



## CHAPTER 11

# Formula 5000

Racing fame has a half-life somewhere between yogurt and sour cream. For every abiding legend, there are hundreds of drivers who were known in their day, and then briskly downgraded to Wikipedia footnotes. All the world loves a winner but sustained winning is hard, especially against the best. A young driver can appear in a blaze of potential and disappear just as quickly when his promise goes unrealised. An up-and-coming racer may achieve his dream of joining an established team and then struggle to compete with last year's technology. Pity the driver signed by an outfit that goes belly-up mid-season, unlikely to be paid and with little chance of finding another ride, maybe ever.

Even a successful driver can find himself silently apprehensive after injuries (like me) or temporarily retired (also like me). If a driver isn't continually in the public eye, he stops existing for teams, media and fans alike. Even the greats can't escape the long shadows of age and declining motivation. Those who are wise stand down before they embarrass themselves.

It isn't just drivers who are permanently temporary. Volatility echoes throughout motor racing, among constructors, categories and championships. Whatever happened to BRM, Cooper, Brabham and Tyrrell? For that matter, where are Formula Junior, the Tasman series and Group C? Sooner or later, most motorsport

enterprises fall prey to unanticipated technologies, or the ennui of enthusiasts, or the vicissitudes of sponsor relationships, at which point they either adapt to a new direction or fade away.

Even the few institutions with seeming longevity are stable in name only: the Grand Prix car has defined open-wheel competition for over 110 years, and IndyCars have exemplified oval racing since the first Indianapolis 500 in 1911, but neither is a model of stability. In fact, the opposite is true. With increasing regularity, the sanctioning bodies for Formula 1 and IndyCar upend their regulations in reaction to technological threats or shifts in public perceptions. As the rules lurch from one specification to another, engineers are obliged to invent new wizardry, team owners must scurry to upgrade sponsorships, and fans habitually moan about cutbacks in horsepower, emasculation of the aural engine delights, or distortions of styling.

Formula 5000 is the poster child for a great series lost.

Abandoned after the 1976 season, Formula 5000 is now remembered largely by a handful of resurrected cars entered in occasional historic races. Yet, in the first half of the 1970s, Formula 5000 was a shop window for motor racing, offering brilliant contests between great drivers competing for handsome purses. While Formula 5000's open-wheeled single-seaters weren't quite as nimble as

**OPPOSITE** Advice from technical mastermind Jim Hall (left) was always valuable, as proven by three American Formula 5000 championships. Mechanic Davey Evans shares Jim's counsel. *Getty Images/Alvis Upitis*



**ABOVE** My affair with Formula 5000 started after my short-lived South African retirement, with my first win coming in Sid Taylor's McLaren M18 at Brands Hatch in April 1971.

LAT

Formula 1 thoroughbreds and not quite as quick in a straight line as IndyCar stallions, they were just as fast around many tracks, and faster on some. Mario Andretti said he could never lap Riverside in his Formula 1 car as fast as he did in his Formula 5000.

Over a career that encompassed Formula 1, the Can-Am, sports prototypes and Formula 5000, it was the latter that I found the most professionally satisfying. It was also the most financially rewarding.

### Beginnings

In 1966 the FIA raised Formula 1 engine capacity from 1.5 litres to 3.0. Team Lotus's Colin Chapman – eternally wheeling and dealing – persuaded two brilliant engineers, Mike Costin and Keith Duckworth, to design a lightweight V8 engine that came to be known as the Cosworth DFV (Double Four Valve), and then convinced Ford's Walter Hayes and Harley Copp to fund it. In the Cosworth DFV's initial outing at the 1967 Dutch Grand Prix, Graham Hill put Chapman's

new Lotus 49 on pole and Jim Clark in an identical car took the engine's maiden win. The Ford DFV went on to become the most famous racing engine in motorsport history, with one fortunate unintended consequence.

As Formula 1 constructors increasingly embraced the 3-litre DFV, teams elsewhere began to turn to traditional 5-litre V8s for a more cost-efficient way to go just about as fast. These 5-litre engines were cheap, strong, simple to build and awesomely powerful.

Formula 5000 – for cars with engines of up to 5,000cc – took hold and the category rapidly grew in Britain, mainland Europe, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. By 1969 it was sufficiently robust to support a European Formula 5000 Championship. Although such series were exclusively for Formula 5000 cars, there were other opportunities to fill out the season and amortise new-car investments, such as free-for-all *Formule Libre* races contested by an array of single-seaters. As the Formula 5000 schedule solidified, occasional drives came my way as helpful fillers



between Formula 1 and serious sports car racing. That soon changed.

In 1968 the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) allowed its Formula A class to fit 5-litre motors, creating a racing use for the universally available 302 cubic inch small-block Chevy V8 but also similar motors from Ford, Dodge and even AMC (American Motor Company). Thus was Formula 5000 born in the USA, where it grew into a series as American as the throaty rumbles of its signature motors.

Although these iron small-block engines were compact enough for use in single-seaters, they were heavier than the aluminium power plants in Formula 1 and IndyCars, but the extra weight was more than offset by the brawn of 500bhp. Since so many of the mechanical parts were off-the-shelf, finished Formula 5000 chassis were relatively inexpensive to fabricate and their motors were differentiated only by the subtle creativity of each artisan engine builder. In consequence, cars from different constructors with engines from different craftsmen ended up closely matched on track.

For new and experienced teams alike, a season with a fast, reliable Formula 5000 car was considerably more affordable than either Formula 1 or IndyCar. What made the series a roaring success, however, was the prize money, which was at least equal to the purses offered by the elite established series and usually superior. Long before 'Deep Throat' instructed Woodward and Bernstein to 'follow the money', racing teams and drivers had made this their mantra. Some top-level Formula 1 and IndyCar entrants were pulled into Formula 5000 by financial opportunity, while drivers loved its intense competition, with winning owing more to preparation and skill than to factory budgets.

### Formula 5000 in Britain

Early in 1971, I returned from my brief South African retirement to learn that I had become professionally invisible. Somehow it seemed inevitable that Sid Taylor, that irrepressible racing entrant, would emerge as my rescuing angel. At the time I fitted Sid's template perfectly: needy,

**ABOVE** After winning the first heat at Ireland's Mondello Park in 1971, a cloud of oily smoke signalled a holed sump and my retirement from the second heat.

LAT



**ABOVE** Marion gives her support at our local circuit, Oulton Park, in Cheshire. Her happiness reflects mine, as I loved every moment of my six seasons spent in Formula 5000.

*Brian Redman collection*

cheap and willing to drive anything. In what became a serial habit, Sid and I moved in and out of each other's lives with disconcerting frequency.

Sid Taylor was nothing if not colourful, ever present in motor racing but not within the inner circle of establishment teams. He made a practice of acquiring the newest racing cars and capitalising on talented drivers in either the formative or opportunistic stages of their careers. His lifetime list of drivers reads like a *Who's Who?* of racing: Denny Hulme, Jody Scheckter, Vern Schuppan, Tony Brise, Frank Gardner, Jack Brabham, Mike Spence, Peter Revson, Trevor Taylor, Alan Jones, Patrick Tambay, Brett Lunger, Howden Ganley, Sam Posey, Eddie Cheever, Keke Rosberg, Johnny Cecotto, Marc Surer, Derek Daly, Geoff Lees, Roberto Guerrero, Jan Lammers, Tommy Byrne and me.

The 1971 Rothmans Formula 5000 Championship was run over 17 rounds, mainly in England but with overseas excursions to Mondello Park (Ireland), Monza (Italy) and Hockenheim (Germany). Sid's McLaren M18

and I did remarkably well in that troubled year, taking two wins, two seconds and one third. This was despite missing three rounds because one clashed with the Targa Florio and two more occurred while I was recovering from the injuries I suffered there. Upon my comeback, the tiring M18 and I endured a quartet of miseries, failing to finish three consecutive races (at Thruxton, Silverstone and Oulton Park) and then crashing in the next (at Snetterton).

That accident involved Frank Gardner, the development driver for Lola. Frank had squeezed a Chevy V8 into a lightweight Formula 2/Formula Atlantic T242 chassis, rendering every other car in the Formula 5000 series out of date. With this weapon, he pipped me for pole by a whole second but, at the start of the first of the two 12-lap heats, I jumped into the lead. I kept him at bay for eight laps but then Frank challenged at the hairpin. We found ourselves side by side heading towards the Esses, him on the outside with two wheels off the track. Neither of us gave way. The crash completely destroyed his lightweight



**ABOVE AND LEFT** During 1971 my big Formula 5000 rival was Frank Gardner in a Lola. At Snetterton in August I held him off until he attempted what is best described as an extremely brave pass – and took us both out. *Mike Dixon*



**ABOVE** For the 1972 Rothmans Formula 5000 Championship Sid Taylor acquired a 1970 McLaren M10B, a better car than the newer M18. The price of a win in the first round at Brands Hatch seems to have included a front fin. LAT

Lola but only damaged the front suspension of my McLaren.

From my perspective it was 'a racing incident', where both competing drivers were equally at fault, but I wasn't confident that Gardner, a tough Aussie ex-boxer, would see it the same way. Tentatively, I joined him for the walk back to the pits, ready to sprint for my life. Frank just brooded, staring ahead in stony silence. Finally, he visibly collected himself, turned to me and issued his succinct assessment of the crash: *'That were a hard one.'* I quickly and thankfully agreed.

My two Formula 5000 wins of 1971 both came at Brands Hatch, at either end of the season. In the second event, my main rival again was Gardner and towards the end of the race I had a 10-second lead over him. I was hammering through South Bank, the left-hander leading onto the back straight, when my McLaren M18 made a terrible lurch and very nearly shot off the track. I looked for a cause in my rear-view mirror and, to my horror, saw that

the top link of the right rear suspension had come completely adrift. All reason dictated that I should stop the car immediately but the win was tantalisingly close and it was impossible for me not to take the risk. The suspension and my luck both held and I won by half a second. Yes, it was a reckless victory, but a win is a win, and getting away with a calculated risk made it especially delicious.

For the 1972 Rothmans Formula 5000 Championship, Sid exchanged his McLaren M18 for an earlier M10B model in what seemed to be a step backwards in theory but proved to be a step forwards on the track – the M10B was the better car. I won my first race in it, yet again at Brands Hatch, and went on to finish third at Snetterton, second in a return to Brands and another second at Silverstone. Finally, I achieved one more win in the Dublin Grand Prix at Mondello Park, my last race in the M10B.

Little by little, however, my attention began to turn towards the United States, where the SCCA-sanctioned Formula 5000 series was

rewarding winners handsomely. The McLaren M10B, however, wasn't going to get the job done against the top American teams, but I had an idea about a car that might. Derek Bennett's success with his 2-litre Chevrons made me confident that whatever he designed and built would be a winner, so I approached him about a car for Formula 5000. Derek, who was in the business of selling his customers replicas of cars in which professionals won races, recognised the opportunity. His answer was, *'Ten weeks and whatever money I've put into it.'* When the Chevron B24 appeared, on time for £3,000, the prototype chassis became mine.

It turned out that canny Sid Taylor had also been eyeing the US Formula 5000 series, and the advertised \$20,000 winner's purse at Watkins Glen in June 1972 made him absolutely giddy. I accepted Sid's offer to provide for the Chevron chassis the requisite 302 cubic inch Chevy and gearbox package (from Alan Smith of Derby), arranged for Derek to shoehorn it into my new B24 and took the car to Oulton Park, our local

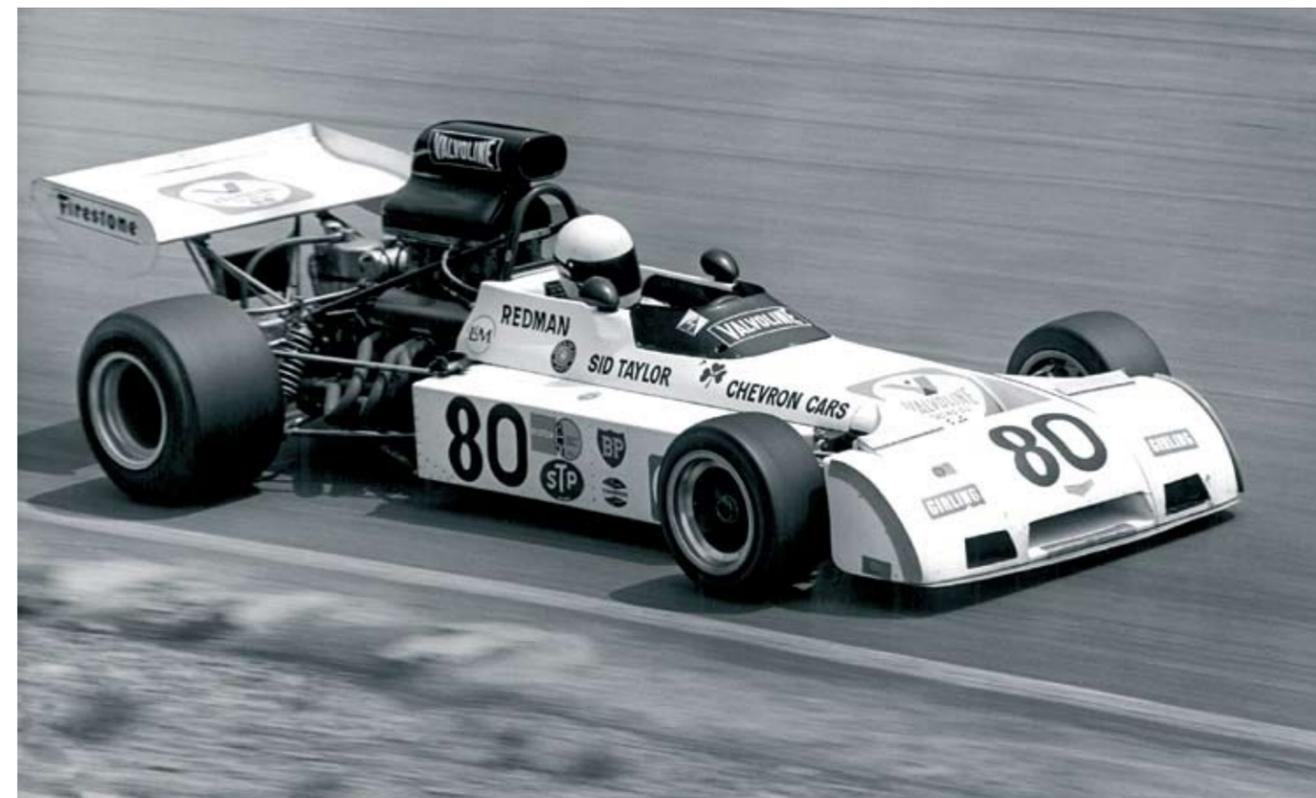
circuit, for testing. As with every Chevron I ever drove, the B24 was quick out of the box, breaking the track record at that Oulton Park test and winning its first event on the same circuit in May, three weeks before Watkins Glen lucratively beckoned.

### To America

With a fast car, a hungry driver and an eager owner, Team Taylor was ready to conquer America. Mechanics Ron Bennett and Julian Randles lashed the Chevron onto an open trailer, rolled it aboard a cargo ship in Liverpool and, accompanied by very few spares, sent it to America to avenge George III. In New York City, Sid invested \$500 in a suspect station wagon, and we four set off for beautiful upstate New York, our car bouncing along behind.

Watkins Glen is a fast, challenging, enjoyable track set amid spectacular scenery. Nearby, the Finger Lakes wineries flourished, and the Corning Company produced sophisticated commercial glass and mouth-blown Steuben

**BELOW** In late 1971, after struggling with the difficult McLaren M18 and the older M10B, I asked Derek Bennett to design a Formula 5000 car. He created the splendid Chevron B24. Bill Warner





**ABOVE** In my American Formula 5000 debut at Watkins Glen, I won the first heat and was leading the second when the Chevron's battery went flat, leaving Graham McRae (following in his Leda GM1) to take the aggregate win, and the \$20,000 prize.

Bill Oursler

artisanal pieces, including many Watkins Glen trophies. The Formula 5000 race was to be run in two heats with the fastest combined times determining the winner. Problems dogged our Chevron in practice and qualifying, and for the first heat I placed a lowly 10th on the grid. Highly motivated driving abetted by some helpful attrition allowed me to work my way through the field and claim a win with a full 40 seconds in the bank for heat number two. With visions of \$20,000 dancing in my head, I had a healthy overall lead in the second heat until, eight laps from the chequered flag, my battery went flat and with it my hopes of victory. Fourth place may have failed to deliver the anticipated shower of riches, but it still brought home a decent payday.

On to Elkhart Lake's Road America, a spectacular Spa-like track in north-western Wisconsin famous for its elevation changes, flowing corners, flat-out kink (with no run-off), up-and-down straights – and delicious Johnson's bratwurst sandwiches. For we connoisseurs, cheerful volunteers from the local St John the

Baptist Church served up brats on mustard-slathered buns heaped with sauerkraut. An old-fashioned needlepoint sign above the serving window advised us to 'Always use condiments', and we always did. Alas, the brats turned out to be the best part of that particular weekend as my suspension failed when I was running in second place.

Next came Road Atlanta, another great circuit, or at least it used to be before being bowdlerised in 1996 by the FIA fun police. In 1972 my Chevron would achieve its 170mph maximum speed on a long, undulating back straight that ended in a sweeping downhill curve with a blind apex. My taking this corner without lifting required a leap of faith every lap. At the bottom of that short hill firm braking was required, but not too much as momentum was needed to climb the steeper gradient that followed. A bridge over the crest of the hill left me facing a massive concrete bridge abutment that necessitated an urgent change of direction. By snapping the car to the right, I passed under the bridge and plunged down a



slope steep enough to appear vertical. It levelled off at the bottom in a right-hand bend edged at its exit by an intimidatingly steep earth bank. Nonetheless, a minimum of braking was in order as this corner led to the circuit's second longest straight.

My result at Road Atlanta was better than at Elkhart Lake, but not my luck. While I was lying in second place behind Brett Lunger's Lola, ominously large raindrops splashed onto my visor. I dived into the pits for rain tyres, and was stopped when the monsoon hit. Four cars crashed on the pit straight, causing the officials to declare unsafe conditions and end the race. Instead of waving the proper red flag to stop things immediately, the marshals ended the event with a chequered flag. Since our pit was after the start/finish line and technically we hadn't completed the final lap, Sid shouted, 'Do another, do another!' Still on slicks, I managed a slow lap that included a spin. We won – or so we thought. After I received the trophy and laurel wreath, Carl Hogan filed a protest on the grounds that the chequer wasn't the correct flag to

end the race and, since a red wasn't waved at the race leader, the finishing order should revert to the previous lap. Hogan's protest was upheld (as it should have been) and Lunger was declared the winner, leaving me demoted to second place.

I finally scored my first US victory at California's great Riverside International Raceway, although Sam Posey disputes this. When he heard that I was writing a memoir, he immediately asked, 'Are you going to admit that you stole Riverside from me in 1972?' Sam, Sam, Sam – 'stole' is such a harsh word. You might say that the win was a gift. On the last lap, I was in the slipstream of Sam's Surtees TS11, closing fast and lining up to pass before the final turn. Suddenly, the rear of his car loomed large – inexplicable unless he was on his brakes way too early. As I swerved to miss Sam, I failed to realise that he had slowed for a yellow flag signalling that tow trucks were clearing disabled cars ahead, and requiring all cars to slow down and maintain position. Busy as I was saving Sam's life and mine, I missed the waving yellow, passed

**ABOVE** Buried in that Lime Rock dust is a Chevron B24 with its unnamed and very embarrassed driver who tried too brave a pass on Brett Lunger's Lola.

Brian Redman collection



**ABOVE** On the pace lap for 1972's final American round at Riverside, my white pole-position Chevron B24 is followed by David Hobbs' blue Lola T300, Graham McRae's red Leda GM1 and Sam Posey's blue/white Surtees TS11.

Chuck Koske

**RIGHT** Sam Posey and I chat pre-race at the Riverside finale where the record shows I won but where Sam, undone by a Lancashire steward, was the real and moral winner.

Luke Lundquist



him and took the win. His team immediately launched a protest. The chief steward approached me and, to my surprise, greeted me with a strong Lancashire accent, vowels as flat as his cap. It seemed that he was from Accrington, about 10 miles from my home town of Burnley.

*'Now Brian,' he began, 'as one Lancashire lad to another, did'st tha see t'yellow flag or not?'*

*'No, I didn't,' I truthfully replied.*

There was no hesitation. *'Right, lad, you're t'winner.'*

Sam is correct in his accusation, of course. Seeing the caution flags is the driver's responsibility and my \$100 fine didn't represent a fair adjudication of his protest. Sorry, Sam: even now I blush.

The season over, I arranged to ship the Chevron back to the UK where I entered it in the last two races of the Rothmans Formula 5000 Championship. I was in the lead at Oulton Park when I was forced off the track and out of the race by two crashed cars, but I did win the finale at Brands Hatch.

### The great Jim Hall

Some American tracks bear poetic names. Michigan has a circuit called GingerMan Raceway, possibly in tribute to the J.P. Donleavy novel. Connecticut offers little Lime Rock, where your Volvo tow car will feel right at home but you might not without leather-patched elbows. The Monticello Motor Club in New York evokes pillaged Virginian history and drivers at California's Willow Springs celebrate tough races with skinny soy lattes and organic yogurt. Should, however, your beat-up Ford F-150 and faded jeans find their way to Midland, Texas and should you spot a roadside sign (with requisite bullet holes) directing you to Rattlesnake Raceway, be respectful, friend – you're among the men now.

Very few drivers today have ever raced a car without some semblance of aerodynamic downforce. As Ferrari, Porsche and McLaren were spending millions to shape the precise curves of trifling aerofoils, a racer, engineer and oil magnate named Jim Hall was reinventing

**ABOVE** Although my focus switched to North America in 1972, I still took in occasional British Formula 5000 races, winning here at Brands Hatch in October.

LAT



**ABOVE** My long partnership with the brilliant Jim Hall began when he and Carl Haas signed me for the 1973 SCCA Formula 5000 Championship season. *Getty Images/Alvis Upitis*

motorsport. His \$5 slab of plywood perched above the rear wheels of a white, self-created Can-Am car changed the racing world forever. At that moment, years of design conventions, aerodynamic theories and racing car records were collectively demolished by Hall's invention of the now-ubiquitous rear wing. From the astonishing results produced by this innovative moment, a series of cars called Chaparrals proceeded to overturn the world of motor racing. For the Chaparral 2C of 1966, Hall's rudimentary plywood wing metamorphosed into a driver-adjustable metal aerofoil mounted on the rear struts. The driver could make the wing flat on the straights to minimise drag and then tilt it up to create downforce through the corners. All wing designs since have been just refinements of this concept.

Jim Hall was a man with a brain as athletic as his right foot, a respected former Formula 1

competitor as well as the driver, engineer and developer of brilliant racing cars. As if inventing winged automotive technology weren't enough for one man, he went on to conceptualise an even more revolutionary racing concept.

In 1970 the boxy Chaparral 2J appeared with its big-block Chevy mated to a shovel-nosed body that had Lexan plastic side skirts hugging the ground. Inside this semi-sealed container, a pair of snowmobile engines drove two huge fans that inhaled the air beneath the car and whooshed it out through rear-facing vents. This created an artificial vacuum that sucked the car to the track and bestowed previously unknown levels of cornering grip. It was Hall's complicated and unlovely Chaparral 2J that ushered in the genesis of 'ground effects'. Four races and three pole positions culminated in a McLaren-sponsored ban, proving that radical technology was capable of creating havoc in any series.



### A very lucky day

Jim Hall and Carl Haas, America's Lola importer, were at Riverside with me in 1972, poised to enter the 1973 Formula 5000 wars but still without a driver. They asked, I accepted: \$5,000 per race and 45 per cent of the prize money, equal to what Haas himself received after the mechanics collected their 10 per cent tithe. As the person who had dragged Derek Bennett and Chevron into Formula 5000, it wasn't without guilt that I agreed to drive an Eric Broadley-designed Lola. I felt I was consorting with the devil, but the satanic promises were just too good to pass up.

My major competitors were Graham McRae, David Hobbs, Brett Lunger and a young, wild South African named Jody Scheckter, who became notorious in that 1973 season for causing an 11-car pile-up on the opening lap of the British Grand Prix and regularly reinforced his legitimate right to the title 'most dangerous driver

in the world'. Jody was hired to drive Sid Taylor's Trojan T101, essentially a pseudo-McLaren designed by Ron Tauranac for Peter Agg's Trojan brand. The fact that the Trojan's entrant was the non-sectarian Sid Taylor tells you a great deal about the unorthodox nature of the team.

### Formula 5000 in 1973

The first race of 1973 was at Riverside, where I notched a good 13-second win over Scheckter. Unfortunately for the team (though fortunately for me), I then needed to break off from my American campaign and perform Ferrari duties in Europe. While Jacky Ickx and I were suffering a frustrating retirement in our 312PB at Spa, Jody was winning Formula 5000 races at Laguna Seca and the Michigan International Speedway.

I returned for the next race at Mid-Ohio, where engine overheating found me running some 20 seconds behind Jody. As happens sometimes

**ABOVE** My Haas/Hall Lola T330 heads for another win at Road Atlanta in August 1973, trailed by my strongest rival, Jody Scheckter. *Bill Oursler*



**ABOVE** Jody Scheckter and I dominated American Formula 5000 in 1973. While I won five rounds to his four, my two weekends away with the works Ferrari team led to an insurmountable points deficit, and Jody became champion.

Luke Lundquist

in racing, changeable weather also changes outcomes. In this case blessed rain slowed the pace, engine temperature moderated and I drove psychotically, ignoring the warning gauges and carving back precious seconds. On the last lap Jody and I were nose to tail as we accelerated towards the tight right-hander heading into the final straight. Jody's motor – fitted with carburettors rather than the more advanced fuel injection on my engine – hesitated slightly, allowing me to pull level on the favoured inside line at the end of the straight, with an unimpeded right to the corner. Inexplicably, Jody seemed to feel that he was equally entitled to the same line from the outside of the track and turned into me as if I weren't there. As his Trojan touched my Lola we both spun, but now Jody had an unexpected technical advantage. In Jim Hall's maniacal pursuit to save ounces of weight, he had removed first gear from my transmission, so I was slow getting moving again. Jody won the drag race to the chequered flag and we finished mere feet apart.

At Watkins Glen I won the first heat but started the second badly, behind Scheckter and Peter Gethin, both notorious blockers. It took me four laps to get past Peter and by then Jody had pulled out a lead that I couldn't overcome, finishing five seconds in arrears. Soon it stopped mattering. Successive wins at Road America and Road Atlanta pointed our season in the right direction, with Pocono upcoming. The Pocono area of Pennsylvania is forested and charming, favoured then as a honeymoon hideaway and peppered with cottages featuring heart-shaped bathtubs and beds; discrete enquiries about lodging were required to avoid embarrassment. It turned out to be a fabulous weekend for the Haas Lola: I qualified on pole, won my heat and blitzed the main event – triply rewarding.

The final race in Seattle continued the duel with my South African rival, and once more we found ourselves side by side, this time on the opening lap, going into the chicane. I knew Scheckter wouldn't give way and I'd be damned if I'd accommodate his intimidation. Inevitably

we touched but this time luck kept me pointing down the track while Jody disappeared in a cloud of scattering earth. I won the race, Mark Donohue finished second in his AMC-powered Lola and Jody came home a dusty third.

Still, although I had won five races to Jody's four, Jody won the 1973 L&M Formula 5000 Championship with 144 points to my 130. My absence from two of the season's nine races had cost our team dearly.

### Formula 5000 versus Formula 1 – 1974

Shadow owner Don Nichols offered me a Formula 1 drive for 1974 but I so loved working with Jim Hall and Carl Haas that I declined. As the American Formula 5000 season wasn't due to start until June, I spent the early part of the year at home in Britain racing Sid Taylor's Lola T332 in the Rothmans Formula 5000 Championship.

My third place at Brands Hatch and a retirement at Mallory Park preceded a real punch-up with David Hobbs and Peter Gethin at Silverstone, where I finally managed a win

with just 1.7 seconds covering our three cars. In the fourth round at Oulton Park, I was pursued relentlessly by Gethin and his teammate Teddy Pilette in their Chevron B28s, they in turn pushed by David Hobbs in his Lola T330. Conveniently, Pilette ran wide at Knickerbrook, knocking Peter out of the race, but this somehow so energised the Belgian driver that he caught and passed me. Hobbs was in third and under control but to beat Pilette I needed a break, which materialised quite literally as a crack in his rear suspension. That left me cruising towards a comfortable victory with 27 seconds in hand when my Lola's rear wing support snapped, causing a violent 160mph swerve. After I gathered up the car and had a chance to check my mirrors, I was horrified to see the wing tilted at a distressing angle. David Hobbs saw it too and, as we started the final lap, he put his car's nose practically against my gearbox. Staring at the dangling wing – potentially an aluminium guillotine – must have made David as apprehensive about its potential collapse

**BELOW** Sid Taylor's Lola T332 shows some opposite lock at Silverstone, where I narrowly edged out Peter Gethin and David Hobbs for the win.  
LAT





**ABOVE** As I led my penultimate British race at Oulton Park in April 1974, a rear wing support broke but I (bravely? foolishly?) pressed on for the win. Do not try this at home! Peter McFadyen

as it did me, but I couldn't quit so close to the chequered flag. Somehow the one remaining support held for the last few hundred yards and I came home the winner by just two tenths of a second.

A geo-political nightmare nearly put paid to the entire 1974 season. In 1973 the middle-eastern Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) raised prices by 70 per cent and punished America – and the UK – with an oil embargo for its support of Israel in the *Yom Kippur* war. As we were preparing for our US racing season, OPEC doubled the price again and cut production by 25 per cent. In towns and cities across America, cars circled gas stations in hopes of meagre allocations while industry ground to a halt. With a looming national disaster and the loss of title sponsor L&M cigarettes, the SCCA faced reality and cancelled its Formula 5000 season.

Upon learning this, Don Nichols rang to renew his invitation for me to drive his Formula 1 Shadow for the rest of the season, as Peter Revson – the man he'd hired after I'd turned down his

previous offer – had been killed practising for the South African Grand Prix. As has been often repeated in my career, the death of a fellow driver prompted a new opportunity. Apprehensive, but with no other drive available, I took it. On the Sunday morning of the Monaco Grand Prix, my third race with Shadow, Carl Haas phoned to say that the Formula 5000 series was back on. The SCCA had a new partner, the United States Automobile Club (USAC), and this bolstered the series with additional teams, star drivers and new sponsors. For me, the decision was easy: the lure of rejoining Jim Hall and Carl Haas was irresistible. Moreover, the American series promised to be the most competitive open-wheel racing in the world. Before the Monaco race, I told Don it was my last outing in Formula 1 and I was returning to America for Formula 5000. Don was gracious, and we parted friends.

The seven-round Formula 5000 season of 1974 shaped up to be one of tough racing, with nine different manufacturers and 29 competent drivers including 15 international stars: Bobby Unser,

Al Unser, Gordon Johncock, James Hunt, David Hobbs, Graham McRae, Johnny Rutherford, Tony Adamowicz, Eppie Wietzes, Evan Noyes, Sam Posey, Warwick Brown, Horst Kroll, Jerry Grant and Lella Lombardi. There was also another team from the USAC stable, fielded by racing legend Parnelli Jones and Southern California car dealer Vel Miletich. Their car was a Lola T332 to be driven by one Mario Gabriele Andretti, possibly the toughest competitor I ever faced. Not only would Mario have the same type of Lola as me but he would enjoy the additional advantages of my former chief mechanic, Jim Chapman, and an exclusive contract with Firestone tyres. We suspected that the Firestones were generally superior to my Goodyears, as they repeatedly proved to be.

The season opener at Mid-Ohio was run as two heats and a finale. I won my heat but Mario absolutely clobbered his with a 40-second margin over Brett Lunger. In the finale, Andretti jumped into the lead with me trailing in second place. Reeling in a spirited Mario is not the job of a

moment and passing him is even harder. After my strenuous efforts to accomplish both, Mario's Lola suffered a cracked exhaust, putting him out of the race and me comfortably into the winner's circle.

At Mosport, in Canada, I chose the wrong qualifying tyres and ended up third in the finale behind the flying Mario and the relentless David Hobbs. David defended his second place vigorously and, by the time I got by, Mario had walked off into the distance. No matter: I came together with a backmarker and my race ended with the Turn Two catch fence wrapped around the car and me, leaving us trussed up like a chicken. At Watkins Glen Mario's Firestones showed their superior grip, worth about two seconds a lap in qualifying. We both won our respective heats but, frustratingly, he again led me home in the main event, this time by 13 seconds. Eerily, a similar scenario played out at Elkhart Lake, where we repeated our respective heat wins with Mario again taking the finale by 0.8 seconds after I couldn't quite pull off a last-turn pass.

**BELOW** In 1974, Formula 5000 in North America was a contest between Mario Andretti and me. At Watkins Glen, Mario lines up on the left in his Vel's Parnelli Jones Lola T332 whilst I get ready on the right in Jim Hall's identical car. Getty Images/Bob Harmeyer



**RIGHT** It was an honour and a pleasure to drive against the great Mario Andretti for two seasons in Formula 5000. It was the toughest and best racing of my career.  
*Getty Images/Alvis Upitis*

**OPPOSITE** Brett Lunger (right) and I lead the parade lap at fabulous Road America.  
*Getty Images/Alvis Upitis*

**BELOW** After winning the sixth of 1974's seven rounds, I stand proudly on the top step at Laguna Seca, with James Hunt second and Mario third.  
*Brian Redman collection*



The next stop for the Formula 5000 circus was Ontario Motor Speedway, a road course that merged with part of its sweeping banked oval and was home to the Vel's Parnelli Jones racing team. Ontario is not a great circuit but the record entry of 39 cars proved that professionals will race anywhere that offers healthy rewards. I won my heat and, for once, Mario failed to finish his, forcing him to start the finale in 17th – and last – place. Being Mario, he worked his way up to fourth and, being lucky, inherited second when the two cars ahead dropped out. By this time, thankfully, my 25-second lead was too much even for him to overcome.

The 1974 championship would come down to which of us prevailed in the last two races in California, at Laguna Seca and Riverside International Raceway. I led on points, but not by enough mathematically to exclude Mario.

At Laguna Seca Andretti cooperatively punctured a tyre, his lengthy pit-stop allowing me to cruise to a 29-second win, with James Hunt second in Dan Gurney's Eagle.



At Riverside, the last race of the season, the pressure was on. Whilst I didn't have to win, I did need to finish with enough points to top Mario for the championship, something he never made easy. In the end Mario won at Riverside by five seconds but my second place was good enough for a season tally of 105 against his 95, and I took home my first Formula 5000 Championship title.

In an odd but much-appreciated congratulatory gesture, Carl Haas shipped a John Deere ride-on mower to Gargrave to help me tend our two acres of walled gardens. Upon seeing this splendid machine, a neighbour sniffed that the former owner of Taira House had done the Lord's work caring for the churchyard and cemetery grass, as now should I on the John Deere. The Lord and families of the deceased might have thought this a mixed blessing as I careened from gravestone to gravestone with my mower blades chewing grass and granite with equal satisfaction.



**ABOVE** In the 1974 finale at Riverside I finished behind Mario, but that second place added enough points for me to win the championship.  
*Bob Tronolone*

**OPPOSITE** Andretti and Bobby Unser (on the wider trajectory) lead me on the opening lap at Riverside.  
*Getty Images/The Enthusiast Network*

**LEFT** It's hard to know the significance of Carl Haas's gift to his new champion but I used it enthusiastically at home.  
*Brian Redman collection*



**ABOVE** For the 1975 season, the Haas/Hall team acquired a new Lola T400, but we found it slow at Pocono. We quietly replaced it with the older T332 – as, unfortunately, did Mario. Bill Oursler

### Star drivers, tough series – 1975

Mario Andretti and I pretty much had our way with the 1974 season but 1975 shaped up to be much more competitive. Lola had introduced a new model, the T400 with rising-rate suspension\*, and in practice for the first race at Pocono the car was bewilderingly slow. I qualified in 11th place and Jim Hall asked me what needed to be done with the car. I replied, *'Nothing, it feels fine. It's just slow.'* Fortunately, a torrent of unrelenting rain caused Pocono to become a pool of standing water and, therefore, unsafe. The race was postponed for a month.

Jim Hall, Carl Haas and I shared a hunch that Eric Broadley's new T400 had taken a design step backwards. This led Carl to make an unusual decision that demonstrated why his discernment was so respected. He located a wrecked T332 –

*\*In cars with rising-rate suspension, the spring resistance increases as the wheels are pushed up into the chassis by road surface bumps or the compression induced by a steep hill or a banked corner.*

the model I had driven the previous season – and shipped it to Rattlesnake Raceway to benefit from Hall's immaculate repair and chassis tuning. Since Carl was the Lola importer, this was dangerous business; he had already sold six of the new T400s to our competitors and wasn't looking to take them back. When the weekend of the delayed Pocono final arrived, we rolled the T332 out of the Hall/Haas trailer to the perplexed looks of Haas's T400 customers. Their shock was exceeded only by ours when the Vel's Parnelli Jones crew unloaded an identical T332 for Mario. It seemed that they, too, had figured it out.

For Pocono's Purolator 500, I was at the back half of the grid in my 11th place from the original qualifying session, but now I had a real racing car under me. I drove hard, leapfrogged everybody and pulled out a win, followed by Al Unser and Jackie Oliver. Bobby Unser complained that I passed him on the inside rather than the outside as was *de rigueur* in USAC racing. *'Redman,'* he said confronting me after the race, *'what the hell you doin' passin' me like that?'* When I replied that



there was a gap, he said, *'Is that the way you road racers do it? Right, now I know.'* Bobby finished a pissed-off sixth but a wiser racing driver. Mario limped home in 17th place.

Andretti came back strongly at Mosport, as expected, strategically flattening his rear wing for better straight-line speed. I considered following his example but decided that I'd prefer the better grip a tipped wing yields in the corners. It was a big mistake. Although I could close up within inches, Mario romped away from me on the straights and I never could gain the necessary momentum to set up a pass. So intense was our battle that we lapped every other car in the field, finishing 1–2 with Mario nosing over the line 0.62 seconds ahead. A hard-fought second place can be as satisfying as a win – well almost.

At Watkins Glen, both Mario and I lapped under the Formula 1 and Can-Am records, and we both won our respective heats. In the finale, Mario lost valuable time when his car refused to start but, by driving superbly, he managed to finish sixth. Jackie Oliver led for 15 laps in the



**ABOVE** The flooded Pocono race was postponed for a month, by which time we had reverted to the faster Lola T332. It could still deliver, and did, for a win. Bill Oursler

**LEFT** After winning Pocono from 11th on the grid, I celebrate a perfect start to the season in time-honored fashion, with an interview and appropriate refreshment. Bill Oursler

Shadow before suffering a head-gasket failure, conceding me the win, 33 seconds ahead of Al Unser. At Road America I had a troubled weekend. First an unusual rear hub failure in the heat race and then a flat tyre in the finale dropped me to eighth overall. Andretti, Oliver and Wietzes claimed the first three places.

I went on to Mid-Ohio for what proved to be a heart-rending weekend. In 1975 the promising B.J. Swanson was on the threshold of his dream to be a professional racer. B.J. had been making such impressive progress in Formula 5000 that Dan Gurney had signed him for the following year's Indy 500, but first invited him to Mid-Ohio as a private Gurney entry. Having qualified the Bay Racing Lola T332 a solid fourth in his heat, B.J. was in a good position to do well in the finale. As the flag dropped for the start, the throttle on his Lola jammed wide open and the car turned sharply left into the guardrail. The wooden support post broke and B.J. hit his head on the top of the barrier, damaging his spine. The car bounced off the railing and continued backwards

up the track before stopping under the bridge, on fire and with the engine still screaming. B.J. never regained consciousness, and his life support was removed two days later. The rest of us continued. I won the race.

B.J. Swanson was 26 years old.

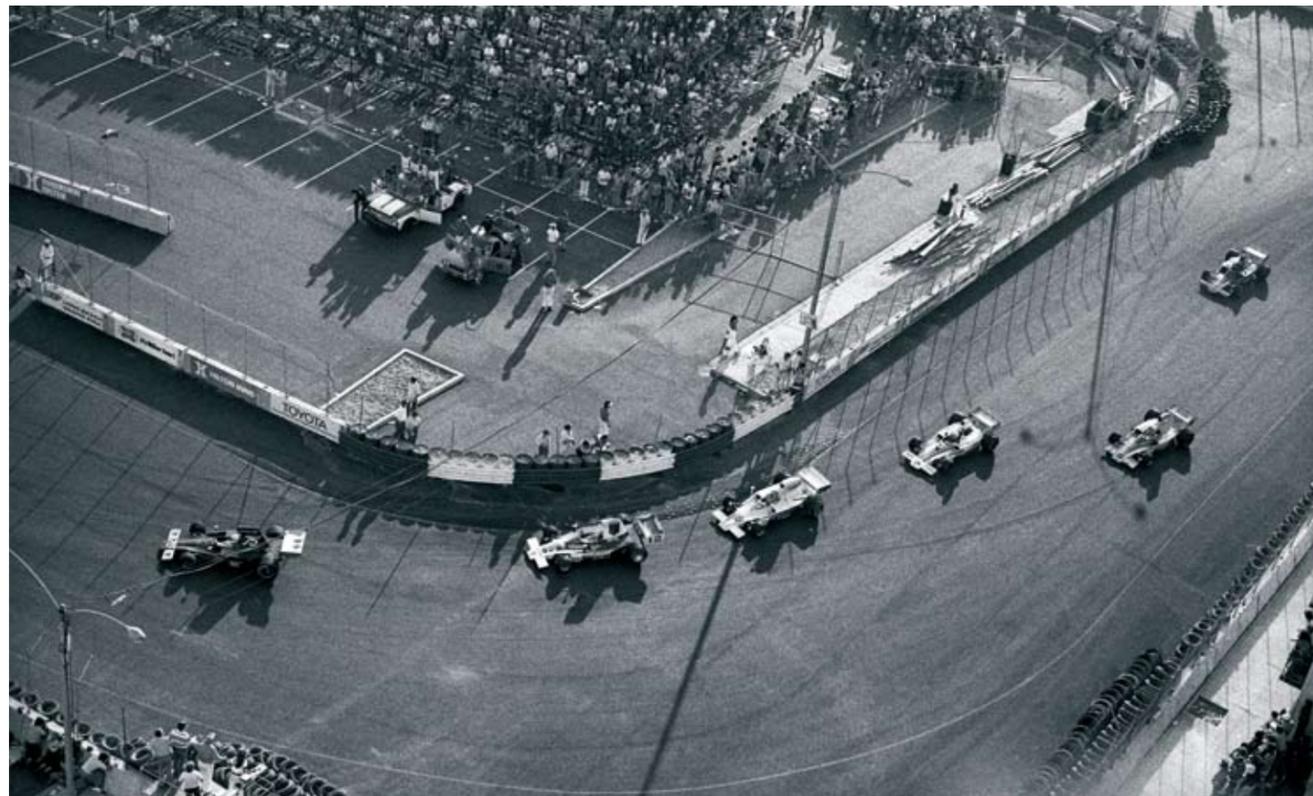
A rain-soaked race at Road Atlanta came next. I led until very near the end when my tyres gave up, allowing Al Unser to get around me. I finished runner-up, just 0.1 second behind.

The street race in Long Beach, California attracted a star-studded cast. Formula 1 contributed Jody Scheckter, David Hobbs, Tony Brise, Vern Schuppan, Chris Amon, George Follmer, Brett Lunger and Tom Pryce. Adding to the strength of the field were the Aussie sports-car driver Warwick Brown and Formula 5000 Champion Graham McRae – plus, of course, Mario.

The Long Beach street circuit had a challenging first corner where the road fell away so sharply it was almost a jump, taken with the front wheels in full droop while the car was still

**BELOW** The streets of Long Beach echo with thousands of horsepower, my Lola T332 (wearing white Boraxo livery for those with good eyes) in third place here but ultimately finishing first.

Jutta Fausel



turning. There was just time for a brief shot of acceleration before braking for the next corner, a tight left-hander. Towards the end of qualifying, I approached Turn One at full throttle and threw the car into the corner. The combination of this rough transition and the twisted landing snapped the T332C sideways and broke the limited-slip differential. The drawback of limited-slip is that it takes a lot of mechanical complexity to make this trick happen, increasing the transmission's vulnerability. Jim Hall and his crew fitted a new Weismann differential for the race but it was clear that either I'd have to accommodate Turn One or the same would happen again.

In the race I took pains to be gentle but obviously wasn't gentle enough. Whilst I was in fourth place, my limited-slip became damaged again and, without its help, I rapidly lost ground to the trio ahead – Andretti, Brise and Al Unser. As I nursed my car along, trying to maintain fourth, the race unexpectedly came to me. First, Al stuck his car into the wall, then Mario's transmission failed, and finally Tony broke a

half shaft. It's just possible that the troublesome Turn One suddenly became my friend. At driving school, every novice learns that, *'To finish first, first you have to finish.'* This eternal principle also applies to professionals.

The penultimate Formula 5000 race at Laguna Seca yielded a third-place finish and I arrived at Riverside for the season's finale leading the championship, but not by enough that Mario couldn't snatch it away. That weekend I was scheduled to run in two races, the Formula 5000 headliner and the popular supporting event, a marketing spectacle known as the International Race of Champions (IROC) in which well-paid professionals from Formula 1, NASCAR, IndyCar and sports prototypes raced against each other in identical semi-race-prepared Chevy Camaros.

The IROC schedule featured four races over three weekends. In the Michigan opener Jody Scheckter spun on the first lap and divided the field, relegating me to seventh behind NASCAR legend Richard Petty and ahead of Al Unser. The second and third races were to be held at

**ABOVE** My Long Beach winner's celebration was a Queen-Palooza. The trophy, including a model of the nearby Queen Mary, was presented by Patti Queen (wife of sponsor Boraxo's president Jack Queen), standing in after the race queen had prematurely repaired to a bar.

Bob Tronolone



Riverside the same weekend as the Formula 5000 decider. By the time I arrived at the track, I was completely focused on Formula 5000, such that the two IROC races, one on Saturday and the second on Sunday, became unwelcome diversions. Little did I anticipate the trauma that lay ahead.

In Formula 5000 practice on Friday morning my Lola T332 blew a tyre in the fast Turn Nine bowl, throwing me across the track and into the concrete wall at over 100mph. This bounced my head from side to side with such violence that my helmet smashed the Plexiglas screens on both sides of the cockpit. With my neck quite sore, I wasn't looking forward to two IROC races.

In Saturday's IROC heat Richard Petty couldn't quite pass me so, being from NASCAR, he nudged my rear bumper, edging me into a gentle spin and the roadside gravel. Later he told me he did it considerately, in a place he knew I couldn't get hurt. On the next lap a stone jammed my throttle wide open at my nemesis, the banked Turn Nine, and I was thrown against

its outside wall once again, but this time head-on at 150mph. I was fortunate that no bones were broken but, in my battered state, I didn't feel very lucky. The second IROC race on Sunday was held immediately before the final Formula 5000 event. Somehow, I struggled around unable to hold up my head, finishing seventh again, this time behind Formula 1's James Hunt and ahead of NASCAR's David Pearson.

By the time I started the Formula 5000 main event, my blue race suit was dark with perspiration and matched the colour of the bruises on my neck and chest muscles. It took my full effort to get the spare T400 around the course, but racing produces adrenalin – and adrenalin blocks out pain. In spite of my never having raced the spare Lola, I managed to finish third. Mario won the race but, with points to spare, I secured my second Formula 5000 title, made all the sweeter by the duels with my brilliant rival. Later that day Mario told me he was going back to Formula 1 the following year, a decision that left me dumbfounded.

**OPPOSITE** The Corkscrew at Laguna Seca is dramatic but not very difficult. Tony Brise is on my tail in the penultimate 1975 round, which Mario won with me placed third.

*Jutta Fausel*

**BELOW** In the first 1975 IROC race at Riverside, Richard Petty edged me off the track – but kindly so, in a place I couldn't get into trouble.

*Bob Tronolone*





**ABOVE** A burst tyre and heavy crash during practice at Riverside in 1975 badly damaged my Lola T332, requiring us to dust off our beloved T400 for the race. My third place was good enough to make me champion for the second time.

Jutta Fausel

*'Mario,' I said, 'those young guys are going to eat you alive!'*

History proved me a poor prophet. Two years later Andretti became Formula 1 World Champion in Colin Chapman's glorious Lotus 79.

### Once more unto the breach – 1976

Lola replaced the lethargic T400 with a new model called the T430. It was smaller than the T332 and nearly as quick, but we still judged the older car to be marginally better.

Our initial outing at Pocono was challenging, with the hard-charging Danny Ongais ('On-The-Gas') hounding me in the two heats as well as the finale. Ultimately I won all three races but only by six seconds in the one that counted most. Mosport came and went with second place in my heat but only eighth in the finale owing to a misfire and a pitstop. At Watkins Glen, Al Unser was on pole with me in second. When rain poured down at the start, I was quite happy that my outside line into Turn 1 would have better grip than Al's oily inside position. Unfortunately, Al decided

he would out-brake me anyway and, as was predictable, slid into my car and forced us both off the track. Later, a four-minute pit-stop to fix a puncture left me trailing the winner, Alan Jones (another future Formula 1 World Champion), by two laps. Going into Elkhart Lake's Road America, I was second in the championship with 44 points to Jones's 76. Things weren't looking good.

Somehow the Road America management talked the SCCA/USAC sanctioning body into two races that season – not unwelcome to the drivers as it's the best track in North America. The first was 20 laps in late July, the second a 20-lapper in late August. After picking off and pulling away from Ongais, Bobby Unser and Jones in the July event, my magneto failed and I was forced to drop out. Jackie Oliver's win in the Dodge-powered Shadow DN6B was the first in five years for a car without a Chevrolet engine. My retirement pushed me down to fourth place in the championship behind Jones, who led with 84 points, leaving Oliver in second with 60 and Unser in third with 48. My miserable season's total was a discouraging 44. Things



**ABOVE** At the start of the 1976 round at Mosport, I lead the field in my white Lola T332C from Alan Jones (red Lola), Danny Ongais (black/orange Lola) and Jackie Oliver (black Shadow). Jones won it after a misfire demoted me to eighth. LAT



**LEFT** A driver listens carefully when advised by a brilliant owner/engineer like Jim Hall (left) and a wise, generous owner/patron like Carl Haas (right). Brian Redman collection



**ABOVE** My 1976 Formula 5000 campaign brought three wins from seven rounds – Pocono, Mid-Ohio and Road America.  
Brian Redman collection

**BELOW** During practice at Road America, a suspension breakage put me into the barrier. It was the only preparation shortcoming I experienced in four years with Haas/Hall.  
Harry Kennison



weren't looking good and it was time to get on with the campaign.

In between the two Elkhart Lake events came Mid-Ohio, where the Lola and I were perfectly suited to the twisty course and we won by a full 28 seconds. This left Oliver and Jones tied at the top of the championship table with 84 points each, and me in striking distance with 80. At the second Road America event, a front tyre began to chunk and Ongais quickly closed the gap, but I held on for the win by a slim four seconds. Now I entered the season's finale at Riverside with 116 points, up 32 on Jones and Oliver. With the championship very much in mind, I drove conservatively to finish third behind Al Unser and Jackie Oliver's Shadow.

The 1976 season's final points score put me on 132 points followed by Unser on 112, Oliver 108, Jones 96, Ongais 78 and Schuppan 45. I became Formula 5000's only three-time champion.

Four years of fantastic Formula 5000 racing produced three championship titles and one year as runner-up. Credit must go to the best team in racing: Jim Hall for his cerebral engineering and

for leading from the front; Jim's super-capable wife Sandy who not only ran the office but helped style the cars; Carl Haas and wife Berni who tended to all the unglamorous management duties; Franz Weis, the ultra-competent Texas engine builder and fast test driver; and our three superb mechanics, Troy Rogers, Tony Connor and Davey Evans, who prepped the car at Rattlesnake and worked on it at the races. I thanked them profusely then, and I thank them again now.

I would like to conclude with some gracious words from Jim Hall: *'Brian Redman... did the best job that I could imagine. I've got a lot of respect for Brian. He can drive the car. If it isn't right he can do a good job with it and if it's right he'll really do a job with it. We finished so many races and won so many races during those four years and it's hard for me to imagine that we were able to do that. We had good reliability and Brian took care of the equipment and was quick enough to win. I'll guarantee you the last ten laps of the race I wouldn't have traded anybody for him. He might not have put it on the pole, but it wasn't because he didn't want to. He didn't have to.'*



**ABOVE** Missing from this particular photograph is artwork added by my crew, a helper with a brush and a shovel standing behind the team of 20 mules.  
Brian Redman collection

**BELOW** I went to Riverside with a decent lead in the championship and my 'safe' third-place finish secured my third consecutive Formula 5000 title.  
Jutta Fausel

