

GARY MAGWOOD: MY 1970 FORMULA FORD CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON...

BY JEREMY SALE



PAUL GULDE

Canadian racing legend and 2015 Canadian Historic Grand Prix Grand Marshall Gary Magwood recently spoke to the Vintage Automobile Racing Association of Canada's Jeremy Sale about how his 1970 title-winning season came together.

JEREMY SALE: Gary, the photo of you and Craig Hill included in this article is great, tell us about it.

GARY MAGWOOD: The photo was taken by Paul Gulde at the 1969 Canadian Grand Prix at Mosport (Canadian Tire Motorsport Park) after the Formula Ford race, Craig won in his Lotus 61 and I was second in my Merlyn.

JS: Then the following year was the year you won the championship, tell us about that.

GM: I had successfully raced the Merlyn Mk11A Formula Ford in the photo under the Redex banner. Formula Ford was just gaining acceptance in Canada at this juncture. A few Lotus 51s had made it to this side of the Atlantic and they were cleaning up in Canadian Formula Libre events, as the F3 and Canada Class single seaters were simply outclassed by the simplicity and affordability of new FFs.

The Brits had established a one-thousand-pound-sterling limit on all FFs, which were now being produced by at least a dozen upstart manufacturers. I was able to sell a brand new Merlyn Mk11A for \$2995 ready to race in 1969! I had enjoyed a great season in 1969 with my Merlyn, becoming the Canadian distributor for Merlyn with my new enterprise, Gary Magwood's RaceEquip, the first full-time race shop in Canada."

JS: But then you decided to switch cars for the 1970 season...

GM: As the result of my 1969 successes with the Merlyn, I received a call from David Lazenby, an ex-Lotus F1 and IndyCar mechanic in the fall of 1969. He had just penned his first Hawke FF and offered to ship one over to Toronto for my appraisal. The DL1 was an interesting wedge shaped design and Lazenby was a smooth talking charmer who offered RaceEquip distribution for all of North America if I wanted it! Yes, I did, and I sold the first car very quickly.

NOTE: Lazenby was an interesting character; he had been Jim Clark's race mechanic, preparing his Formula One and Indy 500 cars and part of the team helping Clark win the 1965 Indy 500. At the end of the 1968 season he resigned from Lotus and started his own race car business. He worked out of a small workshop in the cozy parish village of Nazeing, near Waltham Abbey and apparently shared the shop with an old hawk, and so he used the word "hawk" as a trade name.

JS: So Gary, tell us what transpired with the Hawke outfit...

GM: Well, I had several discussions with David and convinced him that we should run a "factory" car in the 1970 Regional and Canadian Championship races and in as many SCCA Nationals as possible. Unfortunately, there was the usual problem - money! I was bereft of the necessary funds, having just started RaceEquip and was struggling to establish the idea of a professional, full-time race shop in Canada.

Then, as the fates would have it, a rather interesting character wandered into my Scarborough shop - Rick Shea - an American "carnie" who built and operated rather suspect "handwriting analysis" machines at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto. Rick was surprised that I didn't have a ride for 1970 and he offered to finance a new Formula Ford for me! Wonderful, but now time was ticking away quickly.

The decision to order a Hawke FF DL2A was made only a month ahead of the June Can-Am race at Mosport. Lazenby had tweaked his original DL2A design, lightened it up and tidied up the bodywork. We hastily ordered the car.

JS: So you had to get cracking...

GM: Yes, just two weeks before the Can-Am a crate arrived for me at Toronto's Pearson Airport. It contained a sleek, black-bodied DL2A race car. We were short of time and desperate to get the "knocked down for shipping" car back to my shop, but just to complicate matters, the car had been shipped sans wheels at my request because I already had a substantial stock of Cortina rims.

Without wheels, the customs official decreed that it was not a "complete car" and should therefore be rated as "car parts," which is a completely different tariff with far more paperwork required! I pleaded my case, even threatened to build the car in the customs shed and drive it out at one stage! Finally, after a few Can-Am passes had changed hands, the car was released.

I had already hired ace mechanic Louis Martin from McCaig Racing and he had been busy massaging an engine in preparation for the arrival of the chassis. We had the car made ready in time and to make a long story short, I won the prelim to the Can-Am and then went on to win something like 16 races in Ontario and Quebec, including Three Rivers for the third time, a second at Lime Rock, an unfortunate DNF while leading at Watkins Glen and then the all-important four-race Canadian FF Championship.

JS: So it was all worth it, you had a really successful year, ultimately winning the 1970 Canadian Formula Ford Championship in the Hawke...



PHOTOS BY RICHARD COBURN

(Opposite page) 2015 Canadian Historic Grand Prix Grand Marshall Gary Magwood. (Above) F1600 is the featured marque.

GM: Yes, it was a dream season. The car and engine combo was flawless. Louis Martin was a master engine tweaker and my small crew kept an eye on the competition during practice and qualifying, so I could optimize my time on the track and be able to respond to any challengers for a front row grid position, my philosophy being that it is always easier to win from the front of the grid than from the back!"

JS: And happily you will return to the scene at Canadian Tire Motorsport Park in 2015...

GM: Yes, I am really looking forward to the 2015 Canadian Historic Grand Prix at Canadian Tire Motorsport Park on June 19-21. I have been invited to be the Grand Marshall as VARAC will have Formula Ford as the featured marque this year. It's going to be great!

For more information on the 2015 Canadian Historic Grand Prix on June 19-21 at Canadian Tire Motorsport Park, visit [.canadianhistoricgrandprix.com](http://canadianhistoricgrandprix.com).