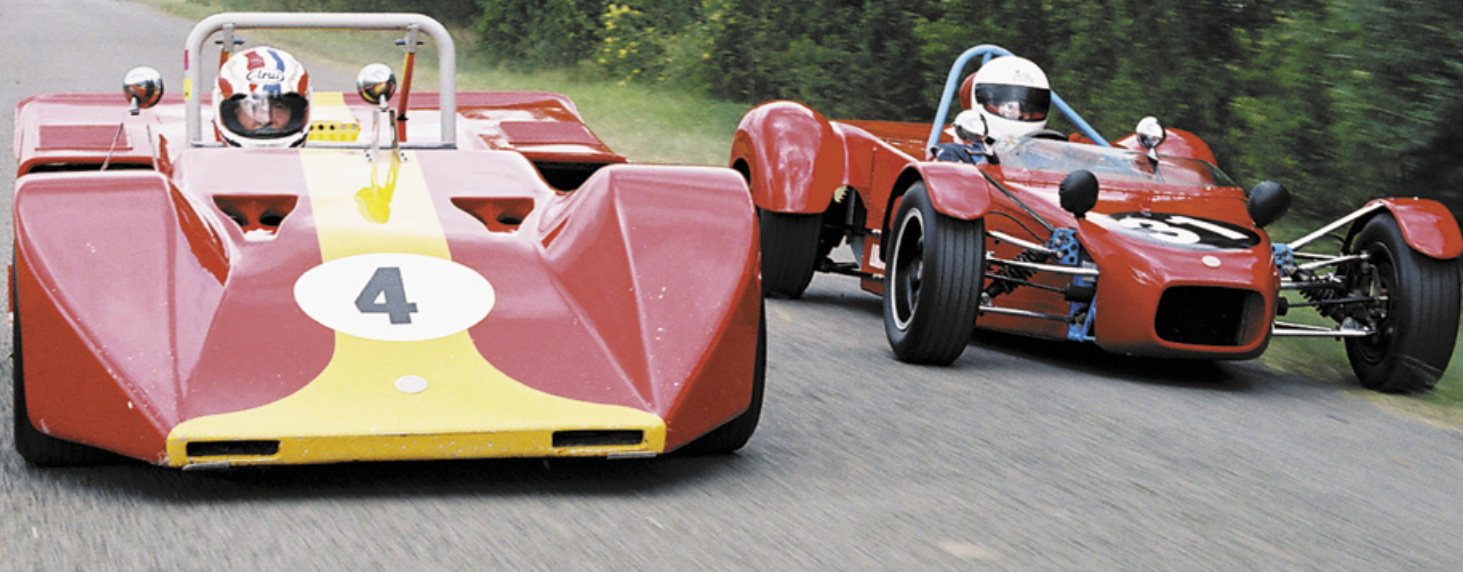


Relative Performance

Words by Patrick Quinn. Photos by Steve Oom, Craig Watson and Autopics



When Henry Nehrybecki decided to build a small sports racecar from scratch, the Mini's powerplant was ready-made.

Just how low can you go? Using a Mini engine in any sort of special, competition or otherwise, makes good sense. Remember the Unipower GT in the last issue? Its engine was at the back, but sitting in the normal upright pose. However, to see an engine that was leaning over 60° to the front took me by surprise.

We had gathered together to get up-close and personal with both the Lolita Mk1 and Mk2. As far as we could recall, it had been some years since both cars had been together.

Sydneysider Ian Pope, owner of the Mk1, has been associated with the car almost from the beginning, and these days regularly throws it around in historic racing events.

The Mk2's owner, Ian Ross (with sundry Lola and Elfin racing cars under his garage roof), found that his time had been taken up by other things, and had just sold the car to Greg Neal. Greg was standing by, just to make sure his new toy was being looked after.

The name of Henry Nehrybecki may not mean all that much to many Australian car enthusiasts, but that of six-times Australian Sports Car Champion, and twice Australian and once New Zealand Grand Prix winner Frank Matich certainly does. The connection will soon be clear.

If you're thinking that the Lolita has some connection with the very risqué 1955 novel by Vladimir Nabokov, I have to disappoint you. Actually it comes from a derivation of the name of UK racing car constructor Lola. Like so many Australians from the 1960s, and today, Henry Nehrybecki left for the UK to find work in the racing car industry. In Henry's case it was with Lola, staying there for just under two years.

Henry then opted for an unconventional return to Australia, by driving a new 848cc Mini overland. On his arrival, he went to work for BMC dealer Lorimer's in the Sydney suburb of Gordon.

Still wildly enthused from his time with Lola, he almost immediately drew up plans for a racecar, starting construction at Lorimer's.

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Ian Pope (inset) regularly races the Mk1 Lolita, which he was involved with almost from the beginning. Right: Winton 2000.