

CLASSIC DRIVER

Racing as a privateer in Formula 1 - with Ronnie Peterson



Editors note: In our last feature on Colin Crabbe it told of the time he bought, and raced, a [Mercedes W125 pre-war Grand Prix car](#). This time Colin describes his second season as a privateer Formula 1 entrant, running Ronnie Peterson in his debut F1 year with a car from March, one of whose owners was Max Mosley, now a leading figure at the FIA. The team was named after his business 'Antique Automobiles'. Colin had run Vic Elford in an ex-works McLaren M7A and Cooper Maserati in 1969. March became the first of the Formula 1 'kit car' constructors using off the shelf Cosworth DFV engines and entered cars for Jackie Stewart and Chris Amon in their inaugural year.

"In January 1970 I received a telephone call from Max Mosley asking me whether I would be interested in running one of their new March 701 cars with their young contracted Swedish driver Ronnie Peterson. The deal was attractive as all I had to do was to supply the engine (from last year!) and gearbox plus our team expertise. Financially this this was a good thing and the sponsorship from the trade attractive.

"So off to Monaco once again (Ronnie had won the F3 race there the previous year) and came in a credible 7th, just out of the points; which was to be the story of the season. Ronnie never had the knack that Vic had of tuning a chassis and the 701 was a pretty dreadful car anyway. Also the prospect of blowing the one and only engine up weighed heavily on the young Swede's shoulders. There were masses of great parties during the season but I will always remember the Goodyear lunch party story at Monza. Dear Leo Mehl, head of Goodyear Competition, introduced me to an odd looking guy and told him who I was and that I owned the rarest pre-war GP car in the world - the Mercedes W125. Quite true, but not realising who he was; Fritz Schlumpf (Schlumpf Collection, Alsace). He never stopped eating and said, 'OK - so I have two of them...' A serious put down!



"I like to think I was the last of the serious privateers in F1, excluding Alexander Hesketh who was in a class apart, and Rob Walker, who had retired by then. At the end of 1970 [having almost decided to close the team down:Ed] I received a strange communication which I have rarely spoken about. Would I be interested in running a private Ferrari 312 GP car during 1971? This was a great honour but I decided that I had been there and had my Formula 1 fun. I was also under some serious pressure from family trustees to pack it in so decided to call it a day. Actually this turned out to be a wise decision as a privateer I would probably have got nowhere.

"Anyway two years of the most enormous fun and a great deal of experience learnt."

We are grateful to the publishers of 'Cars for the Connoisseur' Magazine for allowing us to use part of this interview; a full version appearing in the April 2002 edition, which also tells the full story of the 1969 season's racing. For further information and details of a free sample issue call +44 (0) 1258 473215 or visit www.carsfortheconnoisseur.com or email [Charles Harbord](mailto:Charles.Harbord) direct.

Photos by kind permission of Colin Crabbe showing Colin talking to Ronnie Peterson as well as Ronnie in action at Brands Hatch 1970.

Editors note: In a future extract from Charles' interview with Colin we will tell stories of doing a cash deal on a Ferrari Testa Rossa in the Chapel of Rest at Oklahoma City Airport as well as discovering and restoring An Auto Union GP car from Czechoslovakia.....

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