

# SUPER VEE UPDATE

SUPER VEE RACING CONTINUES TO GROW

BY JOHN G. RETTIE

Photos by John G. Rettie and Dennis Torres

Some predictions come true, some don't. When we wrote the Super Vee preview in the April issue we had to guess or predict what was likely to be happening during this year's season. Things change in racing so rapidly that it is difficult to keep abreast of what's going to happen. Now that the Mini-Indy season is just about half-way through, it's interesting to look back at our preview and see what has happened in the intervening months. The first two Mini-Indy races had good turn-outs of cars, most of which were new cars with water-cooled engines. There were also many new drivers and two rookies, Tim Richmond and John Wood, won the first two races.

Since then, two more rounds of the ten race championship series have taken place, and two different drivers have won the events. So in four races we've had four different winners, and there are ten drivers who are within 200 points of each other in the championship score. Any one of them could be the champion at the end of the year. Yes, Mini-Indy is proving to be a very competitive and interesting series.

So far there have been 45 drivers who have competed in the four races, but there have only been about 35 cars. Those numbers are not nearly as high as had been expected at the beginning of the year, but the quality of entries has been good, and at least nobody has been unable to race because of too many entrants.

Out of the 20 or so companies who indicated that they would be building FSV cars, only seven have actually managed to produce cars that have raced. The problem has been that some of the American companies have had to concentrate on their Champ car programs at the expense of the FSV cars. Hopefully, now that the season is well underway, they can find time to further develop their Mini-Indy cars. The problem with the English car manufacturers seems to be that they have not received any orders. Most of the English companies have adapted their Formula 3 car chassis for FSV use, and so they only build to order.

It's interesting that at the beginning of the season it seemed to be the Argo, the Ralts, and the Zinks that were the best cars, although a Lola did win the first race. Since then, the Lolas as

DUNE BUGGIES & HOT VWs



TOP, Volkswagen provided the pace car at both the Trenton race and the Milwaukee race and plans on doing the same at several other USAC races this year. CENTER, the end of the pace lap at Mosport Park, and the Super Vee cars are about to start the race. ABOVE, Bill Alsop leads Herm Johnson and Stuart Moore through a corner at Mosport Park.

well as the March have come to the front. But, Bill Alsup driving the lone Argo, seems to have had the best results. It would appear that he has the best engine at present; it was originally built by John Zeitler and since developed by Bill Alsup. A large part of Bill's early success was due to the fact that he started development on his new car and engine before anybody else.

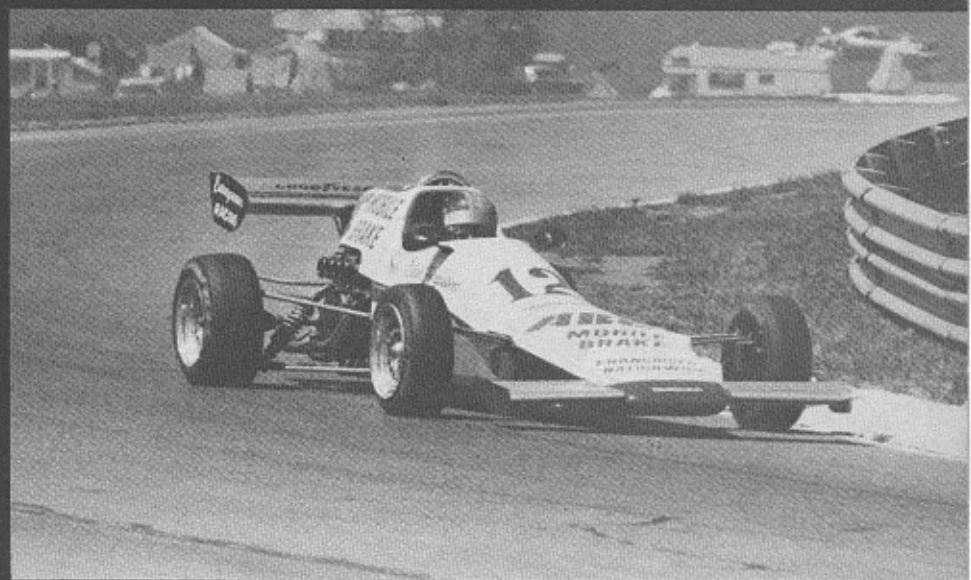
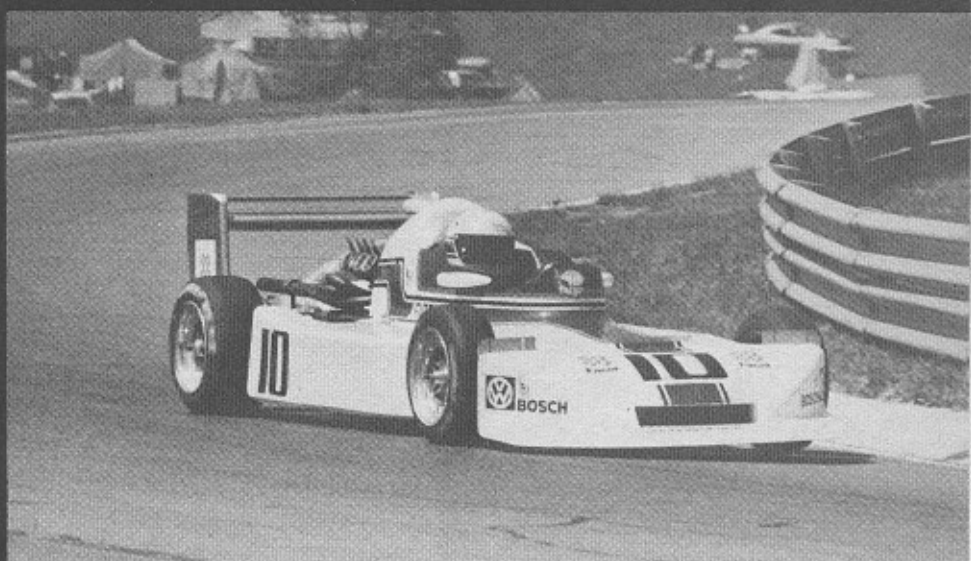
When we spoke to Bertil at his shop in Libertyville, Illinois, before the third race, he said he thought he'd found the answer to getting power out of the Rabbit engine, and he told us to watch the cars with his engines at the following races. He was right, at the Milwaukee race there was not really very much difference in straight line performance between most of the cars. On the corners the story did seem to be different, though. It would appear that the March car driven by Dennis Firestone is the best handling car in the series, as he seems to be able to get around the corners considerably faster than anybody else. That is probably not so surprising when one considers the chassis alone costs around \$30,000, whereas most of the other chassis are about half that price.

Mini-Indy racing is rather like Formula One racing at present; it seems that at every race somebody has done more development and gets a jump on the competition. Obviously, by the end of the year things will have evened out, but at present there is no way of telling which chassis, engine or driver is going to be the winner — which makes for exciting racing!

#### MOSPORT PARK, CANADA

For the third round of the Robert Bosch/VW Mini-Indy series, the contestants travelled to the Canadian road circuit at Mosport Park near Toronto. This is the only race in the series not to take place on an oval, so naturally everybody expected the road racers to fair better than those with an oval background. Mosport Park is an interesting track with a wide variety of corners and several straights. The drivers who had raced FSV in previous years have raced there several times, so had an advantage in not having to learn the track from scratch.

Bill Alsup was the fastest qualifier with a time of 1:23.75 (105.70 mph) which was a second quicker than the fastest time by an air-cooled car at the last race in 1977. Beside Bill, on the front row, was none other than Herm Johnson with a time of 1:23.82. Herm

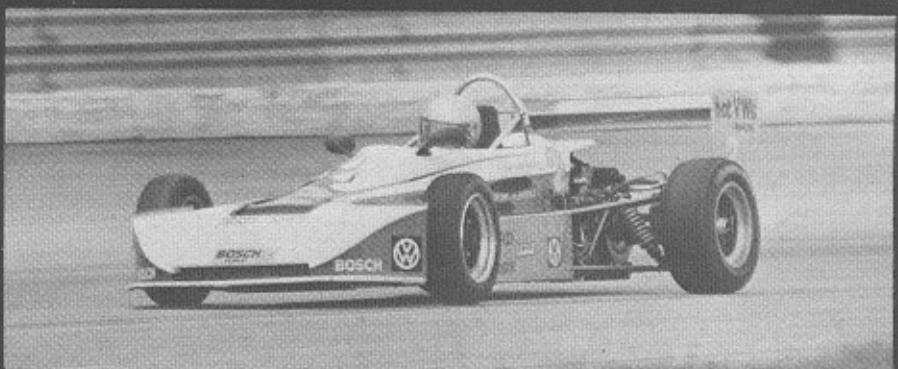
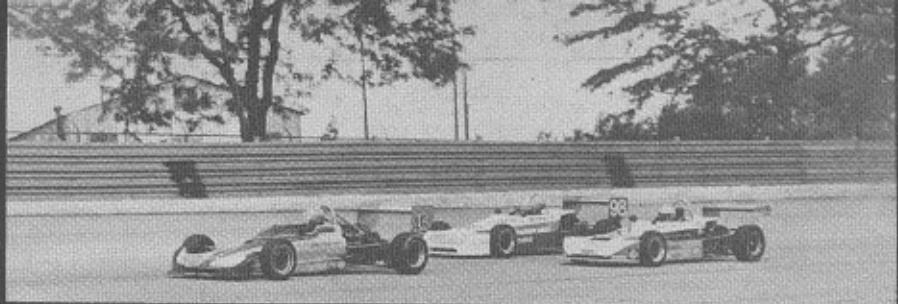


TOP, Dennis Firestone's March seems to be the fastest through the corners. The March is probably the most sophisticated car in Super Vee at present. Dick Ferguson from Los Angeles is now driving the Race Research car with sponsorship from ABC Mobile Brake. BELOW, Bill Alsup won the race at Mosport Park and got to be in the victory circle with none other than Linda Vaughn.



had finally gotten the handling of his new Lola more to his liking thanks to some development help from Eric Broadley, the designer of the car. He also had the latest engine from Bertil with approximately seven horsepower more than before. Dennis Firestone (March) with a time of 1:24.41 was on the second row along with Harry MacDonald (Ralt) with a time of 1:24.86. Two newcomers appearing at Mosport for the first time were Dick Ferguson in the ABC Mobile Brake sponsored Race Research car that Peter Halsmer had driven at the first race. Also Geoff Brabham (son of Jack Brabham) entered in a Ralt run by Dave Pesaki and sponsored by Cosworth Engines. In fact, the car is the same one that Dennis Firestone drove at Phoenix before his March car was ready.

The race saw Bill Alsup take the lead right from the start, and he never looked back, winning with an average speed of 88.54 mph, over 1 mph faster than the winning speed in the yellow flag plagued Champ car race! Stuart Moore who drives Bertil's Race Engines Lola came in a surprising second, proving that Bertil's engines seem to be right on, now, as does the Lola. Dennis Firestone finished third after having trouble passing some slower cars earlier in the race. Herm Johnson, after challenging Bill Alsup for the lead, dropped out when one of the rear brake rotors failed. Geoff Brabham was not very successful in his first race on this side of the Atlantic and only managed a 12th place finish.



#### MILWAUKEE, WISC.



One week after the race in Canada, the fourth round was held at the Wisconsin State fairground in Milwaukee. This is Herm Johnson's "home" track, so he is the local hero. Because of this, he not only appeared on TV the day before the race but also got to drive the pace car during the Champ car race.

Even in one week several new cars and drivers appeared. Roger Mears was able to finally get his ride in the Warner Hodgdon Ralt powered by a Schrick engine. Roy Kischell, who is the son of a USAC tech official, had bought Tom Bagley's Zink and was appearing in his first race. Tom has now decided to concentrate fully on his Champ car effort.

Unfortunately it rained on the day set for qualifying, so the officials decided to let the drivers draw for their starting positions. The top ten drivers got to draw for the top ten spots, while the rest had to draw for the remaining 18 spots. Bill Henderson and Dennis Firestone were the lucky ones drawing first and second spots, with Howdy Holmes (in a new Bosch sponsored Zink) and Harry MacDonald (Bill Scott Racing Ralt) taking the next two spots.

Fortunately it did not rain on race day so the FSV cars were able to race before the Champ cars as planned. Dennis Firestone went straight into the



TOP, Bill Henderson, Tim Richmond and Herm Johnson, all in Lolas, battle it out. CENTER TOP, Herm Johnson. CENTER, Geoff Brabham in a Ralt. CENTER BOTTOM, Knut Bendixon of Robert Bosch congratulates Geoff Brabham, Herm Johnson and Bill Henderson at the end of the race. RIGHT, Bobby Unser, Sr. tells Rick Mears how to win the Champ race, and he did!



lead in his March and began to build up a commanding lead over Bill Henderson, Tim Richmond and Herm Johnson, all fighting for the next three places, and all in Lolas powered by Bertil's engines. The only yellow flag came on the eighth lap when John Wood (Ralt) spun damaging the nose of his car. Unfortunately, Roger Mears was right behind and was unable to avoid hitting the errant Ralt. So Roger was out rather early in his first FSV race. However, he had managed to work his way up from a 17th place start to eighth place when he went out, so he should be a top contender in future races.

Dennis Firestone built up a lead of about 10 sec. when on the 38th lap the throttle linkage broke on the car, and he was unable to make it back to the pits. But, he had proved that his Drake powered March seems to be the fastest car out there, at least in the corners. From then on there were no major changes in the race and no more yellows. Bill Henderson won his first Mini-Indy race, Herm Johnson was second and Harry MacDonald third. Geoff Brabham came in sixth, winning the Montgomery Ward Auto Club Rookie of the Race award.

The race was an unlucky event for Bill Alsup, who had the fuel injector pack up on lap 26, also for Fred Phillips who after destroying the car in testing had the engine pack up the day before the race, and for Howdy Holmes who had an engine problem in the first lap and for Dick Ferguson who lost a rod in the engine on the seventh lap.

However, with many of the top drivers not gaining many more points, it gave others a chance to catch up. For example, Herm Johnson is now third in the points standing after being in twelfth place after Mosport. Ironically it was at the same race in Milwaukee last year that Herm's fortunes turned around, so perhaps the same will happen this year, though the competition is somewhat tougher!

#### MINI-INDY SERIES POINTS (after 4 races)

1	Bill Alsup	366
2	Fred Phillips	280
3	Herm Johnson	270
4	Tim Richmond	268
5	Gary Bettenhausen	268
6	Harry MacDonald	264
7	Dennis Firestone	246
8	Peter Halsmer	243
9	Bill Henderson	224
10	John Wood	212



Roger Mears was finally able to race in a Mini-Indy event after waiting for his car to be ready since the start of the season. Here he is talking with Ron Tauranac, the Australian designer of the Ralt Roger is racing. Ron used to design the Brabham cars for Jack Brabham. In the background the familiar face is that of Danny Thompson, who is now working on National Engineering's team (the team Roger is racing for). Danny hopes to be racing a FSV car soon, himself, either a second car or Roger's, once Roger moves out to a Champ car.

#### MILWAUKEE MINI-INDY RESULTS

Fin. Pos.	Driver/Car Name	Car	Money Won
1	Bill Henderson, Village Motors	Lola	\$2850
2	Herm Johnson, Bertils Menards Cashway	Lola	1900
3	Harry Mac Donald, HCM Racing	Ralt	1190
4	Gary Bettenhausen, American Eagle Racing	Lola	850
5	Bob Cicconi, Molysleet 1	Lola	735
6	Geoff Brabham, Cosworth Developments	Ralt	620
7	Tim Richmond, Montgomery Ward Auto Club	Lola	565
8	John Sisk Jr., Aspen Racing	Wheeler	485
9	Tommy Thompson, Black American Racers	Lola	450
10	John Kalagian, Ardisana	Lynx	395

#### MOSPORT PARK MINI-INDY RESULTS

Fin. Pos.	Driver/Car Name	Car	Money Won
1	Bill Alsup, Zeitler Racing	Argo	\$2850
2	Stuart Moore, Bertils Race Engines	Lola	1850
3	Dennis Firestone, David Rogers Racing	March	1190
4	Harry MacDonald, HCM Racing	Ralt	850
5	Syd Demovksy, Fred C Dobbs Racing	Lola	735
6	Peter Halsmer, ARCQgraphite Racer	Lola	620
7	Tommy Thompson, Black American Racers	Lola	565
8	Heinz Snizek		485
9	Richard Tallon, Import Engineering	Lola	450
10	Bob Cicconi, Molysleet 1	Lola	395

#### SCCA Robert Bosch/VW Gold Cup Events

The month of June was a busy one for FSV racers. Apart from the two USAC Mini-Indy races there were also two SCCA road races. Unfortunately, one of these at Mid-Ohio was on the same day as the USAC race at Mosport Park, so inevitably the top runners were in Canada. The field at Mid-Ohio was mainly made up of amateurs and air-cooled cars. However, Bob Lazier and John Kalagian chose to compete there in their newer cars. Bob Lazier took pole position and won the race comfortably beating John Kalagian. Third place went to Bill Cruse and fourth to Mike Yoder.

One week after the Mini-Indy race at Milwaukee many of the FSV teams trudged to St. Jovite, Quebec, Canada, for the fourth round of the SCCA series. This race produced some pleasant surprises. Geoff Brabham got it all together and put the Cosworth Development Ralt on the pole position with Bill Alsup beside him. Unfortunately, after leading for the first two laps, Geoff had the toothed belt slip off the fuel injection pump, and he had to retire.

This left Bill Alsup and Bob Lazier (Lola) fighting it out for first place. Herm Johnson was lying back in third place waiting for one of them to overcook it. And Bob Lazier did, crashing heavily out of the race, fortunately without injury to himself. Herm then tried to catch up with Bill Alsup, but his shocks started to collapse, and he could finish no better than second. John Kalagian (Lynx) finished third, Dom Balleria fourth and John Sisk finished fifth in a Wheeler, also collecting the rookie award. This was only the third race ever for John, and only the second in a Wheeler. John has been a footballer with the Chicago Bears for 13 years and has now retired and is taking up motor racing.