

AUGUST 1974

# SPORTS CAR

## bad luck and good in the berkshires

5000: WHERE IT'S AT

OLD TIMES THERE ARE NOT FORGOTTEN

DRIVERS MEETING: CLUB RACING PLANS FOR '76

A DIFFERENT TEXAN

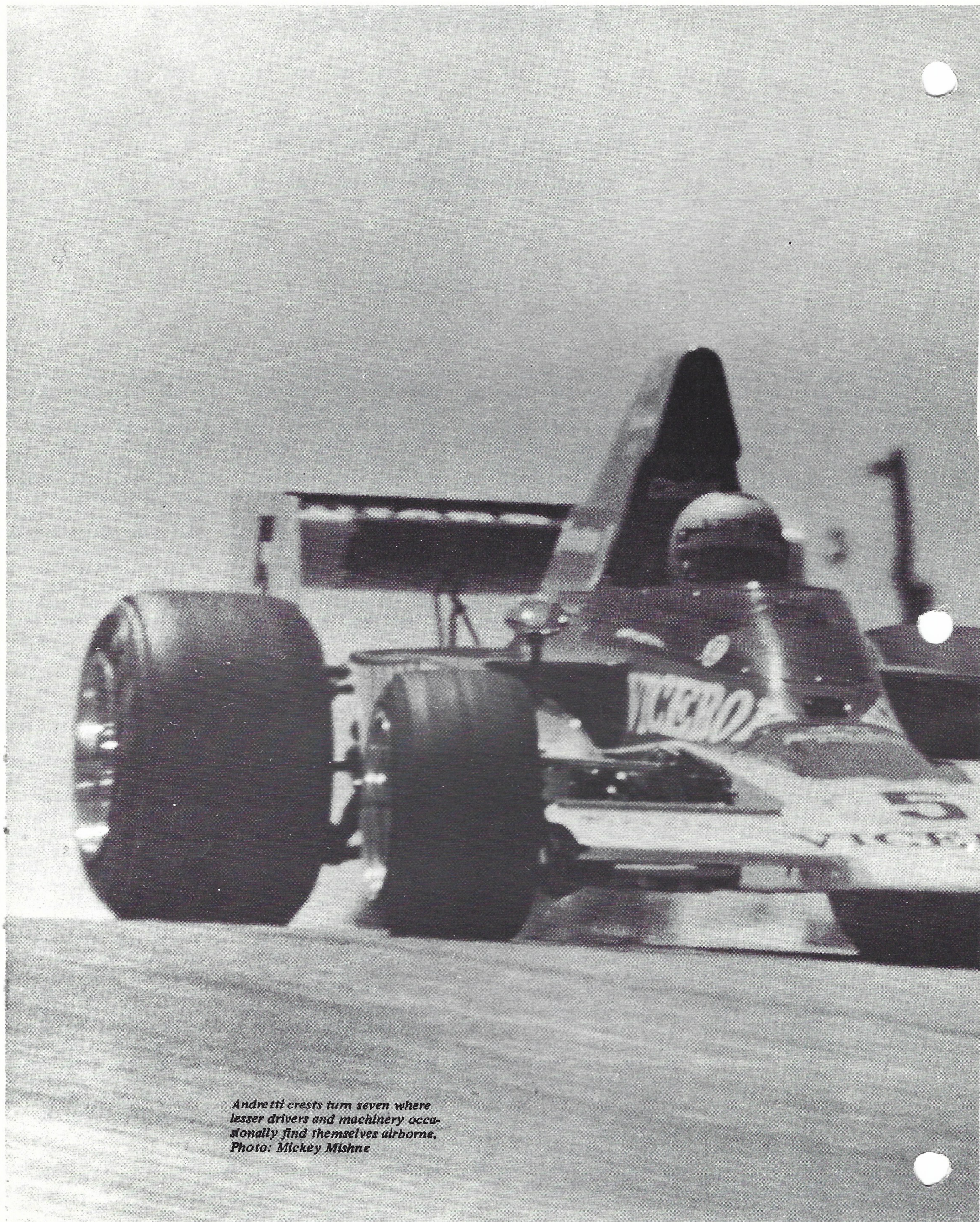
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*Andretti crests turn seven where  
lesser drivers and machinery occa-  
sionally find themselves airborne.  
Photo: Mickey Mishne*



# 5000: WHERE IT'S AT

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THE FIELD FOR THE MID-OHIO  
OPENER WAS MODEST  
BUT THE RACE WAS SIMPLY GREAT

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BY GARY WITZENBURG

**T**he season looked good on paper, even after L&M dropped its series sponsorship and Riverside rescheduled its event, leaving Mid-Ohio in the unenviable position of hosting the opening date. And though the much-talked-about SCCA/USAC joint sanction was delayed, the all-knowing, all-seeing motoring press looked up from its Can-Am/Trans-Am eulogies long enough to proclaim, "Five thousand! That's where it's at!" for US racing during 1974.

And the first-rate drivers and teams and sponsors started lining up, as if to vindicate the venerable scribes, energy crisis notwithstanding.

Dan Gurney stepped up to the table with a signed contract from Jorgensen Steel, associate sponsorship from Mister Marty, a clothing firm of California, plus a brace of shiny new Eagles, brilliant driving talent in Brett Lunger and Super Vee whiz kid Elliott Forbes-Robinson, and veteran Roy Winkelmann to run the show.

Graham McRae surfaced from Down Under, along with Sam Posey, five new Talon (McRae) MR1s, sponsorship from Norris Industries, and Jack McCormack as team manager and chief mechanic. At Mid-Ohio, three Talons would be fielded for McRae, Posey and West Coast sports car ace, Jon Woodner.

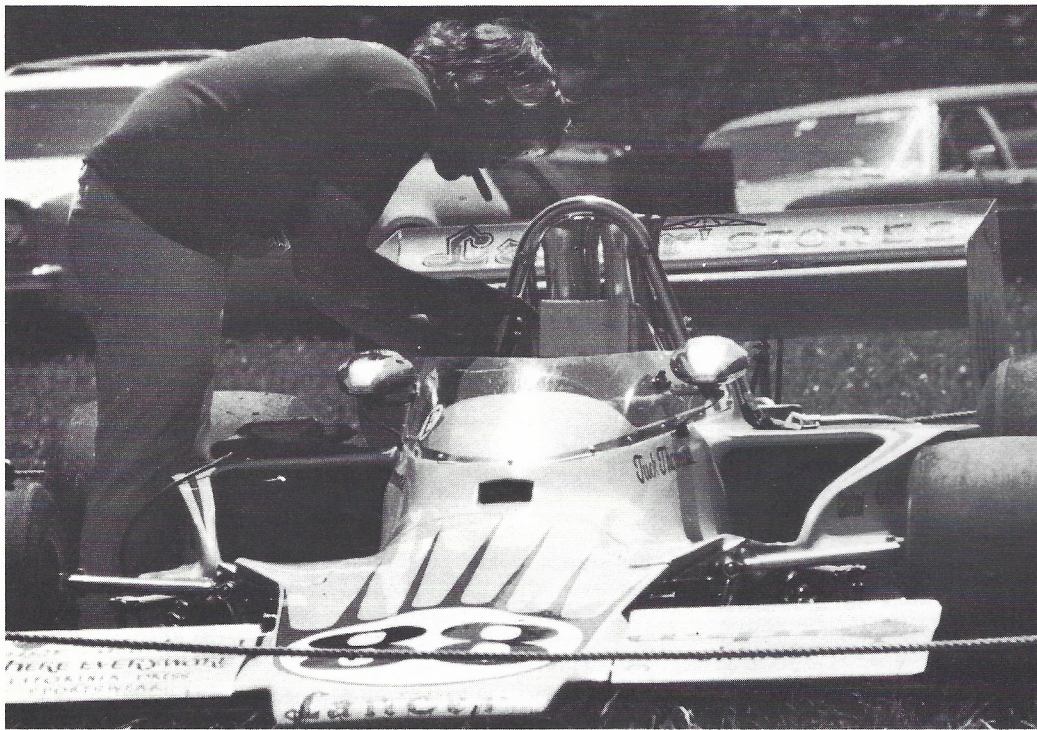
Next, up walked none other than P. Jones, of Viceroy "superteam" renown, with a new Lola T332 and some driver named Andretti. And the only guy who could consistently run with 1973 series-winner

Jody Scheckter, and beat him—Englishman Brian Redman—was to return in the Jim Hall/Carl Haas-works Lola T332. Fellow-Britisher David Hobbs would have his choice of a pair of Lolas with the Hogan Racing Team.

These eight could be expected to provide pretty good racing even without the likes of Scheckter, Mark Donohue, Peter Gethin and Tony Adamowicz, who had helped stir excitement in last year's excellent series. Redman missed two of last year's races, finished second twice and won five of the events. Posey, the second-leading points winner in US 5000 history, won at Mid-Ohio in 1971, narrowly beating Hobbs who took the series that year. McRae has been F5000 series champ once in this country (1972), and has won the New Zealand/Australian Tasman series three times. Andretti, at home on nearly any track, had never raced at Mid-Ohio but had practiced enough there to be a genuine threat.

Among the dark horse high shooters ready to pick up the marbles, should the favorites falter, most likely was the personable and talented Canadian, Eppie Wietzes, who finished sixth in last year's series behind Scheckter, Redman, Donohue, Gethin and Hobbs, and ahead of both Lunger and Adamowicz. Other popular contenders were Marchal-sponsored John Gunn (March 73A), Lancer Stores' Tuck Thomas, Eagle Creek Aviation pilot Evan Noyes, and the (no-kidding!)





Lola T332s dominated the weekend. Tuck Thomas drove the Lancer Stores car to a fifth-place finish. Photo: Gary Witzenburg

Armadillo Breeders Association entry, Larry Harley—all Lola T332-mounted. And two weeks before the race there were rumors circulating that 1970 Mid-Ohio winner George Follmer would enter in an ex-Scheckter Lola owned by Jerry Hansen.

The racers' handbook assures that the only part for which you won't have a spare is the one that breaks first. An application of that aphorism scuttled Forbes-Robinson's debut. A small but crucial toggle-widgett, or something, broke on his Eagle early Saturday and Lunger had custody of the only other one around—on his Eagle. The unfortunate Elliott was a disappointed spectator on Sunday.

Hobbs blew the engine in his Lola Sunday morning, suffering minor but painful burns from hot water and oil, and being eliminated from the first qualifying heat race (for which he'd qualified second at 1:26.2). This meant he'd have to start the feature from the south end of the grid in the back-up Hogan car. It's nice to have a

second car qualified in case you break the first; however, the year-old Lola was fully two seconds slower than the new one, probably putting Hobbs out of any realistic contention for the lead. Even Mid-Ohio's Griebing and Arnold, who'd worked some kind of super deal with the weather gods besides managing a super-smooth event all around, could not account for George Follmer's failure to appear.

With Hobbs missing and Lunger's Eagle more than three seconds slower, Andretti literally devastated the first heat race, qualifying, to begin with, at 1:23.3—almost 104 mph around the Mid-Ohio course he was a stranger to and only a half second short of Donohue's all-time track record in the Can-Am Porsche 917/30K. Andretti turned no lap worse than 1:27 and rolled in nearly 45 seconds ahead of the frustrated Lunger.

Woodner finished his Talon third, the only man besides Lunger on the same lap as Andretti. A very unhappy Graham McRae, starting last be-

cause of mechanical ills which bugged him all weekend, had retired his Talon with oil pump problems after only two laps.

In short, except for hard-core Andretti fans, the first heat wanted for a little of what the people had paid to see—racing—and produced a paltry seven finishers, the last of which had been lapped twice in only 21 trips around the 2.5-mile course. The only hope for some action in the feature seemed to lie with Redman, the sole driver besides Andretti to qualify under 1:26.

But first there was the second qualifying heat for Redman to get through. Third-fastest qualifier Posey failed to start the third Talon as a result of trouble with the car's differential, though he promised to have it fixed for the feature, so it was left to Eppie Wietzes to keep Redman honest. And after the qualifier there could be no question about Redman's veracity.

He and the surprisingly quick Wietzes battled fiercely for the lead, one out-gutsing the other at the end of the long

back straight nearly every time around. Meanwhile, an equally surprising Evan Noyes was working his way forward from the back row where he'd started with no qualifying time, and seemed to gain a second or two on the dueling leaders every lap.

Redman finally managed to open some distance on the fiery Wietzes, and though Noyes lacked the time to push past third, the tussle was in welcome contrast to Andretti's earlier walk-away demonstration.

If the superiority of the new Lolas on Mid-Ohio's difficult surface had been clearly demonstrated by Andretti, Redman, Wietzes and Noyes, the outlook for the feature was not so clear. Had the Redman/Wietzes battle developed because Brian was slower than he should have been (was he saving his machinery or experiencing some problem?) or was it that Eppie was quicker than expected?

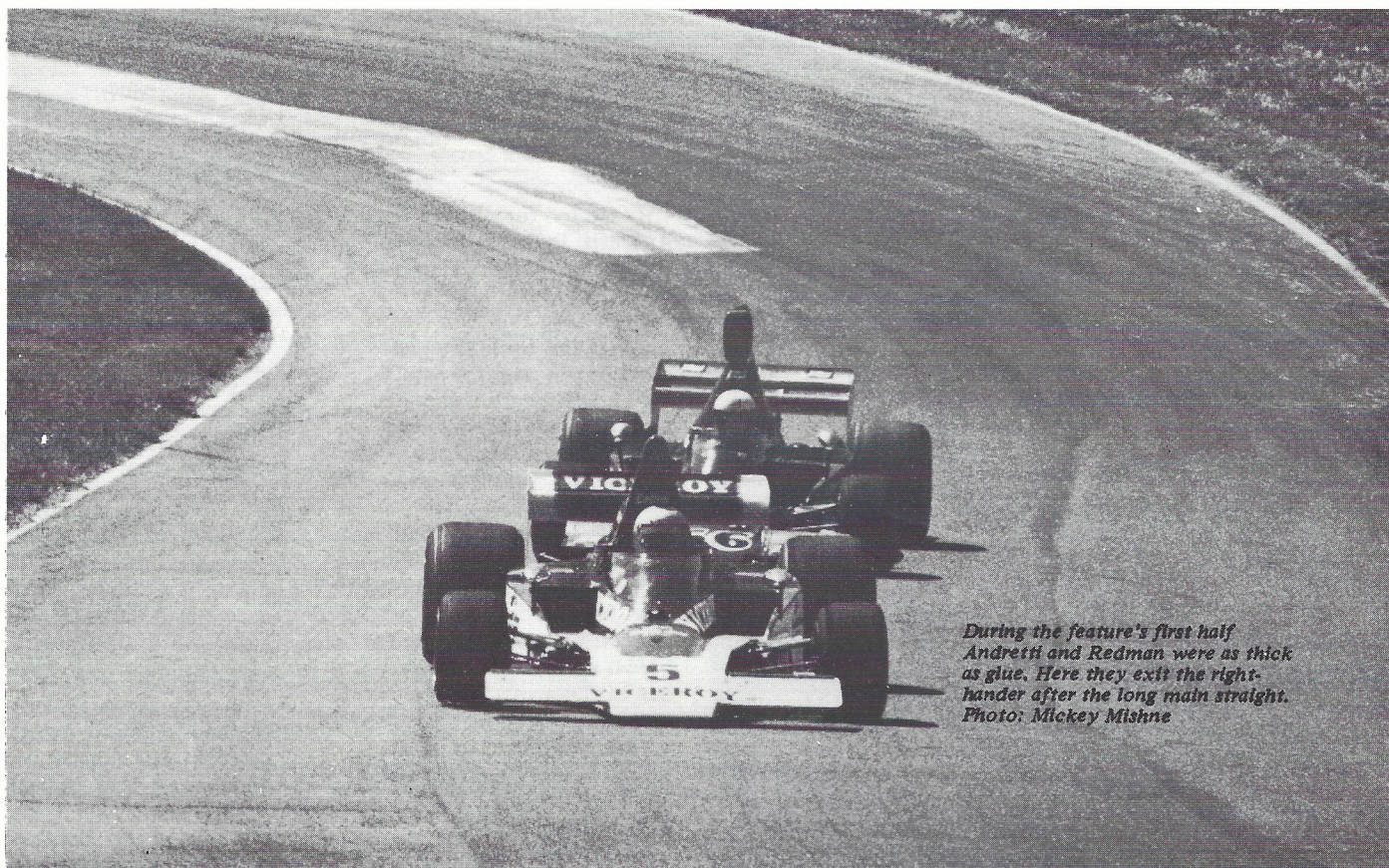
Redman's overall 21-lap time was a minute longer than Andretti's, but his best lap was 1:24.8 compared to Mario's 1:25.3. Maybe Andretti was saving his equipment, since he was under no pressure, though that would be untypical of him.

And would there be a challenge from the rear—from Posey or McRae in a rejuvenated Talon? Or from Hobbs in the back-up Hogan Lola?

As the late afternoon sun basted the half-naked throng and the inevitable streakers struck inevitably though sporadically, the grid took shape for the big race. Andretti's shiny red-and-white Viceroy/Parnelli Jones Lola was on the pole, next to Redman's wine-colored Hall/Haas T332. The second row paired Wietzes' lovely dark blue, green and yellow Lola against Lunger's powder-blue Jorgensen/Mister Marty Eagle. Twenty-two grid positions were filled with Posey and Hobbs in the last two slots. McRae's troubles didn't let up; his Talon didn't start, along with James Dunkel's Chevron, leaving a field of twenty cars.

At 3:30 p.m. sharp, the colorful group burred off to the sound of twenty slipping clutches and eager V-8s, throttled





During the feature's first half Andretti and Redman were as thick as glue. Here they exit the right-hander after the long main straight. Photo: Mickey Mishne

OFFICIAL RESULTS of the SCCA/USAC Formula 5000 Championship, Round 1, Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course, Lexington, Ohio, June 2, 1974

Race on 2.4-mile course. Event conducted by Fort Wayne Region, SCCA. Race length: 42 laps, 100.8 miles. Total race time: 1 hour, 1 minute 4.621 seconds. Winner's average speed: 99.023 mph. Victory margin: 1 minute 14.352 seconds. Fastest race lap: Brian Redman, 1:25.254, 101.344 mph. Fastest qualifier: Mario Andretti, 1:23.267, 103.763 mph (record). Qualifying heat winners: 1, Andretti in 30 minutes, 11.897 seconds at 100.138 mph; 2, Redman in 31 minutes, 15.413 seconds at 96.747 mph. Weather: clear, 70s. Attendance: 30,000.

Finish Position	Driver/Hometown	Car/Engine	Laps Completed	Reason Out	Driver's Points	Monies Prize	Accessory
1	Brian Redman, Colne, England	Haas Racing Teams Lola T332-Chevy	1(2) 42		20	\$13,250	\$2100
2	Brett Lunger, New York, N.Y.	Jorgensen Eagle-Chevy	2(1) 42		15	7550	900
3	Evan Noyes, Cedarville, Mich.	Eagle Creek Aviation Lola T332-Chevy	3(2) 41		12	4700	600
4	David Hobbs, Upper Boddington, England	Hogan Racing Ltd, Lola T330-Chevy	— 41		10	2800	200
5	Tuck Thomas, Minneapolis, Minn.	Lancer Stores Lola T332-Chevy	4(2) 40		8	2100	100
6	John Gunn, Miami, Fla.	Racing Specialties March 73A-Chevy	4(1) 39		6	1800	
7	Bill Tempero, Fort Collins, Colo.	Cloverleaf Texaco March 73A-Chevy	5(1) 39		4	1600	
8	James Hawes, Carlsbad, Calif.	Bernard Parsons Lola T330-Chevy	7(2) 39		3	1450	
9	Tom Jones, Eastlake, Ohio	Jones Racing Enterprises McLaren M22-Chevy	7(1) 37		2	1300	
10	Dan Furey, Columbus, Ohio	Furey Racing Lola T192-Chevy	9(1) 37		1	1150	
11	Brad Blankenship, Indianapolis, Ind.	Thunderhawk Lola T300-Chevy	6(2) 36			1000	
12	John Benton, Chicago, Ill.	Formula Magazine Lola T330-Chevy	8(2) 35			900	
13	Mario Andretti, Nazareth, Pa.	Jones/Viceroy Lola T332-Chevy	1(1) 34*	suspension		2050	
14	Horst Kroll, Scarborough, Ontario	Bosch Lola T300-Chevy	6(1) 27*	flat tire		800	
15	Jon Woodner, Berkeley, Calif.	Norris Industries Talon MR1-Chevy	3(1) 23*	radiator		1200	
16	Eppie Wietzes, Thornhill, Ontario	Formula Racing Lola T332-Chevy	2(2) 18*	blown engine		1450	
17	Larry Harley, Dallas, Texas	Armadillo Breeders Lola T332-Chevy	5(2) 13*	off course		700	
18	Sam Posey, San Juan Capistrano, Calif.	Norris Industries Talon MR1-Chevy	— 10*	transmission		600	
19	Rodney Green, Aurora, Colo.	Pope's Racing Association Lotus 70-Ford	9(2) 8*	off course		600	
20	Roger Bighouse, Eastlake, Ohio	Bighouse/Schade Chevron B24-Chevy	8(2) 2*	off course		600	
DNS	Graham McRae, Wellington, New Zealand	Norris Industries Talon MR1-Chevy	10(1)				
	Dr. James Dunkel, Rockford, Ill.	Rosecrances Memorial Homes Chevron B24-Chevy	10(2)				
	Eljriott Forbes-Robinson, LaCrescenta, Calif.	Jorgensen Eagle-Chevy	—				

\* Not running at finish

\*\* First number indicates finish position, number in ( ) indicates heat. Top eight finishers in each qualifying heat guaranteed starting position in the feature race. Remaining positions filled at the discretion of the promoter and series chief steward.

— Did not start





behind the pace car for a lap, then held at bay by a soft-peddalling Andretti for another. Finally they came around the last left-hander toward Houlihan the starter man, posed as only he can manage over the start/finish. There was a flash of green blurred with the movement of the black-and-white polkadot-shirted Houlihan as he leaped into the air,

which was instantly filled with dust and smoke and the beautiful sound of ten thousand unleashed horses.

Andretti jumped ahead of Redman, but Brian held on, and they quickly pulled away from the swarm, except for Eppie Wietzes who'd have none of that and was soon engaged in a lonely campaign to keep the leaders in his sights.



*Eventual winner Brian Redman before qualifying second in the first heat on Saturday at ease in the Haas Racing Teams Lola. Photo: Mark Windecker*

By lap ten the order was Andretti, Redman, Wietzes, Lunger and Woodner, followed by Hobbs and Posey (up from the last row) and then Noyes, Thomas and Gunn. Suddenly, the race was over for Sam as his Talon's transmission let go at turn two, leaving only Jon Woodner to carry the McRae/McCormack/Norris Industries banner.

Wietzes, meanwhile, had closed the gap between himself and the Andretti/Redman dice, making the race a first-class crowd-pleasing three-car brawl. Redman, it appeared, had his Lola's flat nose either inches behind or just alongside of Mario's flying cigarette machine, with Wietzes cool-headedly looking for the way around them both.

Later, Redman said he could get out of the turns quicker than Andretti and could pull alongside almost at will, but Mario could gain back the crucial few feet down the straight. "There's a little kink on the back straight," Redman commented, "and if you can be alongside at that point, you've got him." But time after time, Brian's effort failed and Andretti held his position till next time around.

On the eighteenth lap, Canadian hopes flagged as Wietzes felt his engine self-destruct at the end of the back straight. Everyone loves a valiant underdog; the groans and moans of heart-felt disappointment from the sun-, booze- and adrenalin-soaked Mid-Ohio crowd must have been heard all the way to Cleveland. They rolled the ravaged Lola behind the turn eight guardrail and the Redman/Andretti scrap continued right on.

Suddenly, at near the halfway point, it was Redman leading Andretti. This time the crowd

went bananas with glee, since who roots for short race drivers who happen to be very good and who make Brett Lunger and his All American, apple pi motherhood and Dan Gurney Eagle racers look no good?

"This one time, Mario didn't make such a good exit from the turn leading onto the back straight," explained Redman, "and I did. When we arrived at the kink and I was still with him, I knew I could make it by on the inside at the end." And that he did, though the understated Englishman didn't mention that the maneuver was made doubly tricky and treacherous by the remains of Wietzes' engine oil in the braking area and around the right-hand turn eight.

From then on, the coach turned into a pumpkin: The superteam got less and less super and things went from slightly bad to plainly awful for Andretti. His exhaust header was coming adrift, causing him to lose power and drop steadily behind the charging Redman, all the way back to where Lunger waited with revenge in his eyes. On lap 29 the loose header flew free and by the next tour Lunger had him for second.

Meanwhile, the steady Jon Woodner, then running fourth, had retired the remaining McRae Talon with a flat tire and cracked radiator, leaving fourth to Hobbs with the question of whether he might catch Andretti.

But fortune is fickle and Hobbs was ultimately overtaken by Evan Noyes in the closing laps. Andretti parked his Vice-roy Lola with terminal suspension failure only eight laps short of the line.

So it was Redman, Lunger and Noyes in the winners' circle (Lola, Eagle, Lola) followed by Hobbs, Thomas and Gunn. The race, an exciting contest almost to the last lap, pleased everyone except, of course, the losers. But Andretti and the three Norris Talons and Forbes-Robinson's Gurney Eagle and the rest would be ready to do battle at Mosport two weeks later, hopefully along with a few USAC Championship cars under the new joint sanction. ●

*Final polish. Mario Andretti's Vel's-Parnelli Jones/Lola T332 Chevy the day before qualifying. Photo: Mark Windecker*