

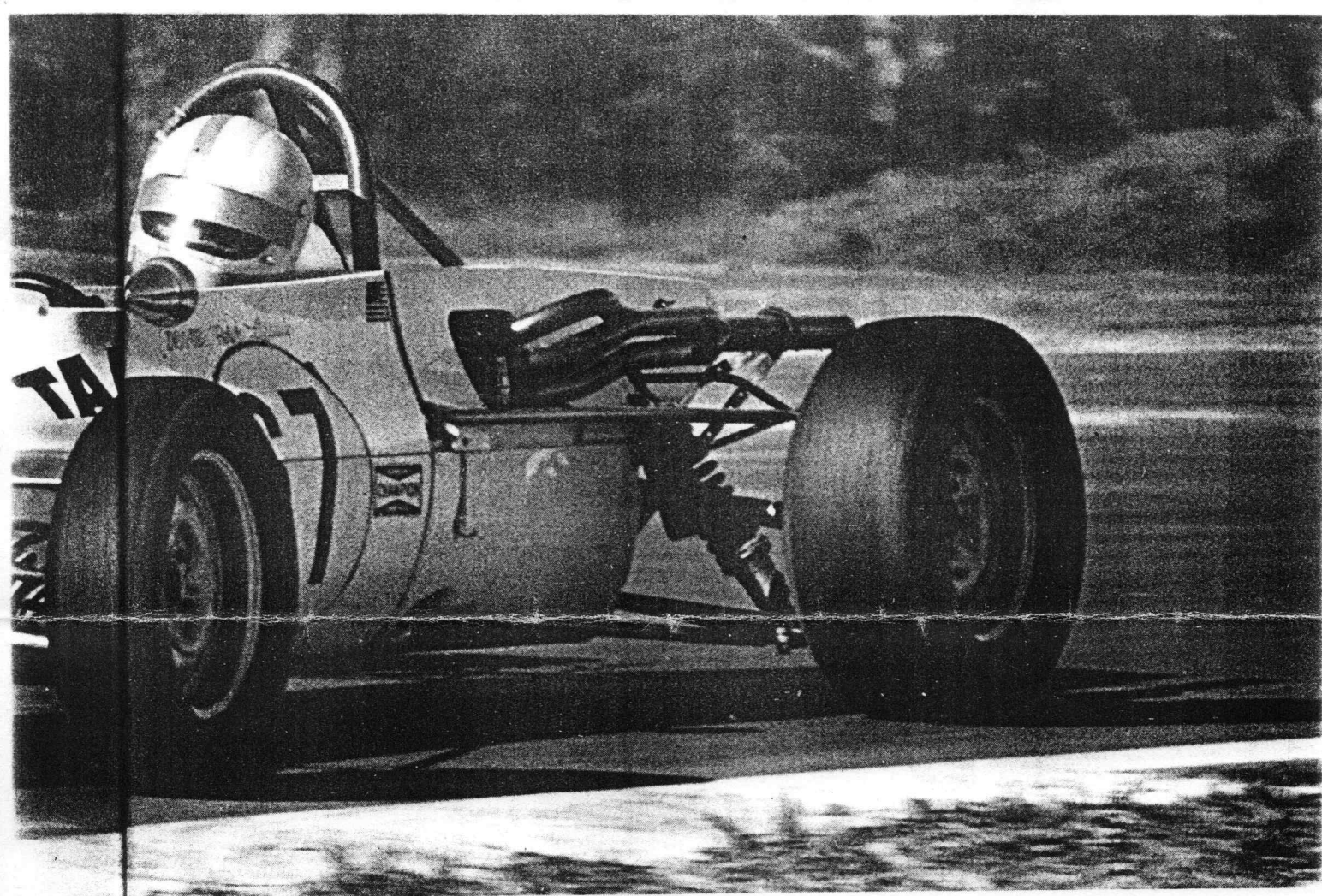


PETER LISSIUK RACING ON A SHOESTRING



Peter Lissiuk — maybe he doesn't look like the archetypal racing driver but he's reliable, singleminded — and fast.

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Peter Lissiuk has no sponsor, little money and must keep his Formula Ford Titan out of trouble because the cost of crash repairs would surely overstretch his meagre budget. Yet he's won a round of the 1974 TAA Formula Ford Series and has beaten every one of the top contenders in the class at one time or another. Interview by A. J. VAN LOON.

THE SIGHT was something out of a surrealistic dream.

A battered EJ station wagon, loaded to the gills and towing an all white race car on a trailer, slowly labored its way up a hill.

The registration had expired more than a month ago, it was fitted with a motley assortment of tyres and two brown streaks from boiling water painted grimy patterns on the front mudguards.

Behind the wheel a slight figure, face almost hidden by a large cloth cap, sunglasses, long hair and a bushy beard, hung on grimly as the revs dropped, and it seemed inevitable the whole rig would come to a shuddering halt as the engine stalled in top gear.

Then, when it seemed almost too late, with a bootful of revs and a double declutch the driver changed back to bottom gear (second gear was not working) and the car, still spouting steam from a boiling radiator, gathered itself up and continued over the hill.

The Titan Formula Ford is an English-built car, bought by Lissiuk in the US. It seems able to match the best locals around corners, but a lack of power has been a big problem. Since this story was written, Lissiuk won both Formula Ford races at a wet Sandown meeting — one of them a round of the TAA sponsored series.

Every 40 or so kilometres the outfit would roll to a stop and Peter Lissiuk would get out to replenish the radiator so that he could go another 40 km on his trip from Melbourne to Sydney.

Peter Lissiuk was on his way to Oran Park.

There is only one thing Peter wants to do. Race. And he's been going to extraordinary lengths to satisfy that burning desire.

A motor racing monkey on his back which has led him more than 16,000 km from Silver Springs, Maryland, US, to Australia.

"I can't remember when I first wanted to race, I guess I always have . . . I remember sitting in a TR2 when I was about five years old, and was really rapt."

Now he's 22 and has been racing for just over 12 months. His car is a Titan Mk6A and in Australia he's contesting the TAA 'Driver to Europe' Series for Formula Ford single seaters.

This time last year, his race car was shiny and new but continued exposure to the elements has dulled the gloss of the paint and tarnished all the metalwork to the extent that it looks old and tired — even though the mechanical efficiency of the thing has not been impaired. *(Continued overleaf)*

That is evident as Peter has, at one time or another, beaten every top Formula Ford driver in the country.

But he has had to thank some of those same drivers for helping him to beat them.

Among them are Steve Dewhurst, who works at Graham Ritter Engines, and Terry Perkins, happy-go-lucky Cowangie Kid Number Two — king of the class.

Peter Lissiuk has been in Australia since March and fronted for his first race at Calder with \$30 and race car as his total assets.

A good racing record in New Zealand gained him some backing through former race and rally driver Lionel Williams at National Panasonic and that, combined with borrowed wheels and tyres, took him into his first race.

Things haven't become any easier since then, but where others would have long given up, Lissiuk's Ukrainian-Irish streak of stubbornness refuses to accept defeat and forces him to go on.

Small, slight and reserved, Peter Lissiuk is entirely different from the popular image of the American race driver.

His involvement in racing started in 1970 when he dropped out of Maryland University and went to England to work for John Surtees.

Peter Lissiuk sits reflectively in the marshalling area before a race at Oran Park. He's beaten all of the best 1974 "names" in Formula Ford, but must drive primarily to finish because car repair costs would stretch his budget past the limit.



"I wanted to go to Cornell," he says, "but then decided I really didn't want to go to school at all — I just wanted to work on race cars. I went to Maryland mainly to please my folks, but stayed only two weeks before heading for England. My folks weren't too happy about that."

The job led to Peter's first real contact with racing cars and for four months he was involved in the building of Formula 5000 Surtees. But it came to a sudden end.

British immigration regulations and a return air ticket forced him to return to America.

"John Surtees was a difficult man to work for," Peter says, "but I don't know anyone more dedicated to racing. It's all he lives for, and he just can't understand why people working for him don't think the same. That's why nobody stays very long and they have a huge staff turnover."

Peter again became involved with Surtees when they journeyed to the US to contest the 1970 Formula 5000 Series — first as an unpaid helper and later, after one man quit halfway through the series, as an official works mechanic.

David Hobbs ("I can't think of a driver I like better") was driving for Surtees at the time and slotted Peter into a mechanic's job with Bonphil Racing as the F5000 series ended. And it was with Bonphil and driver Mike Eyerly that Peter Lissiuk first came to New Zealand and Australia.

Did the Tasman have such a good reputation in the US?

"No," says Peter, "I didn't come for the racing, I just came for the trip!" The trip that turned into a nightmare.

"We had problems from the start — we arrived too late, the car (a Surtees TSS) had never been run, and we had old engines . . . The whole team was the most disorganised I've ever seen — and they didn't have any money either, they were flat broke.

"Bills were left unpaid all over the place. There were disputes within the team and my job as a mechanic was reduced to one as a gopher.

"By the time we hit Australia I was so disillusioned I never even went to the track. At Warwick Farm I watched Eyerley crash on TV and flew home the next day."

The following year Peter again came out for the Tasman Series as a mechanic for Evan Noyes' McLaren M8.

Conditions were different. There was plenty of money, all the mechanics were given round-the-world air tickets and had the best of everything. Noyes was rich. And those who asked how he made his money were simply told: "from drugs." Evan Noyes derived most of his income from the Lilly Pharmaceutical Company, one of the largest drug manufacturers in the world.

Before Noyes' Tasman races, Lissiuk did a complete rebuild on the car and proudly states it had a 100 percent reliability record to match, for the series.

He stayed with Noyes for the following L&M Series in the US, racing a McRae but became disillusioned with the driver when he wouldn't come in for adjustments when practising the car.

"Finally he'd come in on the end of a towtruck, after spearing off through the haybales, saying the front end was washing out.

"By the end of the year I was sick of sticking the car back together, collected my pay, went to England for four weeks and blew it.



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The Lissiuk equipé — tired Holden wagon, well used Titan single seater and enough guts for two teams.

During that time Peter still had his sights set on racing a car of his own, though US regulations prevented him doing so till he was 21.

Finally, in '73 he took a job with the US Elden race car distributor on a work-for-a-drive deal and took in a racing driver's school and one race in before Even Noyes called up again and offered him another wrenching deal he couldn't refuse.

"He hadn't finished one race all year and was getting desperate but only raced two more events before deciding to toss it all in and give motor racing away.

"So he paid us off and we were on our own again.

"At that time I decided I'd had enough working for other people and that I wanted to race myself. The other mechanic, Steve Schlendering, wanted to race too, so we sold up all we had and bought two Titan Mk6s with a pile of spares we could each dig into.

"Having been to New Zealand we figured it would be a good idea to ship the cars there as they had a good Formula Ford Series going. I had a number of friends there and the cost of living was a lot lower than at home.

"We did a deal with Fred Opert to ship the cars out but that didn't work out and we ended up missing the first race of the series.

"I raced there from October to January this year and managed to get by on the prizemoney I won.

"My best race was at Pukekohe during the Tasman, which I won.

"I really blew 'em into the weeds that day! Then the petrol crisis stopped all racing in New Zealand after the Tasman so I came across to Australia to have a go at the TAA Series here.

"I don't know if your blokes are faster, but I haven't picked up too much prizemoney here, although I am leading the Stilwell Ford Series at Calder, which is worth \$750.

"I suppose part of the problem is that I can't

afford to have a prang. And I don't want to get hurt in motor racing.

"When I see some of the things Terry (Perkins) does, I think 'Phev, no way!'"

"But if you win as consistently as he does, it is possible to be a professional in motor racing.

"If you have a sponsor to pay most of the bills, you could exist on the prizemoney in Formula Ford."

But for Peter Lissiuk? No way — no sponsor.

He is forced to do odd jobs to pay for his racing costs and even took a regular job on a production line, bonding car engine mounts — but "went mad" on the second day.

"I suppose it's part laziness," he says about not wanting to work at a regular job "but it's also that I want to devote all my time to motor racing and can't get interested in a job outside that."

So what of the future?

"I'd like to have a go at Formula Two next year," says flat broke Lissiuk "or Formula Ford again if I can't get big enough sponsorship." Eventually he'd like to be a professional Formula 5000 driver "back home".

He's not interested in Formula One because "you have to be very rich and get all the breaks to get into it. It's unrealistic to even think about it."

Last we saw of Peter he was packing his gear into that battered, two speed, unregistered EJ preparing for that long, long tow back to Melbourne and wondering where he'd get enough money to pay the rent.

And to pay for the racing slick he'd punctured and ruined at Oran Park, and registration for that old Holden.

But without a thought of giving it all away . . .

CONFEDERATION OF AUSTRALIAN MOTOR SPORT
APPLICATION FOR VEHICLE LOG BOOK



OFFICE USE ONLY

Name LISSIAK P.
 Book No. V.3110
 Date of Issue 15 / 3 / 74

Make/Identity TITAN F/FModel MK6cYear of Manufacture 1973

(A) Type Designation _____

Swept Volume 1598 ccCategory 1²Formula/Group F/FORD

DETAILED SPECIFICATIONS

Civil Registration Number (if any) _____

Chassis/Body Number 736105

General

Wheelbase 92 ins. Track _____ ins. (Front)Dry Weight 920 lbs. _____ ins. (Rear)Make Type (Front) DISC (Rear) DISC(B) Method of Actuation HYDRAULICNo. of Master Cylinders TWO(C) Wheel rim size: Front 13 x 5.5Rear 13 x 5.5

Transmission

No. of Speeds (Fwd) 4 (Rev.) 1Gear Ratios VARIOUS (D)Final Drive Ratio VARIOUS (D)Limited Slip Differential? N.A.Make of Gearbox NEWLANDMake of Differential N.A.

Engine

Make QUICKSILVER FORD Engine No(s) D16No. of Cyls 4 Configuration IN LINE (E)

(F) Bore _____ mm Stroke _____ mm

Valve Location OHV Actuation 3 OHV pushrodIs whether supercharged N.A.

Bodywork

Type (Open or Closed) OPENIf open, Sports or Racing? FORMULAConstruction materials FIBRE GLASSColour WHITENAME OF OWNER (Must be same as applicant) PETER LISSIAK

ADDRESS _____

Competitor Licence No. _____ Telephone No. _____

DATE _____

SIGNED Peter Lissiak

- NOTE:
- This application must be lodged with C.A.M.S. office at least two weeks prior to event for which it is required.
 - It must be accompanied by
 - fee of \$2.50
 - two photographs, each 4" x 3", gloss finish black and white prints, showing ½ front and ½ rear view.
 - Use units specified, i.e., ins., cms., lbs.
 - Explanation of symbols above
 - Model means GT, GTS, Monaro, S, Pacer, etc.
Type Designation means XT, XW, HK, AP4, 1423341, etc.
 - Specify HYDRAULIC, PNEUMATIC, VACUUM-HYDRAULIC, MECHANICAL
 - Specify rim-width, section and diameter, e.g. 4.5J x 10".
 - Where not restricted by group or formula requirement, specify "various".
 - Specify In line, vee, horizontal, etc.
 - 1" = 2.54 cms.
 - If forced aspiration, insert also equivalent capacity (nom. capacity x 1.4).
 - If rotary engine, insert also equivalent capacity (nom. capacity x 2).