



QUESTOR



GRAND PRIX



This year, the Questor Grand Prix becomes a 40-year-old footnote in racing history— but, nonetheless, it remains brilliant theater. Several of the top drivers, who contested the race, share their memories of this one-of-a-kind event. BY TOM STAHLER

Setting the stage: Gather the vehicles of the world's two top-flight open-wheel racing series from opposite shores; offer an absolute pot of gold; attract the valorous racing heroes of the day—including three F1 World Champions and four Indianapolis 500 Champions; run this race at the most modern and beautiful monument of speed to date; then immerse it in a domain of movie stars and the Southern California car culture. This “Great Confrontation,” held on a sunny early spring weekend in 1971 at the then new and palatial Ontario Motor Speedway, was a perfect storm to anyone who would ponder such a meeting. Ever.

For many years since, this one-off concept in “who’s the best” has developed an underground “cult” status around the world—as even today, murmurs across the internet-based racing bulletin boards discuss this unique happening with an almost spiritual fascination. Just consider the lineup: Manufacturers Ferrari, Lotus, Tyrrell, McLaren and Matra embattled with Lola, Eagle and Surtees, powered by small-block Chevy, Ford and Plymouth. Drivers Andretti, Stewart, Amon, Hulme, Gethin, and Peterson going wheel-to-wheel with Donohue, Unser, Foyt, Follmer, Grable, Revson and Posey in a quest for a nearly \$300,000 purse. The FIA referred to the meeting as Formula Libre—free, without restriction ... epic!

While the track was still under construction, the F1 Circus was invited to Ontario, in hopes that a new United States Grand Prix “West” would find a home in the new temple of speed. It had been more than 10 years since F1 raced at Riverside in California—an entire continent away from the established U.S. Grand Prix held annually at Watkins Glen. The Ontario Motor Speedway board was anxious to host every preeminent racing series within its gates.

Ontario's was new and modern, perhaps too big for its own good. However, it proved a perfect host for the Questor Grand Prix.

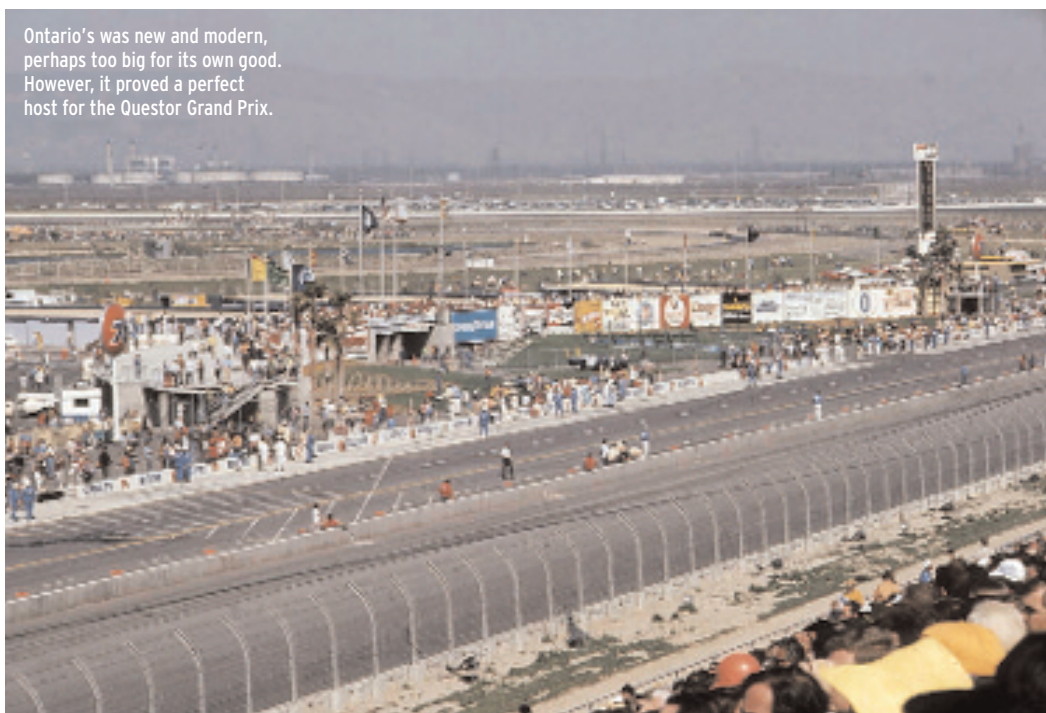


PHOTO PETE LUONGO

Ontario Motor Speedway was the concept of a consortium of investors led by Indianapolis-based super-agent David Lockton. Sports Headliners, Lockton's firm, co-owned with former Firestone PR Director, Chuck Barnes, managed the careers of the PGA's big three—Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer and Gary Player—and at that time, most of the top Formula 1 and Indy 500 race drivers as well. The OMS investment group who included John Nuveen and Company, Citi Securities and Pioneer Lands, joined with general contractor, Stolte Construction Company to acquire the 14 parcels—700 acres that made up the site. Among the 150 individual owners of these parcels was Hollywood's elite, who essentially owned the land as tax shelters. The speedway would be completed in August of 1970 at a cost of \$25.5 million.

FIA rules required any facility hoping to host a Grand Prix to have a non-championship “qualifier” race for evaluation purposes. OMS would host multiple racing series in its maiden year, beginning Labor Day weekend 1970, including the California 500 for Indy

Cars—paid attendance 178,000, the Miller High Life 500 for NASCAR—80,000 and the Mattel Hot Wheels Supnationals drag races—75,000. These impressive attendance numbers were due to a massive ad and marketing campaign aimed not only at the some 50,000 core racing fans in Southern California, but also families who would be enticed by new safety features and amenities—and the potential to rub-shoulders with the glamorous Hollywood stars that frequented the events.

The track board, along with chairman Dan Lufkin and CEO Lockton, wanted to perpetuate attendance, despite the non-championship status of the scheduled F1 race. There had to be a way to attract public interest. The void of Americans in Grand Prix racing could pose a major problem for attendance. Sam Posey, who raced a Surtees-Chevy FA car in the race, commented on the concept of bringing together two different worlds of open wheel racing to one event. “They couldn't get American drivers any other way. Without the Unsers and A.J., it was just a Formula 1 race which had little cache in California—and the Formula A cars were



Dancers Internationale provided entertainment between the race heats.

PHOTO BOB TRONOLONE

cheap and readily available.”

Enter Toledo, Ohio-based Questor Corporation and its CEO P.M. “Sandy” Grieve. With an enthusiastic attitude towards motor racing and a need to promote the variety of businesses in its portfolio, Grieve made an ongoing and immense financial commitment to the unique and highly publicized race. By the time all the bills were paid, the Corporation that boasted \$260 million in worldwide sales would drop an unprecedented \$750,000 (estimated) into the overall event. Today that number, adjusted for inflation, would be nearly \$4 million!

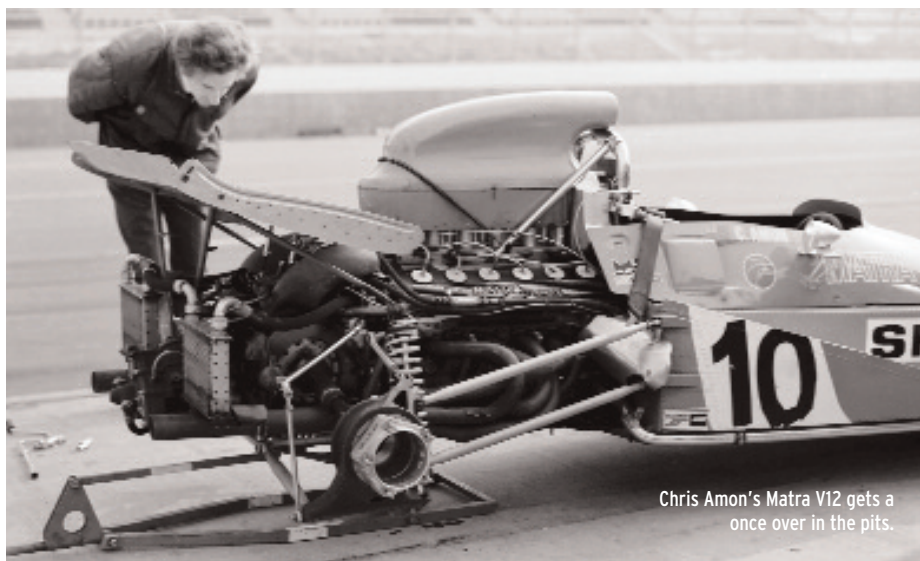
Questor and Automobile Racing Blend

Automobile racing is the fastest growing sport in the world,” Sandy Grieve told Competition Press, leading up to the race. “As we move into the decade of the '70s there will be increased public emphasis on those factors of mechanical perfection and individual fulfillment which so characterize the sport.”

Questor represented what would be a trend for corporations in the early 1970s and then again in the late '80s—the “wieldy conglomerate.” Essentially it was a business plan to take a group of unrelated companies, doing a variety of different business activities and products and put them all under a single management structure, then work to make them all profitable despite the far reaching nature of products and services. Questor owned a number of disparate companies including Spalding, Evenflo Baby Products, Fisher Pool Tables and Tinkertoys, along with Detroit-contracted OEM manufacturers AP Exhaust Products, Columbus Shock Absorbers and Muskegon Piston Rings. Similar corporate models of the day were AMF and Litton.

A meeting of F1 team owners and Ontario Motor Speedway executives at the Mexico GP in 1970 sealed a promise of the richest purse to date in an American road race and the commitment of F1 taking on FA on U.S. soil. Into the future, a promised April 1972 USGP West date was agreed—unless the Formula Libre concept was a success and could become a perpetual non-championship race. “The Questor GP promoters wanted an international field and they paid the price,” commented Jackie Stewart.

Beyond the 1950s, when the Indianapolis 500 was considered an FIA F1 World Championship race, there were only two other meetings in racing history, that



Chris Amon's Matra V12 gets a once over in the pits.

PHOTO LLEW KINST



World Champion Jackie Stewart was in his prime and would battle Andretti for the win.

PHOTO BARRY TENN



One of the pre-race favorites was Mario Andretti.

PHOTO BOB TRONOLONE



Jo Siffert drove a V12 BRM P153 to a 3-13 finish in the two heats.

PHOTO BOB TRONOLONE

pitted series against series in an America vs. Europe Ryder Cup fashion: The "Race of Two Worlds" a 500-mile event, was held by the Automobile Club of Italy on the banked oval at Monza in 1957 and '58. Also known as the "Monzapolis Series," Jimmy Bryan, Troy Ruttman and Jim Rathmann won heats in a scenario that played to the oval-adapted Offenhauser roadsters.

The unlimited formula of the SCCA Can-Am had become a very profitable win as the series saw immense notoriety and involvement from the mid 60's into the '70s. In the quest for another highly competitive, but lower cost formula to complete the show with its wildly successful Trans-Am series, the SCCA looked inward. The answer? The emerging Formula Continental series. The Formula A racers were economical, could house a cast iron 5.0-liter small block V8, offered exciting open wheel road racing—and a newfound sanctioning partnership with

USA—which allowed Indy Car heroes of the day to participate.

Formula A, or The Continental Championship, had been running since 1968. It was set up as an SCCA open-wheel class that allowed a myriad of open-wheel cars to compete. The Formula 5000 moniker came from the 5.0-liter engines that dominated the class. As this series gained popularity with teams and spectators alike, chassis builders such as Lola, Eagle, Surtees, McLaren, March and Lotus entered the fray and added to its competitiveness. At first glance, the winged, single-seater racers had a similar look to their Euro-F1 counterparts of the day—but with the throaty growl of an American V8. Lola, with its short wheelbase T-190 chassis and Chevrolet's 305cid small block, was becoming standard issue for the group by 1970.

Designer Eric Broadley and test driver Frank Gardner introduced the longer wheelbase Lola T-192 after much

development work in England. The first of these improved Lolas went to Roger Penske in September 1970. It would be fitted with a Chevrolet V8 motor built by Traco Engineering and be catalyzed over the next six months by Mark Donohue. Constructive feedback went back and forth between Newtown Square, Pa. and Slough, England as Donohue spent tireless hours setting up the new Lola chassis.

For the majority of the American Questor competitors, a difficult task would lie ahead as the cars were new and undeveloped—Formula A had not yet raced in 1971. "We took delivery of a new Lola T-192 at Ontario," said 1969 Formula A Champion, Tony Adamowicz, "and it arrived in crates. The car was literally assembled for the first time right there in the garages."

Al Unser was used to racing with new and untested equipment. "Things were much different then. You had mechanics who would snap together a car, then drag it



Bobby Unser's Lola T-192 was entered by Charlie Hayes.

1000 miles to race without development. Plus you had several different ideas going into a single car from the engine builder to the mechanic who set up the car."

Sam Posey was entered in a new Surtees TS8 F5000 ride. "It was a brand new car that we had just been in England fitting the engine to and testing. We brought it over and within a week or so we were at Ontario racing the thing." Regardless, he would forever be enamored with the car. "The Surtees TS8 was a wonderful car to drive. It was one of my two favorite cars that I drove in the course of my career, the other being the (NART) Ferrari 512M."

Ron Grable entered with a year-old short wheelbase Lola T-190 owned by local race car builder Charlie Hayes. The major upgrade for this machine was a T-192 nose.

Other FA entrants included Peter Revson, George Follmer, Lou Sell, Bob Bondurant and Gus Hutchison. David Hobbs, who was contracted to Carl Hogan in the FA series (and incidentally would win the 1971 Championship) was precluded by the promoters "...because I was English and they did not want Europeans racing the American cars." This could be attributed to the politics of the organizers. Andretti, an American in a F1 car, had not even heard about that and chuckled, "Regardless, there was no way I would give up my Ferrari for a 5000 car."

Across the pond in Formula 1, the Circus had emerged from an illustrious but tragic 1970 that mourned its first posthumous World Champion. None could catch the points tally from five victories by Jochen Rindt when he was killed at Monza, practicing for the Italian Grand Prix. Saddened but determined, Colin Chapman would complete the season's last three meetings, preparing a Lotus 72C for a young upstart Brazilian named Emerson Fittipaldi. Max Mosley, Alan Rees, Graham Coaker and Robin Herd would introduce the world to their new F1 steed, the March 701. The March-Ford DFV took its maiden GP win in the hands of Jackie Stewart just prior to the introduction of Ken Tyrrell's world-beating Tyrrell 001.

Meanwhile back in Ontario at its completion, OMS, or "the big O," was a splendid multi-faceted motorsport facility. Its 2.5-mile oval was a modern interpretation of Indianapolis—slightly more banked in the corners and short chutes, plus it was a full lane wider. In its infield, OMS had a 20-turn, 3.194-mile road course, in combination with the oval. "I thought (Ontario) was a real drivers track," remembers Ron Grable, "as there was a little bit of everything, high speed in



Chris Amon's shrieking V12 Matra MS-120B finished just off the podium in 4th place.



Bobby Unser (L) and Al Unser discuss their Lola-Chevy T-192s.

PHOTO LLEW KINST

the straight and what was Turn 4 for the Indy cars was Turn 1 for us and then there was a good mixture in the infield. However on the negative side the infield section was pretty flat, without camber changes.”

“Ontario’s road course was not one of my favorites,” Al Unser said, agreeing with Grable. “In road racing, I liked elevation changes and Ontario had none of that. I don’t think it was as demanding as it could have been. Despite that, I hated to see Ontario go away. It was a pivotal facility where they tried new developments that we see today. I loved the oval.”

As a bonus, the long straightaway was used as a drag strip to host National NHRA events. Tony Hulman, in a very public blessing of the facility, donated bricks from IMS to be laid in the winner’s circle. Jackie Stewart was duly impressed with the facility, recalling, “It was the first real multi-purpose stadium race track. It was a very good track.”

Posey had just set up shop in Southern California with Champcarr, Inc. “We thought (Ontario) was fabulous—a thing of beauty. It was big time in every way. It was a surprise that our sport was capable of having a show like the Questor. To be part of it was quite a revelation. That was a real turning point for American road racing since for the first time it really went big league. I felt it took the whole sport a step forward.”

Beyond the multi-purposed grounds, the facility was designed with elite recreation and spectating in mind. Beautiful Club-level VIP suites offered comfort and shelter from the oppressive desert heat. If one wasn’t so privileged, they could find themselves in one of 140,000 grandstand seats or infield vantage points close to the action.

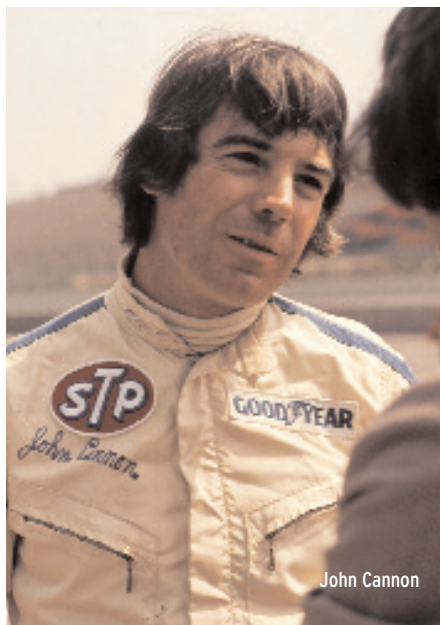
For the racers, OMS offered innovation in the form of crash-absorbent retaining walls, safety fences and state-of-the-art garages. The newest and greatest of its innovations was timing and scoring system that worked in real time. This was done incorporating a receiver under the start/finish line and transmitters, fixed to each car in the nose, feeding an IBM1130 computer that scored all the cars within a 1000th of a second. Immediately, this information was transmitted to the pressroom and to 50-foot high pylon-style scoreboards, thus allowing the spectators to instantly view race positions on the track. For 1971, this was a glimpse into the future of motorsport facility technology, safety and amenities.

Chris Amon had a more familiarized view in retrospect. “Because I had been to



Jacky Ickx

PHOTO LLEW KINST



John Cannon

PHOTO LLEW KINST



John Cannon's STP March 701 Cosworth finished 11th overall.

PHOTO LLEW KINST

Indianapolis and Daytona, Ontario was not as much a surprise to me as it might have been to many of the other Formula 1 guys. There was a tinge of Hollywood about the place, which made it unique."

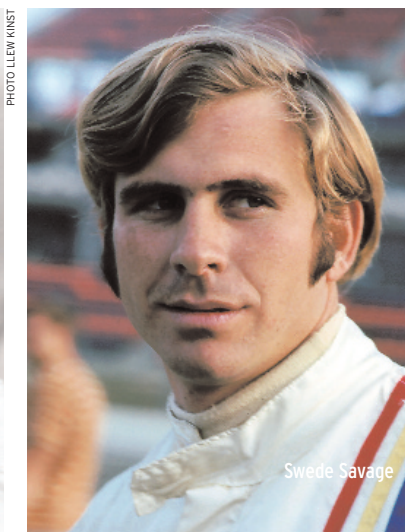
Leading up to the Great Confrontation, there were two schools of thought on the outcome of such a pairing. Those who predicted the FA cars did not have a chance against the ultra-sophisticated F1 machines, and the other believing that the FA cars would give an honest run for the F1 cars' money.

The Americans and Europeans had significantly different historic and technological mindsets in the execution of race cars. American racing theory sported big engines and brute horsepower—500hp 5.0-liter V8s—learned from years of oval track racing and a "bigger is better" mentality. While the FA cars were insanely fast, a major disadvantage were the cast iron Chevy, Plymouth and Ford engines, weighing easily 200 lb. more and with a higher center of gravity than the F1 machines. This difference would effect acceleration, braking and cornering.

Amon recalls, "I think (the FA cars) mixed in very well, there was no way one was going to win the race, but in terms of horsepower they were on par and had more torque than the F1 car but the real disadvantage was that they were heavy."



Ron Grable



Swede Savage

compare them," said Posey, "and the F1 cars were faster in a straight line, much faster. The 5000 cars strength was in torque, coming off turns—but every time we got on the straight, we would lose 10 car lengths. It was a shock to all of us."

Further, the race would need to be run in two 102-mile heats (32 Laps) as the American cars did not have the fuel capacity of their European counterparts.

Getting There

Gathering the competitors required a massive logistics undertaking. Adding to the urgency, the weekend prior to the Questor Grand Prix, Brands Hatch was hosting its annual non-championship Race of Champions. With Ontario opening the following Wednesday for first familiarization practice sessions, a roughly 48-hour window existed to pack, transport, and unload the Circus half way around the world.

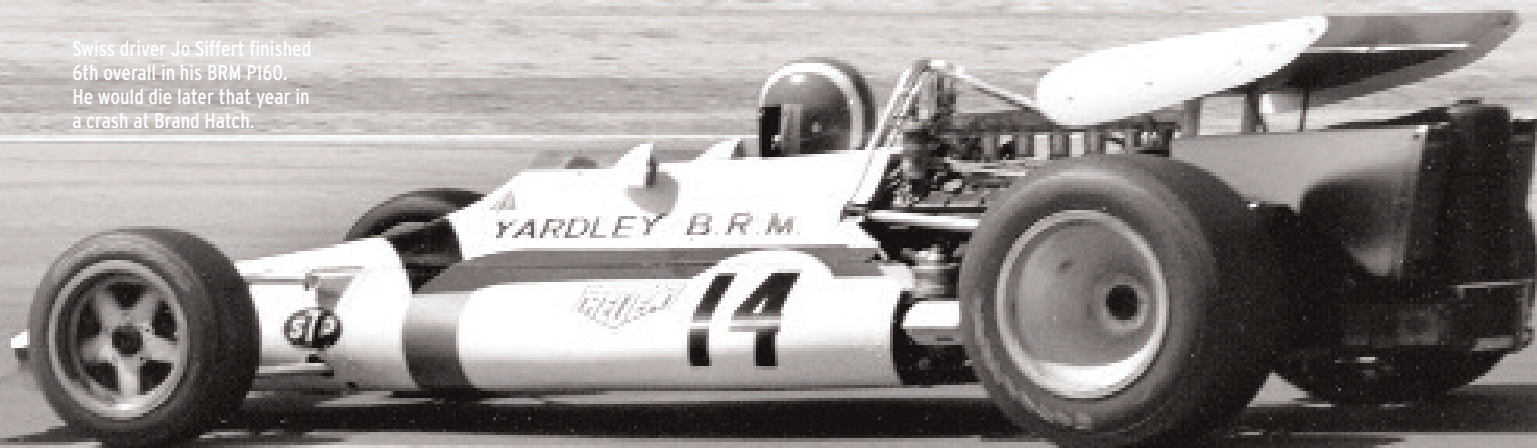
All except Ferrari and Matra, cars and gear were airlifted directly from Brands Hatch at the conclusion of the race. To accomplish this, Questor chartered a massive Tradewinds Airways Ltd. CL-44 turbo-prop cargo plane. The payload included 14 F1 cars and 50,000 lb of spares in 92 Containers. It left Gatwick Airport in London, refueled at Ottawa then flew directly to Ontario International. The combination of heavy load and possible ice

On the European side, its racing pedigree was much to the contrary. Ovals were an anomaly overseas, the races there were run on public roads, then purpose-built road courses that flowed with the landscape, twisting turning lefts and rights—and from this came more nimble "quick" cars with smaller displacement engines that could accelerate rapidly, stop on a dime and handle corners with an acumen of ease. F1 was at that time, 3.0-liter multi-cam V8s and V12s, making about 450hp.

"There was no comparison between the cars," called to mind Jackie Stewart. "The FA car was a much more difficult car to drive whereas a Formula 1 car is the ultimate. The car I raced in the Questor Grand Prix (Tyrrell 001) was the same car I drove to the 1971 World Championship."

"Later in the year (at the USGP at Watkins Glen) I would have a chance to

Swiss driver Jo Siffert finished 6th overall in his BRM P160. He would die later that year in a crash at Brand Hatch.



slivers, picked up in Ottawa, caused massive blowouts to the tires as the plane landed at Ontario. Capt. E. Jones averted certain disaster with calm control as the plane swerved across the runway—coming to rest on a nearby taxi strip.

Ferrari sent its cars directly from Rome to LAX on a Pan Am commercial flight. From there they were trucked to the track. Matra, who sat out the Race of Champions, sent its car from Charles DeGaulle in Paris.

The drivers, crews and select European press were flown on a chartered TWA Boeing 707 from Heathrow to Ontario.

Matra, despite being a two-car team like the others, tragedy had led them to only bring only one car and driver: Chris Amon and the Simca V12-powered Matra 120C. Jean-Pierre Beltoise, Amon's F1 teammate, suffered a rare FIA license suspension from an accident, which killed Ferrari factory driver Ignazio Giunti. During the January 10, 1971 running of the Buenos Aires 1000km, Beltoise had run out of fuel in his Matra 660 and was attempting to push it back to the pits, when Giunti crested a hill and punched his fuel laden Ferrari 312B prototype. Giunti had no time to react as he slammed into the Matra. The resulting impact and fire left the 30-year-old Italian F1 hopeful to eternity. Beltoise' ban would last until the 1971 running of the Spanish Grand Prix on the famed Montjuic street circuit. Amon remembers, "It was my second event for Matra in the 120C. The first event was the Argentine Grand Prix, which was a non-Championship event that I won. I seemed to have been better at winning the non-championship races."

Ferrari looked to California as one of its most substantial markets for road car sales and really wanted to win the race in this market. Il Commendatore sent well-prepared 312B's with drivers Jacky Ickx of Belgium and American hero Andretti, who drove a third car for the Prancing Horse in 1971 along with his STP Indy Car commitment. Ferrari's regular driver, Clay Reggazoni won the Race of Champions a week prior but did not come to California. Andretti was fresh off a season-opening GP race win at Kyalami in South Africa and had a great deal of momentum going into the race, "It was really the most balanced car at the time, that I drove. It really fit my driving style."

At Tyrrell, Stewart had chassis 001, but teammate Francois Cevert would not be making the trip after crashing his March 701 at Kyalami. Tyrrell did not have another car prepared for the Frenchman and he missed both the Brands Hatch meeting and the Questor Grand Prix.

Stewart, who did a promotional media tour of New York, Chicago and Los Angeles for Questor Corporation said, "My wife had to open the Glasgow International Auto Show in my absence. The Questor Grand Prix was that important."

BRM sent their developed P160's with drivers Jo Siffert and Pedro Rodriguez. March was well represented with the Ford DFV-powered 1970 701 and newer 711 cars being driven by Swede Ronnie Peterson, Frenchman Henri Pescarolo, Canadian John Cannon and Brit Derek Bell. Brabham entered its new BT34 Ford

with then 42-year-old Graham Hill and Aussie Tim Schenken. Chapman sent two highly-developed Lotus 72's for Emerson Fittipaldi, who spent the better part of 1971 outshining Swedish teammate Reine Wisell.

Add one more logistical condition to the fray: The Jimmy Bryan 150 Indy Car race at Phoenix International was set for the day prior to the Questor race. So a number of the USAC stars, including the Unsers, Foyt, Andretti, Donohue and Swede Savage would have to make haste in commuting back and forth to practice, qualify and race in both venues.



Race cars exit the hot pits to line up behind the '71 Dodge Challenger R/T pace car, powered by a 440 "Six Pack" V8, producing 390hp.

New and Unconquered

For the drivers, Ontario was an unconquered road circuit. In light of the brand new course, and for many of the Formula A drivers, untested cars, three days of familiarization of the 20-turn infield were granted. Wednesday, practice was non-timed with four-hour sessions on Thursday and Friday and qualifying Friday and Saturday.

On Wednesday only Ferrari, with pilots Andretti and Ickx and the Formula A competitors participated. Riding on the laurels of his South African GP victory, Andretti took to the track with a number of Formula A cars. He was building speed and confidence as he toured the circuit. Entering the infield he came up on an "unidentified F5000 car."

"I probably picked the wrong place to pass," reminisced Andretti. "I came up on a F5000 car that didn't give me room and forced me to the outside. I got two wheels

in the dirt, which was very soft, and just lost it." The resulting excursion into a barrier damaged the Ferrari bodywork and suspension badly. With no spare car—and few spare parts to work with, the Scuderia took over A.J. Watson's Sprint Car shop in Gardena to repair the car—Andretti arranged the shop through his USAC contacts as he departed for Phoenix. The scarlet 312-B, once operable, would be shaken down by Ferrari teammate Ickx.

Stewart, who would hop the pond regularly to drive the factory-supported Carl Haas L&M Lola T-260 in the 1971 Can-Am Championship, got the opportunity to turn a wheel in a McLaren M10B Formula A car. "A.J. Foyt was doing an Indy car race that same weekend so they allowed me to qualify his car. It was the first time I ever drove a Formula 5000 car and the last time, I'm happy to say." Stewart was considered a master of car setup and worked with Foyt's crew to get the car race ready. Foyt would step out of

the car on lap 6 in the first heat, decrying the car "un-drivable."

Qualifying was a history defining moment, thanks to Ontario's new electronic timing and scoring, as for the first time, pole-sitter Stewart in his Tyrrell-Ford at 1:41.22sec was separated by just .005sec over Amon's Matra-Simca at 1:41.27sec. Any prior race would have shown them tied as stopwatch measurements only went to the hundredth.

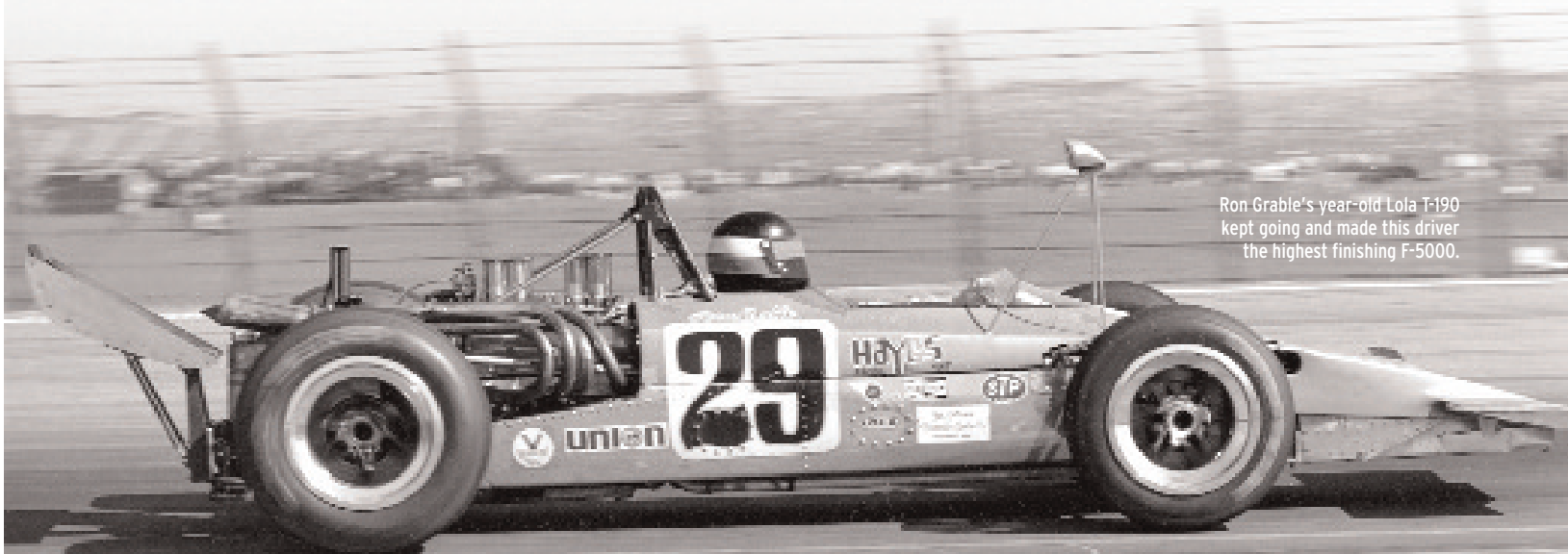
The fastest FA car was the Lola T-192 of Mark Donohue that qualified on the inside of row 4. "Donohue and Penske were such a factor in those days," observed Unser, "Donohue was an excellent driver and a very smart man." Adamowicz has a different take on Donohue's speed and success that weekend. "It is only a theory—and I may be the only one who sees it this way—but I think the Traco Chevy 305 was an illegal aluminum block—or at the very least, [it had] aluminum heads. This saved enough weight and balance to keep up with the F1 cars."

The Indy car contingent flew in from Phoenix Saturday night after the Jimmy Bryan 150 that saw a wheel-to-wheel fight to the finish by the Unsers on the 1-mile oval at PIR with Al taking the win in his Johnny Lightning Colt over big brother Bobby in the Eagle Offy.

According to Michael Argetsinger's "Mark Donohue, Technical Excellence at Speed," Donohue and Andretti shared the STP jet for the commute.

It's Showtime

As Sunday, March 28, 1971 dawned in the Southern California desert, the fans, estimated at 60,000, poured into the behemoth stadium circuit and would be



Ron Grable's year-old Lola T-190 kept going and made this driver the highest finishing F-5000.

swallowed among the 140,000 seats. From there, show business took over. Support races including an SCCA regional and marching bands, a driver/celebrity parade and other spectacles wowed the crowd. Race hostess, Rosemarie Bowe Stack, wife of "The Untouchables" star Robert Stack, fronted the glitterati of Hollywood.

Movie/TV star James Garner—better known as Pete Aaron in the cinematic masterpiece, "Grand Prix," drove the pace car to bring this mixed group of racers to the line in a rolling start. Amon recalls, "There is much more skill involved in a standing start ... I was on the front row and with the rolling start, I was swamped by the first corner."

Ickx in the Ferrari shot into the lead, ahead of Stewart, Amon, Hulme, Hill and Siffert. Giving chase to the leaders was Donohue with Andretti, Rodriguez, Fittipaldi, Wisell and Pescarolo behind him. Stewart fought to pass Ickx. Denny Hulme looped his McLaren in an attempt to pass Amon. The Matra 120C Simca 60-degree V12 made a beautiful noise, but according to Amon, "The Matra was a very good chassis with a very ordinary engine. It was a great car in the infield but was difficult in the high speed sections of the oval."

Almost immediately attrition began to take hold. Follmer, Hill, Bondurant and Revson all broke. Posey's engine overheated due to radiator damage after making contact with John Cannon's March—who came in shortly thereafter with suspension issues.

"The performance of the F1 cars was far

and above the 5000 cars. I probably thought it was a great idea at the time. They had less horsepower, but a definite weight advantage. They were also very fragile," commented Unser who suffered oil pressure problems in the Heat 1 and only appeared on the grid for Heat 2, waved to the 60,000-person crowd and called it a day as a DNF.

David Earl "Swede" Savage, Jr. decided to take the wheel of what could have been considered an uncompetitive and "unstable" Eagle Plymouth 69/511 F5000

Pedro Rodríguez drove for BRM and did better in Heat No. 2.



PHOTO BOB TROVOLDONE

car, qualifying at the back of the grid in 29th. He would finish third behind the Unser Brothers at Phoenix on Saturday in the Jimmy Bryan 150. Sam Posey recalls what would be the beginning of the end for Savage: "Swede should have never been in that car. It was a third—or rather fourth rate car. He had no business at his level of driving at that point of his reputation, taking the ride. He knew Dan [Gurney] was angry with him and that should have been enough for him to back out of it. But he didn't and he hit his head and scrambled his brains."

Gurney has a different memory of his protégé, "I do not remember advising

Swede one way or another. I had enormous admiration and respect for him. The [Eagle/Plymouth] car was not part of our company; it was under the responsibility of Jim Wright, a former employee who was also a huge fan of Swede's. Swede had 100% confidence in his mechanic."

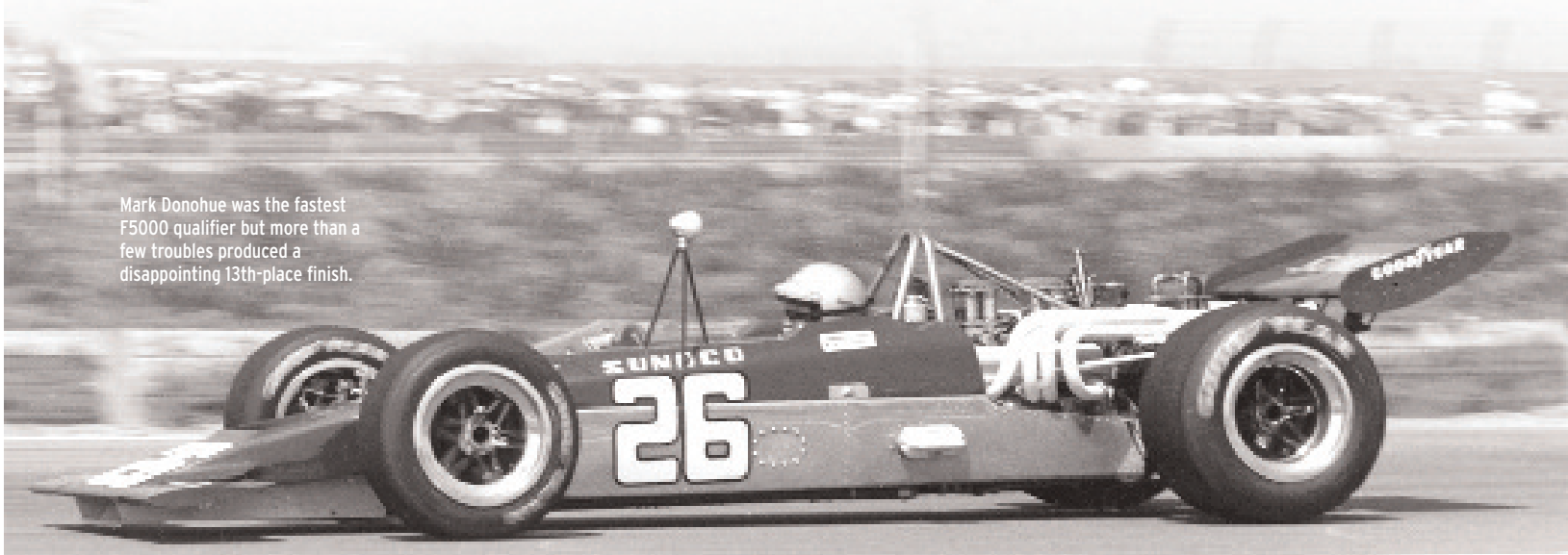
On lap 11, Savage was entering turn 9 of the infield section at 140mph. He checked up—and nothing ... the throttle stuck wide open and the Eagle went straight off the tarmac. The resulting crash remembers one witness, "He hit it a ton!"

Swede's helmet hit a concrete barrier and Savage suffered near-fatal head injuries. He still returned to the cockpit in the Indy Car series in the beginning of the 1972 season. Observers and friends said he never regained his champion form. "He was never the same," said Posey. Savage crashed spectacularly in the 1973 Indy 500, suffering critical burns. He succumbed a month later to pneumonia and complications from his injuries July 2, 1973.

Grable, while realizing his disadvantage, had a safe strategy. "Going into the race, we were basically outclassed. Their cars were faster everywhere. The only way we were going to have any success against them was in terms of reliability and try to be there at the end. A problem we had in the first heat was the left valve cover gasket started leaking and put oil on the left rear tire and I spun it in the infield and that put us back quite a bit. We got that fixed and I did significantly better in the second heat."

Grable's impressive seventh-place

Mark Donohue was the fastest F5000 qualifier but more than a few troubles produced a disappointing 13th-place finish.



overall finish, was a F5000 island in a sea of F1 cars. “The experience was really enlightening, because I had held the Formula 1 guys in such high regard. But once I was out there with them, I realized they weren’t much different than anyone I had raced against—they all made the same mistakes that I made and had the same vulnerabilities and abilities. It really encouraged me to go on in my racing (career). Guys like Andretti and Stewart, they do have an extraordinary ability, but on any given day, they were just as beatable as any other driver.”

Stewart finally got by Ickx under braking, but then the Belgian took to the pits with a tire going down. Stewart was pulling away from Amon, but Andretti had now moved into third after a multi-lap fight with Donohue. Pedro Rodriguez stopped to have his springs checked, but then left the pits to pick up the pace, setting the fast lap for the race.

Andretti chased Amon, closing in on Stewart, but then Amon faded, as a tire began to let go. “Throughout 1971,” Amon lamented, “with my choice to leave Ferrari, every time I was passed by a 312, I wanted to cry.”

Andretti and Stewart began a late-race game of cat and mouse. Donohue was holding his own and proving to everyone just how competitive the F5000 cars could be with proper development. In a 1971 TV interview at Ontario, Donohue made the keen observation: “They cost so much money to go Formula 1 racing needlessly when you can go just as fast with a lot less invested in the car. Our cars are 10 times cheaper and I think that is very important

in racing today—the finances.”

Stewart was passed by Andretti diving into Turn 1 on lap 29. Donohue pulled into the pits with what felt like fuel starvation. Stewart eyeballed the shrinking



Denny “The Bear” Hulme ran strong in his McLaren M19A.

PHOTO BOB TRONOLONE

image of Andretti as he motored away to the checker. “The Firestone tire lasted better than the Goodyears,” opined Stewart. “It was disappointing from my point of view because the Tyrrell was competitive enough to win, but the heat was quite high, it was very early in the season and we didn’t know how the tires would perform. That year the Ferraris on the Firestone tires were very competitive.”

Siffert managed third followed by Hulme, Ickx and Amon. Schenken ran out of fuel, but was seventh ahead of Howden Ganley, Mark Donohue, Ron Grable, Peter Gethin, Bobby Unser, Derek Bell and Lou Sell.

Firestone vs Goodyear

Heat 1 results determined the grid for the second heat. Andretti led the 22 remaining cars including Foyt, who returned to the grid. Ronnie Peterson came out for a free test session on the 17th lap of the second heat. Stewart took Andretti into Turn 1 at the start, followed by Siffert, Ickx, Hulme, Amon and Donohue. By lap 2, Stewart had

a two-second lead on Andretti. But then the Tyrrell’s Goodyears began to go away as Andretti’s Firestones came into their own. Ickx tried to out-brake Siffert in the infield section, taking both cars out of contention as they connected and left the racing surface promoting Donohue again to third. Sadly for Mark, the fuel problems returned, and took the American hopeful to the garages early in the final heat.

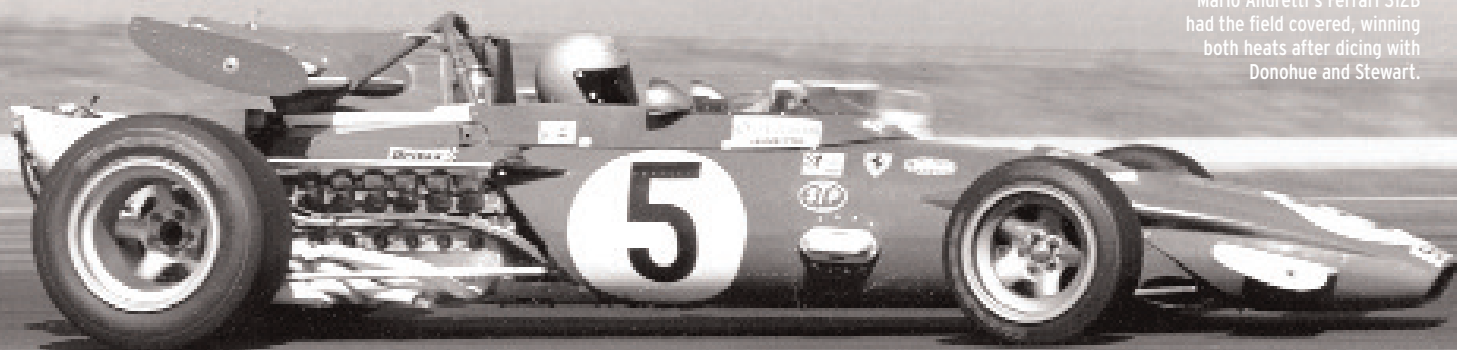
Andretti caught Stewart once again and swept both heats for the overall win and the Questor Trophy. “Considering the names in the field, it was a very special victory, I was racing the best of the best,” beams Andretti at the memory, “even finishing second to an Unser, A.J. or Jackie Stewart, is a great day. Having them finish second to you is the ultimate!”

Several points were proven, yet it seemed that the F1 cars emerged superior from this meeting. As the ’70s progressed, further developments in the F5000 series increased the speed and reliability of these cars. The popularity of F5000 spread around the globe with races, and star F1 drivers taking part in the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, and the UK. As surmised before the Questor race, the torque-laden V8’s with improved aero-efficient bodywork including enclosed air boxes would prove formidable.

“The (Lola T-332) F5000 car I drove for Vels-Parnelli Jones edged closer to the F1 cars of the day, until ground effects were introduced,” said Andretti. This would be proven as in 1975, Graham Hill protégé—the late Tony Brise—would lap the Long Beach street circuit two seconds quicker than the F1 cars the following year.

Mario Andretti’s Ferrari 312B had the field covered, winning both heats after dicing with Donohue and Stewart.

PHOTO BOB TRONOLONE





With a victory in both heats, Mario Andretti proved he could run with the best and his F1 Ferrari 312B ran flawlessly. The win paid \$25,000.

The Questor Corporation did not re-up its involvement in racing and Ontario Motor Speedway was on its way to oblivion, defaulting on its debt service payments due to dwindling crowds. The Formula Libre concept would not happen again at any circuit.

Dick Stahler, retired racing promoter, was a 28-year old public relations representative at the Questor race. While spectacular in concept, he considered the Great Confrontation a promotional win—but only for the span of the event itself: “In sports marketing terms, Questor spent a lot of money on a one-time shot—it got lots of attention, but had no follow up. The Questor executives and customers had a wonderful event. They took over the Century Plaza Hotel and held their quarterly board meeting. During the week of the race, the stock price surged 10% on the exposure, then just went away.” Questor’s stock price would settle back to previous levels within two weeks. “It was a mystery to a lot of intelligent people. It was this big noise—then nothing.”

“Ontario was a great facility and it was tragic how it disappeared,” reminisced Gurney. Andretti, who boasts having driven every configuration of Ontario said, “Road courses never materialized well in the speedway circuits. It loses ambiance. Look at Daytona for example, it has been running the 24 Hour since the mid-’60s—and it doesn’t draw. You go to Sebring and they have 200,000 people that weekend. At Ontario, as good

as that road course was, the spectator really couldn’t get close, so it didn’t have the appeal to the true road-racing fan.”

The Wrecking Ball

In 1981, without fanfare, OMS, having never regained the attendance of that first California 500 in 1970, was demolished to make way for burgeoning manufacturing and retail business in the area. Within 15 years of the rubble being cleared, a new amenity-heavy, multi-purpose facility, California Speedway, broke ground just 10 miles away in Fontana. A Hilton Hotel sits

QUESTOR GRAND PRIX - OFFICIAL RESULTS									
Overall Rank	Car No.	Driver	Country	Car	Finish	Points	Points	Points	Points
1	5	Mario Andretti	Nazareth, Pa.	Ferrari 312B	1-1	\$25,000	50 points		
2	6	Jackie Stewart	Scotland	Tyrrell Ford	2-2	\$25,000	70 points		
3	6	Boris Borge	New Zealand	McLaren Ford	4-5	\$17,400	58 points	*	
4	10	Chris Amos	New Zealand	McLaren Ford	6-3	\$14,350	58 points	*	
5	20	Tim Schenken	Australia	Holden-Ford	7-5	\$13,550	50 points	*	
6	14	Jo Stoffert	Switzerland	Hill 153	1-1	\$12,950	50 points	*	
7	24	Don Grubb	Mountain View, Ca.	Lola Chevy	10-7	\$ 6,000	45 points		
8	7	Peter Gethin	England	McLaren Ford	11-8	\$11,850	43 points		
9	12	Pedro Rodriguez	Spain	McLaren	20-4	\$12,350	41 points		
10	4	Dick Trice	Belgium	Ferrari 312B	3-23	\$11,300	39 points		
11	25	John Cannon	Canada	STP-March	15-9	\$ 6,500	38 points		
12	37	Louie Bell	Fullerton, Cal.	Lola Chevy	16-17	\$ 6,250	36 points		
13	26	Rick Durnow	Modia, Pa.	Lola Chevy	9-21	\$ 6,000	34 points		
14	2	David Bell	England	March Ford	13-17	\$10,000	32 points		
15	38	Robby Unser	Albuquerque, N.M.	Lola Chevy	12-20	\$ 5,500	32 points		
16	34	Yong Amonson	Torrance, Calif.	Lola Chevy	21-15	\$ 5,250	28 points*		
17	21	Tommy Peterson	Sweden	STP-March	16-16	\$ 5,350	30 points		
18	36	Dan Hutchison	Illinois, Ill.	Ako American	18-14	\$ 4,750	29 points		
19	18	Boris Descombes	France	March Ford	27-15	\$ 8,850	16 points		
20	2	Emerson Fittipaldi	Brazil	Lola Ford	17-23	\$ 8,600	14 points		
21	30	Bob Foy	Sharon, Conn.	Lola Chevy	26-18	\$ 4,750	13 points		
22	35	Bob Boudaunt	Weymouth, Mass., Ca.	McLaren Chevy	28-0	\$ 4,050	10 points		
23	31	Felix Sargun	New York, N.Y.	McLaren Chevy	22-0	\$ 3,950	8 points		
24	17	Steve Savage	Santa Ana, Cal.	Teale Flyg	23-0	\$ 3,850	7 points		
25	19	Arwen Hill	England	McLaren Ford	22-0	\$ 3,200	6 points		
26	37	Wolfgang von Trips	Sweden	Lola Ford	***				
27	33	Al Unser	Albuquerque, N.M.	Lola Chevy	22				
28	28	A.J. Foyt	Houston, Tex.	McLaren Chevy	***				
29	27	George Follmer	Arkadia, Cal.	Lola Ford					

TOTAL TIME: 1:51:48.41
* F1 in points - Final position determined on lowest overall elapsed time
**Based on race, according to the results of the race, withdrawn voluntarily from the race
...and therefore are not entitled to points, according to SCCA officials.
ANDRETTI'S PRIZE MONEY: Purse \$37,000; P-1 Qualifying \$4,350; Lap money \$4600/average \$3500
Hill who drove \$3,000/ run of race award \$3,500

the 13-acre “Founders Garden” in tribute to the Chaffey brothers, who settled the area. A few blocks from Founders Garden at the intersection of Concours Street and Center Avenue is a small public plot of land, aptly named for its former glory: Ontario Motor Speedway Park.

Will we ever see such a match-up again? In this day and age, due to the astronomical costs in promotion, contractual obligations and a gulf between sanctioning bodies, it would be about as possible as seeing a race at Ontario Motor Speedway in 2011. Unser sounded off, “It’s a shame that today sponsors and car owners won’t allow a driver to jump back and forth in other series. However, I think that the drivers themselves don’t want to do it for lack of focus on one discipline.”

Andretti fondly recalls, “It was the best F1 and Indy car drivers at the time and it was significant to be in that group, but to win made for a perfect weekend. I really wish that event could continue, rather than being a one-off.”

Only one other cross-series challenge went untested, according to Dan Gurney. “In 1972, we made an open \$100,000 bet that an Eagle Turbo-Offy Indy car could lap the Nürburgring (Nordschleiffe) faster than the current F1 Cars. We were set to run Jacky Ickx in such a challenge—but no one in F1 took the bet.”

So as another page in racing history turned, the Questor Grand Prix could be viewed in one of three ways: A unique and historic moment in racing that will continue to fascinate, an obscure footnote in motorsports or corporate boondoggle. Based on the facts presented here, you decide . . .

About the Author: Tom Stahler is a racing historian, writer, media talent and marketer. He resides in the Chicago area with his wife and three daughters. Special thanks to Doug Magnon at the Riverside International Automotive Museum and Pete Luongo and Barry Tenin for all the research help and resourcefulness, and to Llew Kinst and Bob Tronolone for digging through their photo archives.