

Chevron Formula 5000 cars in the SCCA Championship

by Wolfgang Klopfer

After much success with sportscars British racing car manufacturer Chevron presented its first F5000 machine early in 1972. The sturdy-looking B24 had the radiators in a distinctive wide front section. Well known entrant Sid Taylor brought the prototype B24 to Watkins Glen for the third round of the SCCA F5000 series. Brian Redman was the driver. He qualified tenth and came through to win the first heat despite severe tire trouble. To score the overall win Redman only needed a good finish in the second race. But the Englishman was out of luck. Suspension trouble and a flat battery eight laps from the end stopped the Chevron.

At Road America Redman again led for six laps in the first heat until the suspension broke. Peter Gethin deputized for the F1-committed Redman at the next round at Donnybrooke and again the B24 showed good form. Gethin was in first place when another suspension failure took him out. Starting from 17th place in the second heat Gethin drove magnificently. After two laps he was fifth, got fourth on the sixth lap and had the lead on the eighth circuit. When the chequered flag fell, Gethin was 14 seconds in front.

Redman was back at Road Atlanta and brought Chevron designer Derek Bennett with him. Bennett strengthened the B24's suspension which had been the weak point of the car. That certainly helped Redman to take a dominant win in the first heat. Second place man Brett Lunger was 17 seconds behind. Due to bizarre circumstances Redman again lost the overall win. In the second heat he ran close behind Lunger when torrential rain swept the track. Redman pitted to change tires but Lunger raced on. At this moment the race was stopped and Redman declared the aggregate winner. Lunger's team protested. The protest was upheld and Lunger got the overall win because he led Redman by more than 17 seconds when the Chevron driver entered the pits. In the penultimate round at Lime Rock Redman again led for 15 laps in the second heat until Lunger overtook him. Once again he was runner-up overall. Finally, at Riverside everything came right. Despite strong pressure from Sam Posey's Surtees Redman won both heats and finished fourth with sixty points in the championship. 1972 was to be Chevron's best season in America.

In 1973 Chevron produced a small run of B24s which were virtually identical to the prototype. With backing from Marathon Oil and support from the Chevron factory Doug Shierson's team hired Peter Gethin for the American F5000 series. Throughout the year Gethin ran near the front. He was third at Michigan and Road Atlanta and took a close second place behind Jody Scheckter's Trojan at Laguna Seca after winning his qualifying heat. But apart from Laguna Seca Gethin never really threatened Scheckter or Brian Redman who shared all the wins in 1973. The Chevron looked unstable

in fast turns and had a tendency to understeer. The car was designed for smaller British tires and the Shierson team had problems to get the Chevron right for the taller American ones. There was also some bad luck for Gethin. At Watkins Glen he lost fourth place because tire vibration broke a suspension upright. In the final round at Seattle Gethin won his second qualifying heat of the season and ran in a secure second place in the final. But an overheating engine caused his retirement. Gethin scored 49 points and was fourth in the final standings.

Englishman Tony Dean and American Bobby Brown also campaigned B24s. The American took a seventh at Mid-Ohio and was fifth at Road America. The B28 was Chevron's F5000 model for the 1974 season. The car looked similar to the B24. It had a slightly modified nose section and revised suspension geometry. Belgium-based Racing Team VDS ran two B28s in Europe in 1974 and then sold them to Tony Dean. Dean raced one car in America in 1975 and placed seventh at Mosport and eighth at Watkins Glen.

In 1976 Racing Team VDS entered the SCCA series. Interestingly, the team brought the last F5000 designs of both Lola (named T430) and Chevron for drivers Peter Gethin and Belgian Teddy Pilette. The new B37 based on the Chevron F2 car, sported the traditional wide nose and had low intakes for the Chevrolet from Swiss tuner Morand contrasting to the high airboxes of the Lolas. VDS found no time to thoroughly test and develop the Chevron. The Morand engines were also less powerful than the American Chaparral, Falconer & Dunn and Bartz units. Gethin raced the Chevron four times. At Road America in August he had his best results when he finished fourth in the points race and fifth in the handicap event.

Pilette drove the B37 only once at Mid-Ohio. He took a fine second in the heat, 18 seconds behind Redman's Lola but in front of Alan Jones, Brett Lunger and David Purley's March. In the final the Chevron ran well too until low oil pressure dropped Pilette to fifth at the end.