

#72 Chris Schoap, 1970 Titan Mk 6.

## A Brief History of Titan

— story by *Andy Antipas*

After participating in various forms of motor racing with little or no success, Charles Lucas, Jonathan Williams, and Piers Courage got more serious about racing when the FIA created 1 liter Formula 3 in 1964 to replace Formula Junior. During the 1964 season, Courage and Williams teamed up to form Anglo-Swiss racing and joined the F3 circus on the continent. On several occasions, Charles Lucas tagged along and liked what he saw.

Roy Thomas was well known in London's club racing circles for his natural engineering talent and skill as a welder. Roy worked for Graham Warner's Chequered Flag Team, building the Gemini Formula Juniors. He then went on to do contract work for the Sirocco F1 team and Tom Hawkes' AUSPER concern. For the 1964 season, Roy built Lotus 31 clones for Jonathan and Piers, and a Lotus 23 clone for Charles Lucas.

For 1965, Charles came into his family inheritance and decided to do motor racing properly. He teamed up with engineering wizard Roy Thomas to form Charles Lucas Engineering, Limited (CLE). In the 1960s, everyone involved in racing seemed to have a nickname. Charles was known as Luke, and Roy was known as Tom the Weld or just Tom.

Even the team had a nickname that appeared in the press as "The Eng."

Luke bought the former Brabham, Hulme, and Hill 1964 F2 BT10s for himself, Jonathan Williams ("Willums"), and Piers Courage ("Porridge"). Tom reworked the cars to F3 specification, and the team dominated the 1965 European F3 season bringing a level of professionalism that was new to the Junior formula. So much so that Colin Chapman ("Chunky") hired Luke to run the Team Lotus works F3 team for the 1966 season. The team was called Charles Lucas-Team Lotus.

At the beginning of the 1966 season, Brabham F3 cars were the privateer's choice. They were fast, durable, and forgiving. Chapman was looking to break the Brabham strangle hold and designed the Lotus 41 F3 car. The sponsors selected two up and coming drivers in Piers Courage and American Roy Pike ("Pikums") to drive Chunky's new F3 car. However, the "41" was not living up to expectations, but as the season progressed the team developed the cars. So much so, that Piers Courage finished the season sharing top F3 series honors with Chris Irwin ("Earwig") who drove a Brabham for the Chequered Flag Team.

The Team's relationship with Lotus ended when Chunky decided to keep Eng's Firestone bonus money. The Firestone bonus was a substantial amount of money, and this unfortunate experience drove Luke and Tom to build their own F3 car, the Titan Mk 3. Given Tom's experience with Brabhams and Lotus cars, he incorporated the best of both marques and designed a conventional space frame car with beautiful cigar shaped bodywork. While the Titan progressed, Tom

was also working on a modified version of the Ford based Cosworth MAE Formula 3 engine.

The Titan Mk 3 made its debut at the British Grand Prix held at Silverstone, July 15, 1967. Roy Pike put the prototype on the pole and Luke qualified 3rd in one of the Lotus 41s. Luke's car was fitted with Tom's prototype downdraft MAE engine. Unfortunately, Luke spun at Stowe corner collecting Roy Pike, but miraculously Luke recovered and went on to win the race thanks to the horsepower of the new engine, and the Eng took over 100 engine orders the next day. The modified downdraft MAE became the F3 standard until the formula was changed in 1970.

The 1968 works team of Roy Pike and Luke raced the Mk 3 with a lot of success. While a large percentage of the F3 grid had Lucas MAEs sitting behind the driver. Charles Lucas Engineering started out as a private racing team. However, their success pushed Luke and Tom into commercial racecar and engine production. At the end of 1968, the company had built and sold 36 cars and over 100 F3 and Formula Ford engines, which would be the tip of the iceberg.

Intertwined with the F3 story was a new junior formula that appeared in England during 1967. At Motor Racing Stables, a racing drivers school, they installed a stock Ford Cortina engine in the back of an old



#36 Joseph Westervelt, 1969 Titan Mk 5.

F3 chassis, and instead of expensive racing tires on went street radials with steel wheels. Sterling Moss and Denny Hulme tested the cars and said the performance envelope was very close to F3. Almost instantly, Formula Ford was born and it spread quickly throughout the world to become the most successful single-seater formula of all time.

Luke and Tom recognized the sales potential of FF, and modified the Mk 3 to meet the FF regulations. The modified Mk 3 became the Titan Mk 4 Formula Ford, which was introduced in 1968 and was successful in the hands of Tony Trimmer. Tony was originally a mechanic who worked for Harry Stiller out of the Team's Highgate works and then later worked for (Sir) Frank Williams. Other notable Mk 4 drivers included Derek Lawrence and Tony Dron. A handful of Mk 4s did find their way to the United States, and they were very competitive with the Lotuses, Merlyns, and Crossles of the day.



#83 Michael Cooper, Titan Mk 6.

In 1969, the Mk 4 was modified to accept the new Hewland Mk 8 gearbox, and along with a few minor revisions, became the Titan Mk 5 Formula Ford. Again, Tony Trimmer drove a Mk 5 Titan with much success throughout the UK and Europe, and finished second overall in the European FF championship. Titan also continued to make a favorable impression in America, which attracted the attention of Fred Opert and Pierre Phillips who were the major racecar importers of the time.

During February 1968, CLE moved the works from their London Highgate shop to a new purpose built facility in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, which was right across the street from Lola's factory. Less than a mile down the road was Arch Motors and Specialized Moldings making Huntingdon a motor racing center in East Anglia. The new facility incorporated a machine shop, engine clean room, engine test beds, and a car



photo by Bob Pengraph

#4 John Anderson, 1969 Titan Mk 4.

assembly area. It was a facility second only to Cosworth at the time.

The highly competitive nature of Formula Ford forced racing car manufacturers to keep improving their cars. In 1970 CLE introduced the Titan Mk 6 Formula Ford, which is considered one of the most successful Formula Fords ever to take to the track. Tom improved the front suspension of the Mk 5 chassis by utilizing a two-piece upper wishbone, which fed suspension loads through more of the chassis. At the same time, he redesigned the bodywork to improve down force and clean up airflow. Based on the registry, we believe over 300 Mk 6s were built between late

1969 and early 1974, which probably makes the Mk 6 the most numerous formula ford ever produced.

In 1971 Luke wanted out of the business, and sold the company's assets to Roy and Diana Thomas ("Seccy"). Roy and Diana formed Titan Cars and move the business to smaller premises in St. Neots. Luke kept his hand in motor racing and went on to work with the Hesketh Formula 1 team.

US Importers Fred Opert and Pierre Phillips created Mk 6 variants to offer something new to customers each year. However, CLE/Titan Cars never recognized the variants, and all Mk 6 chassis were the same. The differences over the four years of production were usually minor changes to the bodywork.

These changes culminated in the "duckbill" nose, which appeared in the UK during the August of 1972, and in the United States during the 1973 season.

During the 1972 season in the UK, Derek Lawrence and Ken Bailey teamed up to form "Team Titan". They had a lot of success, winning 35 races between them, which included a couple of championships,

as well as placing second and third in several more. In the US, the Mk 6 was the dominant car of the era winning eleven SCCA divisional championships, and the SCCA Formula Ford National Championship in 1971 with Jim Harrell at the wheel.

For 1974, Tom designed a successor to the four-year-old Mk 6, which was designated as the Mk 8 (The Mk 7 was the still born Super Vee project). The Mk 8 chassis featured what Tom called "double side panniers", which meant that the chassis had 8 main tubes instead of the typical 4. In addition, the engine was a semi-stressed member of the chassis. Roy also tried some new suspension geometry



photo by Bob Pengraph

#38 Dan Cowdrey, 1970 Titan.

concepts, and designed a wedge shaped body with two side mounted radiators similar to the Lotus 72 F1 car. The wheelbase was shorter and the front and rear tracks were wider than the Mk 6 to increase agility and cornering power. The nose cone was short and turned down sharply in order to enhance slip-streaming.

Unfortunately, the Mk 8 was late off the drawing board, rushed into production, and suffered from insufficient development. Once in the hands of customers problems appeared. Titan quickly supplied update kits to sort the cars problems, dropped the Mk 8, and introduced the revised Mk 9 model. However, nothing travels faster than bad news, and the company's reputation was damaged. At the end of 1976, Titan decided to stop producing racing cars, and shifted its focus to engine construction and racing car component manufacturing.

Today, Titan Motorsport and Manufacturing, Ltd. do a thriving business on the same site in St. Neots, England. They manufacture racing components for the top companies in the industry such as Lola, Dallara, Caterham, Cosworth, and Morgan cars. Titan hasn't forgotten its roots, and still manufactures components for early Cosworth and formula ford engines. Plus, many of today's other formula car classes use Titan designed steering racks, suspension components, and dry sump systems. The company is owned and managed by Diana Thomas and Oz Timms, both of whom started working with the company when it was an up and coming Formula 3 team called Charles Lucas Engineering.

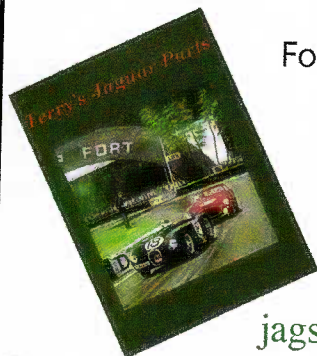
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