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JUNIORS GO FOR GOLD



In 1956 racing driver and journalist Count Giovanni 'Johnny' Lurani Cernuschi, regretting the lack of Italian success in British dominated 500cc Formula 3 events, advocated a new formula based on 1000cc engines. From 1958, Lurani's proposal was accepted as the Italian national formula and in 1959 it was granted international status. Initially, Italian built cars such as Stanguellini and other Fiat derived front engined race cars prevailed, but British manufacturers were to take over. Elva, Cooper, Lotus, Brabham and Lola began producing cars that soon dominated the Formula worldwide.

Though Formula Two and Three replaced Formula Junior in 1964, the mark it left is significant, having launched such drivers as Jim Clark, Sir Jackie Stewart, Frank Gardner, Denis Hulme and John Surtees.

Australian constructors included Elfin, Rennmax, Lynx and Nota, promoting Frank Match, Leo Geoghegan and Kevin Bartlett. In 1975 Formula Junior was the first accepted as an historic series.

SIX INTO ONE

To celebrate Formula Junior's Golden Anniversary, races have been taking place around the world. The Australian Formula Junior Association and the New Zealand Formula Junior Register held the Golden Jubilee Tasman Series. Races took place at Pukekohe and Taupo in NZ, then at Calder Raceway, Victoria on 1 March and finally, at Phillip Island as part of the Historic race meeting 7-9 March. Well over 50 cars from NZ, Australia, the UK, USA and France competed. Of these, 14 crossed from Australia to contest the NZ



■ ABOVE LEFT Series winner Clive Wilson's MK2 Lola leads Don Thallon, T56 Cooper & Vernon Williamson in the Ausper. ABOVE Peter Strauss, Jonathan Williamson & Ned Spieker engage in one of the series' closest battles.

races, from as far as Perth, fitting 6 Formula Juniors in one 40ft shipping container. Frenchman Jac Nelleman drove an Australian built 1962 Nota.

All 3 FJ classes competed - early front engine cars, rear engine drum brake cars and rear engine disc brake cars - allowing the early cars to achieve the same point score as the quicker, later cars. The overall winner and recipient of the Gold Cup was the UK's Clive Wilson with a perfect score, in his very competitive 1960 front engine Mk2 Lola with alloy Costin body. Second overall and winner of the disc brake class was Australian Peter Strauss in a BT6 Brabham, followed by Bill Hemming, driving his recently acquired Elfin into third position and winning the drum brake class.

At each circuit, commentators and spectators agreed that the racing was some of the best seen in recent times. At Phillip Island, the 3 cars of Peter Strauss, Englishman Jonathan Williamson and American Ned Spieker contested the lead side by side on the straight, lap after lap. The Australians in NZ had mixed success due to the fragility of their highly tuned 1100cc engines, such as Neil McCrudden and Lance Carwardine and their 1961 Lotus and 1962 McEntee from WA. But by the time they competed in the local events, all had been restored to full capability, applying that true Aussie spirit of late nights in the workshop. For more details, visit www.australianformulajunior.com

■ ABOVE A group of Lotus Formula Juniors at NZ's Taupo Circuit stand poised for action.

■ LEFT Neil McCrudden's Lotus (WA) chases the Elfin of Bill Hemming 2nd place winner overall in the series & first in his class. BELOW Formula Juniors line up for the start of the race at the Taupo Circuit in New Zealand.



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