

MOORES THE MERRIER

DEREK DALY'S CHEVRON ENHANCES ITS REPUTATION

Rob Moores has raced the ex-Derek Daly 1977 BP Formula 3 series-winning Chevron B38 since 1978, having bought it as a sad wreck from Steve Malins. He ran it in F3 before turning to Formule Libre, then won the 750MC's F4 title in '86 with a 1300cc Ford engine.

'I also finished second in the 1985 Madras and Bangalore Grands Prix with the F4 unit,' says Moores, whose rugby jersey company Halbro is based in Bolton, home of the Chevron marque 'although I told the Indians it was a BDA!

'We converted it back to its original 2-litre Toyota/Nova power for the second year of TF3 in 1987, and won first time out.' Champion in 1990, Moores also won last year's HSCC pilot series. This season he intends to tackle Europe too.

'Toyota F3 is great value. For £10,000 you will buy a good car and do a season, barring disaster. My engine is ultra-reliable. I count on a Stuart Rolt rebuild every other season, but with that and a couple of sets of new tyres, you should be able to do a super year for £5000.'

Moores and mechanic Howard Knowles know the superbly turned-out car inside out – although they are helped by ex-Chevron engineer Neil Edwards – and were not fazed by the weather prior to my run at Silverstone. They calmly put it on wet tyres and settings, added a couple of splitters on the nose and sent me packing.

To say it was a joy to drive would be an understatement. It instilled such confidence that I could put it anywhere, hold it in powerslides and brake only slightly earlier than my dry points. Even a 1994 F3 Dallara could only pull out a length or two on the Club Straight.

The experience reinforced my long-held belief that the late Derek Bennett, father of Chevron, had a way of flattering drivers. Certainly, he would have been proud that Moores and Nick Crossley (see panel, opposite) won last year's Historic F3 series in his designs.

Toyota Formula 3 details from Richard Ranson on 01252 860826 (evenings).

Historic racing is all about nostalgia, reliving the past, but I had more than a touch of déjà vu when I tried a bunch of latterday Formula 3 cars at Silverstone. It wasn't merely because I remembered them from my teens. I had been there before.

In fact, I competed in the Toyota (2-litre) and Classic (1600cc) classes over three enjoyable summers. My criteria were: interesting single-seater chassis, affordable running costs and helpful environments for this cack-handed spanner jockey. Both met them admirably.

But my interest still went deeper than running ex-Thierry Tassin and David Sears Argo-Toyota JM6s and the ex-Tim Brise GRD-Lotus 372 (all designed by the late Jo Marquart), for I was one of Tony Broster's cohorts who founded the Toyota F3 revival as a viable wings-and-slicks club formula in 1986.

By switching back to the 1600cc class I did things the wrong way around. If you were to tackle it the logical way, you would find the smaller cars equally involving and prepare you well for Toyota F3. The 'Classics' ran from 1971-'73, between the unforgettable 1-litre 'screamers' and the 2-litre F3 which arrived in '74 and is still here.

The most popular engine in the era was the Lotus twin-cam, but the Renault Gordini (tuned by Bernard Dudot, who now heads the French giant's F1 team) also achieved success. Both air-restricted engines produce around 125bhp.

My first lapping session reacquainted me with the ex-Bev Bond March-Lotus 713S which I drove at Goodwood in 1989. The immaculate chassis suited owner Bob Sellix (who finished joint third last year, on consistency), but was set up too soft for my liking.

The Renault engine in Nigel Fright's March 733 (the best ever 1600cc F3 chassis?) refused to play ball due to electrical gremlins, thus its characteristics remain a mystery.



Three's

HISTORIC FORMULA 3 IS AN AFFORDABLE, FUN WAY TO RACE IN BRITAIN AND ON EUROPE'S FINEST CIRCUITS. MARCUS PYE WENT BACK TO HIS ROOTS TO FIND OUT

The Lotus in champion Nick Crossley's Chevron B20 was more amenable. Built by Colin Holt, who developed the originals at Norvic, it felt stronger than any I'd previously sampled. Torquey and free-revving, it brought the car alive, and reacted like a TF3 (see panel, right).

But the surprise of the day was Mike Barnby's Elden PRH9. The ex-Mike Catlow car, and its intriguing engine, are belters. Wheel manufacturer Barnby, who had not raced since he won the Oceanair Clubmans B Sport title in 1978, developed the Ford crossflow unit – eligible, but rarely seen in period – simply because he could not afford up to £4000 for a Lotus 'twink.'

Built from a new FF1600 block, with Escort GT pistons and a 13.7:1 compression ratio, it breathes

through twin Weber 40DCOE carbs and an original Vegantune airbox, courtesy of John Hart. For under £1000 in parts, plus Mike's labour, I was amazed to discover that the engine's power and torque were very similar to those of Crossley's.

The plated spaceframe chassis was responsive too, and turned in on a sixpence, thus I was able to lap within half a second of my best in the Chevron. Mike has a couple of third places under his belt, but I reckon his car could win races and the engine option could open the F3 door to many competitors.

My Toyota F3 comeback was initially a disappointment, for neither Alastair Ferguson's ex-Rupert Keegan Chevron B34 nor Mike Quinn's ex-Anders Olofsson Ralt RT1 was properly set up.



CROSSLEY'S RETURN

BACK IN HARNESS AFTER 20 YEARS, AND STILL WINNING

Nick Crossley won Formula 4 titles in 1972 and '74 (in Chevron B15/17 and Ensign LNF3), and competed in European F3 with a March 733 between club racing programmes. Having built up the Delta Race Cars concern in the late-'70s, he ended a 20-year lay-off to come back and win last year's Oregon Timberframe Homes Classic F3 series in the ex-Chris Skeaping Chevron B20.

'Derek Kneller of Chevron rebuilt it from a basket case,' says Crossley, who now runs a tube manipulation business in Lancing, 'but I broke my back while testing it at Goodwood on Friday, January 13. Despite being intensely superstitious, I had to get some miles in. It was only due to an orthopaedic seat from Profile Seating Systems that I was able to race at all.'

With the tub reskinned, Nick was quickly back in his stride. Scraps with fellow returnee Peter Harrington (Brabham BT41) proved that none of his old ability had deserted him, en route to four wins.

He pays tribute to Colin Holt ('he built an absolute blinder of an engine, it did 1870 miles with only a top end job') and mechanic Brian Parker for putting him in the winner's circle.

'I'd thoroughly recommend Classic F3 to anyone considering Historic racing,' says Crossley. 'It's a myth that the engines are difficult. In fact the good old Lotus twin-cam is far more driveable than the 2-litre Toyota, with a wider 1500rpm power band.'

This tractability and the Chevron's handling in Silverstone's quicker corners were the overriding impressions of my run on the test day. Crammed into the small cockpit I may have been, but the B20 was forgiving if tail-happy at Brooklands.

Crossley is graduating to TF3 this season, with a Chevron B43 or a March 793. Expect him to be among the front runners again.

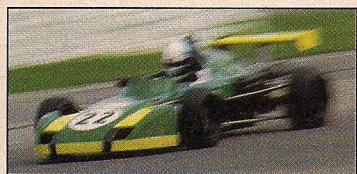
Classic Formula 3 Association details from David Jackson on 01403 784022.

Photos: Steve White



Rob Moores (7) and Nick Crossley (77) put their Chevrons on the front of the Classic Formula 3 grids last season

a crowd



The Chevron understeered big time at Brooklands, only a huge lift or a pitch at the apex would get it to turn-in. Ferguson, who had warned me, described a few laps in Rob Moores's B38 as 'the biggest education of my racing career, and incentive to sort mine for 1996.'

Ron Tauranac's genius spawned the robust Ralt RT1 models for five years. Indeed Larry Perkins won the European title first time out in 1975. But the two I'd driven previously had both been equipped with Rover V8 engines for speed events.

I wanted to give the beefy Toyota twin-cams some stick (the needle must be kept between 5000-6000rpm in the higher gears to avoid detonation with the 24mm air restrictors), but inexplicably Quinn's had its brake bias wound

Above left: Ferguson's ex-Keegan Chevron B34. Above right: Barnby's ex-Catlow Elden PRH9. Right: Crossley's ex-Skeaping Chevron B20 handled like a bigger car. Left: Moores's ex-Daly Chevron B38 was a revelation in wet conditions

fully to the front, thus the wheels locked when I breathed on the pedal. Without a cockpit-adjustable balance bar, we called it a day.

These were far from typical of the Toyota F3 cars I loved racing, but my confidence was more than restored by a shot in Moores's Chevron (see panel, left).

Both classes remain fine introductions to 'Historic' racing. For less than a Pre-'71 Formula Ford 1600, and sensible running costs, they can also take you to Europe's greatest circuits via the super German Open series. ■

