

Concise History – Chapter 8

Part 1 – 1970

This year marked the return to Europe of “real” racing for the first time since the end of the Coupe Deutsch Race series in 1936. Formula One was imported into Great Britain by the Royal Aero Club, following the steady build-up of interest among British race pilots and builders, once they realized how much more exciting it was for everyone than handicap racing.

The Florida National Air Races

The third meet organized by Atlantic Coast Air Races was held April 16-19 at Executive Airport, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Three classes were flown on the 3.189-mile course. Each would have a daily “final” race.

In the AT-6 Class race, 20 qualifiers were led by John Mosby at 195.24 mph, while second was Richard Minges at 193.60 mph, and third was Hugh Alexander at 192.62 mph. Sunday’s Final race was won by Ben Hall at 198.25 mph, breaking the record set at Reno in 1969. In second place was Minges at 190.22 mph, and in third was John Trainor at 188.59 mph.

Prior to the first Sport Biplane Class race of the season, the rules were changed to limit engine modifications and thus reduce speeds. Eleven pilots qualified, with Dallas Christian again leading, at 173.16 mph, “Skeeter” Royall was second at 169.82 mph, and Earl Hoffman third at 160.56 mph. The Sunday Final race was won by Royall at 162.49 mph, Christian was a very close second at 162.43 mph, and Earl Hoffman was third at 157.94 mph.

In Formula One, Bill Falck won Time Trials easily at 229.61 mph, to Nick Jones’ 216.61 mph and Chuck Andrews’ 213.39 mph. Falck won the Sunday Finals in calculated dramatic fashion, beating Steve Wittman by 210.91 mph to 210.49 mph. Bob Downey was third at 209.49 mph.

The Isle of Man Formula One Race

American midget racing crossed the Atlantic Ocean on April 24-25 and landed on the little Isle of Man, in the Irish Sea, the occasion being the annual Manx Air Festival at the old RAF base at Jurby. Present for the historic event were five British-built midgets: two Cassutt Racers and three Rollason Betas. They would share billing with the Manx Air Derby, a major handicap race.

There was no qualifying, and only a single 10-lap race around the 3.47-mile course. The first European look at an American-style race with its race-horse start was a big success. While the speeds were unimpressive, the race was close and hard fought. The winner was Fred Marsh in a Beta at 174.36 mph, second was Cassutt-builder Tom Storey at 174.24 mph, just 0.4 seconds back. Third place went to Michael Jones in a Beta at 172.12 mph. Four more races would follow in this first season.

The 38th King's Cup Race

Sharing the spotlight with a Formula One race at Nottingham, June 27-28, this classic handicap was run for a single lap around a 310-mile course. The winner was Mike Pruden in a Citabria at 129.5 mph, V.B. Mitchell was second in a Miles Gemini at 175.0 mph, and John Stewart-Wood was third in a Cessna Rocket at 172 mph.

The St. Louis Air Races

This AT-6 Class-only event was held September 5 at Alton, Illinois. Twelve pilots qualified, Bob Mitchem setting a one-lap record around the 2½-mile course at 213.270 mph. Richard Minges was second at 203.620 mph, and Ed Snyder was third at 202.247 mph. In one of the heat races, Mitchem set a speed record at 202.817 mph. He then won the Championship Race at 199.115 mph, to 193.548 mph for Minges, and 192.719 mph for Tony Murgia

The 7th National Championship Air Races

The long cross-country race from Milwaukee was won by Dick Kestle in a Mustang at 283.664 mph, second was Gunther Balz in a Bearcat at 273.453 mph, and third was John Sliker in a Mustang at 254.983 mph. It was the last in the series of Reno cross-country races that began in 1964.

The Sport Biplane Race qualifications were led by Bill Boland (Mong Sport) at a record 181.818 mph, second was Dallas Christian (Mongster) at 177.924 mph, and third was Roy Berry (Hot Canary) at 171.701 mph. In the Lucky Lager Championship Race, Boland won at 177.449 mph, Christian was second at 168.487 mph, and Dave Forbes was third at 163.667 mph.

The Formula One Race, sponsored by the Nuggett Casino, saw Bill Falck lead a field of 25 in time trials with a record-tying 231.263 mph, Ray Cote was second at 224.532 mph, and Bob Downey was third at 214.286 mph. In the 12-

lap Championship Race, Cote won at 220.071 mph, Falck was second at 215.964 mph, and Bob Moeller was third at 210.835 mph.

In the Harrah's Club Unlimited Class race, the top qualifier was Clay Lacy at 380.124 mph, second was Darryl Greenamyre at 378.245 mph, and third was Howie Keefe at 377.312 mph. In the Championship Race, Lacy won at 387.342 mph, Mike Loening was second at 376.693 mph, and LeRoy Penhall was third at 373.817 mph.

California 1000

The first Unlimited Class long-distance pylon race with pit stops was held November 15 at Mojave, California. It consisted of 66 laps of a 15-mile course, for a nominal 1,000 miles. The winner was Sherman Cooper in a Hawker Sea Fury at 344 mph. In second, completing 61 laps, was Cliff Cummins in a Mustang, and third with 61 laps, was Jack Sliker in a Mustang. Placing sixth was Clay Lacy in a Douglas DC-7B airliner, which was able to fly the race non-stop.

The British Season

Everyone involved in the introduction of Formula One racing was highly enthusiastic, and so by the time the season ended, there had been four more races.

June 27-28 at Nottingham. Tom Storey won the Coltex Trophy in a Cassutt at 180.25 mph, Marsh was second in a Beta at 179.00 mph, and Frank Gathercole was third in a Cassutt at 176.75 mph.

August 31 at Halfpenny Green. This race for the Goodyear Trophy was won by Storey, Robin Voice was second in a Beta, and Jones was third. No times were recorded.

September 13 at Shobdon. Carl Schofield won the Viscount Portman Trophy in a Cassutt, Marsh was second and Gathercole was third.

October 11 at Tees-Side. Marsh won the Duke of Edinburgh Trophy, Gathercole was second, and Mike Hennessey was third in a Beta.

Part 2 – 1971

For the second straight year, there were more Formula One races in Great Britain than the USA, and more F/1 races in both countries than races for all other classes, combined.

Wilson, North Carolina, Air Races

This friendly regional race offered Formula One and the AT-6 Class for its May 15-16 event. The AT-6 Final Race was won by Richard Minges at 198.0 mph, with Hugh Alexander second at 196.5 mph, and Ed Snyder third at 194.3 mph. In the F/1 portion of the program, Bob Moeller won at 220.2 mph, Minges was second at 212.49 mph, and Nick Jones was third at 209.18 mph.

New Jersey National Air Races

The meet held June 4-6 at Cape May, New Jersey, required a waiver from a state law prohibiting air racing. By the time it was over, air racing had suffered its biggest black-eye ever.

In the AT-6 Class race, Bob Mitchem led 15 qualifiers with 209.30 mph, Jack Lowers was second at 201.34 mph. At the start of the fourth preliminary heat, Richard Minges collided with Don Barrett and crashed fatally, while Barrett landed safely. Two laps later, a confusing signal by the FAA canceling the race, led to the airplanes of Victor Baker and Ed Snyder colliding, and their wreckage hitting Joe Quinn; all three crashed and died. It was the worst accident in air racing history. In the Championship Race, Mitchem won at a record 199.06 mph, Hugh Alexander was second at 192.72 mph, and Jim Strang was third at 188.63 mph.

Sport Biplane time trials were led by Dave Forbes at 159.29 mph, Don Fairbanks at 153.85 mph, and Earl Hoffman at 153.06 mph. In the Championship, Bill Warwick won at 163.93 mph, Forbes was second at 160.11 mph, and Fairbanks was third at 158.42 mph.

The Formula One race time trials saw Bob Moeller fastest at 225.00 mph, Richard Minges second at 220.59 mph, and Nick Jones third at 215.31 mph. In the Championship Race, Moeller was first at 214.70 mph, Jones was second at 212.16 mph, and John Thompson was third at 201.93 mph.

The Unlimited Class race was flown over a poorly-marked 7.25-mile course. First in time trials was Lyle Shelton (Rare Bear) at 361.93 mph, second was Howie Keefe (Miss America) at 349.40, and third was Ormond Haydon-Baillie (Sea Fury) at 332.22 mph. In the 10-lap Championship, Shelton won at 360.15 mph, Clay Lacy was second at 354.96 mph, and Gunther Balz was third at 332.40 mph.

Formula One World Championship Trophy Race

While the title of the July 16-18 meet at Cleveland's Lakefront Airport may have been overly ambitious, it was the biggest class race in many years. Twenty-five airplanes were on hand, led in qualifying by Bill Falck at 214.29 mph, Bob Moeller at 212.26 mph, and Bob Downey at 207.85 mph. Half the pilots flew some version of the Cassutt Racer.

There were three rounds of four heats, each, with the final "A" heat serving as the Championship. Bill Falck edged Bob Moeller for the win, 213.02 mph to 212.22 mph. Jim Wilson as third at 201.30 mph, just ahead of Nick Jones at 201.25 mph.

United States Cup Race

This 1,000-mile race (100 laps of a 10-mile course) at San Diego, California, July 18, saw a sweep by the powerful, reliable Sea Furys. Sherman Cooper repeated his first win, this time at 330.1 mph. Frank Sanders was second, completing 98 laps. In third, flying a P-51, was Darryl Greenamyre

39th King's Cup Race

The race was held August 14 and ran the 155.5 miles from White Waltham to Swansea, in Wales, with two intermediate turning points. The winner, flying a Percival Provost, was J. Bradshaw, at 204.5 mph. In second was Peter Clifford in a Meta Sokol at 174 mph, and in third was A. Trowbridge in a Beech Baron at 260 mph. All but one of the 30 starters finished.

8th National Championship Air Races

The dominating Reno air races, September 20-26, attracted a record field of 91: 24 AT-6s, 22 Sport Biplanes, 27 Formula Ones and 18 Unlimiteds. Cold, windy weather contributed to pylon cuts and runway mishaps.

In the AT-6 Class, time trials saw Bob Mitchem set a national one-lap record of 213.86 mph. In the 6-lap Championship Race, he set another national record—205.85 mph—while out-distancing Pat Palmer at 195.71 mph and Bill Turnbull at 189.14 mph.

The Sport Biplanes were led in qualifying by Bill Boland at 180.00 mph, Jim Hall (Jungster III) at 177.92 mph, and Paul Deschamps (Sorceress) at 177.05 mph. Boland won the Championship Race at 181.67 mph, Deschamps was second at 175.29 mph, and Dallas Christian (Mongster) was third at 173.84 mph.

In Formula One, time trials winner Bill Falck broke his own national record with a lap at 232.258 mph. Second was Bob Moeller at 230.28 mph, and third was Bob Downey at 226.89 mph. Nineteen of the 27 qualifiers exceeded 200 mph. In the Championship Race, of 12 laps around the 3-mile course, Ray Cote won at 224.14 mph, Falck was second at 220.30 mph, and Bob Downey was third at 219.25 mph.

Unlimited Class qualifications were won by Gunther Balz (#5 P-51) at 419.50 mph. Second was Lyle Shelton at 418.009 mph, and third was Howie Keefe at 412.632 mph. An exceptionally close, hard-fought 98-mile Championship Race produced a record 413.987 mph by Darryl Greenamyer (Bearcat) to 413.066 mph by Lyle Shelton (Bearcat), and 412.583 mph by Sherman Cooper (Sea Fury). All flew radial-engined airplanes.

California 1000

This long-distance pylon race was shortened to 1000 km. (621 mi.) to increase spectator appeal. Sea Fury pilots continued to win, with Frank Sanders the victor at 346.55 mph. Far behind were Mustang pilots Howie Keefe at 328.21 mph and Bill Jackson at 323.84 mph

The British F/1 Season

May 31 – North Weald. Ian McCowen won the Duke of Edinburgh Trophy in the Cosmic Wind “Little Toni” at 196.0 mph.

June 13 – Biggin Hill. Neil Williams won the Air Fair Race in “Little Toni” at 188.5 mph.

June 25 – Shobdon. McCowen won the Viscount Portman Trophy at 190.0 mph.

August 29-30 – Halfpenny Green. McCowen won the Goodyear Trophy at 202.0 mph.

Part 3 – 1972

Ten of the 11 race meets involved Formula One, with more than half of them in England, while the AT-6 Class was the only other class that raced anywhere but Reno.

Wilson Air Races

The third in this series was held May 20-21. The AT-6 Class race drew six pilots, with Hugh Alexander leading time trials at 204.082 mph. In the Championship Race for 8 laps of the 2.424-mile course, he won at 200.000 mph, Roy McClain was second at 191.898 mph, and Ralph Twombly was third at 191.489 mph. In Formula One, eight pilots were led in time trials by Bob Moeller (BooRay) at 222.222 mph, Bob Downey (Ole Tiger) at 215.827 mph, and Chuck Andrews (Moonshiner) at 202.247 mph. In the 8-lap Championship Race, Downey won by 0.2 seconds, at 214.692 mph to Moeller’s 214.649 mph. Andrews was third at 209.302 mph.

Transpo 72

This May 27-June 4 extravaganza at Dulles International Airport, outside Washington, D.C., was intended as the start of a major American event comparable to the Paris Air Show, with acres of industry displays, plus one of the

greatest air shows in history. Several fatal accidents, along with a big financial loss and increased traffic, ended any hope for its future.

The only competitive event was a Formula One race on the final weekend, which attracted 11 entries. Time trials saw Bob Downey win at 231.10 mph, Bill Falck second at 230.13 mph, and Nick Jones third at 213.05 mph. In the Consolation Race, Hugh Alexander collided with Chuck Andrews, with Hugh crashing fatally and Andrews landing with a broken wing spar.

In the subdued Championship Race, Bill Falck discarded his usual dramatic flair and went all-out to set a national record at 227.20 mph to Nick Jones' 214.25 mph and Marion Baker's 213.94 mph in "Aquarius".

The 40th King's Cup Race

It was held July 15 at High Wycombe on the 50th anniversary of the first in this long series, and attracted celebrants including Frank Courtney who won in 1923.

The 9th National Championship Air Races

After eight years of perfect safety, Reno saw its first fatality in competition, though it could still claim the best safety record in the sport's history.

In the AT-6 Class, time trials were won by John Mosby at 210.53 mph, with Robert Suacci second at 210.12 mph, and Ron McClain third at 208.09 mph. In the 8-lap Championship Race, McClain won at 201.587 mph, John Mosby was second by 0.6 seconds, at 201.305 mph, and Bill Turnbull was third at 197.035 mph.

Seventeen qualified for the Sport Biplane Class, with Don Beck setting a qualifying record of 190.48 mph in the highly original "Sorceress". In the Championship, he set a record for a full race at 189.723 mph, with Jim Hall second in "Jonathan Livingston Seagull" at 180.038 mph, and Dave Forbes third at 179.030 mph. On the first lap, the fatal crash of Tommy Thomas in his original-design was later blamed on medical problems.

In Formula One, 19 qualifiers were led by Roy Cote at 230.28 mph, Bill Falck at 225.94 mph, and Bob Downey at 223.14 mph. In the Championship race, the order was Cote 1st at 223.950 mph, Bob Moeller 2nd at 220.972 mph, and Downey 3rd at 212.913 mph.

Sixteen qualified in the Unlimited Class, with Richard Laidley replacing the suspended Greenamyre, finishing first at 411.19 mph, Clay Lacy second at 409.28 mph, and Lyle Shelton third at 402.74 mph. In the Championship race, Gunther Balz won in his #5 P-51 with a national record 416.060 mph. Laidley placed second, then was disqualified for repeated low flying. Officially second was Lyle Shelton at 404.703 mph, and third, Howie Keefe at 398.531 mph.

Quaker State Grand Prix

This Formula One race at Pt. Mugu (California) Naval Air Station was held October 21-23, using a handicap system which tightened up the finishes and rendered speeds meaningless. The winner of the Finals was Bob Downey (Ole Tiger) at 213 mph. Second was Vince DeLuca (Owl Racer), and third was John Paul Jones (Stinger).

British Formula One Season

There were six F/1 races, equal to the most ever held in the USA in a single year.

May 29 – North Weald. Michael Jones (Beta) won the Wills International Trophy at 176.2 mph.

July 2 – Tollerton. Ian McCowen (Cosmic Wind) won the John Howitt Trophy at 200.00 mph.

July 23 – Shobdon. Bill Walker (Cassutt) won the Viscount Portman Trophy at 193.00 mph.

August 19 – Goodwood. McCowen won the LEC Refrigeration Trophy at 196.8 mph.

August 27 – Halfpenny Green. McCowen won the Duke of Edinburgh Trophy at 200.2 mph, and the Goodyear Trophy at 200.0 mph.

October 1 – Tees-side. Michael Jones won the Vaux Trophy at 192.8 mph, and Ian McCowen won the International Chemical Industries Trophy at 195.4 mph.

Part 4 -- 1973

The Great Miami Air Race

On January 16-21, pylon racing returned to the Miami, Florida, area after an absence of more than 20 years, at New Tamiami Airport.

The AT-6 Class saw 12 airplanes qualifying, led by John Mosby at 204.16 mph, and Calvin Early at 201.87 mph. In heat races, John Mosby twice broke the national record, with 208.9 mph and then 210.53 mph. In the finale Harold Neumann Speed Classic, Mosby won at 207.69 mph, Roy McClain was second at 206.50 mph, and Bill Turnbull was third at 203.39 mph.

In the Sport Biplane Class, nine airplanes were qualified, starting with Dave Garber's Pitts Special at 166.92 mph, Earl Hoffman's "Susie Bee" at 165.14 mph, and Bill Nagle's "Mong-Goose" at 157.21 mph. In the Matty Laird Speed Classic, Garber won at 173.08 mph, Hoffman was second at 169.55 mph, and Don Fairbanks ("White Knight") was third at 151.69 mph.

In Formula One, Bill Falck tied his national qualifying record of 232.26 mph, Bob Downey was second at 221.77 mph, and Marion Baker was third at 219.07 mph. Falck then easily won the Steve Wittman Speed Classic at 224.53 mph, to Downey's 217.74 mph and Baker's 212.18 mph.

Fourteen Unlimited pilots qualified, with Jack Sliker first in an F8F-2 at 383.56 mph, Cliff Cummins second in a P-51D at 376.84 mph, and Howie Keefe third in a P-51D at 375.32 mph. In the Roscoe Turner Speed Classic, Lyle Shelton (F8F-2) won at 373.32 mph, Sliker was second at 366.47 mph, and Leroy Penhall (P-51D) was third at 359.87 mph.

The 41st King's Cup Race

The September 8-9 race at Cranfield was for three laps over a 37.5-mile course. The winner was Bill Bonner in a Chipmunk, Jack Spiller was second in a Cessna 180, and Dick Haydon was third in a VW-powered Turbulent.

The 10th National Championship Air Races

Ten years of racing at Reno had established the site as one of the most important in the sport's history. And probably the safest, as only one pilot had been lost in actual competition.

The AT-6 Class time trials saw James Mott lead 26 qualifiers with a speed of 210.94 mph, followed by Calvin Early at 209.71 mph, and Richard Sykes at 209.30 mph. Competition was getting closer. In the Consolation Race, Jack Lowers set a heat record of 212.390 mph. In the Championship Race, Bill Turnbull won at 206.60 mph, Mott was second at 204.35 mph, and Pat Palmer was third at 203.82 mph.

Only nine pilots showed up for the Sport Biplane race, though Sid White set a national qualifying record at 194.25 mph in the new, original "Sundancer". Don Beck was second in "Sorceress" at 184.30 mph, and Dave Forbes was third at 180.60 mph. In the Championship Race, White set another record, at 194.946 mph, with Beck second at 184.62 mph, and Forbes third at 184.50 mph.

Bill Falck broke his own Formula One qualifying record with a lap at 235.29 mph, Bob Moeller was second at 234.27 mph, and Ray Cote was third at 228.33 mph. The Finals saw a win by Cote at a national record 231.263 mph, John Paul Jones was second at 229.543 mph, and Moeller was third at 225.376 mph.

Seventeen Unlimited pilots qualified, with Lyle Shelton setting a record at 426.60 mph. Bob Love was second at 423.02 mph, and Cliff Cummins was third at 412.15 mph. In the 88-mile Championship Race, Shelton set his second record of the week, 428.155 mph, in winning. Cummins was second at 417.076 mph, and John Wright was third at 407.495 mph.

Quaker State Grand Prix

This race was held October 13-14 at Naval Air Station Miramar, California, as part of a U.S. Navy air show. The race course for Formula One was not surveyed, and so accurate speeds could not be determined. The Final Race was won by Ray Cote in a time of 3:36.6, second was John Paul Jones in 3:39.3, and third was Vince DeLuca in 3:49.25.

California Air Classic

Mojave, scene of two 1000-mile races, was used October 19-21 for a conventional three-class race, with the Sport Biplanes and the AT-6s using an unusually long and fast 3.8-mile course.

In the AT-6 race, 16 pilots qualified, with Pat Palmer first at 216.455 mph for a national record. In second was Roy McClain at 215.772 mph, and in third, Jim Mott at 213.750 mph. In the Gold Final Race, Palmer won at a record

219.891 mph, McClain was second at 218.880 mph, and Dennis Buehn was third at 218.,051 mph.

The Sport Biplane qualifications were won by Sid White at a record 213.375 mph. Don Beck was second at 191.596 mph, and Dave Forbes was third at 188.429 mph. The Gold Final Race was won by Sid White at 199.344 mph, to Don Beck's 194.560 mph, and Don Fairbanks' 179.204 mph.

Eleven Unlimited pilots were led in time trials by Bob Love at 390.993 mph, Ken Burnstine at 37.788 mph, and Lloyd Hamilton's 266.253 mph. While preparing to land after a heat race, Bud Fountain experienced a fire, which led to his fatal crash. In the Gold Final Race, Lyle Shelton won at 396.614 mph, Lloyd Hamilton was second at 367.988 mph, and Howie Keefe was third at 363.770 mph.

British Formula One Season

The British F/1 season again included five meets, bringing the year's total for the class to eight.

May 20, Biggin Hill. Tom Storey won the Mackenzie-Hill Trophy in his #1 taperwing Cassutt "Blue" at 201.54 mph.

July 1, Tollerton. Storey won again, this time for the John Howitt Trophy, at 201.86 mph.

July 22, Shobdon. Storey made it three in a row, winning the Viscount Portman Trophy at 204.34 mph.

September 9, Cranfield. Michael Jones won the Aspenair Trophy in his #74 Beta "Blue Chip" at 204.8 mph. Storey finished first by 0.6 seconds, but was penalized for cutting a pylon.

September 30, Teesside. Bill Walker won the Heineken Trophy in the new #5 Cosmic Wind "Ballerina II" at 202.70 mph, with Storey 0.4 seconds back.

Storey had the season's fastest qualifying lap at 216.00 mph, and the fastest race lap at 215.13 mph.