



The 1967 Series was won by Gus Hutchison driving a FB Lotus 41C powered by a 1600cc modified Lotus twin cam engine.

SCCA Goes Pro!

Part Five Of The Series On The Beginning Of SCCA Professional Road Racing: The Continental Grand Prix Series Begins In 1967 - 1600cc vs 3000cc

-by Dan Davis

This saga of the SCCA Continental Grand Prix Series began in 1967 with five races including the spectacular but little known event on an awesome true road circuit around the mountains and through the meadows just south of Lake Tahoe, California for the Lake Tahoe Grand Prix. That was the first year of a real U.S. Pro Formula drivers series with great cars, teams and world class drivers, big grids and unfortunately only an average draw for spectators. Gus Hutchinson racing a Lotus 41C powered by a modified Lotus Twin Cam, 4 cylinder, 1600cc engine won that first series championship in 1967. That year had few sponsors, was mildly promoted but had great races with large fields. How it began and how it exploded for the second year is our story.

A SCCA Pro series for REAL Racing Cars! Could this be from the SPORTS CAR CLUB of America? Real racing enthusiasts knew REAL racing cars don't have fenders and in 1966 the Sports Car Club of America (note the name Sports Car) had just announced a professional road racing series for open wheel Formula Cars, that is for non Sports Cars! Furthermore it was for Formula One Cars with racing engines of three liters just like the international FIA F1 Championship and the United States version of F2 Cars called (in a PR lapse) FB.

This series was another indication of the change in SCCA which was astonishing from the late 1950s to the mid late 1960s. In the 1950s the SCCA was a totally amateur drivers only, gentleman racer and Sports Car ownership club centered in New England in which only Sports Car owners could be members which by the 1960s had changed to an anyone could join road racing



In 1968 the Series had a new title, L & M Continental Grand Prix and new class of F5000 Cars powered by American 5 liter Pushrod V8 engines.

drivers club. I know I was an unofficial "student" member in the mid 1950s working corners, tech, etc then a full member and club racer by 1960 and semi pro racer from 1967 through 1971.

As an aspiring pro road racer in 1966 after a few amateur years I briefly tried the 2 liter USRRC in 1965 then began looking at other Series. Trans-Am Cars were not interesting to me and hard to maintain since they were production car based. Although the big road races and road racing sponsors were in the Can-Am/USRRC Series for Group 7 cars, the much greater cost to purchase and race to win required a sponsor not just a personal budget.

A quick analysis of 1966 amateur SCCA race results showed that the current 1600cc FB cars should be as quick or quicker than the current three liter F1 cars on many North American circuits and could be purchased for a third the price. The just announced Continental Grand Prix Series was a good choice. A privateer could maintain a state-of-the-art FB car capable of winning. The competitive cars from Brabham, Crossle, Merlyn and Lotus were initially powered by mildly tuned Production based 1600cc engines. Later with more work they could approach 200 HP even in the late 1960s. The best were Lotus Ford Twin Cam engines although a few racers were using 1600cc Twin Cam 4 cylinder Alfa engines.

The grids of largely FB cars for that year were immense, some 35-40 cars. The 1967 series raced at circuits across North America including Continental Divide in Colorado, San Jovite in Canada, Warbonnet in Oklahoma, Lake Tahoe in California and Daytona. The publicity to the public by SCCA was non existent and the spectator count reflected that. However the big fields promised a viable series. Good times for the series were just ahead!

The late 1967 news was big but had pluses and minuses for FB car owners! L & M Cigarettes would be title sponsor for 1968 and beyond. The category was expanded to take Formula 5000 open wheel cars powered by 5 liter production based pushrod V8s. That made a bunch of FB cars potentially obsolete. The previous FA and FB cars would run with the F5000s initially. Later the FB cars were given separate races and their own series which in 1974 developed into Formula Atlantic.

The major racing car manufacturers, teams and track operators were suddenly attracted by the big PR series budget funded by L & M and a major increase in prize money.

For the 1968 season Lola introduced the tube framed F5000 Lola with T70 suspension. McLaren introduced the full monocoque M10A. Several other major race car builders and specialists builders followed over the next eight years of the series. These included Lotus, McRae, Spectre and LeGrand. The FB manufacturers which had been mostly Lotus, Brabham and a few Winkelmanns in 1967 also grew. Eventually Chevron, Crossle, LeGrand, Bourgerault, Genie, TUI, McLaren and more introduced FB cars.

The plus was that the expanded series for 1968 was widely publicized and races were held at most of the major US road racing circuits. The F5000 and FB cars ran in the same races. The well driven FB cars which had basically created the series could place in the top 10 but were no longer overall winners. Mike Eyerly driving for Fred Opert's factory Chevron team was the consistent FB winner usually challenged by Jon Milledge in a Brabham. Opert who ran future F1 champions Niki Lauda and Kiki Rosberg in European F2 rated Eyerly as good or better than either.

For F5000 in their first year, 1968, former FB driver Lew Sell driving Dickie Smothers' Eagle was the series winner. Lew was regarded by many as a candidate for an Indy ride but chose not to follow that path.



The 1967 Series allowed 1600cc FB or 3000cc F1 Cars like the 1967 Brabham BT24.

From 1969 through 1976 the F5000 cars and the FB cars had separate races on the same weekend. The series races attracted world class drivers over the next few years. Any series that can attract drivers the caliber of Mario Andretti must be a top racing series. The names of both FB and F5000 series drivers in the accompanying side bar attest to the stature of the series. The series ended with 1976 and for 1977 many F5000 cars with full bodywork formed the basis for the single seat Can-Am Sports Racing Car Series.

Today the F5000 Association organizes Feature Races for the F5000 Cars driving spectator vintage racing weekends.

SCCA Continental Grand Prix Series Champions

1967 Gus Hutchison Lotus 41C
 1968 Lou Sell Eagle
 1969 Tony Adamowicz Eagle
 1970 John Cannon McLaren
 1971 David Hobbs McLaren
 1972 Graham McRae McRae Mk1
 1973 Jody Schecter Lola
 1974 Brian Redman Lola
 1975 Brian Redman Lola
 1976 Brian Redman Lola

A Continental Grand Prix FB Lap 1969 On The Old Laguna Seca 9 Turn Circuit

-by Dan Davis

Take the green on a standing start by revving the engine between 6500, torque peak, and 8500, HP peak, and drop the clutch in first gear. Engine screaming, through the gears full revs out of the first left hand turn one in fourth snatching fifth over the hill. Flat out in fifth through Laguna's fearsome original, two bend; kinked straight at about 140 mph, through the bridge edging to the right for the banked left turn to a late apex then holding max revs up the hill with that slight hump and right bend that can slightly upset the car fighting to stay right in prep for the corkscrew hard breaking, snatch third and dive left first and instantly right to hit the falling away right hand exit turn apex, always a challenge to get back hard and early on the accelerator. Stay right on the short

straight then a smooth dropping away left curve and drift out to the very right edge snatch the next gear, move across to left on the medium straight then a sweeping flat right onto the short straight and up a gear to turn 9, take it in just past a sane brake marker to gain a few feet on that annoying guy right behind, down through the gears stay on right for the left turn to hit a late apex of the greater than 90° left and slide out toward hay bales just taking a bit of straw, then through the gears to start/finish and do it again for an hour till one gets the chequer.

This was in a 1,000 lb. just under 200 HP high suspension mounted winged Lotus 41C Formula B Car in 1969 the third year of SCCA's Pro Formula Series.



The Lotus 41C of Dan Davis in 1969 trim with suspension mounted high wing.

Formula A/Formula 5000/FB drivers competing in North America 1967-1976

Adamowicz, Tony	Courtney, Ron	Gethin, Peter	Koops, A.J.	Oxton, David	Sell, Lou. MD
Adams, Matt	Craig, Harvey	Gimbel, John	Korn, John T. MD	Pabst, David, Jr.	Settember, Tony
Adamich de Andrea	Craw, Nick	Goth, Mike	Kroll, Horst	Painter, Wil	Shelton, Monty
Alderman, George	Davie, Geoff	Grable, Ron	Kronn, Mak	Palm, Phil	Shepard, Sandy
Allen, Bob	Davis, Dan	Grant, Francis	Kuehne, Burt	Palumbo, Tony	Sherer, Wayne
Allison, Bruce	Dean, Tony	Grant, Jerry	Kwech, Horst	Papke, Peter	Sherman, Pete
Amon, Chris	DeJarid, Richard	Green, Rodney	Lader, Allen Neil	Parsons, Chuck	Sherwood, Johnson
Andrus, Mel	Delamore, Don	Gunaseca L.A.	Lazier, Robert	Patrick, Scooter	Shields, Vernon MD
Andretti, Mario	Demovsky, Syd	Guneau, Len	Lebsack, Theodore	Paul, Jim	Shirey, Richard
Baker, Clive	DePasquale, Eno	Gunn, John	Letellier, Ron	Pavesi, Lou	Simms, Tony
Baker, Bill	Dietrich, Charles	Gutfreund, Jim	Lewis, John "Randy"	Pease, Al	Simon, Dick
Baker, Fred	Dioguardi, Nick	Gustafson, Jim	Lombard, Lella	Peterson, Crockey	Simpson, Bill
Bandy, Jim	Dittemore, Jim	Haga, Eric	Lovely, Pete	Peterson, Gregg	Smiley, Gordon
Barber, Skip	Donohue, Mark	Hall, Arthur	Lunger, Brett	Pescarolo, Henri	Smothers, Dick
Barker, John	Dugo, Bob	Hansen, Jerry	Mahler, John	Phillips, C. L.	Sneva, Tom
Barr, Roger	Dunkel, James C., MD	Hargley, Larry	Marshall, John	Phillips, Fred	Stanford, Bob
Barrow, Doug	Durst, Steve	Harris, Hunter	Martin, John	Pieper, Steve	Stanton, Gene
Bartlett, Kevin	Dykes, Ron	Harrison, Kris	Matich, Frank	Pilette, Teddy	Stevens, Jim
Behr, John	Earl, Bob	Hawes, Jim	Mathews, Gary, C.	Posey, Sam	Stewart, Max
Bell, Derek	Eaton, George	Heinz, Dave	McBurnie, Thomas	Pohl, Ozzie	Stockton, Richard
Benjamin, William	Eglinton, Bruce	Helferich, Peter	McCaig, Roger	Pollard, Garth	Stoddard, Spence
Benton, John	Eiteljorg, Jack	Henny, Phil	McGinty, Bob	Polley, Ed	Swanson, B.J.
Bighouse, Roger	Entin, Jerry	Hinchliff, Ed	McGonegle, Pat	Pryce, Tom	Tambay, Patrick
Bisignano, John	Ericson, Robert	Hiss, Mike	McKitterick, Sheeter	Purley, David	Taylor, Travor
Blackmore, Barry	Eschelman, Dave	Hoffman, Richard	McMillen, Stew	Ramsey, Rex	Tempero, Bill
Blankenship, Brad	Essecks, Bob	Holmes, Ron	McNeil, Larry	Ransom, John	Thomas, Tuck
Blessing, Randy	Eve, Bill	Hobbs, David W.	McRae, Graham	Raney, Gerard	Trowbridge, Chuck
Bonnier, Joakim	Eyerly, Mike	Hood, John. MD	Meffert, Gordon	Ratcliffe, Andrew	Truitt, Jerry
Botsford, Peter	Fairbanks, Howie	Hooper, Douglas C.	Merzario, Arturo	Redman, Brian	Unser, Al
Bouverat, Alan	Felter, Ed	Hunt, James	Micejewski, Max	Reinold, Kurt	Unser, Bobby
Brack, Bill	Ferro, Bob	Hutchison, Gus	Milledge, Jon, M.	Rehl, Peter S.	Vendl, Rick
Brambilla, Vittorio	Flickinger, Warren	Hyams, Colin	Miller, Eddie	Revson, Peter	Vetrock, Dean
Brayton, Mike	Fishetti, Robert	Infererra, Don	Moffatt, Jim	Rosbach, Jerry	Vose, Hamilton III
Breidenbach, Don	Florence, Lew	Ingle, Harry	Moran, Rocky	Roth, Gil. MD	Waco, Mark
Brennan, Merle	Follmer, George	Jacobs, Dick	Morley, Bud	Ruby, Lloyd	Walker, Johnny
Briggs, John	Forbes-Robinson, Elliot	Jeffrey, George	Morton, John	Rupp, Mickey	Ward, Jon
Brise, Tony	Stuart Forbes-	Johncock, Gordon	Mosley, Mike	Rutherford, Johnny	West, Robert
Brockman, Michael	Robinson	Johns, Tom	Motschenbacher, Lothar	Sarich, Charles	Wietzes, Eppie
Broeker, Peter	Forsgren, Lyle	Johnston, Randolph	Muir, Bob	Sarich, Jim	Williams, Robert
Brown, Warwick	Fowler, Mickey	Johnston, Sherwood	Mulhall, Jim	Saucier, John	Wilson, Gary
Brown, Bobby	Fraser, Randy	Jones, Alan	Murphy, Dan	Savage, Swede	Winkler, Monty
Brown, Glenn	Frederick, Charles	Jones, Thomas C.	Nagel, Bob	Schecker, Jody	Wintersteen, Geo.
Brown, Sam	Freeman, Bill	Jordan, Davey	Negley, Richard	Scheffer, Randy	Wisell, Reine
Brownstein, Steve	Furey, Dan	Kantrud, Dick	Nichols, Bob	Schulz, Doug	Wolin, Dave
Byers, Don II	Fushida, Hiroshi	Kasproicz, Ed	Noyes, Evan Jr.	Schuppan, Vern	Wood, Tom
Candler, Hank	Galloway, Richard	Kerns, Jerry	Oliver, Jackie	Schwieger, William	Woods, Roy, G.
Cannon, John	Garcia-Viega,	Kijek, Arthur	O'Neil, Brian	Scott, Benny	Woods, Steve
Cook, Chris	Nestor	Kindal, John	Ongais, Danny	Scott, Josef	Woodner, Jon
Corbett, Fred	Gardner, John	Kircher, John	Opalka, Frank	Scott, Skip	Workman, Dick
Corwin, Jim	Geishart, Gerald	Kloster, Ken	Ott, Dennis	Sechser, James	Young, Gregg

