

CVAR Thunder on the Cimarron

Hallett Motor Racing Circuit, Oklahoma

October 11-13, 2019



#11 Gray Gregory, 1977 Chevron B39; #31 James Stiehr, 1969 Winkelmann WDF-1; #35 Nick Leonard, 1981 Ralt RT-4; #86 Angus Lemon, 1969 Merlyn 11A/17A; #47 Steve Lafferty, 1971 Merlyn Mk 20; #78 Allen Letterly, 1981 Zink 16; #157 Matt Ammer, 1972 Konig-Heath KHF-1.





#34 Bob Hancock, 1969 Merlyn 11A.

– *story by Don Gwynne
and Angus Lemon*

– *photos by Hallett Foto Shoppe*

This year, Thunder on the Cimarron took place just one week after the SVRA National Championship races at COTA in Austin. Understandably, turnout at Hallett was on the light side, but those who came had a great time. On Saturday, the drivers that took the green for Saturday's Formula Ford Feature race put on a great show..

Among the ongoing improvements at HMRC is the new pavilion where our Saturday evening party featured some great munchies, cold refreshments and a lot of bench racing.

Non-Vintage News Flash! While all this was going on at Hallett, Hunter Barron notched a brilliant 2nd place at the 2019 SCCA runoffs at Virginia International Raceway. Hunter started fifth in a field of 24 Formula Vees, eventually taking the checkered flag in second place after 40 minutes of hard racing. Quite an achievement as this was his first time at the SCCA Runoffs. Some CVAR workers were excited to be able to electronically monitor Hunter's drive to the podium in real time. Isn't science and technology wonderful?

20 entrants from four states converged on Hallett Motor Racing Circuit (a formula car track if there ever was one) to help CVAR celebrate its ninth annual **FORMULA FORD FEATURE** race, celebrating 50 years of Formula Ford racing in the USA. For various reasons, five of them didn't come to the grid for the FF Feature.

A little FF history and background: Formula Ford was started in 1967 in England as a more reliable, cost effective formula car for motor racing schools in the UK. The first standalone Formula Ford race was held at Brands Hatch on July 2, 1967. The first official Formula Ford race in the United States was held on March 23, 1969; Formula Ford was also included in the SCCA Runoffs that year. Today Formula Ford championship series are held in over twenty countries around the world.

driven by Jodi Scheckter, another Formula One driver, and now resides in Scheckter's collection.

In CVAR all Formula Ford cars use a 1,600 cc crossflow English Ford "Kent" engine.



#71 Skip Meyer, 1959 Austin Healey Bugeye Sprite; #301 Mark Hansen, 1966 Austin Healey Sprite; #23 Dave Williams, 1959 Austin Healey Bugeye Sprite.

Recent developments (steel crankshafts and forged pistons) have helped resolve the few weak points of these engines and it is not uncommon to get 50 hours between rebuilds. All engine parts are readily available. Ford has even resumed making new four-cylinder English Ford blocks.

CVAR runs three classes of Formula Fords:

- FF1 up to 1972 Formula Fords – the classic cigar shaped 1960s formula car, runs on treaded vintage racing tires.
- FF2 1973-1981 Formula Fords, many cars have inboard rear brakes and some have inboard front suspension. May run slicks.
- FF3 1982-1994 Formula Fords, much more streamlined cars typically with inboard suspension on both ends of the car. May run slicks.

The pre-race deal-making started early Saturday morning with a short debate over the length of the race, some wanted to shorten the 30-minute race due to the limited fuel capacity

In 1970 Emerson Fittipaldi became the first of many Formula Ford drivers to win a Formula One Grand Prix and two years later became the first to win a Formula One world championship. The car Fittipaldi raced, a Merlyn Mk11A, now known as "The Magic Merlyn" went on to dominate Formula Ford in 1970 at the hands of Colin Vandervell (son of wealthy industrialist Tony Vandervell, the man behind the Vanwall racing cars). The very same car was also



#98 Jason White, 1965 Zink C4; #25 Willis Murphey, 1969 Lynx B.

in some cars....one crafty driver declared his car held six gallons and proposed a one hour feature. A 25-minute race was agreed upon and most cars arrived to the grid with fuel cells filled right to the top.

After a group photo on the start-finish straight, the field of 15 low slung cars took the green...and immediately one car went off the outside of Turn 1. After that, the race progressed smoothly with almost everyone having someone to race with.

It is interesting to note that the two fastest drivers, Jamie Stiehr (1:24.873) and Trevor Bond (1:24.257) were both running treaded tires but have very different driving styles. Jamie "Smooth Operator" Stiehr is one of the most consistent drivers on the track, the car never looks out of shape and is driven so smoothly it almost looks slow, but clearly isn't! Trevor "Captain Sideways" Bond is obviously not afraid of large slide angles and will use any part of the track available to him, very exciting to watch and also very fast.

At the checker the trophies went to:

FF1: 1st Jamie Stiehr in a 1969 Winkelmann WDF1; 2nd Steve Lafferty in a 1971 Merlyn Mk20; 3rd Pete Christensen in a 1970 Winkelmann WDF2.

FF2: 1st Trevor Bond in a 1975 LeGrand Mk21 (You always know when Trevor is behind you. Your mirrors light up bright green!).

FF3: 1st Greg Smith driving the newest car in the field, a beautiful red 1986 Swift DB-1

Hard Luck Award: Unfortunately there were several drivers competing for Art Summerville's famous Hard Luck trophy:

- Tim Blakeney lost his clutch master cylinder on the grid.
- Angus Lemon snapped the throttle cable at the end of lap one. Speculation is that he was pushing on the accelerator pedal too hard in an effort to catch Steve Lafferty... it didn't work.
- Jeff Langham came in after noticing a vibration to find a failing rear half-shaft. Nice save Jeff.
- Greg Hibbs ran in second position for 14 laps in his newly repainted red (I hear it is an



#147 Richard Fisher, 1959 Austin Healey Sprite; #40 George Curl, 1964 MGB; #614 William Pollard, 1974 Porsche 914.

Alfa Romeo color) 1972 Merlyn 20A, before noticing a slight loss of power, dropping oil pressure and climbing temperature. He lost a bearing in the engine and dropped out, thus clinching the Hard Luck award. Perhaps it was his British car protesting the Italian paint color.

Many thanks to all the Formula Ford drivers who came from far and wide, including Texas, Colorado, Nebraska, and Wyoming. A special thanks to Past CVAR President Art Summerville for his continuing dedication to the Formula Ford feature race and for all the wonderful trophies he continues to make us! If you want to see a grown man be truly thankful and excited for a pile of worn, dirty engine parts, give your post engine rebuild (or post engine failure) parts to Art, you may get one back as a trophy someday. The entire Formula Ford group appreciates the hard work the race officials and corner workers put into an event like this... Thank You!

Getting down to business with the 20 minute Sunday afternoon points races, the **GROUP 4** cars came out first. Initially, seven cars registered for the Group 4 race, but Denver's Diane Alder decided to change her entry from Group 6 to Group 4, which was approved by the Chief Steward. As a result, eight cars came to the grid, with Tom Atlas on pole driving his red #14 Lola Mk2 Formula Junior. Jim Yule started

alongside in his green #59 Elva 100 Formula Junior. Robert Merrill started dead last in his yellow #159 BMC Formula Junior, but did not stay there long at all. Incredibly, he moved into second overall by the first lap, and on the fourth lap passed Tom Atlas to take the overall lead, which he held for the next nine laps to the checkered flag to win the FJ-1 (front engine Formula Juniors) class. Diane Alder moved up from next to last at the green flag



#88 Gary Perser, 1960 Austin Healey Sprite Mk 1; #153 Gary Emery, 1957 Arnold Special.

to finish third overall for CVAR's new G4T class win. New Mexico's Henry Morrison took the VB class win in fifth overall driving his white #10 Elva Courier. Gary Emery won the CM class in sixth overall with his green #153 Arnold Special. The VC class win went to Gary Perser's blue #88 Austin Healey Sprite. Chris Kellner won the VA class in his red and white #23 Austin Healey 3000.

There were 24 cars entered in **GROUP 6** (FA, FC, BSR, FF1, FF2, and FF3) but on Sunday, only 16 of them reported to the grid for the points race. Rather predictably, Houston's Gray Gregory sat on pole driving his blue #11 Chevron B39. When the green flag waved, he was gone, turning laps more than three seconds quicker than the next fastest competitor, Nick Leonard in his white #35 Ralt RT-4. And that's how these two FA cars finished. Pat Magruder's tow from West



#30 Michael Kopecky, 1971 Porsche 914/4, #654 Louis Gladfelter, 1962 Morris Mini Cooper S.



#96 John Strnad, 1969 Lynx B; #25 Willis Murphey, 1969 Lynx B; #103 John Williamson, 1970 Caldwell D-13.

Memphis, Arkansas, was rewarded with a third overall finish to win the FC class with his red #57 Van Diemen RF-95. After starting on the outside of the front row, Jim Gewinner finished fourth overall to win the B Sports Racing class in his green #33 Lotus 23B. Formula Fords comprised the remainder of the finishers, all of whom were at least one lap down from Gray Gregory's FA Chevron (no shame in that!). Colorado's Bob Hancock took the FF1 win in fifth overall driving his red #34 Merlyn 11A. Trevor Bond's (very) green #98 LeGrand Mk 21 trailed Hancock by just half a second at the checkered flag to finish sixth overall and win the FF2 class. San Antonio's Greg Smith won the FF3 class in seventh overall with his red #6 Swift DB1.

The **GROUP 2/7** (E Production, F Production, and C Sedan) field was small. Of 13 entrants, only five came to the grid. And then, there were no lead changes for the entire race. Michael Kopecky started on pole driving

his yellow and orange #30 Porsche 914-4, turned in the fastest lap, and finished first overall to win the E Production class. Little Rock's Louis Gladfelter took an unopposed C Sedan class win in second overall driving his green #654 Mini Cooper. Third overall was Ted Melady, driving his blue #76 MGB, for a second place in E Production. Richard Fisher won the F Production class in fifth overall with his blue #47 Austin Healey Sprite.

The last race of the day, **GROUP 1/8**, was also one of the most exciting. Although the lap charts don't show it very clearly, Paul Park's yellow #85 Chevrolet Camaro had a great dice with George Kopecky's black #97 Porsche RSR. They each made their speed in different places and it was most interesting and entertaining to watch

how each attacked the course. Park started on pole, with Kopecky along side, and that's how they finished. So Park notched the A Sedan class win and Kopecky took the FIA class win. Mark Gohlke ran in third overall for the whole race to finish third overall and second in FIA class with his R/W/B #123 Porsche 914-6. He was less than a second behind Kopecky at the checkered flag, which is very credible. After starting in fourth overall, CVAR President Herb Hilton encountered problems on about the ninth lap, which moved R. Burt Williams up into fourth overall for the C Production class win in his blue #43 Porsche 911. The B Sedan class win went to David McCullough in his red and white #68 Datsun 510 in seventh overall.



#57 Pat Magruder, 1995 Van Diemen RF-95; #34 Bob Hancock, 1969 Merlyn 11A.

The First event of CVAR's 2020 season will be the Brian Goldman Memorial Race and Driver's School at MSR-Houston, Feb. 21-23, 2020.

FF FEATURE

PL CL DRIVER/CAR

- 1 FF1 J. Stiehr/1969 Winkelmann WDF-1 1:24.783
- 1 FF3 G. Smith/1986 Swift DB1 1:25.165
- 2 FF1 S. Lafferty/1971 Merlyn Mk 20
- 1 FF2 T. Bond/1975 Legrand Mk 21 1:24.257
- 2 FF2 A. Letterly/1981 Zink 16
- 3 FF1 P. Christensen/1970 Winkelmann WDF-2



#33 Jim Gewinner, 1965 Lotus 23B.

- 4 FF1 S. Barkley/1969 Winkelmann
- 5 FF1 G. Tussing/1972 Titan Mk 6
- 6 FF1 B. Hancock/1969 Merlyn 11A
- 7 FF1 A. Goch/1969 Titan Mk 6B
- 8 FF1 G. Hibbs/1972 Meryln 20A
- 9 FF1 J. Langham/1972 Merlyn Mk 20A

GROUP 1/8

PL CL DRIVER/CAR

- 1 AS P. Park/1971 Camaro 1:26.213
- 1 FIA G. Kopecky/1973 Porsche RSR 1:26.010
- 2 FIA M. Gohlke/1970 Porsche 914
- 1 CP R.B. Williams/1970 Porsche 911 1:30.219

- 2 AS R. Mussina/1965 Ford Mustang
- 2 CP T. Taff/1971 Porsche 914/6

- 1 BS D. McCullough/1969 Datsun 510 1:33.500



#87 Dwight Calkins, 1972 Lynx B.

- 2 BS C. Beckwith/1972 BMW 2002
- 3 AS H. Hilton/1967 Ford Mustang
- AP M. Baker/1970 AMC Javelin
- G8-4 B. Boyd/1987 Porsche 944
- BP G. Jonas/1966 Ford GT350 Replica
- G8-4 R. Virden/1988 Porsche 944
- G8-4 S. Virden/1986 Porsche 944

GROUP 2/7

PL CL DRIVER/CAR

- 1 EP M. Kopecky/1971 Porsche 914/4 1:30.539
- 1 CS L. Gladfelter/1962 Morris Mini Cooper S 1:34.742
- 2 EP T. Melady/1965 MGB
- 3 EP W. Pollard/1974 Porsche 914
- 1 FP R. Fisher/1959 Austin Healey Sprite 1:43.870

GROUP 3

PL CL DRIVER/CAR

- 1 FV D. Calkins/1972 Lynx B 1:34.583
- 2 FV P. Bastyr/1969 McNamara FV

- 3 FV J. Ridings/1968 Beach Mk 5C
- 4 FV W. Wolff/1968 Zink Z-5
- 5 FV J. Strnad/1969 Lynx B
- 6 FV J. Williamson/1970 Caldwell D-13
- 7 FV D. Phillips/1969 Zink C-4

- 1 FV1 S. Murphy/1964 Bobsy Vanguard FV1 1:39.760
- 8 FV J. White/1965 Zink C-4
- 9 FV W. Murphey/1969 Lynx B

- GROUP 4**
- PL CL DRIVER/CAR**

- 1 FJ-1 R. Merrill/1959 BMC Mk 1 1:34.354
- 2 FJ-1 T. Atlas/1960 Lola Mk 2
- 1 G4T D. Alder/1965 Miller Sports Racer 1:33.408



#159 Robert Merrill, 1959 BMC Mk 1.

- 3 FJ-1 J. Yule/1959 Elva 100
- 1 VB H. Morrison/1959 Elva Courier 1:38.941
- 1 CM G. Emery/1957 Arnold Special 1:43.575
- 1 VC G. Perser/1960 Austin Healey Sprite Mk 1 1:45.527
- 1 VA C. Kellner/1959 Austin Healey 3000 1:55.095

GROUP 6

PL CL DRIVER/CAR

- 1 FA G. Gregory/1977 Chevron B39 1:17.760
- 2 FA N. Leonard/1981 Ralt RT-4
- 1 FC P. Magruder/1995 Van Diemen RF-95 1:22.913
- 1 BSR J. Gewinner/1965 Lotus 23B 1:23.482



#301 Mark Hansen, 1966 Austin Healey Sprite.

- 1 FF1 B. Hancock/1969 Merlyn 11A 1:23.906
- 1 FF2 T. Bond/1975 Legrand Mk 21 1:23.985
- 1 FF3 G. Smith/1986 Swift DB1 1:25.505
- 2 FF1 S. Lafferty/1971 Merlyn Mk 20
- 3 FF1 A. Lemon/1969 Merlyn 11A/17A
- 2 FF2 A. Letterly/1981 Zink 16
- 4 FF1 P. Christensen/1970 Winkelmann WDF-2
- 5 FF1 S. Barkley/1969 Winkelmann WDF-1
- 6 FF1 G. Tussing/1972 Titan Mk 6
- 2 FF3 W. Trimbur/1982 Van Diemen FF
- 7 FF1 T. Blakeney/1972 Royale RP-16