people would go to motor races if they knew they could get tickets in advance, just like the theatre. Nobody turns up at theatres on spec. You book in advance. Normal people who go to watch sporting events are no different to normal people who go to the theatre," explains Sawyer.

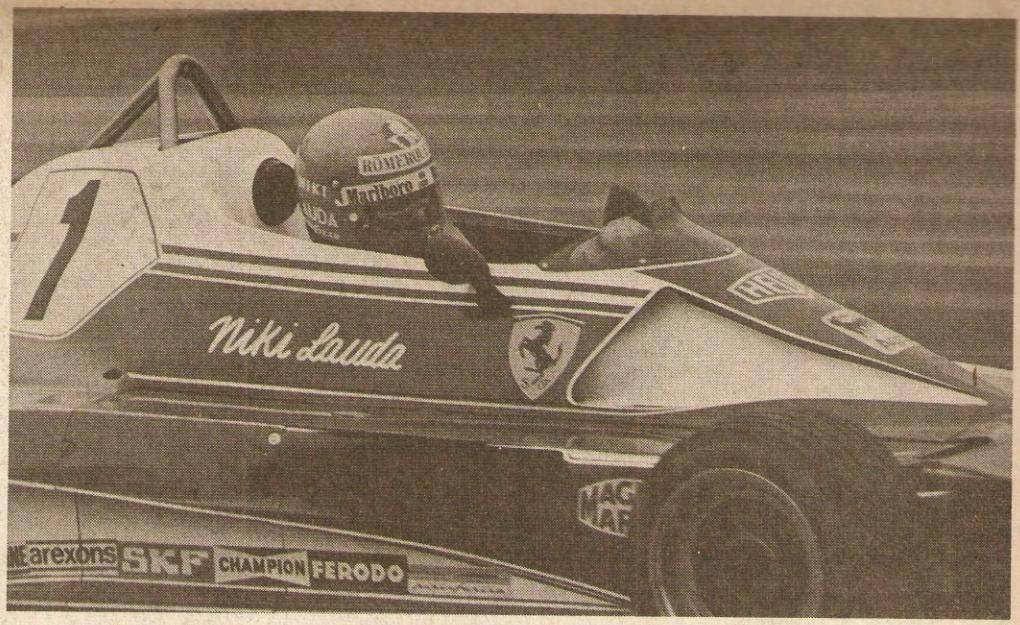
"The day we launched the scheme we received a request from Belgium to supply 110 seats for the Monaco GP. I think that proves the point I'm making."

A neat tie-in for a travel firm, for once the Keith Prowse end of the operation has supplied the tickets who better to arrange the ticket holders' travel requirements? The wide-awake Mr Sawyer of course.

If you can't get to the two London Sports Centres you can make your booking through any one of the 1,013 Keith Prowse agencies around the country. Or 'phone the Prowse HQ in London on 01-836 2184. There's every chance of getting through – the switchboard has 307 lines!

I have the feeling that Sir Henry Irvine and Dame Nellie Melba would approve of Sawyer for putting 20th century motor racing on the same level as nineteenth century music hall.





Ferrari chief designer Mauro Forghieri (left). The latest 312 T2 Ferrari debuted by Niki Lauda last weekend (note the radiator ducting behind the front wheel and the airbox ducting above the wheel (painted white).

INTERVIEW

Forghieri—Ferrari's brains

By PETE LYONS

After two GPs, it begins to look like the most significant story in F1 racing for 1976 is that the SEFAC Ferrari organization is just as strong as last year, if not more so. Having commenced the new season with two GP victories out of two starts — on circuits which in the past have seen only mediocre Ferrari competitiveness — it begins to look as if there is no flaw in their approach and that nothing but niggling bad luck will be able to beat them.

The two drivers have indeed both suffered such troubles so far. In Brazil Lauda was handicapped in the latter part of the race by understeer and also a vibration somewhere at the back, while Regazzoni apparently picked up a piece of glass in a front tyre as he accelerated off the startline — he'd asked his mechanics to sweep the track in front of him, where he could see glass sparkling, but they had time to cover only some 40 metres before they themselves were cleared from the grid. In South Africa, of course, Niki this time picked up a puncture, apparently an object that became embedded perhaps 30 laps from the end and very slowly enlarged its original hole until near the finish it was a dice between the air in the tyre and the remaining laps, to see which would run out first!

In Africa, it is true, Regga's engine went very ill and this was not a "niggling" trouble; Nikki had a rear damper that deteriorated as well. At Brands last Sunday, the new T2 went out with a fractured brake pipe — it cracked across at the flare where the tubing joined a union. So the "Supercars" are not invincible.

But they are very, very good, and if anyone had perhaps hoped idly that after a year of winning and after two years of hard, sustained effort toward winning, the Italian team might tend to lay back on their laurels, a few minutes spent on the sidelines by the big red transporter watching the intense, untiring bustle about the small red cars dispels that notion quite away. To get more than a few words in edgewise with anyone about the team is a project, but at Kyalami and again at Brands we were fortunately able to snatch some time with Mauro Forghieri, the long-term Ferrari designer who is in charge of the engineering side of the World Championship 312T and it's new successor, the T2.

Mauro, the renaissance of Ferrari, is now in its third season, but never before this year have the Ferraris performed especially well at the beginning of the season either in South America or South Africa. Everyone is agog to know why they are so fast this time. Are your cars going better in the altitude and in the heat than you yourself expected?

As we expect, our car is going well, that's all. I expected this performace. I don't think the others are as quick as they will be. Maybe we have reached our maximum, and the others have some more to do, I don't know. I know my own car, I don't know about the others!

The car is improved from last year, we do a lot of development on the car, and also for the moment at Kyalami the temperature is not so high as ususal — when the temperature is low for us is easy to be quick. Last year we were not so quick in the race because it was bloody warm, and our engine lose more than a Cosworth in warm conditions. For instance, perhaps we lose one second whereas a Cosworth lose only point two or point four or point six of a second, and so the difference disappear.

Are you trying new things in the engine?

Not particularly. They are not a lot change, they are improvement a little bit, for reliability and power curve and torque — not much more power.

Is it the same as the special engine which won Monza last year?

It is not the *"super engine"* as people believe. Is an engine that only get a different spread of torque, and a different band-rev. Is a small modification to the cylinder head; mainly is basically the same engine.

We are looking a lot at the combustion efficiency, and the possibility to make leaner and leaner the mixture. We improve a little bit; I don't think it's enough. I think the Cosworth is still using less fuel for the race than us, than we do usually. I don't think so so much, but anyway a little bit.

What we have develop a lot is the chassis department, on both type of car, the independent and the de Dion. We have three type of suspension, two independent with different geometry, different "quadrilateral", and the de Dion.

Everyone wants to know how the de Dion is working

It is a special type of suspension we develop with Goodyear, because we are doing research on tyre's construction and the de Dion tell a lot. You know, because the way in which the tyre works is completely different, and so Goodyear can learn a lot. Anyway, I hope so.

When you are in the straight, the tyre, the wheel, is moving continuously its vertical plane with the independent suspension, and so the tread area in contact with the ground is changing continuously and so stability is less good, usually. But this is affected by the road also; as everybody knows, the de Dion could be good mainly on a flat track. But this sometimes is not true; depends on how you set up the car.

Are you having difficulty in matching up the different camber change curves between the front suspension and the de Dion rear?

Not for the moment. Because is not particularly a *true* de Dion. No, I don't like to tell you why! But is not a true de Dion. Something *like* a de Dion, but not exactly the same. Maybe because of that we don't have so many problems.

We know the T2 car is different, narrower for one thing, because the radiators are at more of an angle . . .

Yes. Is a new chassis, a lighter chassis, looks similar to the T but inside is completely different. The modifications are inside — we take our outside shape from the T because is a good shape for the aerodynamic, we didn't find any better. But the car is new.

But basically both cars can use the same type of suspension, so I can set up the T as the T2 and the T2 as the T. They are interchangeable, you know? I can put this piece on the other car.

The new car is also a little bit longer in the wheelbase, not a lot at the moment but we can change it with the front suspension, to give a different ratio of the track to the wheelbase.

Also it has a different distribution of the tanks for the fuel; on full tanks the handling is better, marginally better. Also the car is lighter, closer to the weight limit.

Generally speaking, when we have been testing the new car in the rules for 1976, it is slower than for 1975; this is the effect of the rules, the wing position and the low airbox.

The mechanics had a little trouble in testing at Kyalami — a reputed two-hour job to put the de Dion on took a bit longer than that.

Yes! Not because was a de Dion, because was a new one. Brand new de Dion. You know, is not easy to use a de Dion, because the exhaust pipes have to pass through, and you have to check if anything is touching. When you have something new is normal for a team have to work, you know?

How much change do you expect the new regulations taking effect in Spain to have on the cars?
As you know, the new rules change the position of the wing and the air intake, and so the car will change drastically on the aerodynamic. We development a lot the aerodymanic side for the new car, because if you take a car good for 1975 rules and change immediately to the new rules, you lose a lot of performance. A lot. Because 20 centimetres is a lot for a rear wing, and also the effect of the air intake for the engine is doubled — because it works for the *engine* and *also* for the aerodynamic of the car, the wing. So the effect when you change is — big.

You've obviously tested the effects already. How important, really, has your test track at Fiorano been to Ferrari's success so far?
I think it is important for us. Because before, compare us to the English teams, we didn't have one track to test. Was Monza, yes, but Monza is not a track where you can learn anything about the car because is too easy, is only speed — Monza four or five years ago when we make Fiorano was different from today.

Now we have, I don't say we have Silverstone, Goodwood, Oulton Park, but we do have a small track that we know very well and over which we can do *all* the development.

Do you have anything new at Fiorano this year in the way of new equipment or new facilities?
Yes. We do have a steering pad, it's not in use because we have to do the hard surface, but we start to use it soon.

Was this built in conjunction with Goodyear?
No. I told Goodyear we are going to make a steering pad, but you know they are not so interested because what you can learn from a steering pad is mainly in the suspension department, and the weight ratio. I don't think they can learn something new — you know, modern tyres are so developed they are fabulous under consistent cornering force. The part on which they are working now, for the tyres, is the *transit* state, and the steering pad doesn't help you.

The steering pad can help you only for *your* suspension, for *your* kind of aerodynamic, for *your* type of chassis.

Mauro, where is Formula One going these days?
Listen, nobody can tell you where F1 is going until the people who make the rules decide what they are going to do for the next year. Because the rules are so *hard*, so *close*, today the development of F1 is moving between walls and so is forced to move in one direction.

Today the rules give to you: the maximum length, the maximum width, the maximum height, eh, maximum position of wing, the overhang at the front, the overhang at the rear, ehh, the crushable structure, the 13 inch rear rim, no more than this, really, no more than that; you know, if you take a pencil and go on a white page, following the rules you will make a Formula One car!

Does the restriction make F1 less challenging for a designer like you?
No. Because, you know, instead to make the big change you will be called to make a small change, but this is still interesting. For us is different from the others, because I have ability to design the twelve cylinder, and the gearbox, and the others cannot do that, they have less to do, but for me is a big difference. I think is still a lot to do, using the same rules.

You know, for instance, Goodyear is doing a tremendous work technically speaking. In previous years, when there was a lot of competition with Firestone and the others, the easiest way to develop tyes was to make a new compound. Now they are involved in a research compound over the construction of the tyres. I can imagine, this is the same tyre we use at Kyalami last year, about, only a little bit improved; last year testing tyres using a bloody soft compound we did a 16.2s, this year, using a much harder compound, we did a 15.2s. One second off, only because of the development of Goodyear in the construction of the tyre. It's a tremendous improvement, more technical than the previous way. Only construction; that's very important. Tyres become cheaper, and more efficient, and technically speaking much more interesting.

But it is more difficult work, a lot more difficult, because, you know, you must move between walls. So nobody will know in which way we will develop the new F1 until we will know the rules under which we will develop it.

Why do you believe the car, when you tested the de Dion at Kyalami, was "bouncing" up and down at the back?
I think was, how do you say, the back wheels going like *this*, axle-tramping. Because we didn't have time to adjust it much.

Here at Brands, you did have available a de Dion system to put onto the new car, and you intended to try it out in comparison with the IRS during practice. Why didn't you?

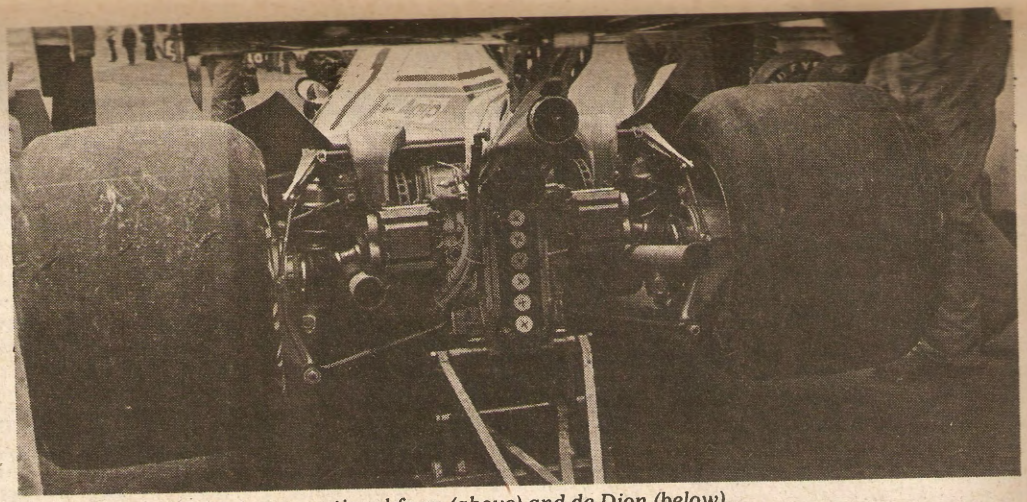
Because was so cold! You know, we are forty degrees colder than the others, over the tyre temperatures. You can't compare in such a situation. You change the car, you don't feel you change it. It's a pity, Brands Hatch was a good circuit to try the de Dion.

Do you have any plans to develop a de Dion suspension for the front of the car?

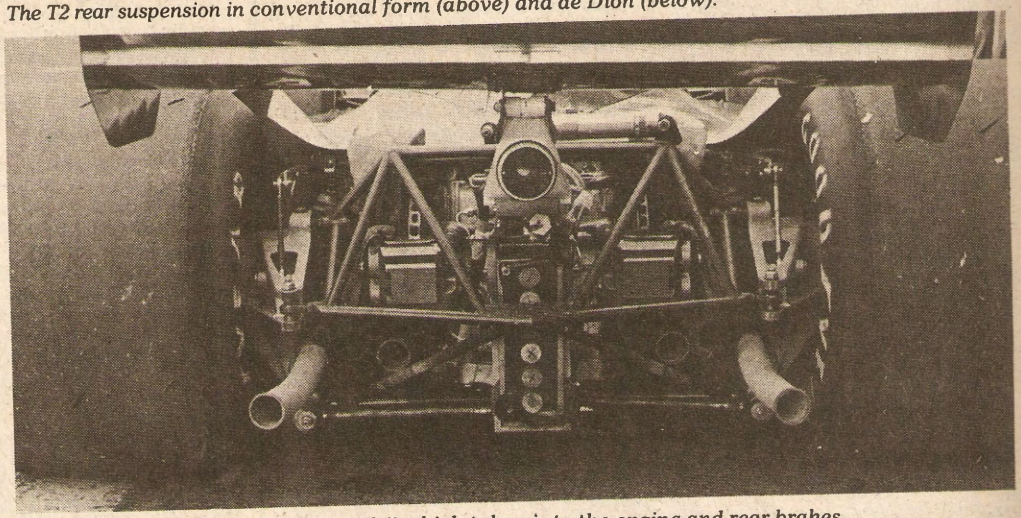
I don't know! I don't know. We maybe think about it. You know, when the de Dion works at the rear, more traction, you maybe destroy the front . . .

Mauro, thank you very much indeed.

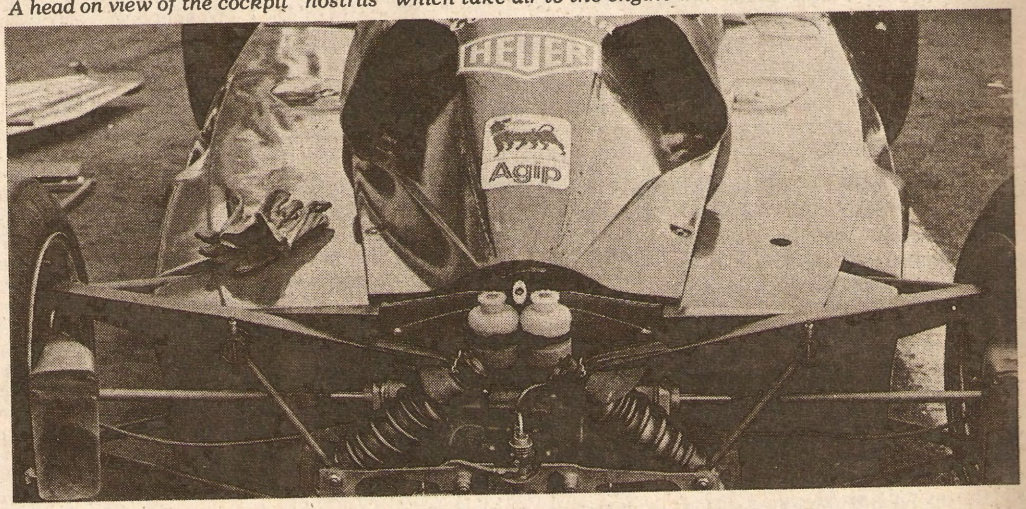
It's OK, thank you too. You know, it's good for me to talk with the journalists, because then, when they write, I don't have to write a report for Mr. Ferrari!



The T2 rear suspension in conventional form (above) and de Dion (below).



A head on view of the cockpit "nostrils" which take air to the engine and rear brakes.



Forghieri (left) with new team manager Daniele Audetto.

Welsh debut for TR7?

It now seems almost certain that we shall see the belated appearance of the Triumph TR7 on the Welsh in the first week of May. Testing with the first car is now well advanced, and a recent session on the loose proved highly satisfactory with no major mechanical problems manifesting themselves. While it would have perhaps been possible to have debuted one car before May, company policy indicates that the impact of two cars on an international would be somewhat watered down by a possibly premature entry of one car on the Circuit of Ireland or a shakedown on the Cheltenham Festival. These sentiments obviously make good sense. Once the original car is properly sorted, it will, we are assured, take very little time to build up the second car and between now and May, extensive testing is on the agenda to iron out any major problems so that the team can be fully competitive before the Welsh. 220 bhp is being talked about as a power figure from the Dolomite-based engines.

Culcheth in thick snow on Clashindarroch 2 last weekend – surely "FRW's" last outing?

Nicolas' Opel

Following our story last week that Jean Pierre Nicolas had secured a Safari drive with Peugeot and was having talks with another European manufacturer over the possibility of drives later in the year, a deal was announced last week which will involve the talented ex-Alpine man in two drives for Opel (Germany) in the latter half of the season on the San Remo and the Tour de Corse; both events of which Jean-Pierre has vast experience. For both these events he will be using a 240bhp fuel injected Opel Kadett GTE in G4 trim but the car may be entered by Opel (Marseilles), the French importers.

Opel's WCR plans include a car for resident ace, Walter Rohrl, who will of course have a car at San Remo and on the Tour de Corse although we hear that the team may have a third car out on the Italian event. For the Acropolis there will be two cars for Rohrl and Aaltonen while the Safari is very much on the agenda and at present will be contested with three cars for Rohrl, Aaltonen and Hans Herrmann. These Kadetts will be fitted with the slightly less powerful and more reliable carburrettor engines from the Ascona.

Meanwhile we hear that Renault's rally plans involve running cars in G5, presumably with the V6 engine which is not homologated into G4. This new programme is expected to be announced shortly and certainly Gerard Larrousse, the new competitions supremo, has not severed ties with previous Renault drivers including Jean Pierre Nicolas whose future is now really looking up again.

WCR and ECR ratings

After three rounds of the World Rally Championship for Makes; the most recent of which (the Rally of Portugal) took place last weekend, Lancia once again have a total grip on proceedings. They go to Africa for the Safari at Easter, firm favourites to take the top honours once more in '76. Points to date are as follows: Lancia 50; Opel 32; Saab 20; Toyota 15; Ford 12; SEAT and Datsun 6; Porsche and Volvo 4; Mazda 3; Alfa Romeo 1.

'Across the road' in the rambling ECR for drivers, the series as is usual at this time of year being dominated by Finns, although Bernard Darniche, thanks to his smooth performances at the wheel of the Chardonnet-entered Lancia Stratos, is very well placed. Has anyone tried to persuade his entrant to bring the car over for the Circuit of Ireland? Leading drivers so far in order of points are as follows:

Tapio Rainio (Finland)	**120**
Bernard Darniche (France)	**80**
Hannu Valtaharju (Finland)	**60**
Antonio Zanini (Spain)	**60**
Bruno Saaby (France)	**60**
Kyosti Saari (Finland)	**48**
Francis Serpaggi (France)	**48**
Salvador Servia (Spain)	**45**
Pauli Toivonen (Finland)	**40**
Christian Dorche (France)	**40**
Pertti Karha (Finland)	**36**
Fernando Lezama (Spain)	**36**
Franz Wittman (France)	**32**
Jean-Piere Barin (France)	**32**
Antonio Borges (Portugal)	**30**
Ulf Grunholm (Finland)	**30**

Action in the Southwest

The third round of the BTRDA Gold Star championship, the Esso Uniflo South West Stages, takes place this Sunday, the 21st March. Organised by a triumverate of Motor Clubs, the Exeter MC, Taunton MC and Plymouth MC, the rally starts from Taunton Technical College where an Esso caravan will be available to distribute more detailed spectator information than is printed here. The entry boasts a healthy 125 starters and the top ten is as follows: 1, Terry Brown/Ed Morgan (RS1600); 2, Will Sparrow/Rodney Spokes (Vauxhall Magnum); 3, David Stokes/Bill Andrews (RS1600); 4, Frank Pierson/Arthur Brick (RS1600); 5, John Edwards Parton/Don Davidson (RS1600); 6, Randolph Whittal-Williams/Roger Hemmings (RS1600); 7, Peter Bryant/(Clan Crusader); 8, Tony Morris/Richard Lewis (RS1600); 9, Stan Dukes/Roy Wilcox (RS1600); 10, David Grainger/Dave Nicholson (RS1600).

Other principal entries include Charles Eveson's Escort TC at 11; John Lloyd's Imp at 12 and the Simpson brothers Escort at 14. DTV are going to the West country in accordance with a crash development programme which will at the finish of the Cheltenham Festival have taken Will, Jerry and the boys to Scotland, Wales and West Country on three successive weeks, all this to glean more information for the build of the new car which it is hoped will be ready in time for the Circuit of Ireland.

Peter Bryant will also be debuting his Clan Crusader the shell of which clothes the innards of his trusty Imp.

Spectator information is as printed below. The organisers stress that March is a month of very high fire risk in the south west, and thus ask spectators not to smoke in the forests or inadvertentl(y!) start a fire. The stages themselves include the infamous Porlock Hill toll road and several others will be in use again this year in the RAC in November.

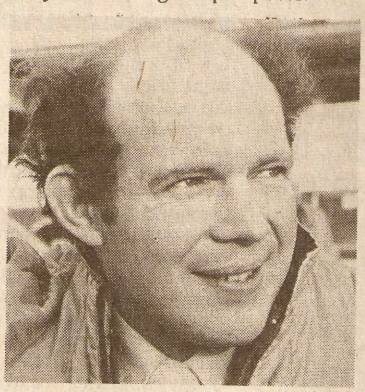
Spectator stages . . .

Stage Number	Stage Name	First Car due	Map Reference	Description of location given and comments
S.S. 1	Chargot Wood	09.10	181/975 354½	Stage start & finish; park on verges and keep road clear for rally traffic
S.S. 2	Kennisham	09.16	181/964 358½	Stage start
			181/953 365	Stage finish; park on verges and keep road clear for rally traffic
			181/968 410	Keep away from this road — very narrow and unsuitable for spectating traffic
S.S. 6	Porlock Toll Road	10.24	181/841½ 462½	Stage finish. Park on verges near finish. Keep out of Porlock village
S.S. 9	Werrington Park	13.44	201/323 862	Access from this point (stage start) to mid-stage parking and spectating. Ideal for those wanting to stop in one place and see whole rally through. Tarmac stage with good spectating
S.S. 11	Witherdon	14.44	190/424½ 963	Stage finish; park on verges and keep road clear for rally traffic
S.S. 13	Lanagford	15.08	190/417 011½	Park here for access to mid-stage
S.S. 14	Whiteleigh	15.12	190/416½ 015½	Stage start
			190/435½ 041	Stage finish. Park on verges
S.S. 15	Whiteway Wood	17.15	192/886½ 840	Park between this point (stage finish) and 886 846 on verges

Official—Sanyo back Fowkes

Excellent news this week concerns Tony Fowkes who, as has been rumoured for some time, is to be sponsored by the Japanese electronics company Sanyo. The company have been involved with the sport for some time (Gerry Marshall in production saloons) and have apparently decided to support rallying. They could scarcely have gone to a better address. Tony, already supported by Goodyear and Castrol, will have his new Boreham 'kit' RS1800 ready in time for the Welsh, and Sanyo will be sponsoring Tony for the next 12 months in British national events.

Tony Fowkes – great prospects.



Rohrl's Ford

How many times has one heard the words — "put that lad in a works Escort and we'd really see some fireworks," well, it seems that Opel ace Walter Rohrl is to get his chance in one of Boreham's cars, a works built RS1800. Following the Ford Cologne Motorsport Conference last Monday, we are informed that Walter will be contesting the Baltic Rally, a German national event later in the year for Ford. He was also to contest the Austrian Alpine for Ford, but it appears that the latter event has now been cancelled.

● Pentti Airikkala's shunt on the Granite City during which he totalled the shell of the Avon Tyres Escort, is causing some headaches at David Sutton's busy workshops, but apparently Pentti's new car, which it is hoped will be ready for the Circuit of Ireland, is to be as the affable Finn prefers it—LHD. Pentti is to be partnered by Colin Francis on the Welsh and Martin Holmes on the Circuit before Mike 'Hurricane' Greasley takes over the right hand seat for all the remaining RAC rounds.

Granite City grumblings

Rallying certainly is an unpredictable business. Last Saturday's Granite City rally had its entry decimated by over 60 per cent by the end of the day, that is to say under 40 finishers, and there were two G1 cars in the top six! The presence of snow in the hills certainly took its toll and once a rally car was out of the "tramlines," it was often a matter of luck as to exactly where it finished up. Russell Brookes' fine win brings him within striking distance of the two works drivers in the RAC Championship and with neither Roger nor Ari apparently going to what looks like a rather sparcely supported Circuit of Ireland, Russell has a good chance to draw ahead of the Boreham duo.

RAC points . . .

Current positions after the Granite City, round four of the championship are as follows: **Overall:** Ari Vatanen 33; Roger Clark 28; Russell Brookes 27; Billy Coleman 13; Chris Sclater 11; Tony Fall, Pentti Airikkala, Brian Culcheth and Andy Dawson 10; Tony Drummond and Colin Malkin 9.

Ari Vatanen – at the wheel of his new rally car.

In group one a combination of Tony Pond and the powerful Dolomite Sprint dominate proceedings; but one non-finish from Leyland still leaves Robin Eyre Maunsell with a slender one point advantage. Meanwhile Gavin Waugh, who has been going very quickly ever since the RAC Rally last year, has moved closer to Jim MacRae. The latter, following his accident on the Mintex at 'Roger's' bend, and headgasket troubles on the Granite, was rather more subdued than usual last weekend.

Positions are as follows, **Group one:** Robin Eyre Maunsell 31; Tony Pond 30; Jim MacRae 26; Gavin Waugh 24; Ronnie McCartney 15; Henry Inurrieta and Ian Gemmell 14; Stuert Robertson 10; Gordon Thomas 6; Kevin Glynn, Bernard Banning and Chris Field 5.

Ari's off . . .

Although Gartly Moor was the sole stage of the Granite City which was repeated exactly, there were several which overlapped, leading to problems in the afternoon for crews who would come across a 'bad bit' (ie: one which had not been run in the morning and hence was choked with snow) after several miles of 'good' going. One of these tricky transitions happened to coincide with one of the most difficult bends of the rally, a square right just below a brow on the first of the afternoon Clashindarrochs. This was where Tony Drummond's car found its resting place down a steep bank among some small trees.

Several crews though had moments here and at least half a dozen went off. Drummond was perhaps unfortunate in that he was one of the first of the really quick men to appear over the brow and at the speed he was going, there was never any chance of him catching the wayward Escort. While Tony and a number of spectators were attempting in vain to extricate the undamaged car from its hole, Phil Short was up the track flagging cars down. Russell Brookes nevertheless had a moment here, but Ari Vatanen, perhaps not seeing the caution signs, had both back wheels far down the bank and was on the point of sliding completely off when by amazing good fortune, the errant wheels bounced into a tree stump flinging the car up onto two wheels, but pushing it back in the direction of the track. Nevertheless Vatanen lost over a minute here while the perspiring company which had hitherto devoted their ministrations to Tony, diverted attention to the less seriously positioned Vatanen.

If and but . . .

Without resorting to too many of those omnipotent rally words "if" and "but," Ari would have run Russell very close by the finish had he stayed on the track. While Ari is comfortably leading the RAC championship at present, one cannot escape the fact that he could so easily have won every round since the Dean had not either a small number of momentary driver's errors, or a set of peculiar circumstances robbed him of the elusive win. On the Snowman he was winning the event by a comfortable margin when a three minute 'off' just before lunch dropped him to an eventual third place; on the Mintex, had Cottam Airfield been retained in the results, and had the organisers stood by the figures on Andy Dawson's time card, then Ari would have won in Yorkshire, and on the championship's second visit to Scotland there is no knowing what might have happened had he stayed on the track; for in the afternoon he was undoubtedly the fastest driver in the rally.

● It is doubtful whether fifth, sixth and seventh places have ever been run so close on a British national event . . . just three seconds separating Waugh, Sclater and Cowan! Can't get much closer than that . . .

● One of the main reasons governing the Leyland decision fo press on over the opening stages without too much of the 'loitering' which was being practised wholesale by principal contenders on the Granite was the knowledge that after the first test, they would not only fully appreciate the nature of conditions, but also following this test they would be able to change onto a new choice of tyres should this be necessary. Once through SS1 however, they were not in a position to profit from the extra delay allowances which were being granted following subsequent events at the dramatic opening stage. Thus they pressed on in the company of Billy Coleman and the Samsons (who had the organisers' instructions to be first on the road!) yet despite this crucial handicap, Brian Culcheth was a fine seventh overall at the lunch halt. Coleman was at that time 14th, the Samsons were 15th; Gallacher was 16th and Pond was 17th!

● Tyre in most demand during the snowy sections was Dunlop's 560/13 M&S; a narrow crossply version of the normal 175/13 M&S Mk2.

Firestone—top entries

The Firestone Rally starts tomorrow from Bilbao in Spain. The route consists of a number of small loops with only four time controls. There are 18 stages scheduled for the first night and 17 on the next, with seven of them unpractised in secret forestry land. Despite rumours to the contrary, the political scene is very calm, and plans for the rally, which were somewhat jeopardised last year, are going ahead smoothly on schedule.

Top crews are as follows: Timo Makinen/Henry Liddon (RS1800); Achim Warmbold/Arne Hertz (Toyota); Roger Clark/Jim Porter (RS1800); Zanini/Petisco (SEAT 1800); Jaroszewicz/Zyszkowski (Fiat Abarth Rallye 124); Borges/Morais (Porsche Carrera); Canellas/Ferrater (SEAT 1800); Pradera/Bascaran (Alpine A110); Bagration/Barbeito (Lancia Stratos); John Taylor/Martin Holmes (RS1800).

The rally finishes on Sunday and AUTOSPORT will be carrying a full report next week.

DTV's night spot

For those living in sunny Lancashire, Auty and Lees (Vauxhall Dealers) will be hosting one of the infamous DTV "Roadshows". Refreshments will be available and admission is free. Date is this Tuesday, 7.30pm for 8.0pm. "Speciality Spots" will feature John Horton on the topic of rubberware and associated products, Roger Willis on keeping things lubricated and Chris Coburn on improving your performance. Lascivious compere will be that ageing impresario John Foden of "Cross Roads". It is recommended that children are accompanied by responsible adults.

Secret weapon!

Does this scoop photograph explain the secret of Ari's performances . . . is this the dreaded troll!?

Paul White – on the strength.

Paul is Chrysler's Comps coordinator

They have made an honest man of Paul White at last! Colin Malkin's regular co-driver for many months has at last been given a regular full time post at Chrysler Competitions rather along the lines of the post which Tony Mason looked after so successfully at Boreham. Paul will be working closely with Wyn Mitchell at Coventry and he will be responsible for co-ordinating competition activities as well as looking after publicity in turn-over of merchandise at the Competition Centre and for internal PR distribution. Paul will also now be responsible for competition press liason.

It seems that Des O'Dell's hard working mechanics have at last wrought some reliability out of the latest G4/5 engines and they are hoping to have a new one available for Colin in time for the Circuit of Ireland.

Latest news from across the water

Entries for the Circuit of Ireland have been very slow this year despite European canvassing and the enormous reputation which the event has built up over the years.

Gordon Harvey tells us that there were over 90 entries received by the end of last week, and as entries officially close tomorrow, he urges that prospective entrants should get in touch with the Ulster Automobile Club forthwith in order to indicate their intentions. Most recent participants in the Easter classic are an entry for Colin Malkin in the G4 Avenger; a Lloyds of Stafford entry for Ronnie McCartney in the G1 RS2000; (brother Dessie will be driving his Carrera of course); an entry from Chrysler Dealer Team (Ulster) for Robin Eyre Maunsell in the G1 Avenger; and an entry from Sean Campbell in the Northern Excavators/Lindsay Cars RS2000 Mk1. Carreras coming from England include those belonging to Brian Evans and a black one belonging to Harold Morley; John Lyons is also hoping to contest a fully works prepared G4 BMW 2002Tii which he is expecting to receive a scant four days before the event.

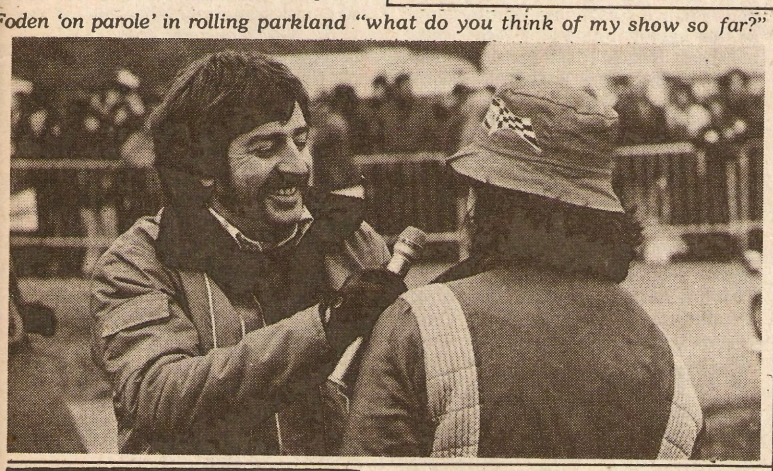
Big plans for Motostage '76

Since 1972, *Motostage* have presented some 17 Televised rallycross programmes and at an informal press gathering last week, spokesman and raconteur, John Foden, announced firm contracts for five more broadcasts this year, principal negotiations have been in progress direct with the ITV's World of Sport team who have in recent months shown great interest in rallying and rallycross.

For rally enthusiasts perhaps the best news is a projected World rallycross championship before the RAC rally, open to G2 and G4 cars, eight per heat and ten in the final. This will be a one day event and names will be by nomination at least for this year. Five other European TV networks are involved including Sweden, Finland, Austria, Holland and Belgium and it all adds up to 45 minutes of live TV from Longmarston with the rallymen battling with international rallycross aces. *Motostage*, the promoters, confidently expect to attract some 10,000 spectators and are hoping that the event will become an annual World Championship thrash. But as one spokesman remarked "at present, we can only have the cream; later we hope to put the cake underneath it."

Viewers of BBC Wales who so enjoyed the televised Rallysprint at Esgair Daffyd last year, will almost undoubtedly get another chance to see a similar programme this year as the networks were very happy with the original results and spin-off, so a similar event is being planned for filming in the summer. All this of course dependent on sponsorship.

Foden 'on parole' in rolling parkland "what do you think of my show so far?"



Funny business

The rumpus caused by a series of nasty incidents on the recent Ides of March Rally in Wales rages on. Centre of the dispute is a competitor, Howard Davies who, it appears from reports appearing in the *Western Mail*, is being accused of some rather distasteful skullduggery along with his brother. Allegations against Davies involve three separate incidents including the positioning of a wire secured across the road between two trees on the rally route, a gate wired shut, and a diversion sign placed on one of the roads used by rally traffic. Colin Francis who was navigating the second car on the road, which hit the wire, described the situation as "the first incident as serious as this that I have ever come across in 15 years of rallying." The wire apparently wrapped itself around one of the car's front wheels and tore off a backing plate on the front disc assembly, resulting in the crew nearly having a serious accident. An investigation is currently underway, being carried out by the organising club, the Ystrad Mynach MC.

Kit-Kadetts

The first batch of standard Kit-Kadetts have arrived at Dealer Opel Team's headquarters. At the present time all except one has been sold and the second batch is expected in the next few weeks.

The cars are rolling shells and include spare wheels and tools but no engines, gearbox, prop shaft and radiators. The cars are fitted with LSD axle, glass, electrics, etc.

Build sheets for the Kadett will shortly be available through sport part dealers, and the cost is £1,495 + VAT.

On the road again

Thomas Motors of Blackpool are pleased to announce that they will be providing an RS 1800 for Mick Briant and Dave Kirkham to contest the '76 *Motoring News* Championship. This continues the firm's involvement in club rallying and complements their support of Billy Coleman in the RAC championship.

The RS 1800 for Briant will initially be prepared by Thomas Motors in their rally workshops at Blackpool and routine servicing will be provided by Roland Shepherd who maintained Briant's RS 2000 to such a high standard in the 1975 championship.

Telford action

One other stage rally taking place this weekend besides the Esso / BTRDA South West Stages (see preview elsewhere) is the Telford AC's Lloyds Telford Stages, which is a counter of both the Welsh and West Midlands stage championships.

The '75 event winner, Derek Evans, starts from the customary position, while behind Evans comes none other than the Lloyds group one RS2000 with Britain's boy wonder discovery, Glen Mitton inside. For this rally, Glen has opted to sit in the left hand seat and he will be leaving the driving to Laurie Richards. No doubt Glen will learn some useful techniques from the old stone mason. David Grainger starts at three, while 19-year-old Ian Hughes is at four.

Two stages are recommended for spectating, Childs Ercall and Loam hole. Locations are 127/682½239 and 127/766½060½ respectively. Times are 09.10 and 09.30.

● After two years absence the Chess Valley MC will again be holding their Three Counties Rally. Date is July 3/4th and the event is scheduled to start from Banbury. Regs come from: Mrs. C. Garrard, 16 Decre Crescent, Kimpton, Herts. Telephone Kimpton 832698.

Welsh Association Code of Practice

The Welsh Association's revised Code of Practice for rally organisers is in draft form and should be ready for the AGM on May 2nd. The points therein will focus on public relations work, not just on night road rallying but on stage events which use link sections on the public highway. It is hoped that organisers of International events run in Wales will co-operate.

The lessons have been learnt on road rallies and one of the aims is to try and prevent the harm that club organisers themselves can unwittingly inflict on the sport. There have been a few instances last year where poor PR work, or lack of it, has "Blacked" a road or even a whole area. This naturally infuriates neighbouring clubs and often inspires the injured party to write a letter to the editor of his local paper condemning rallying in general . . .

Members of the rally subcommittee are now pondering over suitable "sanctions" against clubs that "spoil" rally routes in this way – possibly by refusing to give any of the offending club's rallies Championship status. Warning of such disgrace, not to speak of loss of entries, should impel organisers to step up their PR organisation.

There *are* clubs who manage to run complaint-free events. The secret, they say, is to make sure that every householder along rally route is spoken to nicely. Refinements also help, such as reported by WAMC Chairman Dennis Cardell from the RAC Chairmans' Conference that "all PR leaflets should be bi-lingual" (The Midland Assoc presumed that theirs would be English / Pakistani!)

Following up an idea of "area watchdogs" first thought of by Colin Francis, who is Chairman of the WAMC rally committee, David Lewis and Jack Romain have been appointed as "Complaints Officers" – not because they happen to be Sn and Nn Centre Chairmen, but because they seem to be best known to the Police!

Tony Fall at loggerheads...

Tony Fall put into practice a situation which he, among so many of us, have dreaded for so long. On the second stage of the Granite City he clipped the same pile of logs that produced so much unwanted toe-out on Robin Eyre Maunsell's Avenger and sent one through the Irishman's side window.

However the Opel sent a number of logs spinning high in the air. The impact also spun the Opel round and Tony was horrified to see a number of spectators staggering back to their feet from under the pile of random logs which had settled. He wasted no time in giving vent to his feelings on the matter before continuing on his way. It seems that we shall have to learn the hard way before it is generally realised that a stout pile of logs, far from presenting a natural safety barrier to a rally car, is in reality quite the reverse . . ..

Briefly . . .

● Leading positions in the BTRDA Gold Star championship show Geoff Simpson from Shropshire in the lead from Terry Brown, Graham Lepley and John Eaton. Leading points scorers are as follows: Geoff Simpson 26; Terry Brown, Graham Lepley and John Eaton 15; David Stokes and Randolph Whittall-Williams 14.

● Dave Orrick, the ex-domestic heating representative who has turned his interests full time to rallying, is now offering full sets of ordnance survey maps, marked maps and Dave Orrick pace notes, plus other navigators' paraphernalia for sale. He can be contacted at 15 Lunesdale Court, Derwent Road, Lancaster LA1 3ET, or telephone 0524-60770.

● Terry Hoyle worked himself to the bone in his attempts to prepare Russell Brookes an engine for the Granite City after the setbacks suffered with the theft from his workshops, so he was naturally a little upset when he discovered that AUTOSPORT had decided that Brian Hart was building the engine for Russell's tarmac Escort which is currently being built for the Circuit of Ireland. Apologies to all. . . .

● The Hadrian MC report that the organisation of the Centurion stages is apparently well underway. Taking place in Northumberland, the exciting 140 stage mile route contains a number of familiar stages. This event was nearly included in the Castrol / AUTOSPORT championship this year but the consortium of organisers declined on the grounds of lack of experience. However the event may well be included in the championship next year. Prospective competitors can obtain details of the event pending the publication of the regulations from M. J. Rowe, 2 Clockburnsyde Close; Fellside Park; Whickham; Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

● We hear unconfirmed stories that there are moves afoot at the FIA to ban G4 cars from the WCR series in 1977. This would of course mean that Lancia would be forced to enter their Stratos only in events with provision for G5. . . .

● The RAC was given the green light to the '76 Tour of Hamsterley. Last year this single venue, 50 miles of stages forest event was very favourably received by spectators and the organisers are expecting to run the event in October this year.

● Bath MC are coming-up with one of the longest named stage events we have heard of this year. The Festival Stages will be known this year as "The Derek James Organisation and Bath Motor Club Festival Stages". As if this were not enough, the rally qualifies for the Pirelli/Triple 'C', ASWMC and ACSMC championships. Date is 19/20th of June.

● Details of the 6th International Rally of the Algarve, which is expected to be included in the European Championship for 1977, include that the 1000km event will contain 25 stages and a prize fund of no less than £2,000. The rally takes place from October 29th to 31st October.

A real Lancia-Lancia is the new Gamma Coupé powered by a 2.5 engine developing 140 bhp and peaking at 6,000 rpm.

GENEVA SHOW

New cars in the spring

By JOHN BOLSTER

Photos by JEFF HUTCHINSON

Perhaps the most important of the annual motor exhibitions, the Geneva Show has the great advantage of taking place in early spring, when a young man's fancy is apt to turn to thoughts of new cars. It is therefore the best choice for the presentations of the latest models and it has for long been a favourite among manufacturers. Nowadays, the cost of producing an entirely new car is astronomical and some of these vehicles turn out to be old friends that have suffered crafty facelifts. Nevertheless, in spite of all the difficulties there are some genuinely new cars at Geneva.

Apart from its international aspect, this show is also a shop window for selling cars to the Swiss, who do not make cars themselves, apart from some very small and specialised manufacturers. It is therefore nothing short of a catastrophe that the performance of the British motor industry on this lucrative market has lately been so bad. Our sales in 1975 were just over half those of 1974, only Rolls-Royce achieving an increase. It's true that trading conditions were bad during this period, but both Germany and Japan managed to put up their figures by more than 1,000 cars each, BMW and Toyota showing the greatest individual gains.

It seems curious that some firms which are known to be in financial difficulties, or virtually out of production, have stands at the Salon. In the past, this has not been permitted at the major shows, in the interest of the public, who should be protected. It would be well if this tradition were followed, and there are also one or two cars that should be thrown out for inferior finish.

Of all the new cars, perhaps the most interesting is the Lancia Gamma. This is very definitely a Lancia-Lancia, as opposed to the Beta which might be called a Fiat-Lancia. It is reminiscent of the Flavia, as it has a flat-four engine ahead of the transmission and driving the front wheels. The light-allow power unit is the biggest four-cylinder at present offered, with dimensions of 102 x 76 mm (2,484 cc). Each bank of cylinders has a single, belt-driven overhead camshaft, operating the inclined valves through rockers. A twin-choke Weber downdraught carburettor is on a rather lengthy manifold. This hefty unit peaks at an impressive 6,000 rpm, developing 140 bhp on a 9 to 1 compression ratio.

The five-speed all-indirect gearbox is behind the differential, which it drives through spiral bevel gears. The steel bodies are by Pininfarina, both two-door and four-door versions being available, the coupé having a rather more conservative tail treatment than the saloon. Independent suspension of all four wheels and disc brakes all round are features. The new Lancia looks a big car and has clean, attractive lines.

Opel's delightful little Aero Kadett, complete with detachable roof.

BMW Six series coupé

Also new is the BMW coupé of the 630/633 series. The body is notable for its large glass area and slim pillars, though perhaps we were expecting something more aerodynamic from BMW. No doubt it will be raced with all sorts of bits and pieces tacked on, which is not pretty. The independent suspension of all four wheels is traditional BMW, with MacPherson in front and semi-trailing arms at the rear, employing coil springs and rubber with anti-roll bars both ends. The power steering is ZF and assistance is reduced at speed as on a Citroën.

There are two in-line six-cylinder engines, a 2,985cc unit with a Solex twin-choke carburettor, developing 185 bhp at 5,500 rmp, or a more potent one of 3,205cc with fuel injection, giving 200 bhp at 5,000 rpm. A four-speed manual gearbox or a three-speed automatic may be specified, and the final drive ratio is 3.45 to 1 for the carburettor engine or 3.25 to 1 with injection.

Mercedes-Benz have a completely new body shell for all their smaller cars, diesels included. The more powerful models have just been modified to Bosch K-Jetronic mechanical fuel injection, in place of the D-Jetronic electronic system. There is

likely to be a small reduction in power output but reliability and ease of servicing should benefit The sales of Mercedes-Benz have fallen seriously on the Swiss market, so these improvements are timely, though the new bodies still lack the Italian flair.

A really new car is the Volvo 343, which would have been the long-awaited medium-sized DAF. It's quite a long car, with plenty of legroom for all the passengers, and the front engine is a pushrod unit with a twin-choke carburettor of 1397cc. The DAF twin-belt transmission now has a selector lever like that of a normal automatic box. The front suspension is by courtesy of MacPherson and the rear-end consists of the axle named after the Marquis de Dion, with single-leaf springs which would have caused that personage to raise his aristocratic eyebrows.

Saab have gone up-market with fuel-injection and power steering on their more costly models. Their new car is called a five-door Combi-Coupé, though whether a car with more than two doors is really a coupé is open to doubt. Anyway, it is of the high standard of construction which one now expects from Saabs.

Opel's airy Aero

Opel are now the leading German constructors, both for home sales and exports, and they have a new version of their delightful little coupé, known as Aero Kadett. It has a detachable roof, but retains the built-in rollover bar on which some insurance companies are so keen.

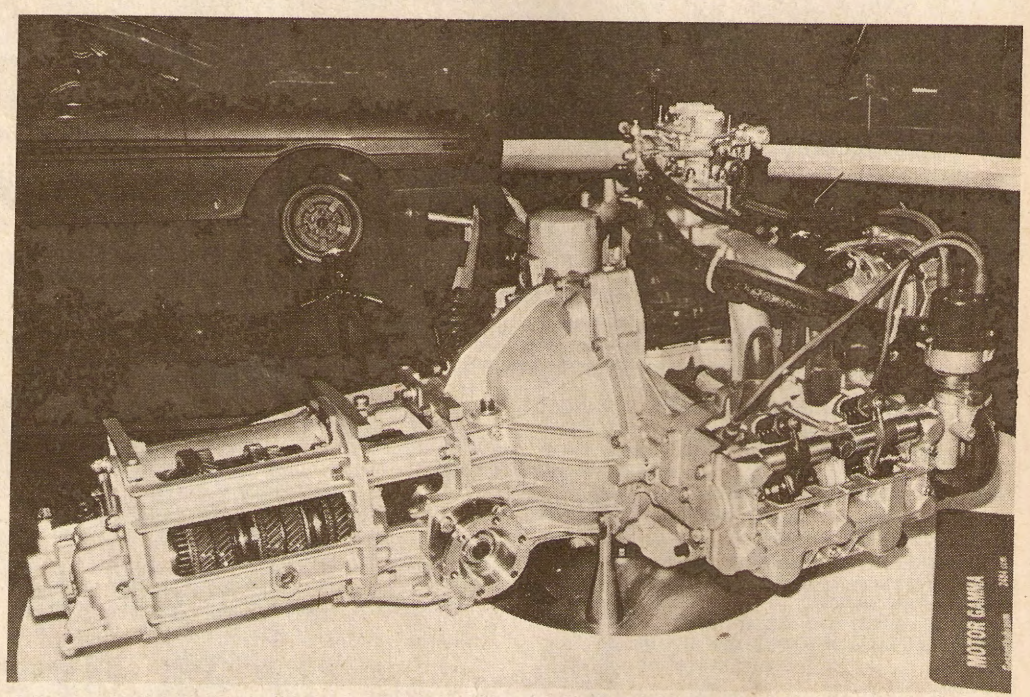
Fiat have a new model, the 131 Abarth Rally, which is fairly loosely derived from the 131 saloon. The back axle has given place to independent rear suspension of massive construction, with lower wishbones fabricated from steel tubes. The engine is the twin-cam 1995cc unit which is also found in Lancias, giving 140 bhp DIN in this instance. The somewhat angular body shell is smothered in aerodynamic devices to 'correct' its respectable and uncompromising shape, but rally cars are seldom beautiful.

Rather unexpectedly, Peter Monteverdi has added a cross-country car to his range of expensive coupés. It resembles a rather oversize Range Rover. There are other new models among the Swiss constructors, notably some well-made and expensive one-offs from Felber, and there is a buggy-type device from Franke, called the Joker 76.

In general, with my readers' permission, I proposed to ignore the lunatic fringe of Beetle-powered devices, most of which should not have been accepted for a show of this calibre. I am very angry, however, about an ill-constructed heap that actually carries a bogus Bugatti name-plate. Ettore Bugatti joined the immortals when he built his beautiful racing cars and this travesty should be tarred and feathered. In a similar category comes a so-called sports car, from a slightly bankrupt Canadian concern, called the Bricklin. The car at the show appears to have been involved in a bad accident — correction, several bad accidents. Achilli have an imitation Zagato 1750 Alfa which is not even well finished.

On quite a different plane is a gorgeous joke called the Colani Laiglon. Its a send-up of the nineteen-thirties, with a bonnet of infinite length, outside exhaust pipes galore, and all the worst excesses of the inter-war years. Even my old friend Saoutchik would not have dared to go quite as far!

The four door version of the Gamma, known as the Berlina (above), which is also powered by the flat four 2.5 engine (below).



BMW's new six series coupé, notable for high glass area and slim pillars.

This will be the first opportunity for many people to see the Porsche 924. With its water-cooled front engine and rear-mounted gearbox, it marks a new trend towards a high polar moment of inertia in sports cars, for some recent examples have proved altogether too twitchy. The 911, great car though it is, suddenly looks old-fashioned and the 924 is the first of a new generation.

When I tried the new little Peugeot 104ZS at the Montlhéry test day, I realised that this machine had sporting potential. Peugeot have now recognised this by producing a 'Rallye' version. You take it along to your dealer, who produced a special cylinder head, two twin-choke Weber carburettors, and a high-lift camshaft. This adds up to a DIN output of 85 bhp from 1124cc and you can have glassfibre body panels, light-alloy wheels, and fat tyres, too. Apparently, some dealers will be equipped with facilities for doing special paint jobs to the customer's choice. Certainly, this is a big change for the once ultra-dignified Peugeot firm.

It would appear that Maserati must still be in production, though we had heard otherwise. At all events, a range of cars is on view, including a new model, the Kyalami, which is a two-door coupé with proper rear seats, unlike the Merak. It has a V8 engine of 4930cc developing 320 bhp, mounted at the front and driving independently sprung rear wheels that are on the most massive wishbones we have seen yet. Inexplicable is the presence of the Innocenti Mini on the Leyland stand, though much publicity was attracted when the British firm pulled out of its Italian venture. Will somebody please explain?

Among the special coachbuilding, Zagato have a new Bristol with a detachable roof, which retains a rollover bar in open form; the appearance is somewhat massive. Bertone has a futuristic mid-engined Alfa Romeo coupé, which is in early prototype form. Let us not forget that he took his Stratos around the shows for several years, before Mr Agnelli found he had some spare Dino engines and turned it into a Lancia. Pininfarina shows the new Lancia Gamma, which he styled.

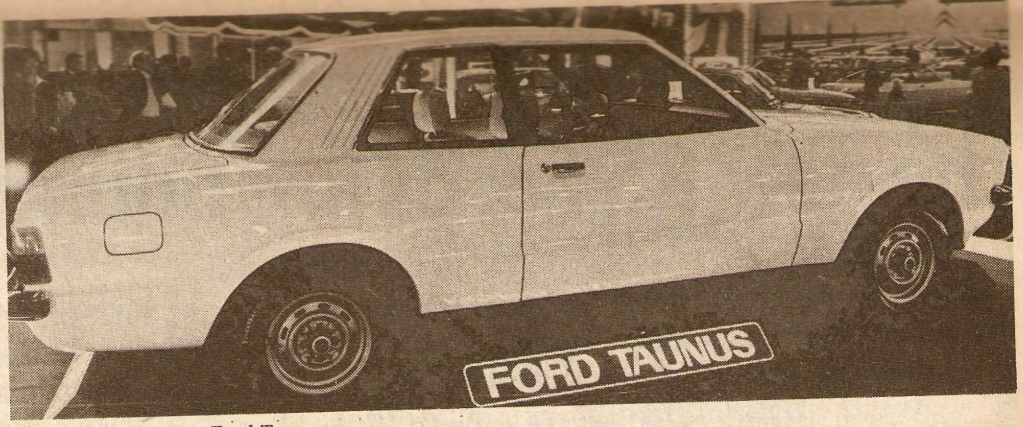
V12 Beach car

Beach cars are often found in the coachbuilders' section, but Felber has one with a V12 Ferrari engine! Caruna has a curiously angular coupé with a 911 Porsche engine and Moretti proudly presents what he had named 'Gentlemen-Car', which looks rather like a Jeep. Fissore has something rather similar, but his is called 'Scout'. Bitter has large, streamlined coupés on the V8 Opel which we have seen before. Marden exhibits a tiny two-seater coupé called Espace II, in which you can have either an electric motor and batteries or a motorcycle-type Wankel engine made by Sachs.

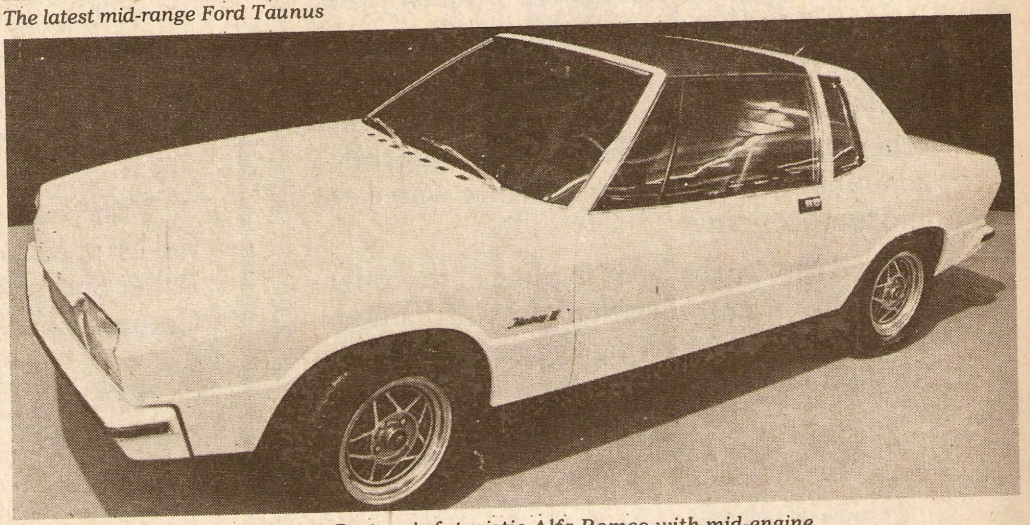
The Wankel is in a sad decline, though Mazda are soldiering on with the attractive RX5 coupé. Space does not permit me to mention many other cars that are worthy of comment, but I must say that Leylands' large and impressive display is beautifully carried out. The Rolls-Royce stand is the ultimate in elegance and its nice to see Lotus and TVR so far from home.

Finally, Christies have a collection of historic cars for their auction sale, in the basement. This is not their best show but there are some excellent pieces, as well as a few tatty ones, too. Perhaps Phil Hill's huge Oldsmobile is the most desirable car of all, but somebody is going to have a lot of fun, and a very hot bottom, driving the tiny Grout steam buggy. I wish I could afford to add it to my collection!

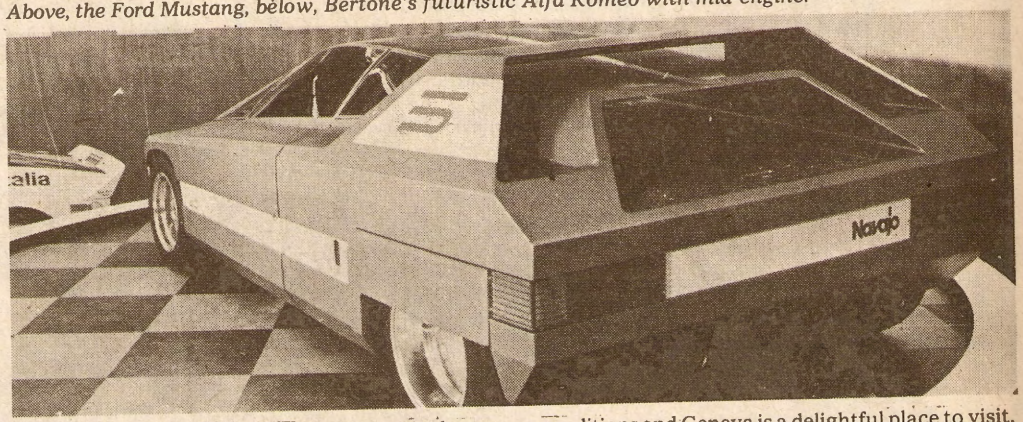
The Salon is held in superb buildings under ideal conditions and Geneva is a delightful place to visit, as always. The cost of living is unbelievably high, however, and I was able to make very substantial savings by taking an all-in package trip, organised by the travel firm of Wakefield Fortune. If you want to go to just one motor show, Geneva is the best choice every time.



The latest mid-range Ford Taunus



Above, the Ford Mustang, below, Bertone's futuristic Alfa Romeo with mid-engine.



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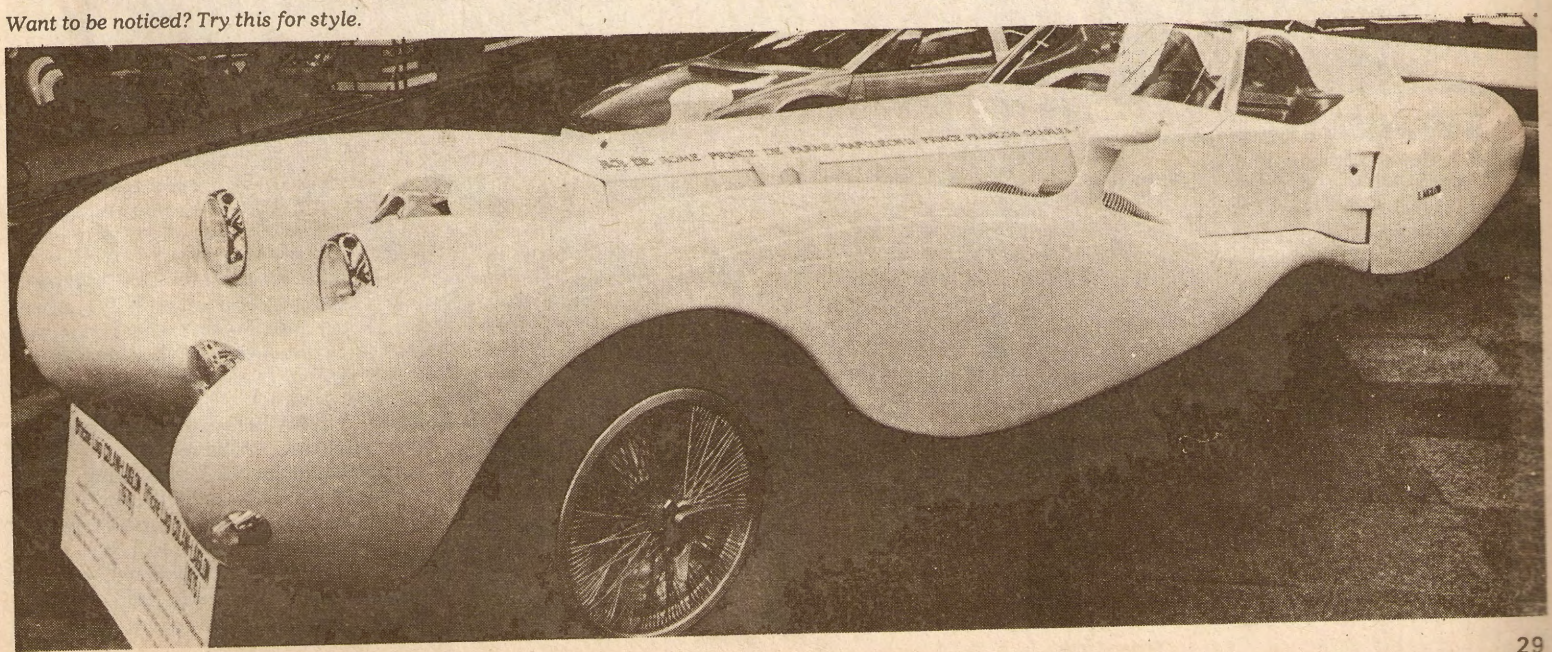


There was evidently nothing wrong with the ex-Staepelaere Hart/Hoyle "7,000 miles only without rebuild" BDA which was hurriedly fitted in the Andrews Heat Escort. A combination of tactics and skill at last paid desserts.

CP GRANITE CITY — RAC ROUND 4

Brookes: not before time

Story and pictures by PETER NEWTON

"Well, whose turn to win this week then?" mused an associate idly late one night a few days ago as we stood slumped resignedly against a South London mahogany bar-top. On receiving no reply, he turned inquiringly to the landlord, shuffling closer to the barrels and furtively eyeing the dregs of a half-forgotten pint of bitter before droning on again . . . "of course if Ari can stop going off, he's got to make it this time, but then it's really Russell's turn now, wouldn't you say?" They used to say it cynically about Grands Prix . . .'X's turn to win today; his sponsors demand it you know . . .' but the Ford lottery that is unfolding at the top of the RAC championship tree is a deadly serious business.

It certainly is Russell's turn to pick up the hardware and he has had to work harder for it and discipline himself more rigorously than perhaps even he could ever have imagined after having won his last rally. Russell Brookes is such a pillar of the British rally establishment that it seems quite incredible to learn that his last rally victory was three years ago on the Plains in the Brooklyn Mexico. Yes, it was his turn alright and Russell brought off this win through a combination of tactics, good fortune and sheer driving skill. There must scarcely be anyone involved with rallying who would begrudge him this belated triumph, and as far as the assembled company of revellers were concerned last Saturday night in Aberdeen, the right man had won, itself a cause of prolonged celebration, and there cannot have been a more popular victory for many months.

Architect of this happy state of affairs, at least in part, was John Brown who with great presence of mind and mathematical detachment, exploited the various hold-ups and delays at the start of the very first stage virtually to the very edge of disaster. It was a calculated game of brinkmanship which paid off handsomely and was thereafter consolidated by Russell in true professional style. Snow was the inanimate condition which lay to be exploited. A dull, cold and dank weekend in Aberdeen can mean little else in early March other than the certainty of snow falling on the high ground inland. The talk at the start was all "snow" but few people were prepared for exactly how much lay in the upland forests of Gartly and Clashindarroch. It was a silent white opaque world which laid its icy hand on rally crews that morning.

Clashindarroch is one of the highest altitude forests rallied in Scotland and at least three inches of snow lay gleaming in the tracks and clinging to the infinite spires of the conifers. The answer in rally terms was to 'hide' anonimously and allow other luckless or more unwary competitors to cream off the top surface and expose the track for following cars to find the necessary traction. This is a game of brinkmanship which frequently occurs in rallying but seldon is it carried to the extremes of Saturday morning. Had the temperature been five degrees lower, or had it dropped suddenly, then the answer would have been to drive the stages as early as possible before the surface could become polished into a forestry ice rink with the passing of traffic. But a steady thaw was in progress on Saturday morning, and it continued unerringly until late afternoon. These circumstances were to play a critical part in the results of the rally but certain initial stage dramas were of particular benefit to the Brookes/Brown combine. The chance was seized with both hands and effectively, the rally was never in doubt of the winner from that moment. But all the above should in no way detract from a very fine performance from Russell who scored a victory in circumstances he must have despaired of ever achieving — by beating Roger Clark to the flag.

Following the petulance and bickering involved in the Mintex fiasco, everyone seemed positively determined to return to rallying by stage times rather than by proxy, and there seemed to be an air of latent anxiety in the camp lest anything should upset the idyllic apple-cart and plunge into acrimony what promised to be a clean, clear-cut, and highly competitive event. They need not have worried for the Aberdeen and District MC are to be congratulated on a smartly presented, marshalled and organised rally which did credit both to the championship and new event sponsors, Consolidated Pneumatic Tool Co. Ltd, who seemed justifiably pleased with the result of the new venture. The organisers were, however, understandably sensitive to competitors' potential

Ari Vatanen once again took a good position, finishing thir increasing his championship lead. Below, Tony Pond weaves amazing fourth in the G1 car after a superb afternoon.

Top twenty starters . . .

1, Roger Clark/Jim Porter (RS1800), Ford Motor Company.
2, Charles and Alec Sampson (RS1600), Private.
3, Andy Dawson/Andy Marriott (Lancia Stratos), Chequered Flag.
4, Ari Vatanen/Peter Bryant (RS1800), Allied Polymer Group.
5, Russell Brookes/John Brown (RS1800), Andrews Heat for Hire.
6, Pentti Airikkala/Mike Greasley (RS1800), Team Avon Tyres.
7, Billy Coleman/Dan O'Sullivan (RS1800), Thomas Motors.
8, — (reserved for Tony Fowkes).
9, Brian Culcheth/Johnstone Syer (Dolomite Sprint), Leyland Cars.
10, Tony Pond/Dave Richards (Dolomite Sprint), Leyland Cars.
11, Drew Gallacher/Ian Muir (RS1600), Private.
12, Bill Taylor/Ian McIver (RS1600), Private.
13, Tony Fall/Mike Broad (Opel Kadett GTE), DOT.
14, Andrew Cowan/Hugh McNeil (Colt Lancer), Private
15, Tony Drummond/Phil Short (RS1600), Derek Carman Catering.
16, Will Sparrow/Nigel Raeburn (Vauxhall Magnum), DTV.
17, — (reserved for Donald Heggie).
18, Chris Sclater/Paul White (Chrysler Avenger), Chrysler.
19, — (reserved Barry Lee).
20, Ronnie McCartney/Terry Harryman (RS2000), Lloyds of Stafford.

for skulduggery on stages. Thus a decision was taken to issue a directive to marshals requesting them not to give out information about other competitors' times at stage finishes, on the assumption that arguing the toss would be cut down to a minimum consequently reducing the possibility of serious delays. This naturally led to some confusion and there were those who expressed the question that 'were not events in the RAC championship being run for competitors?' but it seems that those who really wanted the necessary information discovered it anyway.

One further small point which caused some dissent among the ranks was the organisers' intention not to publish the route before 7.00am on the morning of the start — the argument against this not being merely a case of interrupted slumber, but rather that it would cause wholesale confusion among service schedules and result in chaos on the roads. In effect once more, those who were most determined to find out the route did so anyway; however, in this case it was undeniably hard on those who did not happen to be residing at the Tree Tops Hotel which acted as rally HQ throughout the weekend.

The organisers themselves did well to present such a united and professional facade, for they had not been without their last minute problems, including an eleventh hour stop-watch scare (in transit from London they had been delivered to Edinburgh in error!) while three course cars were

the second time running on an RAC round marginally gh the snow in Leyland's Dolomite Sprint. He finished an

rapidly reduced to one when mechanical failure (rod through the block) and an accident (off at the start of the first Gartly) decimated the ranks.

The route of the Granite City is virtually pre-ordained by the nature of the local geography but three of the stages were immediately familiar to most of the 1976 regulars as Speymouth, Teindland and Aultmore (the latter notorious for the carnage which its sheet ice-covered roads wrought on the Snowman) have already been visited this year. There was no sparing of carnage but the culprit on this occasion was the very first stage, Benachie, where some reliable sources were intimating that as many as an incredible 45 cars had gone off during the course of the stage! (This figure represents nearly 50 per cent of the entry).

The size of the entry itself went some way towards illustrating the almost prohibitive costs involved both in stage rallying itself, and in the distance involved in journeying to Aberdeen for a one-day rally, and in fact only just over 20 crews made the journey from south of the border. Most conspicuous among the non-starters was Tony Fowkes whose car would only just have been ready at the last minute following engine maladies suffered on the Mintex, but any hopes of the car reaching the north by Motorail were dashed by ASLEF.

Another non-appearance was that of Barry Lee whose Glovers Datsun has still to have its cylinder head successfully renovated. Keen Scottish spectators were also denied their first chance to view Donald Heggie's new RS1800 which it was hoped would be ready in time, so they had to be content with George Dean in person, who arrived and remained 'in situ' to soak up the atmosphere . . . Perhaps though the most interesting part of the entry concerned car number 18, the Chrysler entry for Colin Malkin. On Wednesday, Colin apparently indicated that he was "ill" and suggested that the still 'unattached' Chris Sclater might like to drive the car. Des O'Dell lost no time in contacting Chris, who threw his helmet in the back, had his own seat fixed in the Avenger, and drove it north from Coventry without more ado. He, like everyone else, was looking forward to comparing the car with the current forest racers from Boreham.

Will Sparrow's Magnum had a new crankshaft and connecting rods following the Mintex failure and the team were experimenting with more revised rear suspension pick-up points, looking forward to another high speed development session. There is certainly a new air of urgency in the team who again appeared much more confident than of late.

Neither had The Chequered Flag been sitting idle since their historic victory on the Mintex, and some successful testing carried out earlier in the week down in Surrey had led Andy Dawson to specify some marginal alterations to the suspension settings. The team had also modified the rear brakes so that the disc caliper is now positioned above the disc rather than below it, thereby keeping the potentially vulnerable brake pipe components out of the line of fire. Andrew Marriott was again in the co-driver's seat, having found time to sandwich the rally in between his Race of the Champions commitments. He was to be presented with a digital readout stopwatch on the morning of the start in order to rule out any possibilities of more confusion! The 'Flag regretfully report that there has been no tangible improvement in the spares situation of late, and their second engine is still in bits at Race Engine Services, awaiting essential parts. The existing 220 bhp unit has now been driven in anger on some six rallies including extensive testing, and while still apparently very healthy, there were some misgivings as to how long it could all last.

In the Leyland camp, the old Dolomites were out again, Bill Pryce surmising that Brian's FRW version might well be packed off and ceremoniously presented to the Beaulieu Motor Museum after the finish! There were further revelations at scrutineering on the Friday evening and Robin Eyre-Maunsell lost no time in gleefully chastising the new-look sartorial Wyn Mitchell who has both "shed" his beard and "grown" his hair! The car which appeared from Coventry was in fact the G5 "lightweight" version equipped with the larger of the two 16 valve engines (2017cc) which Colin Malkin had used on the Dean and Snowman.

The Ford scene remained largely as before except that Roger's car was resplendent in a new shell, but at the Sutton equipe Jill Robinson could be found driving the 2-litre BDA Mk1 which George Beever has driven in the past, while David Palmby had returned to drive Jill's RS2000.

Action tends to be thick and fast in the early stages of RAC rounds these days and no one can have been disappointed with the plethora of incidents which dramatised this year's Granite . . . light rain and drizzle in Aberdeen gave way rapidly to snow as the cars wound their way north west for the first stage where they soon became fully aware of the conditions of the stages, which for the early runners were almost farcically lacking in grip. Huge moments at low speed were very much the order of the morning. The "hiding game" now began in earnest but among those who were prepared to go on ahead were Andy Dawson, Will Sparrow, the Leyland team and Ronnie McCartney. It was from among the members of this little band that an unwitting contribution to the great Russell Brookes' victory was to come. Just 220 yards into the very first test is a mild kink, all in sight of the start. An obviously very chastened Dawson described the scene that evening. He was "leading by seven and a half minutes at the time" (!) and as he went through the kink he slid the tail of the Stratos wide onto what he imagined was virgin snow. The innocent white carpet concealed a rock which the tail of the car struck a glancing blow. The impact was enough to shatter one of the Speedline wheels completely and while he was feverishly changing the wheel, he watched Ronnie McCartney clip a rock on the next severe corner of the stage and roll out of the rally as a result. With new wheel in place, Dawson continued but as he reached the McCartney corner, the evidently weakened driveshaft sheared. The Stratos came to rest in the centre of the road where it remained until many hands came to manhandle it to one side, but not before Pentti Airikkala had almost gone off trying to avoid the stationary obstacle. The stricken Lancia was not to be left in peace, however, for it was roughly assaulted by Mervyn Cobb's Escort which went on to find a resting place nearby. There was fortunately little damage, however.

The Dawson incident had added some 20 minutes of lateness to the field and a further delay was caused when Will Sparrow was caught out by the same rock as Dawson. The Magnum was spun into the bank, and with opposite lock already applied, the car nosed into the bank and tipped over at walking pace. "No one was more surprised than us," remarked Will later. Inside, the car was a shambles as hypoid gearbox oil had leaked out of the gearbox breather pipe and daubed the entire interior with the contents. Will eventually resumed with a secondhand-looking rear section to his car (which looked much worse than it actually was) and a constant rain of oil from the roof lining which continued to shower down on both crew members for the duration of the event. The remainder of the rally was naturally given over entirely to development and alternative rear springs were tried with great success.

In all some five cars went off on this particular stretch of road and the rally was in consequence running very late since the waiting game meant that cars were booking in late in any case. The organisers wisely decided to add an extra hour of lateness onto the schedule so there was no need to panic, but competitors who had been unavoidably delayed by the Dawson incident obviously benefited. Thanks to what must have been some rather tense moments of splendid brinkmanship, Russell Brookes was now presented with a number of stages, including the Clashindarrochs which were undoubtedly the worst affected by snow, and provided one followed the broad tramlines dug by at least 30 passing cars, offered startling traction advantages for the driver.

This was the critical moment of the rally. The Andrews Heat equipe had gambled and gambled superbly. All that remained now was for Russell to exploit the potential of the situation. He made just one mistake in doing exactly that when just three stages from home, in Glentanar, he put the car on its side. At this point, out of the gloom stepped two saviours in the form of Martin Jeffrey and Angus Carnegie, the trusty crew of Escort number 50 who rapidly had the RS1800 back on its feet again and away. . . .

Meanwhile the retirements continued apace. Pentti Airikkala had been worried by over-rich mixture to his engine from the start and was trying very hard. He was caught out by a tightening righthander which also narrowed, in "the Bin". He managed to struggle round this one but on the rapidly following left he found he was forced to shortcut the corner. The car clipped the bank and rolled heavily into the trees, coming to rest finally on co-driver Greasley's side, heavily damaged. Later that evening a smiling Pentti knew exactly where to apportion blame . . . "It is all Greasley's fault; he's not heavy enough to balance the car!" Meanwhile in another corner of the bar Mike was regaling a spellbound audience

Hunchback in a hurry: Will Sparrow's bent Vauxhall struggles to find some traction in the snow on Clashindarroch 2 after its first stage inversion.

with the epic, concluding that his most serious injury occurred when Pentti unlocked his seat belts "and 18 stone of Finn landed on top of me!" The car will need a re-shell before the next outing but at present Pentti is very keen to compete on the Circuit. . . .

The lunch halt showed some unprecedented positions thanks to the unique conditions. Russell Brookes led comfortably from Roger by one minute and 29 seconds, the latter having lightly killed a deer which jumped out in front of the flying Cossack car in Speymouth while Vatanen was just eight seconds down having had two punctures in two successive stages just before the Rothes halt. These three lay ahead of Piggy Thompson in a fine fourth and with confidence obviously well restored after the Dukeries success but in fifth was none other than Gavin Waugh who was driving superbly in his 1600 White Horse Avenger. A tight-lipped Tony Pond found himself in 16th position, two minutes 40 seconds down on Gavin. Dave Richards expected "to see some real driving this afternoon." Neither he nor anyone who was spectating later in the day was disappointed. . . .

Just into the top ten was a pensive Chris Sclater. The car, he said, felt good but was predictably short of perhaps some 40 bhp to the top Escorts. He had punctured with severe time loss on the first Gartly Moor but had suspected driveshaft failure thanks to the lack of traction on leaving the stage. In fact the entire Minilite was revolving within the shattered remnants of the M&S. Later in the afternoon, due to what he later called "a mental aberration", Chris went into the snow-affected Clashindarrochs comparatively early (the afternoon game of "hide and wait" was once more in full swing) which resulted in him losing probably three places. Nevertheless he finished sixth overall in the car with a certain new-found respect for the Avenger.

As the afternoon wore on so the cold deepened and the frequency of the snow squalls increased. It was not an afternoon for languid spectating but the sight of the afternoon was that of the Dolomites which were again being driven well beyond their modest capabilities by their two grimly determined drivers. Tony threw caution to the sind and drove as only a handful of drivers in the world are able to do under those circumstances. The stage times bear silent witness to a drive which will probably go unnoticed but deserves superlatives well beyond the capabilities of this tired and emotional typewriter — he was eight times in the top five on 12 stages during the afternoon including one fastest! These results speak for themselves but cannot convey the sheer unbridled spectacle, the rather incongruous-looking Dolomite wreathed in stones, at seemingly impossible angles, using scenery as "armco" in the best traditions of those "foreigners" and generally warming the hearts if not the feet and hands of the stalwarts at the roadside.

Brian too was trying as hard as ever. Seventh overall at the lunch halt, FRW was flying as usual but a series of mishaps eventually resulted in Brian being declared OTL at the finish. He bent the steering rack twice in the Clashindarrochs during the afternoon and after a number of lengthy mechanicing sessions he had a front brake caliper shatter and jam on during a road section. Tony Pond, following up behind, rushed off in search of the service crew who returned and eventually put the trouble right, but by then it was of academic interest, as time had fled away. Perhaps soon these two drivers will get the cars they so richly deserve.

Meanwhile the Ryan Allegro had quietly passed away with yet another transmission failure, Pat suspecting a differential pinion.

Another unfortunate retirement after an increasingly promising drive was that of Tony Drummond who went straight on and irretrievably off down a firebreak after a blind crest and square right. He was thus in the grand royal circle to see Ari Vatanen's afternoon excursion. Ari spun trying to persaude the car round the corner and came down the same firebreak where a stout tree stump spun him again to face the right way for an easy departure back onto the stage!

No such luck for others . . . Piggy Thompson's great drive came to nought. It all started with two flat front tyres on which he ran three miles to the finish of the stage. The pounding extracted all the life from the struts but at the stage finish there was only time to change the tyres. Continuing the chapter of setbacks, the battery had also broken loose thanks to the rough ride, and this now shorted out and set fire to the trim. The crew managed to successfully extinguish it. One more stage and Piggy suddenly smelt petrol. That smell in a Porsche means trouble with a capital 'T' for as has occurred before, the contents of the front mounted tank can so easily trickle down the massive under shield to the heat exchangers on the exhausts at the rear . . . a raging inferno is then a mere formality. Wisely Piggy switched everything off immediately and left the car facing downhill . . . it was perhaps very fortunate that he had the driver's window open.

If the English had their problems then the Irish and Scots had their's in full measure. Robin Eyre-Maunsell had clipped a pile of logs in Gartly Moor during the morning and he had the nasty shock of being paid a visit by a member of this pile which crashed through the driver's side window, just inches from the back of his head. Following these dramas, Rick Bell's services were called upon for both a new gearbox and back axle . . . Robin remarked back at the hotel that his resignation would be on Des O'Dell's desk in the morning! He was referring, of course, to Gavin Waugh's stirring drive, during which he was one of the few to hang on to that early advantage, being eclipsed only by the irrepressible Pond.

For Billy Coleman it was probably a rally he would rather forget. He cast the die for the day by running high on the road very early on, with no snow tyres and suffered a continuous misfire in his new Hoyle motor which defied a change of transistor pack and an investigation of the petrol at lunch. By this stage, he was of course well out of the hunt and when during the afternoon he suffered a series of crippling punctures, one felt the heart must have totally deserted him. Alistair Brearley had a better day but was slowed at the end by lack of auxiliary lights in the later stages. His Ascona has recently undergone a major rebuild and seems much improved for it. Drew Gallacher was well placed for some time but it was another problematical day during which he finally disconnected the rear brakes after flattening the pipes. This of course gave renewed trouble with the front discs locking on. Soldiering on with these maladies he then had a half shaft go. In contrast Andrew Cowan's little Colt ran like a train to seventh overall and once the crew had disposed of their Yokahama tyres, the car never gave a moment's concern. Things also looked promising in the Opel camp, where following a number of early dramas and the fitment of Hakkas, Tony Fall really got going to put up some good times before the crew heard the axle breath its last in Clashindarroch.

So Russell it was who stepped gingerly through the doors of the Hotel late that evening. He is now very accustomed to premature celebrations and took much earnest convincing, including a times comparison with Jim Porter, before deciding that he had indeed won. It was indeed Russell's turn.

CP Granite City Rally

1, R. Brookes/J. Brown (RS1800) 99.34;
2, R. Clark/J. Porter (RS1800) 100.29;
3, A. Vatanen/P. Bryant (RS1800) 100.48;
4, T. Pond/D. Richards (Dolomite Sprint) 104.18;
5, G. Waugh/P. Handy (Chrysler Avenger) 105.11;
6, C. Sclater/P. White (Chrysler Avenger) 105.12;
7, A. Cowan/H. McNeil (Colt Lancer) 105.13; 8, A. Brearley/M. Smith (Opel Ascona) 105.45; 9, J. McRae/D. Brown (Vauxhall Magnum) 105.58; 10, =R. Wyre Maunsell/N. Wilson (Chrysler Avenger) and R. Close/J. Dale (RS1800) 107.47.

Group one

1, T. Pond/D. Richards (Dolomite Sprint);
2, G. Waugh/P. Handy (Chrysler Avenger);
3, J. McRae/D. Brown (Vauxhall Magnum).

Stage times

SS1 Benachie

1, Brookes, 3.41; 2, Clarke 3.49; 3, Waugh 3.51; 4, Thompson, 4.00; 5=Vatanen and Sclater 4.05.

SS2 Gartly Moor 1

1, Brookes 4.13; 2, Wilson 4.20; 3, Ryan 4.30; 4, McRae 4.33; 5, Vatanen 4.35.

SS3 Clashindarroch 1

1, Fall 7.19; 2, Brookes 7.20; 3, Vatanen 7.30; 4, Waugh 7.31; 5, Wilson 7.33.

SS4 Clashindarroch 2

1, Fall 3.40; 2, Sclater 3.54; 3 =Brookes and Gemmell 3.55; 5, Vatanen 3.56.

SS5 The Bin

1, Thompson 2.24; 2=Drummond and Coleman 2.54; 4, Vatanen 2.55; 5, Culcheth 2.57.

SS6 Balloch Wood 1

1, Drummond 6.28; 2, Coleman 6.32; 3, Samson 6.39; 4, Vatanen 6.40; 5, Clark 6.48.

SS7 Speymouth

1, Drummond 7.04; 2=Clark and Samson 7.12; 4, Coleman 7.13; 5, Vatanen 7.20.

SS8 Teindland

1 =Clark and Brookes 4.18; 3, Vatanen 4.21; 4, Drummond 4.27; 5, Samson 4.28.

SS9 Aultmore

1, Brookes 8.07; 2, Vatanen 8.16; 3, Clark 8.23; 4, Coleman 8.33; 5, Drummond 8.36.

SS10 Balloch Wood 2

1, Vatanen 6.23; 2, Brookes 6.37; 3, Clark 6.38; 4, Samson 6.39; 5 =Culcheth and Drummond 6.42.

9SS11 Gartly Moor 2

1, Vatanen 3.26; 2, Brookes 3.28; 3, Clark 3.33; 4, Pond 3.34; 5, Sparrow 3.37.

SS 12 Clashindarroch 3

1, Pond 8.38; 2, Sparrow 8.40; 3, Cowan 8.47; 4, Clark 8.54; 5, Gallacher 8.57.

SS13 Clashindarroch 4

1, Eyre-Maunsell 4.08; 2, Pond 4.10; 3, Sparrow 4.14; 4, Vatanen 4.19; 5, Findlay 4.20.

SS14 Clashindarroch 5

1, Vatanen 3.46; 2, Clark 3.50; 3, Cowan 3.51; 4, Sparrow 3.54; 5, Brookes 3.55.

SS15 Tornashean

1 =Clark and Vatanen 4.20; 3=Pond and Sclater 4.25; 5, Eyre-Maunsell 4.31.

SS16 Glentanar 1

1, Brookes 3.28; 2, Vatanen 3.29; 3, Clark 3.37; 4, Pond 3.38; 5 =Samson, Cowan and Sclater 3.40.

SS17 Glentanar 2

1, Vatanen 6.25; 2, Pond 6.32; 3, Clark 6.41; 4, Brookes 6.43; 5, Samson 6.44.

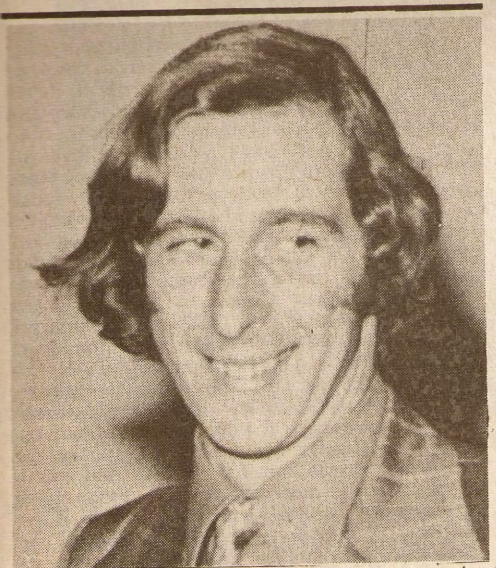
SS18 Durris 1

1 =Clark, Vatanen and Sclater 2.32; 3 =Brookes and Pond 2.33; 5, Coleman 2.35.

SS19 Durris 2

1, Sclater 5.37; 2, Pond 5.39; 3, Clark 5.42; 4, Brookes 5.45.

Purely personal



Mike Freeman is a longtime Mexico racer, coming second in the series last year. Farming on the Welsh border, Freeman has oft-spectated on rallies, and recently took to the forests himself. Below he recounts his experiences.

MIKE FREEMAN

Five . . . Four . . . Three . . . .Two . . . One — Thump . . . bang . . . bang . . clatter — Christ now what! There was I at the start of my first ever Forest stage. Nervously I let the car slide slightly on the first gentle left hander which showed the road sloping away into a valley that appeared to come to an abrupt halt a few yard further on. As I approached however, all opened up before me and as if to overcome my doubts about what I was doing I really gave it all; out came the tail and away we went. At the end of the 6 minutes 21 seconds it took to complete the stage I felt totally drained, exhausted and very glad it was all over. I was actually looking forward to a quiet section on the road to get my composure back. No chance, for within a matter of half a mile of rough track was the start of stage two, however I had already resolved that at the rate I was going the best I could expect to do was last another three stages.

Possibly because they were behind me at scrutineering and possibly because I know them to be good by not up to 'works' standard I had picked car number 50, that of Henry Inurrieta and Martin Whale, as out target for comparison on this my first proper rally, the 1976 Shellsport Dean. At the end of this stage I had taken 27 seconds off them but the pace was tantamount to suicide and 'cool it' had to be my advice for the next few stages.

Although I had got a taste of rallying from competing in the inaugural Tour of Britain and had many times been a spectator in the Forest of Dean on various major events, I was completely in the dark as to what it was going to be like or how I would do. At first I had doubted that I would even get an entry and I kept a watch on the post with a certain amount of apprehension.

Wouldn't it be an embarrassment — think of all the people I had told I was going to be doing the Dean. However all was not lost and the entry was accepted at number 68. "Sixty-eight!" On this the famous Dean — I really can't be that bad after all. Already the confidence was beginning to return. Lets see now; if the organisers rate me at number 68 out of 120 and that is about halfway down the field and let's say two thirds of the field are finishers and I am halfway down this two thirds then I will be about 40th. So, anything better than that does me and the organisers credit, and so at that early stage I had a target to aim for.

Unfortunately I could picture myself, the great authority on all things to do with competitive motoring, standing under a dripping tree on a cold misty morning as number 123 clattered through the forest saying: "of course it's only the top 30 that are really worth watching, the rest are just out for a fast Sunday run in the woods." Well now Mr. Freeman, how many are going to say that today?

After the end of the second stage we met the service crew and I got out and walked round the car which brought back some strength to my legs and I felt better. There didn't appear to be any damage to the car so on we went to the next stage. "Just wait until you do Sallowallets, it's all fast curves, a truly magnificent stage, you'll enjoy that one." So said Tim Humphries a local BDA Escort driver, who was also part of my service crew. Part of the stage I did in fact know from the year before; I remember easing back on the fast curves lest we slipped over and also rounding one bend to find a closed gate barring our way and jumping the stile that was situated to the left of it before driving off into the forest itself, the hounds being well away in front and almost out of earshot, however it would probably look very different from a car than on horseback.

During one of the pre-rally discussions with my navigator, Steve Suckling, it had been decided that he would call out double arrowed dangerous corners to help curb my enthusiasm and in addition any corner that he was certain he knew, as either a hairpin, "90" or "45". In the event we were halfway through Swallovellets and I was just heading for a gateway when Steve shouted: ". . . all on left." "What?" was the reply; "There's a big wall on your left?" "Oh." But by this time I was through the gateway and heading straight on like all racing drivers in the forest with full lock and not even a wheel turning. "Sorry," said Steve; "Shit, what a mess"; replies the round,-roundy.

When we eventually reached the end of the stage it was mutually agreed that the less we said the better, and my frequent expletives certainly didn't call for a reply of any sort

I hear that the RS2000 is a bit nose heavy and should not be yumped with too much enthusiasm as the resulting damage to the front end can be severe, so the advice to be careful of the jumps on Spruce Drive was noted with a degree of sincerity. Although I had never seen this part before I reasoned that it would be instantly recognizable. which indeed it was. The 90° left on to it was accomplished in an acceptable slide, repeatedly satisfying when the corner is surrounded by spectators. I could tell from the avenue of trees narrowing in the distance that this was indeed 'it.' However the road itself was only about 100 yards long and was unfolding, like one of those simulators, as the spectators gently moved aside. Shortly afterwards came the fairly obvious yump, but I must have been going very slowly for the car only just left the ground and full power was instantly applied at the relief of having cleared yet another obstacle to finishing the rally intact. You can imagine my surprise as I felt us being launched into thin air . . . "keep your legs together; lean forward; toes up! . . ." At the high point of the flight a dozen flash cameras pierce through my eyes to the back of my head. Before I ever hit the road again I was aware that the car wasn't. straight for the ten yard strip that I had kindly been allowed by the spectators and this was rapidly increasing. The mind boggles at what might have happened if someone had gone off in a big way at this point.

It has been said before, but it must be repeated again and again, the accident will happen, and when it does the resulting echoes will be heard for a decade or more. As things stand at present the organisers are obliged to have insurance cover against any claim by a spectator, but once there had been a substantial claim will this insurance still be available? If it is, at what cost The implications are obvious.

At about this stage my driving took on a ragged style and the remaining stages to the lunch halt were rather erratic. Part of this was due to a broken shock absorber which was changed in the service area before the Parc Ferme.

When the results for the first half appeared (how thay can be gathered in such a short time I don't know) my mood changed dramatically. Up to this point I had been rather doubtful about the wisdom of taking to the woods. I am glad to say that there was no disgrace and I was actually leading our target car by about a minute.

While some people find it very difficult to remember a stretch of road, I pride myself on being able to do so in some detail after only one passage and I was therefore very optimistic about the afternoon which would largely be a duplication of the morning. The first stage to follow the break was identical to the morning but felt very much smoother and relaxed but surprisingly the elapsed time was four seconds greater. This I put down to the knowledge obtained from the first run. Instead of making the run faster, the tendency is for one to remember the bad corners and as such these are entered at a lower speed than before — in many cases unnecessarily so — hence the more relaxed run but the slower time. I even had time to think of Jackie Stewart in the context of circuit safety, when halfway through the stage, lurking in the brambles, there was a tractor facing the oncoming traffic. Not that a tractor is any more or less resilient than a tree, but this one was fitted with a fore-end loader which in turn had pallet forks on it, which had been left raised to about middle windscreen position! The seasoned rally driver probably never even noticed its presence but I did wonder what the G.P.D.A. might have said.

The tail went well out, but instead of coming back, the whole car fell off the road into the ditch, which was both deep and wet.

Throughout the event I had spent a lot of time in the smooth sided ditches that border nearly every Forestry Commission track. It is these ditches that very often prevent the competing car hiting trees, because if you do exit from a corner too fast they take over and cradle the car until you both recover your composure, where upon you appear to be spat out with a certain amount of distain and if action is not sufficiently quickly taken you become engulfed on the opposite side, which to the inexperienced can lead to a rather tedious and interrupted passage doen the next straight. It was indeed the long straights that I had feared most. and in the event I was proved right. Once in top gear and approaching 90 mph I can only say that I found it very frightening to feel the back end being pulled into the soft verges. I have since discovered that the racing shock absorbers with which this car was still fitted at the rear do tend to aggravate a tail happy situation and I look forward to proper equipment. Those ditches are so helpful at low speeds and frightening at the other end of the scale. They finally cost me several places, for, right, at the end of the penultimate stage there was an 'S' bend. As I entered the first part the lights picked out the second, and at once I knew there would be trouble. As I took my foot off the power in horror, so the tail came right round to leave the car travelling at a right angle. Somehow it all came back again and the tail went out on the other side which allowed the car to flow nicely through the second part, and there, not 200 yards away was the finish of the stage. A great feeling of elation overcame me, and I was eventually aware of my genius and that from this point all would be perfection. On came full power, and I could see the spectators applauding. The tail went well out, but instead of coming back, the whole car fell off the road into the ditch, which was both deep and wet. Worst of all, progress up the ditch was barred by a fallen tree and I had to stop and sink, all within a mere 100 yards of the finish. It was over a minute before we were once more on our way.

The last stage was the longest and for much of the way was totally devoid of lemmings (neé spectators) which I am sure contributed to the pleasure derived. I know I shall remember for a long time the satisfaction of getting nearly all that 13 minutes right.

The tight hairpin that flicked the back of the car around; the undoubted pleasure of catching and passing another competitor; the discovery that there was enough power in second to avoid the time wasting use of first and for the first time that day I could change gear without 'crashing' through the box. Finally there was that last downhill hairpin to the left that was deliberately approached on a full left lock and rounded with a touch of right . . . 'Hombre, que mas queres?'

All in all I was pleased with the final result which was 31st overall and 8th in class. My target car went faster and faster and took 22nd and 4th in class with an elapsed time of 96.47 minutes by my 98.03, and the class was won by Tony Pond in 91.47. I will be back all right.

"I find that I can go as fast on the first lap of a race as I can any other time during the race. I call it going fast quickly."

Competing in a Grand Prix is a two-stage balancing act. First I have to get my car balanced so that it handles to my satisfaction and then I have to get myself balanced mentally. And getting the car balanced was the thing that I failed to do in South Africa. The result was that I started 12th on the grid. That really upset me because it deprived me of one of my racing advantages.

I find that I can go as fast on the first lap of a race as I can any other time during the race. I call it going fast quickly. Now that's fine if I'm on the first or second row, but back where I was there was not a chance of me lighting my touch paper and getting moving — not with all that traffic about.

You'd be surprised at the number of drivers who "feel their way" for the first two or three laps and then work up to their optimum speed. Jackie Stewart was another "instant flyer" and Niki Lauda does it too, although I suspect helped a little by his Ferrari engine.

It doesn't matter how hard a driver tries to divorce himself from the pressures of racing in his own country; those thousands of screaming fans and the local press do have an effect.

Normally I'm more keyed up for practice than I am for the race itself. The race is a situation which I know I can cope with so that doesn't bother me. But practice is a challenge of a different sort, requiring a different sort of concentration, and frankly I find I'm in a much bigger twitch during practice than I am before the race.

For all sorts of reasons I failed to get the car balanced — not least of all that when South African Airways collected an unexpected load of passengers in Las Palmas they off-loaded some of the cargo to arrive at the correct weight load. The cargo they off-loaded was my rear suspension units and Andretti's nose cone. That's the way it goes sometimes.

So all I could do at that stage was to set about balancing myself for the contest. That simply is a two-part receipt of patience and aggression. Two very obvious qualities, but two that don't blend very easily. If you load in too much aggression you wind up in the hedge at the first corner and if you dial in too much patience you wind up being passed on all sides.

I'd got myself pretty well balanced by the time the race started. I knew it was going to be something of an elbowing match all the way down to the first corner, which is quite a long way and you get pretty close to maximum speed even from a standing start.

I was determined that I wasn't going to kiss wheels with anyone and make a fool of myself in front of the home crowd. The enthusiasm of the crowd really does get to drivers at times. At Kyalami we did a parade lap standing in the backs of open sports cars and the tremendous cheers I got from the home fans really did get to me. They obviously wanted to see a repeat performance of last year. I knew that there was no way I could do that from where I was, but I became even more determined not to let them down by doing anything silly.

I think we'd all expected the race to be a big tussle between Niki and James but it didn't work out like that. Niki just got up and went when the flag dropped. It was like he was in a category of his own. Within two laps he'd pulled out over 200 metres and that's pretty well the way it stayed for the distance.

Brambilla came through the arms and elbows thrash best in the scramble for the first corner and he managed to stay between Niki and James for three laps but once James was through the pattern at the front was set for the duration. The action came in the group fighting for the rest of the points.

My teammate Patrick lost the lot under braking and went round like a top taking Ronnie off with him round about lap 15. Ronnie was running in a strong fifth place, the highest he's been for a year or more and he was more than a little disappointed in being knocked off in his first March race when he was going so well.

I worked my way through from 12th and at one point I found myself squeezing past Brambilla only to see the next man up front was Regazzoni. Two of the tougest guys in racing. There I was feeling like the pastrami in a Mafia sandwich.

I managed to get right behind Regga and only then did I remember just how noisy the Ferrari's are. They are deafening. Eventually Clay's engine gave a little puff of smoke and I ducked through into what felt like a valley of silence. That was my move into fourth place and that was where I stayed until the end. Too far behind Mass to do anything about him and far enough in front of John Watson to be comfortable.

I was really quite pleased to be fourth having come up from twelfth. Nowhere as good as a win but at least it was my second points scoring race this year — fifth in Brazil and fourth in South Africa. At least we're moving up the chart and not down it.

I thought Emerson did a fantastic job. He came off the 11th row of the grid and in the late stages of the race he was running sixth before an engine blew. Brambilla sacrificed his fifth place when he had to stop for a fuel top-up with just a few laps to go but he and Ronnie certainly reinforced the impression that the March cars are really very competitive indeed.

Niki still seems to be able to do that magic trick of getting to the flag first and the McLarens seem to have the little bit more than the rest of the Cosworth "kit" cars. But the group that chases the McLarens is really very close and competitive. Niki may make it look easy out front but believe me it's far from easy working in the bunch that chases him. I do believe that this is going to be the most competitive season for a very long time.

Patrick flew straight back from Kyalami to carry on with the test programme for the six wheeler and at Silverstone on the Thursday before the Race of Champions he was regularly clocking times better than pole position for last year's GP. That's the good news. The better news is that both he and Derek Gardner are confident that there's more to come.

The six wheeler is certainly proving to have both straight line and cornering advantages and the plan at the moment is to carry on testing with Patrick's car and build up a second car in time for both of us to debut the pair of them for the Spanish Grand Prix. We're all tremendously encouraged with its early showing and are hopefully that it could be the answer to Mr Ferrari's De Dion and the McLaren's six speed gearbox.

For sure its groing to wipe the smile off the faces of the people who laughed at it and called it a publicity gimmick when it was announced.

At the Race of Champions people kept asking me how I managed to pull out a pole position that was 2.5s better than the next man. It was just one of those days when everything went right. It had a lot to do with getting the tyres to work at their most efficient temperature — and that meant getting them to run warmer than most other people. The trick there was partly a matter of setting up the suspension and partly driving technique.

No Excuses

It was so good in practice that I was able to flick the car as we came into Paddock Bend and keep the power on all the way down the hill. It's a long time since I've had adhesion like that. It was so good that I was feeling tyre vibration all down the hill. The pitch of vibration was so strong that I could feel it in my kidneys; my eyes were oscillating and I was losing vision momentarily and, at times, I couldn't draw breath. When that's happening you know you've got real adhesion! It's not a very pleasant physical thing really, but it's worth going through for the end result.

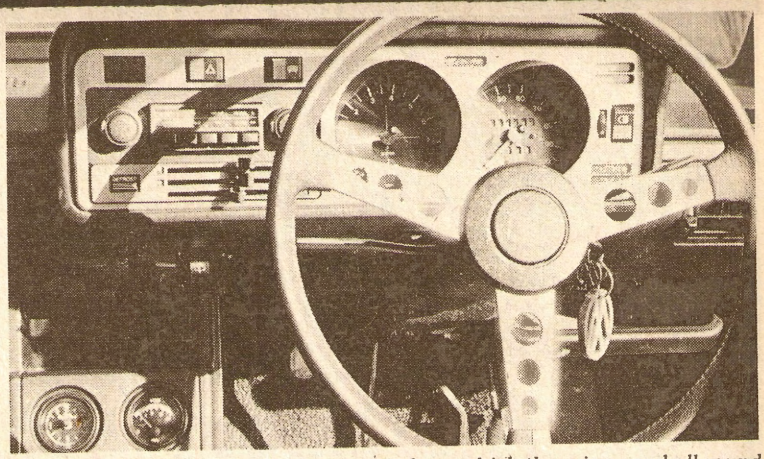
The race . . . no excuses. Driver error. I got swamped at the start and wound up fifth after the jumpers from the row behind flew past. I picked the places back without any real drama. I wasn't charging; there were forty laps to go and I knew that I could run the thing in my own time. Then on the lap that I took over the lead I came into Dingle Dell with a clear 100 yard advantage, braked and began to turn and nothing happened. I came off the brakes, tried again but the car didn't respond. We went straight off into the Armco without ever deviating from our straight line course. Maybe I overbraked the corner, maybe it was a combination of overbraking with a heavy fuel load on a damp track. But whatever it was it all amounts to that fact that the man in charge didn't get it right, and that adds up to a driver error which, if nothing else, proves that we're human.

The sad thing is that it was a terrible let down for the team who were looking for a good win, but even sadder is that the car is a write off and we've got to build a brand new car from a tub in time for the Long Brach GP. And all that puts back the build programme for the second six wheeler in time for the Spanish.

Scheckter began the Race of Champions weekend in fine style by taking Evening News 100 bottles of champagne in the first practice session.

by John Bolster

The Scirocco is a two door coupe with a large access hatch incorporating the rear window.



The Scirocco has comfortable front seats from which there is a good all round view and the instruments are easy to read.

VW Scirocco: fun for money

I never re-read my previous road tests, or anyone else's for that matter, because I want to approach each car with an unbiased mind. So, I can't recollect what I said about the Volkswagen Scirocco when I tested it in 1.5-litre form. Yet, I can remember that I particularly enjoyed my week of "ownership" and so I took over the latest 1.6-litre version with a sense of pleasant anticipation.

Once again, I have had a very enjoyable week, with a sporting little car that has a delightful personality. In increasing the engine size, the designers have taught it to drink two-star fuel and they have also ensured that it complies with new emission requirements. Though no claim for increased maximum power output is made, there is a useful improvement in the torque curve, which gives more vivid acceleration and useful low-speed flexibility.

The car is a 2-door coupé with a large access hatch incorporating the rear window, the folding rear seat giving some advantages of estate-type bodies. The design was by Giorgio Giugiaro and is typical of his work, with plenty of straight lines and a light interior. There is a certain shortage of space, the driver having barely adequate leg room if he is tall, while the restricted rear head room makes that seat more suitable for children. There is plenty of luggage space.

The front suspension is MacPherson, with Audi's queer geometry, and the two brake circuits are coupled diagonally. All this is splendid when your front tyre bursts or one brake breaks, they say, but I am delighted to report that neither of these things happened to me, so I shall have to take their word for it. The steering is by rack and pinion and the rear suspension is of the trailing arm type, a transverse steel member serving to brace the arms and to act as an anti-roll torsion bar.

The larger engine has plenty of torque and pulls away well from low speeds in top gear, which contributes to fuel economy. Nevertheless, the carburisation of the test car left something to be desired. Starting from cold was instantaneous, but during the warm-up period one heard the rhythmic misfire that is indicative of rich mixture. Even when hot, the engine tended to stall when the car had been braked down after a speed burst. These things were presumably a matter of routine carburettor servicing, but I must report what I find.

The engine likes to rev on the gears and gives good acceleration figures. 0-30 mph in 3.0s with front-wheel drive proves that the traction is exceptional, and the rapid gearchange contributes to the lively performance. I would call the engine eager rather than effortless but it willingly gets on with the job. In an ordinary saloon, one might ask for more silence, and the Scirocco certainly lacks the exceptional refinement of the Polo, but in a coupé of sporting character it's all part of the act.

There is no need to rev the engine excessively as it has plenty of punch after changing up at medium speed. The sturdy 5-bearing unit does not rumble when accelerating through the lower ranges and is equally happy at high cruising speeds. A maximum speed of 110 mph is suggested in the firm's technical literature, but "my" car was disinclined to exceed 107 mph, which seems fair enough from 1588 cc.

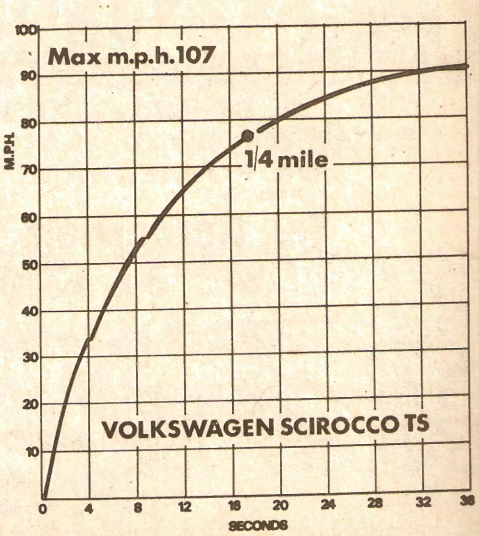
A certain amount of road noise is heard on bad surfaces but the level of wind noise is low. The ride is fairly hard at low speeds but smoothes out nicely as the car gets into its stride. There's something about the roadholding and handling that encourage the driver to enjoy himself. If the car is really flung into corners, it seems to skitter about a little and become slightly untidy, but it sticks down extremely well and gives one great confidence. There is some roll, but this remains quite moderate. Driven fairly hard, the car gives a largely neutral response.

The time is long past when sports cars were uncomfortable and sparsely equipped. The Scirocco has comfortable front seats, from which there is a good all-round view and the instruments are easy to read in daylight or darkness. The heating and cool air ventilation are satisfactory and the windscreen wipers have an intermittent setting, while another wiper and washer look after the rear window. The four headlights are very powerful and the test car had fog lights in addition.

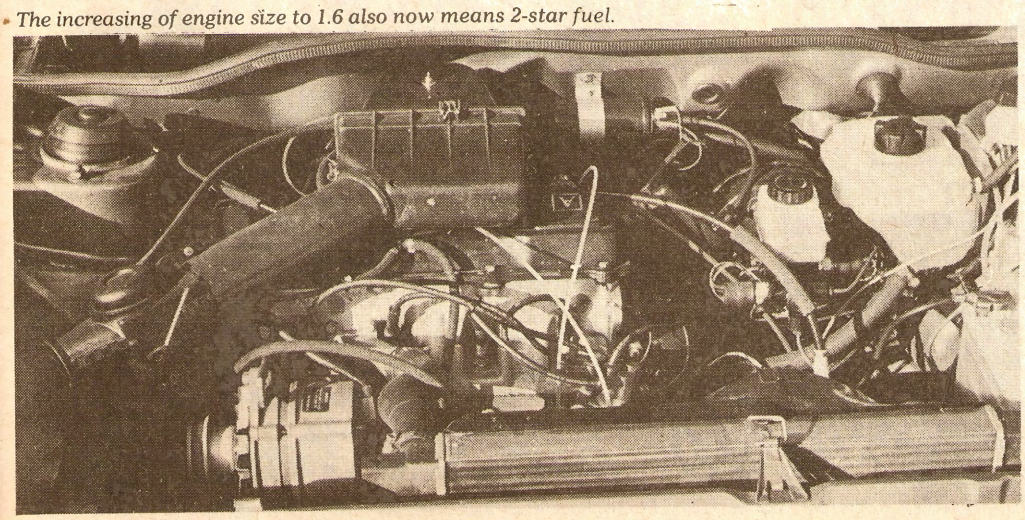
Moderate fuel consumption is a feature of the Scirocco and most drivers should do better than 30 mpg, except in London or Paris, or when taking on the Alfas and BMWs at their own game. This is a car that encourages fast and enthusiastic driving, the brakes showing no sign of fading during sustained hard motoring.

The Volkswagen Scirocco TS is far from cheap, but the man who buys it will get a lot of fun for his money. It is one of the new wave of sports cars which prove that front-wheel drive can be just as rewarding as the classic conception for this class of vehicle. Above all, it has personality, so that when you have several cars in your garage, the little TS is the one you pick for an unpremeditated journey.

Car Tested: Volkswagen Scirocco TS 2+2 coupé, price
Engine: Four-cylinders 79.5 × 80 mm (1588 cc). Compression ratio 8.2:1. 85 bhp at 5600 rpm. Belt-driven overhead camshaft. Solex twin-choke downdraught carburettor.
Transmission: Single dry plate clutch. 4-speed synchromesh gearbox with central remote control, ratios: 0.97, 1.37, 1.94 and 3.45 to 1. Helical spur gear final drive, ratio 3.9 to 1.
Chassis: Combined steel body and chassis. Independent MacPherson front suspension. Rack and pinion steering. Rear suspension by trailing arms with integral torsion member and coil springs. Servo assisted disc/drum brakes. Bolt-on disc wheels, fitted 175/70 SR tyres.
Equipment: 12-volt lighting and starting. Speedometer, rev-counter, oil pressure, water temperature, and fuel gauges. Voltmeter, clock, heating, demisting, and ventilation system with heated rear window. Two-speed and hesitation windscreen wipers and washers. Flashing direction indicators with hazard warning. Reversing lights. Extra: rear wiper and washer. Fog lamps.
Dimensions: Wheelbase 7 ft 10½ in. Track 4 ft 6¾ in/4 ft 5 in. Overall length 12 ft 8½ in. Width 5 ft 4 in. Weight 16¾ cwt.
Performance: Maximum speed 107 mph. Speeds in gears: third 77 mph, second 55 mph, first 33 mph. Standing quarter-mile 17.5s. Acceleration: 0-30 mph 3.0s, 0-50 mph 6.8s, 0-60 mph 10.2 s, 0-80 mph 19.8 s.
Fuel Consumption: 28 to 33 mpg.



The increasing of engine size to 1.6 also now means 2-star fuel.



Derrick Brunt's BMW 3.0 Si heads the Radio One field from Ivan Dutton's Capri and John Brindley's ex-Jock Robertson Mazda (53). Phil Dowsett was the eventual winner.

SILVERSTONE

Tyres are the only problem

More than 4,000 paying spectators braved the damp, cold and grey weather to watch the first of the BRDC's Silverstone Championship meetings last Sunday. They were treated to seven exciting races marred only by competitors' indecision over suitable for the inclement weather. In the opening round of the Shellsport F3 Championship Rupert Keegan made it two wins in as many weekends by beating Mike Young (Modus M1) in his BAF March-Novamotor 753. The Radio One round was won in fine style by Phil Dowsett's Capri, seizing victory from Derrick Brunt's BMW 3.0 Si on the last corner. For his drive Dowsett was the deserving winner of the Allied Polymer Group's Driver of the Day Award. The other races were won by Peter Cooke's Harrison Mk 7B (Tricentrol Clubman's opening round) and John Bright's Royale-Minister RP21 (Brush Fusegear FF opening round).

Such was the entry for the Brush Fusegear FF qualifier that three heats were needed. Following a rainy practice the track was still soaked for the first heat which Rad Dougall (Kismet Royale-Scholar RP21) led from start to finish despite heavy pressure from Derek Daly's Van Diemen-Minister RF76 resulting in Daly almost understeering off on the last corner, but he held it to lead Mike Blanchet (doing great things in his old Lotus 61M again) and Matthew Argenti's Van Diemen RF76. The second heat saw new Irish import Bernard Devaney (Hawke-Scholar DL15) lead away and build up a cushion until a spin on lap six dropped him to third. This let Silverstone expert Jim Walsh bring his Royale-Scholar RP21 through to an easy win. John Bright had an early spin at Becketts but promoted himself well up to second at the end in his Royale-Minister RP21, bringing Devaney in his wake in the later laps.

The third heat, with the track now drying on the line, saw the best dicing as David Heale (Reynard-Rowland R75) led early on pursued by Rod Bremner (Crossle-Rowland 25F replacing the damaged 30F), Irishman David Kennedy (Crossle-Minster 30F) and Derek Warwick (Hawke-Scholar DL15). These four got very close (too close at times!) until Kennedy made full use of errant backmarkers to break away in the closing laps to win while Heale fought back after dropping to fourth to take second from Bremner and a wobbly Warwick.

The final came at the end of the meeting and was shortened to eight laps due to failing light. It was a hell of a scramble at the front but John Bright was the most prominent with Bernard Devaney, Derek Daly, Jim Walsh and David Kennedy; the Irishmen all trying to get a pre-St. Patrick's Day win! Whether caused by the bad light or whatever, much 'physical contact' ensued and nose cones and sundry body panels littered the circuit. Bright however shone and seized victory by outbraking Devaney into Woodcote on the last lap, with Daly in third (his nose cone at a jaunty angle), Walsh fourth (after a spin) and Kennedy fifth with the front of the car smashed and the body rubbing on the ground! Such was the competition that the first ten finished within 4.6s of each other.

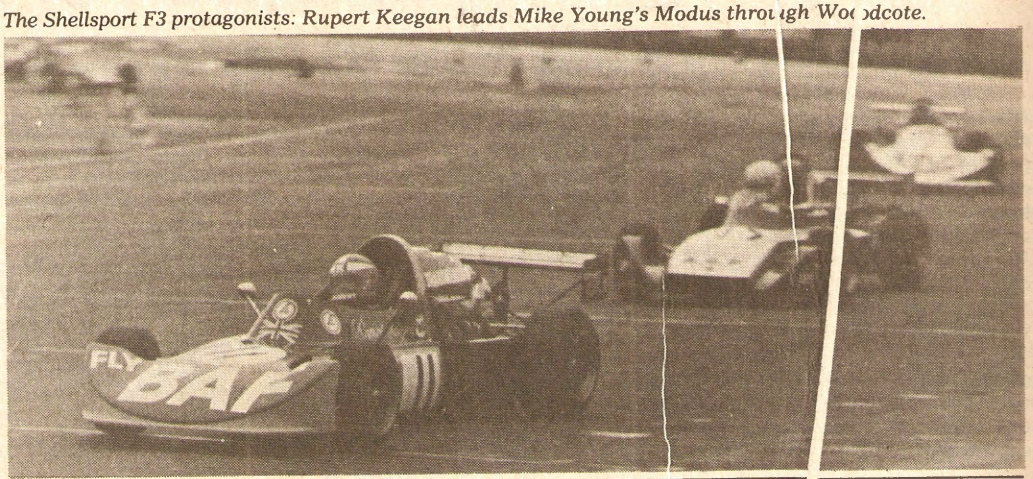
Probably accounting for the presence of many of the spectators were the Radio One Production Saloons. No one was to be disappointed. The battle for the lead was a three cornered affair between the Capris of Phil Dowsett and Ivan Dutton and Derrick Brunt's Manitou BMW 3.0 Si. Dowsett's Industrial Control Services car led Dutton's Century Oils version early on as Brunt made a relaxed start but the BMW forged to the front on lap eight. Dowsett did not give up though and followed closely slipping up the inside under braking for Woodcote on the last lap. They went round the corner side by side with Dowsett winning by a headlamp trim in a breathtaking finish. Dutton sat and watched the fun in third ahead of the "Family Class" winner John Brindlay, well clear of his opposition in the ex-Robertson Mazda RX3. The "Sporting Class" went to Nick Whiting's Magnum which beat Jeff Allam's similar car. The Economy cars were headed by Danny Alderton's Honda Civic which somehow avoided a penalty for setting off at least three seconds before the green light! Bob Saunders' Dolomite was in a position to challenge for the overall leadership when he spun at Becketts at mid-distance. He eventually recovered to finish sixth.

There was a difference of opinion about the best tyres for the Shellsport F3 race. Pole man Formula Italia champion, Bruno Giacomelli, elected to use wets on his works March-Novamotor 763 while fellow front row men, Chris Barnett (March-Novamotor 753) and Rupert Keegan chose slicks. Of the twelve starters four chose wets. At the start Keegan made a flyer, the outside of the grid being on the dry line, and led Mike Young (Modus-Novamotor M1), Giacomelli and Barnett. Barnett lost it at Becketts trying an outbraking move and had to retire soon after with gearbox trouble. Giacomelli soon found his choice of tyres to be wrong as he oversteered more and more as the tread smeared itself across the tyre. Keegan and Young meanwhile pulled clear, Young getting very close under braking but not ruffling the reformed Keegan. In fact it was eventually Young who lost it, spinning sideways on the last lap trying to pass at Woodcote. Keegan made no mistake and scored a deserving win. Young recovered to hold second from Giacomelli, Willi Siller's, wet shod Modus-Novamotor M1, Mike Wrigley's slick shod March-Nova twincam 743 and Corsican Claude Cuicci's wet mounted Supernova-Neil Brown twincam SF3 (which was having its first race).

Tyres were also to affect the Tricentrol Clubman's round which followed. Most runners chose slicks but two notable runners had some good intermediates to use — these being Peter Cooke (Harrison Mk. 7B) and David Orbell (U2 Mk. 16). At the start though Malcolm Jackson (U2 Mk. 14) led as Cooke was on the third row after the wet practice. Cooke soon showed what a superb car the new Harrison is and led after two laps on his Firestone B36S, pulling away to a 15s win. Chris Greville-Smith's much revised de Dion axled Phantom P76, held second early on but encountered trouble stopping for the corners and had a couple of moments. This let Orbell into a safe second from Steve Russell (U2 Mk. 17B), Alan Webb (U2 Mk. 18) and Greville-Smith, who finished in a bunch, from Martin Young (U2 Mk. 11/14B) and Martin Mansell (U2 Mk. 16), who was another to spin a couple of times. The B sport class was won again by Alex Ferrada's Ace Plant U2 Mk. 16B from Don Farthing's U2 Mk. 16E, who set fastest lap in the class.

PETER RICHINGS

The Shellsport F3 protagonists: Rupert Keegan leads Mike Young's Modus through Woodcote.



Brush Fusegear Formula Ford Championship Round. Heat one (8 laps): 1, Rad Dougall (Royale-Scholar RP21), 9m 47.0s, 78.89 mph; 2, Derek Daly (Van Diemen-Minister RF76), 9m 48.0s; 3, Mike Blanchet (Lotus-Minister 61M); 9m 52.0s; 4, Matthew Argenti (Van Diemen-Scholar RF76), 9m 57.4s. **Fastest lap:** Dougall and Blanchet 1m 12.0s, 80.40 mph.

Heat Two (8 laps): 1, Jim Walsh (Royale-Scholar RP21), 9m 45.0s, 79.16 mph; 2, John Bright (Royale-Minister RP21), 9m 49.8s; 3, Bernard Devaney (Hawke-Scholar DL15), 9m 52.8s; 4, Richard Wills (MRE-Oselli 75F), 9m 53.6s. **Fastest lap:** Devaney, 1m 9.8s, 82.93 mph.

Heat Three (8 laps): 1, David Kennedy (Crossle-Minister 30F), 9m 31.2s, 81.07 mph; 2, David Heale (Reynard-Rowland R75), 9m 33.2s; Rod Bremner (Crossle-Rowland 25F), 9m 34.0s; 4, Derek Warwick (Hawke-Scholar DL15), 9m 34.2s. **Fastest lap:** Kennedy and Heale, 1m 9.6s, 83.17 mph.

Final (8 laps): 1 John Bright (Royale-Minister RP21), 9m 5.2s, 84.66 mph; 2, Bernard Devaney (Hawke-Scholar DL15), 9m 5.2s; 3, Derek Daly (Van Diemen-Minister RF76), 9m 5.2s; 4, Jim Walsh (Royale-Scholar RP21, 9m 7.6s; 5, David Kennedy (Crossle-Minister 30F), 9m 7.8s; 6, Mike Blanchet (Lotus-Minister 61M), 9m 8.6s. **Fastest lap:** Walsh and Richard Wills (MRE-Oselli 75F), 1m 5.6s, 88.24 mph.

BBC Radio One Production Saloon Championship Round (10 laps). Overall: 1, Phil Dowsett (3.0 Ford Capri), 12m 55.4s, 74.66 mph; 2, Derrick Brunt (3.0 BMW Si), 12m 55.4s; 3, Ivan Dutton (3.0 Ford Capri), 12m 58.2s; 4, John Brindley (2.3 Mazda RX3), 13m 5.2s. **Over £2,400:** 1, Dowsett; 2, Brunt; 3, Dutton. **Fastest lap:** Dowsett, 1m 15.4s, 76.77 mph. **£2,001-£2,400:** 1, Nick Whiting (2.3 Vauxhall Magnum), 71.16 mph; 2, Jeff Allam (2.3 Vauxhall Magnum), 3, Malcolm Prior (2.3 Vauxhall Magnum). **Fastest lap:** Whiting, 1m 18.0s, 74.21mph. **£1,601-£2,000:** 1, Brindley, 73.72 mph; 2, Eric Cook (2.3 Mazda RX3); 3, Jeremy Walton (2.3 Mazda RX2). **Fastest lap:** Brindley, 1m 16.8s, 75.37 mph. **Up to £1,600:** 1, Danny Alderton (1.2 Honda Civic), 67.61 mph; 2, Pete Smith (1.2 Honda Civic); 3, Peter Jopp (1.3 Mini GT). **Fastest lap:** Smith, 1m 23.4s, 69.41 mph. **(equals record).**

Shellsport Formula Three Championship Round 1. (12 laps): 1, Rupert Keegan (March-Novamotor/Toyota 743), 11m 56.5s, 96.93 mph; 2, Mike Young (Modus-Novamotor/Toyota M1), 12m 3.8s; 3, Bruno Giacomelli (March-Novamotor/Toyota 763), 12m 19.8s; 4, Willi Siller (Modus-Novamotor M1), 12m 25.0s; 5, Mike Wrigley (March-Novamotor/Ford tc 743), 12m 26.6s; Claude Cuicci (Supernova-Neil Brown/Ford tc), 12m 27.2s. **Fastest lap:** Keegan 58.2s, 99.46 mph.

Tricentrol Clubman's Sports Championship Round (10 laps): Overall and Class A: 1, Peter Cooke (Harrison-Cosworth Mk. 7B), 10m 26.8s, 92.35 mph; 2, David Orbell (U2-Holbay Mk. 16), 10m 41.8s; 3, Steve Russell (U2-Davron Mk. 17B), 10m 50.4s; 4, Alan Webb (U2 Davron-Mk 18), 10m 52.6s. **Fastest lap:** Cooke, 1m 1.0s, 94.89 mph. **Class B:** 1, Alex Ferrada (U2-Davron Mk 16B) 84.33 mph; 2, Don Farthing (U2-Holbay Mk. 16E); 3, Keith Money (U2-Davron Mk. 15). **Fastest lap:** Farthing, 1m 5.8s, 87.97 mph.

Sandro Munari's perform ance over all stages, from dry tarmac to treacherously slippery loose, verged on the ultimate copy-book display.

RALLY OF PORTUGAL **WCR ROUND THREE**

The Magnificent Seven

By IAN SADLER **Photos by COLIN TAYLOR PRODUCTIONS**

Just another demonstration of the Lancia Stratos's near-total domination of international rallying? The Port Wine Rally of Portugal was, unfortunately, little more, Sandro Munari (yawn) and his green, white and yellow Alitalia Stratos (yawn) drove mechanically round the country to win (yawn) by a totally predictable and well-maintained margin. On the other hand, the Toyota Celica of Ove Andersson and Arne Hertz put in an incredible performance chasing Munari home, even though it was plain that the very-professionally managed Japanese car could only have won by default. Andersson's drive was one of the few highlights. Part of the reason for there being a general lack of atmosphere for a world championship rally must have been due to the lack of works, and good private, support. It was, in reality, no more than a "seven car" rally and after the first day's motoring this was reduced to a grand total of three international works entries. The political unrest in Portugal (thankfully not in evidence during the event) can be fairly blamed for the poor showing of foreigners, perhaps coupled with the fact that just about wherever the massive Alitalia Lancia entourage appear, one is left wondering who will be left with the scraps. The green-jacketed Italians appeared to outnumber policemen by about three-to-one in Portugal last week.

So, after keeping virtually all of Portugal waiting for three full days, there was very little last-ditch drama save for Rafaelle Pinto's electrical-fire misfortune. A lack of mechanical excitement was more than made-up for, however, by the sheer spectacle of the final night's concentrated loop, with an unprecedented number of spectators making more noise and endangering themselves to new-found heights of lunacy. It was all good stuff for the predominantly young watchers; their way of becoming involved in the rally that had been awarded so much publicity in the preceding days. Only the sinister barking and banging of the approaching non-musical 24-valve-engined Lancia Stratoses was sufficient to keep the revelling crowds at bay — even though both were undoubtedly by far the safest and most predictable cars in the hills behind Estoril that night.

The weather played an important part in proceedings, Portugal suffering more than many other European countries of a similar latitude at this time of the year due to its Atlantic seafront. While Estoril was bathed in moderately warm sunshine, further north and inland, the rally cars were battling with steady rain, thick fog, and snow. In places it was more reminiscent of an RAC Rally. The predominance of group one vehicles is also significant in such a pace notes event, mechanical breakages accounting for many of the retirements, though where inbuilt weaknesses in competing vehicles and driver error takes over is a moot point. Portuguese drivers often appear to be strong on flamboyance but produce an occasional, expensive, lack of improvisation at crucial moments.

ENTRY

The seven cars comprising the works interest were headed by the Munari/Maiga Stratos with the Toyota of team manager Andersson and Arne Hertz at two. Walter Rohrl/Claes Billstam were next on the list with the first of two impressively turned-out Opel Euro Handler Team Kadetts, the other car crewed by Anders Kullang and Claes Andersson. Both cars were using the latest 16 valve, 240 bhp engines. The Stratos of Pinto/Bernachini, the Toyota Levin of Hannu Mikkola/Jean Todt and the rented works Alpine A310 of Jean Ragnotti/Jacques Jaubert made up the magnificent seven.

Other entries of some interest included the rather slow (certainly by Irish standards) Porsche Carrera of Antonio Borges; Austrians Goerg Fischer, with a group one Datsun Violet and Franz Wittman with a group four BMW 2002 Tii. The total British contingent was, sadly, of only two cars with a Leyland-Portugal entered Morris Marina — the familiar Abingdon car — for Sandy Lawson and Dorothy Selby-Boothroyd. As the only ladies present, they were obviously highly rated for the ladies prize. The other Britishers came in the familiar bespectacled forms of Keith Billows and Martin Holmes; their car a Keith Billows prepared RS2000, entered just days before the start by J. C. Withers when it was not possible for Robin Hillyar to take up his Withers entry.

Apart from these two crews — neither destined to finish — the seven quick ones and the aforementioned others, there was very little else to break the massed-ranks of locally entered Datsuns, Toyotas and Mazdas. There was, strangely, even a diesel engined car competing — the Peugeot 504 of Santos Pereira which, though it could not win a non-existent diesel class, only had one other class-competitor to contend with. As it turned out, neither finished.

RALLY

After painless scrutineering on Wednesday, the competing cars made their way the few kilometres from Rally Headquarters at Cascais (currently billeting several hundred Angolan refugees) to the Estoril Autodrome ready for a 9 am start on Thursday morning and the first of the three sections. This first day was to last a total of fifteen hours, the cars travelling a most tortuous route to Oporto, in order to tackle the 12 scheduled stages and, as a priority, to have the rally visit the sponsors' home town.

After a fresh and sunny start, the first two

Ove Andersson spent the rally at 10/10ths with Pinto's Stratos as his target.

stages came in quick succession in the Sintra area behind Estoril. Just six hundred metres into this first tarmac stage Walter Rohrl was out of the rally, his Opel coasting to a halt after the central propshaft bearing sheared, allowing the flailing shaft to savage the axle. This is not a particularly new problem and Rohrl and Billstam were more than slightly distressed to have suffered this failure. The Kadett still employs a standard prop-shaft and with the power of their four valve engine coupled to fat slick tyres the failure was not really a total surprise. Kullang's car survived the stage, recording a time 12s down on Munari, but the shaft was to be checked thereafter at every opportunity. Of course, the slight wiry-haired Italian superstar was quickest, leaving his team-mate Pinto behind at precisely one second per kilometre.

Obviously, Munari's practice accident three weeks previously hadn't disturbed him in the slightest, even though his hire car had been destroyed with Munari requiring three stitches in a head-wound. For this treatment he was flown home for his three personal physicians (including brother) to administer the necessary needlework. Following the two Lancias was Ragnotti with the A310, managing well with the carburettor aspirated two-valve engined machine, despite less than perfect handling.

Although the first-stage results were entirely predictable, it was one down and three to go with Rohrl's demise. Just fifteen minutes later as the leaders were tackling the second spectator-packed stage, the 6.5 km Penhina, the times showed that the second car on the road, Andersson, had beaten Pinto's Stratos. What was more, Hannu Mikkola's Levin recorded an identical time to Andersson, so poor Pinto was somewhat disgraced.

A tedious one and threequarter hour run brought the cars to the third stage, still with the weather dry but no longer intensely sunny. Munari clocked his third consecutive quickest time with consumate ease, but more important to Lancia, the threat from Ragnotti was finished when the little Frenchman sailed off the road on a rising-crest right-hand bend. His nearside front tyre had been going soft and it went flat just after the weight of the car came to apply after the crest. The result was not serious, but the excursion did involve the glass fibre body nibbling into the rocks sufficiently to destroy the suspension. Now only five were left, while leading the "other" rally was the group one Opel Kadett GTE of Lisbon driver Meqepe. His drive would continue to impress and he finished a comfortable third, some 45m 11s behind Munari.

Further north, during the afternoon, rain was now falling, dramatically altering the nature of the stages. Hannu Mikkola got no further than the fourth test, his newly built-up Levin clipping a low bridge parapet, flicking the car into the more substantial support pillars before parking itself in the ditch beyond the bridge. Though the car did not look to be extensively damaged, due to the acute angle of the collision the body had twisted and the engine was snug up against the bulkhead. Just four cars left now. On and up-country they travelled, not yet having reached the toughest stages on the itinerary, but the rate of attrition on both loose and smooth stages was well into the figures expected for this rally. It was not until the seventh stage — the nine miles of Bucaco — that disaster struck again; this time falling to Kullang, his Opel suffering a loss of coolant from a head gasket failure and a subsequent cooked engine. Just the two Lancias plus Andersson's Toyota remained and most pundits predicted that Andersson would be the next to be snuffed-out.

After the cars had burbled into Oporto at the end of the first section, beside crowds estimated to have been of six-figure proportion (spectators blocked one 2km section, causing unexpected time penalties to be scrubbed) it was, predictably, Munari on 1h 13m 40s from team-mate Pinto's 1h 14m 36s, with Andersson just two seconds in arrears. Meqepe had a comfortable 58s cushion over Spanish rival, Fernandez, with his group one BMW. Both British entries had made it, Keith Billows comfortably placed in the '20s without the assistance of his service crew who had suffered a blown piston.

Friday was not such a good day to look forward to, with 17 hours of driving, involving 15 rough stages and only one short neutralisation halt. Here were to be found some old favourites like Arganil, a demanding and endless mix of loose, tar, and cobbles. The weather turned atrocious with rain alternating to thick fog at varying altitudes. Less than fifty yards visibility on some stages would mean an interesting, if not somewhat tender time, for the pace-notes experts.

By the time the cars had wearily toiled down to Estoril on Saturday morning (the 15 stage section was topped-off with a three and a half hour main road link section — in Saturday traffic) only 27 cars were officially listed, and four of them were removed for being OTL; including the Leyland Marina which had suffered serious baulking and had missed the boat by just one minute. Keith Billows and Martin Holmes were forced out very near the end of the long and tough Senhora da Graca stage when a rock in the track was flicked up by a front wheel and clouted the bell housing, snapping the retaining bolts.

Incredibly, the effects of snow had proved responsible for the cancellation of two stages in the extreme east when the access route was found to be impassable. This indirectly allowed a much needed opportunity for the patching-up of weary vehicles, Lancia replacing all that they could. Andersson was back ahead of Pinto after the Stratos had been slowed by that perennial problem of finding gears, Pinto having only third for the long Marao stage, dropping an estimated '70-odd seconds. Meqepe was further established, especially after Romaozinho's Citroen GS had broken its gearbox and Fernandez had lost time

Hannu Mikkola and Jean Todt joined the scenery after a promising start.

Pinto, though often not as quick as his team-mate, proved a crowd-favourite.

Portuguese driver "Meqepe" provided an Opel Kadette GTE with its second high group one placing.

on Senhora da Graca with an "off," on an extremely slippery wet tree-bark blanket over the road, before balancing his car on the very edge of the track on the foggy Arganil – admittedly after passing five less adventurous crews.

Now there were just twelve all tarmac stages left, for Saturday night, with the classic 10.5km Sintra being run three times (including a small amount of loose at the start), Peninha four times, Lagoa Azul three times and Alcabideche twice more.

In dry, mild, conditions only two cars retired on this short night's motoring. Munari drove as if on rails, his Stratos not even warming its tyres, like an olden day speeded up film of the "Monte." It was uncanny, apart from the sound. More cruel luck was in store for Pinto however. He was driving brilliantly, his Stratos snaking between the hairpins, tail-out and powering round. His car left a sweet burning smell in its wake. But there was soon a more acrid smell of burning when the electrics went up from the coil until the regulator box was melting too. This cost the previous winner a great deal of time, his maximum sliding him to fourth, behind Meqepe. Andersson was not having the best of drives either; Pinto had been setting very quick times until his trouble, and the Swede was losing fractions all the time due to an elusive fault, believed to have stemmed from the fuel injection, his Toyota cutting to three cylinders for much of the stage driving and intermittently clearing onto four and full song, with a bang to help keep him fully occupied between the rockface and the drops of Sintra and the similarly awe-inspiring others.

So it was over, apart from the popular (for the spectators as well as the sponsors) slalom in front of the stands at the Estoril racing circuit. The very sight of Munari walking down the track, hands in Alitalia ski jacket and cloth cap pulled over his brow, was enough to send the packed stadium into uproar. His demonstration of blue-smoking clutch-booting around the marker cones sent them delirious.

One man not so ecstatic must have been Cesar Torres, Clerk of the Course, and virtually the entire motivating force behind the rally. Until Portugal achieves political stability, he will not be achieving the international entry his fine rally deserves and used to attract. The organisation and results service was superb throughout. Torres never seeming to have any spare moments for even a cat-nap. The whole affair was wasted to a considerable degree this year. Let's hope the situation will soon change for the better.

Port Wine Rally of Portugal
Overall Results

1, S. Munari/S. Maiga (Lancia Stratos), 5h 41m 26s;
2, O. Andersson/A. Hertz (Toyota Celica), 5h 44m 24s;
3, Meqepe/J. Baptista (Opel Kadett GTE), 6h 26m 37s;
4, R. Pinto/A. Bernachini (Lancia Stratos), 6h 33m 54s;
5, S. Mendes/L. Nobre (Opel Ascona), 6h 39m 29s;
6, G. Fischer/H. Gottlielo (Datsun Violet), 6h 40m 20s; 7, G. Salvi/P. Almeida (Ford Escort), 6h 46m 44s; 8, J. Ortigao/P. Abreu (Mazda), 6h 47m 05s; 9, M. Macio/P. Morais (Opel Ascona), 6h 52m 34s; 10, C. Torres/A. Roxo (Mazda), 7h 01m 39s.

Principal retirements . . .

Walter Rohrl: Opel Kadett. Sheared drive-line on first test, 600m from start.
Hannu Mikkola: Toyota Levin. An admitted-to driving misjudgement, resulting in severe mechanical damage on fourth stage.
Jean Ragnotti: Alpine A310. Front tyre puncture resulting in running wide on third test into boulders.
Anders Kullang: Opel Kadett. Engine seizure on seventh stage after head gasket failure.
Fernando Romaozinho: Citroen GS, group four. Gearbox failure on Arganil (1).
Keith Billows: Damage to clutch bell housing causing retirement on Senhora de Graca after making-up several places (to 12th) in Manchester-like fog.
Antonio Borges: Porsche Carrera RS. Drive to fan sheared on Sintra (3).
Benigno Fernandez: BMW 2002Tii. Accident on foggy Arganil (1) terminating inches from a considerable drop.
Franz Wittman: BMW 2002Ti. Low oil pressure (not recording on fascia due to faulty electrics to instruments) leading to blown engine on S11.
Ricardo Munoz: Citroen GS. gp 2. Blew engine in testing and fitted standard unit for event. Still enough power to break a drive-shaft on SS26.

World Championship points

After the Port Wine Rally of Portugal (round three): 1, Lancia 50 points; 2, Opel 32 points; 3, Saab 20 points.

SS1, Lagoa Azul (1) 5.0km
1, Munari/Maiga 2.20; 2, Pinto/Bernachini 2.25; 3, Ragnotti/Jaubert 2.26; 4, Mikkola/Todt 2.28; 5, Andersson/Hertz 2.29.
SS2, Peninha (1) 6.5km
1, Munari/Maiga 4.15; =2, Andersson/Hertz; 3, Mikkola/Todt 4.16; 4, Pinto/Bernachini 4.18; 5, Kullang/Andersson 4.24.
SS3, Montejunto 8.0km
1, Munari/Maiga 5.09; 2, Mikkola/Todt 5.10; 3, Andersson/Hertz 5.15; 4, Pinto/Bernachini 5.21; 5, Kullang/Andersson 5.26.
SS4, Figueiro dos Vinhos 8.0km
1, Munari/Maiga 5.14; 2, Pinto/Bernachini 5.20; 3, Andersson/Hertz 5.21; 4, Kullang/Andersson 5.25; 5, Fernandez/Brasa 5.51.
SS5 Lousa 10.5km
1, Munari/Maiga 8.03; 2, Kullang/Andersson 8.04; 3, Pinto/Bernachini 8.10; 4, Andersson/Hertz 8.11; 5, Meqepe/Baptista 8.27.
SS6 Candosa (1) 6.5km
1, Pinto/Bernachini 5.14; 2, Andersson/Hertz 5.15; 3, Kullang/Andersson 5.15; 4, Munari/Maiga 5.18; 5, Fernandez/Brasa 5.23.
SS7 Bucaco 14.5km
1, Pinto/Bernachini 10.22; 2, Munari/Maiga 10.33; 3, Andersson/Hertz 10.43; 4, Kullang/Andersson 10.47; 5, Meqepe/Baptista 11.10.
SS8 Caramulo 7.0km
1, Munari/Maiga 5.57; 2, Pinto/Bernachini 5.58; 3, Andersson/Hertz 6.10; 4, Borges/Aujos 6.38; 5, Megepe/Baptista 6.47.
SS9 Ladario 9.0km
1, Andersson/Hertz 7.22; 2, Munari/Maiga 7.30; 3, Pinto/Bernachini 7.45; 4, Megepe/Baptista 8.07; 5, Inacio/De Morais 8.16.
SS10 Viseu (1) 8.0km
1, Andersson/Hertz 5.54; 2, Munari/Maiga 6.00; 3, Pinto/Bernachini 6.02; 4, Megepe/Baptista 6.09; 5, Fernandez/Brasa 6.34.
SS11 Lapa 8.0km
1, Munari/Maiga 4.38; 2, Andersson/Hertz 4.45; 3, Pinto/Bernachini 4.46; 4, Fernandez/Brasa 5.05; 5, Borges/Aujos 5.09.
SS12 Armamar 9.5km
1, Munari/Maiga 8.43; 2, Pinto/Bernachini 8.55; 3, Andersson/Hertz 8.57; 4, Fernandez/Brasa 9.21; 5, Macio/De Morais 9.25.
SS13 Fafe 8.0km
1, Andersson/Hertz 6.38; 2, Pinto/Bernachini 6.40; 3, Munari/Maiga 6.48; 4, Meqepe/Baptista 7.15; 5, Inacio/De Morais 7.24.
SS14 Cabreira 15.0km
1, Pinto/Bernachini 11.59; 2, Munari/Maiga 12.03; 3, Andersson/Hertz 12.04; 4, Meqepe/Baptista 13.21; 5, Inacio/De Morais 13.43.
SS15 Sra Da Graca 37.5km
1, Munari/Maiga 32.59; 2, Pinto/Bernachini 33.13; 3, Andersson/Hertz 33.24; 4, Romaozinho/Bernardo 37.45; 5, Meqepe/Baptista 38.04.
SS16 Marao 37.0km
1, Munari/Maiga 30.13; 2, Andersson/Hertz 30.22; 3, Pinto/Bernachini 31.29; 4, Fernandez/Brasa 33.54; 5, Romaozinho/Bernardo 33.59.
SS17 Carvalhas 6.5km
1, Munari/Maiga 4.51; 2, Andersson/Hertz 4.52; 3, Pinto/Bernachini 4.55; 4, Meqepe/Baptista 5.25; 5, Inacio/De Morais 5.29.
SS18 Armamar 9.5km
1, Munari/Maiga 8:27; 2, Andersson/Hertz 8.35; 3, Pinto/Bernachini 8.30; 4, Meqepe/Baptista 9.24; 5, Borges/Aujos 9.25.
SS19 Lapa 7.0km
1, Munari/Maiga 4.42; 2, Pinto/Bernachini 4.44; 3, Andersson/Hertz 4.50; 4, Borges/Aujos 5.13; 5, Fernandez/Brasa 5.18.
SS20 Viseu (2) 8.0km
1, Munari/Maiga 6.04; 2, Pinto/Bernachini 6.08; 3, Andersson/Hertz 6.09; 4, Fernandez/Brasa 6.30; 5, Romaozinho/Bernardo 6.46.
SS21 Argaril (1) 48.0km
1, Munari/Maiga 41.09; 2, Andersson/Hertz 42.02; 3, Pinto/Bernachini 42.25; 4, Torres/Roxo 42.56; 5, Ortigao/D'Abreu 46.55.
SS22 Vide (1) 12.0km
1, Munari/Maiga 9.22; 2, Andersson/Hertz 9.31; 3, Pinto/Bernachini 9.34; 4, Borges/Aujos 10.47; 5, Torres/Roxo 10.55.
SS25 Vide (2) 12.0km
1, Munari/Maiga 10.02; 2, Andersson/Hertz 10.05; 3, Pinto/Bernachini 10.20; 4, Ortigao/D'Abreu 11.26; 5, Inacio/De Morais 12.01.
SS26 Arganil (2) 48.0km
1, Munari/Maiga 39.13; 2, Andersson/Hertz 39.49; 3, Pinto/Bernachini 40.14; 4, Fischer/Gottlieb 45.00; 5, Ortigao/D'Abreu 46.22.
SS27 Candosa (2) 6.5km
=1, Munari/Maiga, Pinto Bernachini 5.38; 3, Andersson/Hertz 5.46; 4, Fischer/Gottlieb 6.26; 5, Santos/Lopez 6.31.
SS28 Alcabidehce (1) 4.2km
1, Pinto/Bernachini 2.44; =2, Andersson/Hertz, Munari/Maiga 2.51; 4, Borges/Aujos 3.00; 5, Meqepe/Baptista 3.05.
SS29 Peninha (2) 6.5km
1, Pinto/Bernachini 4.18; 2, Andersson/Hertz 4.25; 3, Munari/Maiga 4.32; 4, Meqepe/Baptista 4.54; 5, Borges/Aujos 4.56.
SS30 Sintra (1) 10.5km
1, Pinto/Bernachini 7.15; 2, Andersson/Hertz 7.34; 3, Munan/Maiga 7.43; 4, Meqepe/Baptosta 8.09; 5, Inacio/De Morais 8.28.
SS31 Lagoa Azul (2) 5.0km
1, Andersson/Hertz 2.37; 2, Munari/Maiga 2.38; 3, Inacio/De Morais 2.56; 4 Meqepe/Baptista 2.57; 5, Torres/Roxo 3.00.
SS32 Peninha (3) 6.5km
1, Pinto/Bernachini 4.30; 2, Andersson/Hertz 4.31; 3, Munari/Maiga 4.35; 4, Meqepe/Baptista 4.56; 5, Inacio/De Morais 4.59.
SS33 Sintra (2) 10.5km
1, Pinto/Bernachini 7.12; =2, Munari/Maiga, Andersson/Hertz 7.41; 4, Meqepe/Baptista 8.07; 5, Inacio/De Morais 8.20.
SS34 Akabideche (2) 4.2km
1, Pinto/Bernachini 2.51; 2, Andersson/Hertz 2.53; 3, Munari/Maiga 2.58; 4, Meqepe/Baptista 3.06; 5, Inacio/De Morais 3.07.
SS35 Peninha (4) 6.5km
1, Andersson/Hertz 4.43; 2, Pinto/Bernachini 4.52; 3, Munari/Maiga 4.55; 4, Meqepe/Baptista 5.07; 4, Inacio/Morais 5.08.
SS36 Lagoa Azul (3) 5.0km
1, Pinto/Bernachini 2.41; 2, Andersson/Hertz 2.43; 3, Munari/Maiga 2.46; 4, Inacio/Morais 2.55; 5, Torres/Roxo 2.58.
SS37 Sintra (3) 10.5km
1, Andersson/Hertz 7.47; 2, Pinto/Bernachini 8.01; 3, Munari/Maiga 8.02; 4, Meqepe/Baptista 8.35; 5, Inacio/Morais 8.38.
SS 38 Peninha (5) 6.5km
1, Andersson/Hertz 4.42; 2, Munari/Maiga 4.49; 3, Inacio/Morais 5.09; 4, Meqepe/Bapyosta 5.11; 5, Pinto/Bernachini 5.14.
SS39 Lagoa Azul (4) 5.0km
1, Andersson/Hertz 2.42; 2, Munari/Maiga 2.45; 3, Torres/Roxo 2.55; 4, Inacio/Morais 2.56; 5, Pinto/Bernachini 3.00.

Motostage's Internation rallycross challenge

Motostage, the rally/rallycross/autocross club and promotion company run by Richard Harper, Oliver Speight and John Foden, announced elaborate rallycross plans last week.

Biggest news is an exciting internation team challenge to be held at Long Marston two weeks before the RAC rally. The teams will come from Sweden, Finland, Austria, Belgium, Holland and Great Britain, and it's expected that all the great names of rallying and rallycross will be present, including Franz Wurz, Stig Blomqvist, Per Eklund and Bjorn Waldegaard. Motostage, who specialise in getting the sport on ATV from Long Marston and have arranged 17 rallycross programmes on TV since 1972, have tied up a tremendous deal for this event, arranging it to be screened both nationwide on British TV and on TV in each of the invited countries.

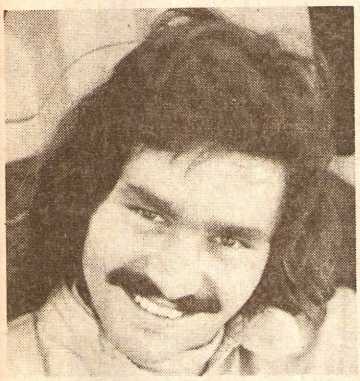
Each team will comprise six cars and the races will be run on a knock-out basis rather than culmatively, which means that there will be just six cars, one from each country at the end, and the TV viewers will quickly know who is the winner. The cars will have to comply to FIA G2 and G4 regs due to the international nature of the event. On the following day, however, there will be a club event, which may also be televised.

Somewhat nearer at hand is another rallycross meeting at Long Marston on May 29/30. Feature of this event is a return match of the rallycross versus hot rod challenge, and although this will be on ATV, it may also be networked. Spedeworth will be handling the hot rod entries.

As well as the rallycross/hot rod challenge, there will be a normal rallycross on that day, running eight cars at a time and ten in the final. Sponsorship for both this event and the European one is shortly to be announced. Regs for the May event will be out shortly and will be sent to all Rallycross Drivers Association members; others will have to apply to Motostage.

Motostage themselves will be running all the events, and they have also arranged to improve the spectator facilities at Long Marston. The spectator areas will be widened and there will be a grandstand available.

● Motostage have been asked to run the BTRDA autocross final at the venue on September 12.



Geoff Smailes – Royale again.

Kismet in again

Kismet, the garage equipment manufacturers from Bedford, are once again sponsoring the South African duo Rad Dougall and Geoff Smailes in their Formula Ford Royale RP21s. Last year Dougall came third in the National Organs series and Smailes came twelfth.

Dougall recently returned to South Africa to be presented with his Springbok badge. It was presented at the Ken Lee Memorial Dinner in the presence of F1 drivers and constructors in Johannesburg, and both Stirling Moss and Max Mosley made speeches.

Smailes, meanwhile, is seeking premises in London where he will work as an accountant. He needs a flat or house with a garage attached where he can work on his car.

Awards going well with Shell

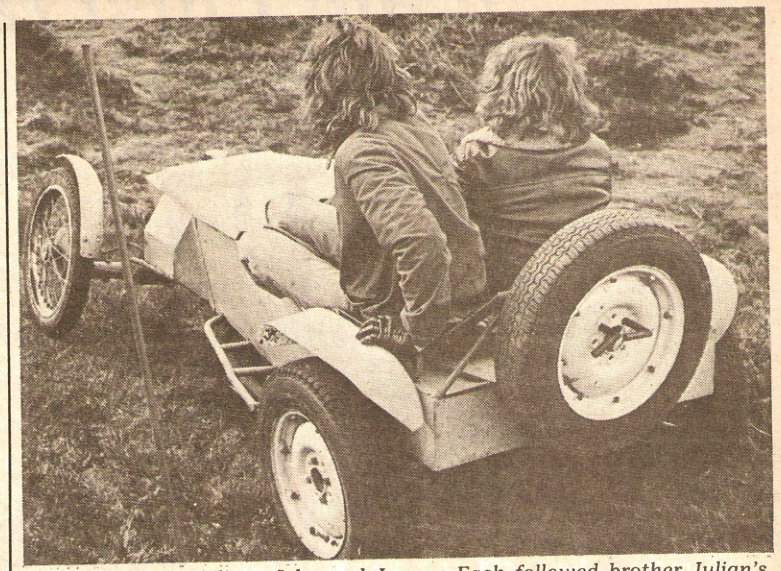
Keith Kirby of Shell reports that his Shellsport Gold Star Awards bonus scheme is going incredibly well. From 1700 inquiries, over 500 competitors have registered and in the first weekend of the season, there were 24 winners, class and outright, who carried Shellsport colours.

However, Kirby is not hinting at who he thinks might be the winner. Last year's victor was Nick Whiting with 30 wins, and the year before's Tony Lanfranchi had nearly ten more although the record stands to Tim Schenken, who had 41 wins in a year.

Bradley's luck

Fish merchant and Elden owner Frank Bradley was in high spirits on Sunday morning at Brands Hatch. While opening whelks, he'd found three left handed ones, a very rare occurence apparently. The previous one he'd found he'd kept in the car to brink him luck. This time he had three, but they didn't bring him much luck. He hit the bank on the slippery Cooper Straight and ended his race there.

● Happy recipient of the British Motor Racing Marshal Club's Dish of the Day at Silverstone award was the blonde haired Lotus FF driver, Mike Blanchet.



Hair style facksimilie – John and Jeremy Fack followed brother Julian's excellent example and finished in the top three on the Derbyshire.

Battle of giants

The current top two in this year's Semperit RAC Sporting Trials Championship, Jack Pearce and Julian Fack had their own private battle, thanks to a lucky draw, at the penultimate round of the early season's event next Buxton last Sunday.

The 34th running of the Derbyshire Trial, by the Lancs and Cheshire CC, provided Fack with his third win of the year and he has now closed to within four points of Pearce who was runner-up.

Fack (Impunity) and Pearce (Kincraft), were fortunate to be sent to commence battle on that part of the venue which was later to cut up and cause subsequent challengers to lose a lot of marks. The pair were quickly into their stride, Pearce leading the way and Fack trying hard to stay in contention initially before finally pulling out a five point margin after a really hard day's motor sport.

Pearce led the first round on 11 pts with Robin Jager doing well in his Nymph to be second at this point ahead of Fack by two points. But the pattern was set and Fack and Pearce cleared off into the distance with their own 'war' and they finished a long way ahead of the rest of an entry of 37 cars.

On a course which demanded extremely delicate throttle control on the bracken, Fack went on to win on 43 marks, five fewer than Pearce while brother John, also in an Impunity, had a good scrap with Dennis Allen, in brother Reg's Kincraft, before coming third on 62 marks, just two ahead after 31 sections. Down the field, one of the most delighted competitors was Bob Dayson in his Cougar who finished eighth and might have done appreciably better if the draw had been in his favour.

1, Julian Fack (Impunity), 43 marks; 2, J. Pearce (Kincraft), 48 marks; 3, John Fack (Impunity), 62 marks; 4, D. Allen (Kincraft), 64 marks; 5, R. Jager (Nymph), 67 marks; 6, G. Fisher (Iris), 73 marks.

Hill record

John Milford from Exeter broke the Oddicombe hillclimb record for the second time in less than a year when he took BTD at the Torbay MC restricted meeting on Sunday. Milford, in a 1293 cc Cooper S flashed up the 750 yard course, which is owned by the local council, in 33.5s on his second run to clip just over 0.1s off the previous record which he set last October.

Second best time of the day went to the credit of F. Statton in his nippy Clan Crusader. In the biggest class of the day — fourteen — he did 34.92s to beat the Mallock U2 of R. Grenfell who did 35.05s. In the newly instituted rally car class, Dennis Marchant had a narrow win in his Escort twin cam recording 39.19s with P. Monro on 39.95s in a similar car as runner-up.

BTD: J. Milford (1.3 Cooper S), 33.5s (**Record**).

Class winners: M. White (850 Mini), 40.22s; D. Holloway (1.0 Riley Elf), 46.87s; S. Browne (Escort), 35.79s; J. Symonds (Clubman), 36.73s; F. Statton (Clan Crusader), 34.92s; D. Butley (Elan), 39.79s; D. Marchant (Escort TC), 39.19s.

Longton's entry full

As reported elsewhere, this weekend is the first round of the RAC Sprint championship at Longridge, but it is also the first round of the Longton and District Motor Club's sprint and hillclimb championship. The entry list for this lucrative series has already been closed due to the flood of entries.

Among the varied entries for this opening meeting, which commences at 9.30 with practice and runs start at 12.30 pm, are Charles Hewardine's Ford Mustang, Peter Nelson's 3.0 Anglia turbo, Donald Cressey's Ferrari 246GT, Robert Speak's Lotus Europa, Bob Prest's U2 and a host of Terrapin's against the Bainbridge Challenger and Larry Hughes' Motus Bultaco. In the bigger single seaters, there are a number of Brabhams, an Ensign and Marches, plus John McCartney's BRM and Peter Dugdale's 2.0 F3 March 733.

Victim is the victor

Despite the attempts of saboteurs to prevent the smooth running of the event and in particular the progress of a certain crew, Ystrad Mynach MC managed to claim they had provided a good night's sport at the end of the Ides of March Rally in South Wales last Saturday night.

Overcoming many problems, Eric Davies and Colin Francis finally won the rally on 21m 9s in the former's BDA Escort while Gwyndaf Evans and Martin Thomas brought their RS 2000 home into the runner-up spot on 24m 22s.

Divided into almost equal thirds throughout the 170 mile route which included a little forest and a lot of well known Welsh classic roads, the rally was not very old when the trouble started. A Road Closed sign appeared *en route* and eventually caused the section to be scrubbed when two crews near the end of the running took it at face value and re-routed.

A couple of selectives in the first third claimed Ian Lindsay (Mazda) who lost it on a left hander and Geoff Dewitt rolled his Avenger and unfortunately landed on a photographer who suffered a broken arm.

Another and slightly more serious accident occurred later on when the Mini of the Wright brothers from Cross Keys clobbered a bridge parapet after getting into a ditch. The car was wrecked and one of the Wrights was detained in hospital with concussion and minor cuts.

In the second third a double piece of ⅛in thick aluminium wire was stretched across the road to greet the arrival of Davies and Francis. One strand flew over the roof, the other wound its way round a brake drum and they lost a little time in consequence.

At the petrol halt Howard Davis and Phil Jones had established a lead in their RS 2000 but they disappeared without trace or reason in the second half.

The third incident which caused comment was the attempt to completely close a gate with apparently the same type of wire. Again Davies/Francis were the initial sufferers.

Local crews took most of the top places for Jeff James and his regular man Lyn Jenkins were third in a Mk 2 Escort but Jeremy Nock and Cenfyn Davies brought an Escort Sport into fourth — a fine effort. Very much the foreigners on the event Glen Mitton and Eric Cowcill from the Midlands were a deserved sixth, the latter having never been to the far outposts of the Principality before.

1, E. Davies/C. Francis (Escort), 21m 9s; 2, G. Evans/M. Thomas (RS 2000), 24m 22s; 3, J. James/L. Jenkins (Escort Mk 2), 27m 57s; 4, J. Nock/C. Davies (Escort Sport), 28m 9s; 5, M. Parsons/P. Robinson (RS 1600), 32m 31s; 6, G. Mitton/E. Cowcill (RS 2000), 34m 14s. **Semi-experts:** M. Standen/K. Tocknell (Colt Lancer), 38m 31s. **Novice:** A. Thomas/N. John (RS 2000), 40m 8s.

Beyond a joke

Reports of sabotage attempts on last weekend's Ides of March Rally are not only disturbing to competitors but also to officials of clubs organising rallies, for it seems it is likely to occur again.

Last weekend's activities, seemingly the work of one group, unfortunately are not an isolated case for strange things happened to certain crews about a fortnight previously, also in Wales.

Because the reports of the attempts to stop a car or cars are quite serious and do not fall into the foolish prank category, the organisers last weekend added into their final instructions a clause which prevented competitors divulging information about the route to spectators.

However, this did not prevent the trouble and officials we have spoken to are bothered as to what to do to eliminate the problem.

Said one of the organisers of the Ystrad Mynach Club, "We know who is causing the trouble but we can't prove it. It always revolves round two crews who seem to be having a feud. That's all right providing they don't involve anyone else but it's now getting beyond a joke."

Apparently a lot of people know who is involved and are heartily sickened by the whole procedure. It is to be hoped that sense will finally prevail — in the meantime the only action that seemingly can be taken is to inform the police of any suspected irregularities.

Preview at Loton

A preview to the 1976 hillclimbing season takes place this Sunday when the Hagley and District Light Car Club hold their annual practice day at Sir Michael Leighton's Loton Park. Apart from the cars, regular visitors will notice a number of changes, including the resurfaced return road from the top of the hill, which means a speeding up of the running of meetings.

Many of the leading RAC hillclimb championship contenders have indicated that they will be there to set up their cars before the first round of the championship at Wiscombe on April 11.

Leading the challengers will be Roy Lane in his faithful McRae GM1 testing interesting Goodyears throughout the season for use both on the hills and off. Two of his main challengers are Alister Douglas-Osborn and Chris Cramer. ADO's Pilbeam R22 is now fitted with a DFV and sporting sponsorship from Motor Sail (Jersey) Ltd, while Cramer has a March 76A with a Cosworth V6 engine. Martyn Griffiths takes over Cramer's March 74B which has the 2.2 Hart still, while another to run this engine will be Ken MacMaster in his Modus.

David Franklin's 2.0 March-BMW 742 will be sporting Wendy Wools sponsorship this year and other notable entries for the practice day include John Cussins (Chevron B32), Malcolm Dungworth (Brabham BT35X), Reg Philips (Chevron B25) and Richard Jones (Surtees TS10).

Spectators are welcome at Loton, and the action begins at 12.15 pm.

The Bishops move fast

Run over a circuit of slightly more than a mile and oval in shape, last Sunday's sprint, run by Stone Cross AC at North Weald provided BTD for the Davrian Imp of Alan Bishop.

In fact it was the Bishop family's day for after Alan had set the target time in 80.2s, the best from three runs, his wife Sue collected the combined Classes 1, 2 and 3 in a Mini with a run of 91.4s. This was almost a second faster than all the men.

Nearly 50 competitors were divided into 10 classes with the biggest support being in the big capacity saloons which went to Bert Wood's BMW 2002 Tii in 84.0s, exactly a second quicker than Dick Jest's Escort TC. John Gray and Gordon Franklin enjoyed a scrap in the next class in their 3 litre Capris, Gray taking the class by under half a second.

Cooper men Howard Lester and Peter Nardizzi had easy wins in the next two categories and Hales Vaughan (Midget) beat the Sprite of Andrew Faux by two seconds in the sports car class.

A rare Lamborghini 400 GT in the hands of John Menhinick graced the big sports class and he drove very gently to be second behind a rapid Elan belonging to Tony Hempsted.

BTD: A. Bishop (Imp), 80.2s.
Class winners: Mrs S. Bishop (Mini), 91.4s; B. Wood (BMW 2002), 84.0s; J. Gray (Capri), 85.6s; H. Lester (Cooper), 85.9s; P. Nardizzi (Cooper), 81.4s; H. Vaughan (Midget), 89.1s; T. Hempsted (Elan), 82.5s; T. Brown (Lenham Le Mans), 82.6s; P. Bodle (Alexis), 81.8s.

Kennedy's problems

Talented Irish Crossle FF driver David Kennedy is possibly a Formula Ford pioneer. He's living a very nomadic life, travelling in his black bus to and from meetings, and living in it in between. His finances are pretty low, although he has some backing from Group Waterworks in Ireland. The red headed Kennedy lists his occupation as strawberry picker, but finding business a little slack, is seeking alternative employment while he races. Last Saturday he finished second to Derek Daly's Van Diemen at Brands Hatch. Kennedy says his reasons for speed are that he's been racing at Mondello, where, he says, the corners are hidden, and one is quite likely to find a chicken or cow on the circuit. Kennedy hopes to stay in the country to contest championship races.

● Farnborough and District MC's closed rally last weekend was won by John Stevens and David Hamilton in a Vitesse on 85 pts. They were miles ahead of Ricki Wall and Steve Walters in a V6 Cortina. Best experts, in a field of 30 crews, were Peter Malec and Brian Fisher in a Clubman on 141 pts and the novice winners Keith Aslett and J. Graham (Cortina), were on 143 pts.

Harris' sprint challengers

With the RAC spring championship starting this weekend at Longridge, news of the competitors is hotting up and there are one or two formidable combinations just waiting to take the crown off champion Dave Harris' head. Harris once again has his McLaren-Chevrolet/Morand M10B/14 and Johnty Williamson still has his Surtees-Chevrolet TS11 under the banner of Unirent, but DFVs and hot two litres are about and waiting to challenge the F5000 cars.

The series kicks off at Longridge on Sunday, and on this twisty track, it might well be one of the small cars which picks up BTD. Foremost in the running must be Rob Turnbull who

Simon Riley – DFV powered.

did such good things last year with his 1.6 Brabham, while that experienced campaigner, David Render now has 2.2 litres in his Brabham BT35 and must also be reckoned with.

But perhaps the most exciting aspect of the Longridge meeting is the entry of John Ravenscroft into the fray in the ex-David Good Lyncar, complete with DFV. Like John Ravenscroft, Simon Riley is another to forsake lots of litres for the DFV, and he's purchased Tony Griffiths' Brabham BT33, a well campaigned car on the hills as was the Lyncar. It all adds up to an exciting series.

Reid award

The friends and racing associates of Mike Reid, the Formula Ford and Renault 5 driver who died earlier this year, have generously donated a trophy to the BRSCC to be awarded each year to the most promising newcomer who has taken out a licence after January 1 of that year. The man concerned won't necessarily be the quickest fellow, for the BRSCC's Peter Browning and his spies are also looking for the manner in which he goes racing as well as actual driving ability. The Mike Reid trophy will be awarded each year with a replica and £200 for the winner, all supplied in memory of Mike Reid by his friends.

Chapman against supercars

An eight man British team contested an international rallycross at Machelen near Antwerp on Sunday and in the face of a wealth of expensive rapid machinery, including 3.3 Porsche Carreras and several Lancia Stratos, the best of the UK representatives was Rod Chapman who was third overall.

The event, which attracted a huge crowd, was won by the Carrera of Guy Nilsson with another Porsche driven by Cees Teurlings in second place. Behind these two, Chapman did well to finish within striking distance and he was a long way ahead on points from the next best Englishman, John Smith in a similar BDA-engined Escort. Smith managed to finish eighth, George Warren also in a BDA Escort was tenth, Mick Bird (1.5 Mini), managed to get up into twelfth place and Dave Fuell (2.0 Escort) was thirteenth.

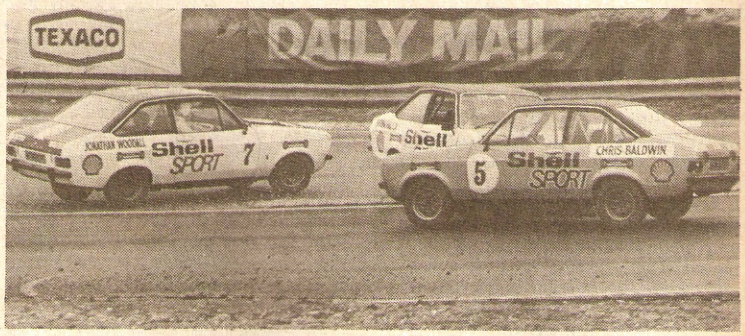
The remainder of the eight man British team, Graham Strugnell (1.4 Mini), Richard Painton (1.4 Mini) and Will Gollop (Dolomite Sprint) did not fare very well in very hot company on a 1.5 mile circuit which was extremely rapid.

Dave Fuell – "it beats autocross."

The British team created a good impression, according to reports, and Messrs Chapman, Smith, Warren, Bird and Fuell have all been invited back to a similar meeting within the next two months.

Brands bumper cars

With MCD cash registers ringing in her ears, Divina Galica rams Chris Baldwin's Shellsport Escort at Brands. Johnathan Woodall is nicely lined up to do the same thing to the lady skier, but keeps it straight to restart and win.



Rose heads big field

One of the best entries in a Midlands production car trial — there were 70 cars — graced last Sunday's Dunlop MC event at Weeford, the event counting towards the AMCC championship. John Rose, slightly fortunate to be an early number and missing a majority of the rain affected sections towards the end, put on a fine performance to take overall victory in his Mini and, for once, the winner had the day's lowest score.

Rose dropped 32 marks on the 30 sections which Brian Betteridge arranged for the club at the last minute and he finished streets ahead of Kevin Caley (Mini) who took Class 1 with a 67 mark total. Ian Spencer (Mini) was second 11 marks behind and George Harrison (Cooper), was third on 81 marks.

It was Skodas all the way in the conventional class with Stephen Courts, in his estate version, beating Dennis Wells' saloon by 20 marks, Courts dropping 53 marks. Ina Hill was a long way back in third.

There was a very clearcut winner in the sports car class with Malcolm Brown (Sprite) beating Reg Bradbury (Sprite) by a street but things were tight in the up to one litre rear engined class where Bob Gilhooley's Imp, on 105 marks, was only five clear of Rob Main. In the big capacity class, Tony Cooke was an easy winner with a 122 total, proving that power was not the answer on some tricky hills. Mike Whitehouse and Patrick Batten had a good scrap for the places, Whitehouse annexing second by a single mark.

Overall: J. Rose (Mini), 32 marks lost. **Class winners:** K. Caley (Mini), 67 marks; S. Courts (Skoda Combi), 53 marks; M. Brown (Sprite), 73 marks; B. Gilhooley (Imp), 105 marks; T. Cooke (Imp), 122 marks. **Ladies:** Mrs Jean Cook (Imp), 179 marks. **Novice:** R. Taylor (Skoda), 100 marks.

Production trials cars

Happy birthday Facksimilie. The Julian Fack inspired and designed trials car is one year old, and is rumoured to have set up a record, for in one year, 14 models have been sold, which is said to be two more than the best that Mike Cannon sold in the heyday of the Cannon. Latest sale is to Ivor Portlock.

Meanwhile Julian himself is in the throes of taking up racing. With Bill Stone, the man who builds Facksimilies, and no mean racer himself some years ago, Fack has bought the ex-Roger Andreason Morris Minor used in Classic Saloon car racing. Stone will race it for the first half of the season while the trialling season finishes, and then Fack will drive the car in sprints and hillclimbs until Stone's own car is completed.

Both Stone and Fack drove the car at Silverstone recently where Fack found it, "very weird", while one to show a considerable turn of speed was Adrian Reynard, another to use Bill Stone's building facilities.

Burgess' big team

Those faithful prodsports men, Colin Blower and Rod Gretton, with the help of Burgess Products of Hinkley and Sketchley Cleaners, have put together a highly professional prodsports team with which to contest this year's 24 round production sports car series.

Having contested 1974 in a pair of Europas, the pair moved on to a works loaned TVR and an E type for 1975, and that year's line-up has proved sufficiently successful for TVR for the factory to loan two TVRs for Gretton and Blower to use.

Burgess are among the country's leaders in manufacturing original and after market silencing and air cleaner equipment, and Gretton and Blower live locally to the Hinkley factory. For the 1976 season, they have an enormous container truck signwritten and converted to carry the TVR 3000Ms, and the whole package attracted Sketchley Cleaners who have come in as joint sponsors.

Besides being car entrants, Burgess have also lent their name to the Southern League prodsports series along with the silencer fitting chain, Euro, so that the series in the south becomes the Euro-Burgess Southern League, of which there are twelve rounds.

● This Saturday sees the first of two practice days at Lydden, the following one being a week later. The morning session, from 9 am to 12.30 pm will be restricted to cars while the afternoon sessions, 1 pm to 6 pm, provide alternate sessions for cars and motorcycles. For further information, contact Miss B. Harris, 71 West Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, Telephone Sittingbourne 71978.

Midgley's right of way

Seven crews, including two who would have probably been in the top three, were excluded from the results of last Saturday's incident packed Shipley MC's Budget Rent-a-Car Trophy Rally run in Lancashire and Yorkshire.

Much protesting and chattering occurred when the organisers announced the exclusions and all protests were rejected in the following two hours of discussion. All were penalised for failing to observe a Give Way sign in the first half.

With seven selectives, the rally was fast and furious in fine conditions initially but ice and very light snow in places slowed everyone subsequently. Most crews managed to clean the first two selectives but life got progressively harder as the night wore on but in spite of the deterioration of the weather, few incidents were reported.

Winners, by the narrow margin of four seconds, were John Midgley and Malcolm Smithson in a Toyota Corolla on 11m 17s from S. Rathbone and F. Stuart-Brown in an Escort.

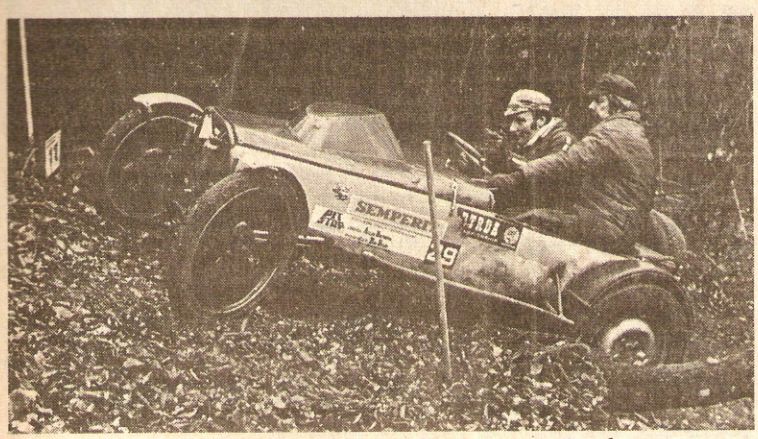
Another Escort, in the hands of Stan Peel and John Rawling was third on 13m 34s and only 37s covered the next three crews.

1, J. Midgley/M. Smithson (Toyota Corolla), 11m 17s; 2, S. Rathbone/F. Stuart-Brown (Escort), 11m 21s; 3, S. Peel/J. Rawling (Escort), 13m 34s; 4, T. Roberts/S. Mason (Cooper S), 14m 6s; 5, D. Leach/P. Ainsworth (Cortina GT), 14m 31s; 6, J. Morton/W. Honeywell (Firenza), 14m 43s. **Capacity class winners:** M. Wilson/J. Teasdale (Marina), 20m 28s; A. Rowell/D. Dickinson (Escort), 17m 5s; W. England/R. Spencer (Escort), 21m 39s. **Best Shipley crew:** A. Bailey/D. Smalley (Rapier), 19m 46s.

Give Way

Seemingly thinking that because the club was short of marshals they would perhaps abandon one of their officials at a Give Way junction, seven crews paid the ultimate penalty on last Saturday's Shipley and District MC Budget Rent-a-Car Trophy Rally.

Those excluded were: Ian Harrison/Stephen Bye, Ron Beecroft/John Millington, M. Donogoe/P. Bland, C. Marshall/D. Gibson, C. Breenan/W. Hughes, K. Clarkson/R. Hartley and C. Payne/J. Hollins.



Alan Brunning on the way to a good second at Boxley on Sunday.

Benson dominates

The Kentish Border Car Club held the penultimate round of the Pit Stop Southern Trials Series last Sunday. The venue – at The Warren, Boxley on the chalky North Downs – is proving an ideal site for the wonderful world of sporting trials. The entry of 38 cars has become the normal quantity for the south meetings, which is good when the BTRDA have their own trial further north. Unfortunately Gordon Jackson suffered an eye injury while trying out his son's trials bike, and was unable to compete but he already leads the series and the title all hangs on the final in April.

The course of eight hills consisted of two open grass sections, and the rest in wooded parts, a testing programme which soon sorted the wheat from the chaff. John Benson led the first round on 21, followed by Alan Brunning, 33, Colin Taylor and Roy Denton both on 35, John Hopkins and Tony Mitchem, 37, Colin Walker, 38 and the rest in close formation. Cyril Gamblen in his 750 was leading many a larger mount with a well driven 39, and Chris Ford was one behind and heading the 950 clan.

The second round saw the departure of ace Stirling Moss and John Benson consolidated his lead with a fine 21 score. Chris Highwood and Colin Walker did well and were four marks behind. John Hopkins and Colin Taylor were next two points behind, with Ted Minter, Alan Brunning and Roy Denton all on 29. The 750 and 950 leaders were the same at lunch so all was set for the afternoon round.

The day was improving and the going got easier and the course tighter so scores remained much the same. Alan Brunning and John Hopkins were best on the final round with 23, giving Alan a well earned second place and John an equal third with Colin Taylor who lost two extra marks. But a steady 24 by John Benson was enough to take a comfortable victory in the well run KB show. Cyril Gamblen took the 750 award, and Chris Ford the 950 with Alan Gisby and John Higgins next in the class.

1, J. Benson (Jabs), 72 marks lost; 2, Alan Brunning (Trialsmaster), 85; 3, C. Taylor (Cannon), J. Hopkins (Ibex), 87; 5, C. Walker (Mudsport), 93; 6, C. Highwood (Cannon), 95.

Class winners: C. Gamblen (Pilgrim), 131; C. Ford (Hansford), 113.

Series Leader Board: 1, Gordon Jackson (Ibex), 75 points; 2, Taylor, 67; 3, Hopkins, 65; 4, Highwood, 56; 5, Benson, 55; 6, Brunning, 54.

Leading 750: Gamblen. **950:** Alan Gisby (Trialsmaster).

BRSCC go on

Sporting Car Club of Norfolk and BRSCC (East Anglian Centre) both managed to get their "A" and "B" teams through to the quarter finals of the Spruce Howlett Motor Club challenge at the third qualifying round held in Norwich on March 9. The BRSCC "B" team did particularly well, scoring the third highest total of the night in a more difficult match than their senior counterparts. Gothic Motor Club, SCCON "B" and Dereham and District CC all made it three wins in a row to qualify. The remaining quarter final places go to Kings Lynn and DMC (who meet local rivals Dereham in their next match) and Eastern Counties MC "A", the latter being separated from the rest of their league by "goal average" only after Gt Yarmouth and Lowestoft MC had stirred things up with a deserved win. The quarter final draw is as follows: Dereham and DCC v Kings Lynn and DMC; SCCON "B" v Eastern Counties MC "A"; SCCON "A" v BRSCC "A"; Gothic MC v BRSCC "B", these matches to be played on April 6.

Needle promotion

The Supersports Register are currently trying to organise a couple of cars which could help to decide or rekindle a persistent needle match. It's between Willie Green and Frank Sytner. The latter apparently says that he could have done just as well in JCB Historic rounds last year if he'd had the equipment that Green had, ie a Maserati 250F, while Green says that all he needed was a JCB Excavator to win the races. Now Sytner is talking of a return match on home ground. He suggests that Green should have the original B1 Chevron, complete with B sports engine, and that he should have Geoff Friswell's championship winning A class car. However, it's more likely that Green will have a Hustler and Sytner (who of course is driving in FF2000 this year) will have a competitive U2.

A fail for all

Navigators ran into all sorts of troubles causing their drivers to collect fails last weekend down in Essex when the West Essex CC ran their novices orientated Essex Rally over a 150 mile route in the county. Silly mistakes meant that nobody came home without a dreaded fail on the card and victory went to the Roding team of Roy Collins and Phil Smith in an Escort TC who finished on 1F 14m.

Missing passage controls was the main disease and several crews suffered sudden demotion after going well in the early stages.

Mick Oldham and Rob Lee finally took second, on furthest cleanest in their Mexico with 1F 32m, ahead of Dennis Golding returning to night rallying after an appreciable break. He was partnered by Preston Ayres in a Dolomite Sprint. Malcolm Barber and Keith Woodward were next up in their Vitesse on 1F 35m with John Stevens and Malcolm McGhee (Cooper S), weighing in fifth on 1F 38m. The Avenger of Brian Parker and Arnold Giardino was sixth on 1F 42m. The novice award went to Paul Chilverd and his brother Alan in an Escort.

Just Lawman

Verulam MC's Mad Hatters Plot Rally, a night navigation exercise of fun, was won last weekend by Tom Lawman and Roger Thomas of the Herts County AC. In a Capri they scored 463 pts to beat Tom Green and Dave Kirkham (Alfa Romeo Junior) by three points with Peter Riley and John Messenger (Magnum) only two marks away in third. Best novices were Brian Street and his wife Olive in a Dolomite Sprint on 385 pts.

Brothers lead

After two rounds of the Welsh Stages Championship two sets of brothers head the drivers and navigators tables. Whitchurch members Geoff and Alan Simpson, in their Pierstune Escort, lead on 24 pts with Richard and Vincent Smalley of the Wolverhampton and South Staffs CC second in their Mini on 11 pts. Events so far held are the Gwynedd and Severn Valley Stages.

Goff's maps

Brian Goff, one of the best known club navigators in the North Wales area, has entered the marked maps business. Under the title BCG Marked Maps, of 1 Circular Drive, Ewloe Green, Deeside, Clwyd, he offers marked metric OS maps 116, 125, 136, 145, 146 and 147 at £3.55, maps 114, 115, 123 and 148 at £2.60 and maps 117, 124, 126, 137 and 159 at £2.35. Marked 1in OS maps are also available on request.

Briefly . . .

● With support from Esso, the Harrow Car Club's Uniflo Brakefast Autotest is this year being run at Scratchwood Services on the M1 on March 28. Regs are already available for this RAC/BTRDA/LCAMC and ACSMC round, and additional awards have been provided by CCC and Ripspeed. The club have come up with good rates at the nearby motel, but all further details may be obtained from John Leslie, 1A Montpelier Rise, Golders Green, London NW11. Telephone (home): 01-455 6059 and (business): Welwyn Garden City 23434, extension 3302.

● While his compatriots were speeding to a one-two, Bernard Devaney was a chastened retirement from the FF race at Brands on Saturday. A coming-together with Nick Orford on the first lap dislodged the nose-cone, and the black flag spelt retirement.

● Our recent picture and caption of Jonathan Palmer and the 3.0 Marcos he is to campaign in modsports events this year failed to mention the car is still, in fact, owned by Sussex journalist John Dudley. Palmer fixed up the deal to race it in BARC modsports championship events, but Dudley still hopes to race it occasionally.

● Regulations are now available for the Mid-Surrey Automobile Club's Esso Uniflo Grand Cup National production car trial to be held on April 4 at Box Hill Farm, Dorking, Surrey at 10.30 am. Regs for this RAC/BTRDA/ACSMC/ASEMC and LCAMC championship event are available from Paul Smith, 126 Cardinal Avenue, Morden, Surrey SM4 4SX.

● After a disastrous start in 750 last year, Mark Pritchard has acquired the ex-James Hunt, Dave Morgan March 713S for F4 this year.

● Regulations are now available for the Hagley and District Light Car Club's autotest on April 4. The Hagley/Vono autotest is a round of the RAC/BTRDA championships and takes place at Vono Ltd, Sedgley Road East, Tipton, Staffs. Entries, at £3, are available from John Ball, 65 Hewell Road, Barnt Green, Birmingham. Telephone, evenings, 021-445 4681.

● It seems the wives and girlfriends of the 750 MC are fed up with leaning over pit walls hanging out signs and running errands; they want their own race in their husbands' cars. They seek further support from 750 drivers' wives.

● The 1000 cc 8 port special saloon Mini of Duncan Kirk and Alan Smith will again be sponsored by Adrian Flux Insurance of King's Lynn with additional support from East Anglian cut price petrol company Raven Petroleum. The two drivers will contest the Hitachi and Forward Trust series this season.

● Poachers MC's Uniband Trophy Stages Rally, originally planned for June 6, has been brought forward to May 23. Based on Grantham the event will consist of 22 stages and will be a round in the East Midlands Championship. Regs will be available from March 1 from Roy Wright, 13 London Road, Grantham. Entry fee will be £16.

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