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SPORTS CAR WORLD

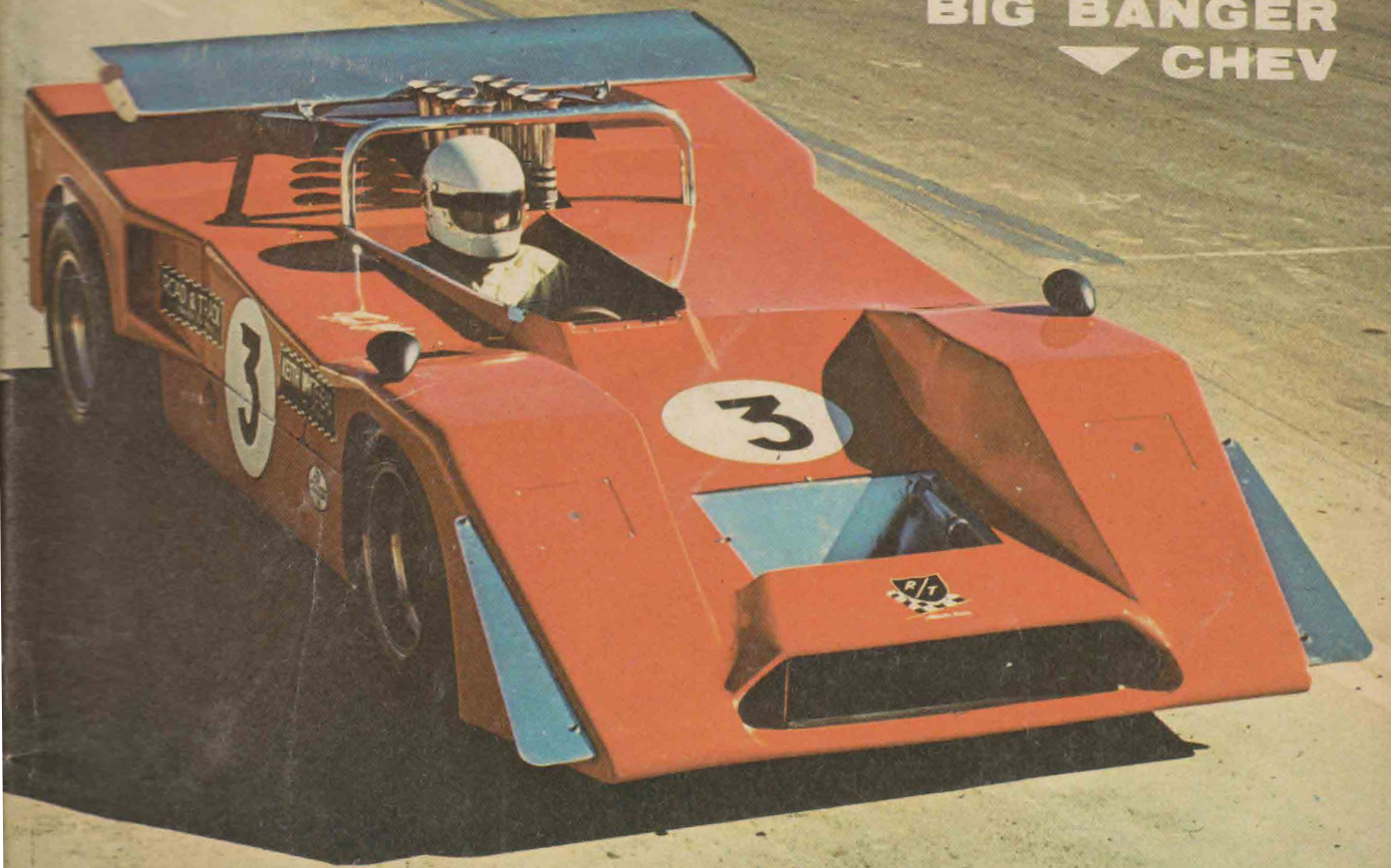
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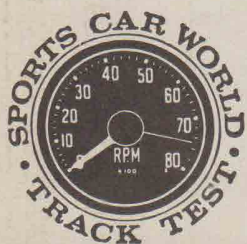
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AUSTRALIA'S MAGAZINE OF ROAD AND TRACK

**FRED GIBSON'S
BIG BANGER
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**TRACK TEST: AUSTRALIA'S FASTEST MGB
DRIVING BRITISH LEYLAND'S RALLY CROSS 1800**



SUPER BEE... THE RECORD SEEKER

We track test Iain and Carole Corness' MGB
— the fastest MGB in Australia.

Story and Photographs by Kevan Wolfe

AN old saying was, "You can't race an MGB any more because it won't handle and won't go hard enough". But since Carole and Iain Corness have come on the scene with their Super Bee, it just ain't so.

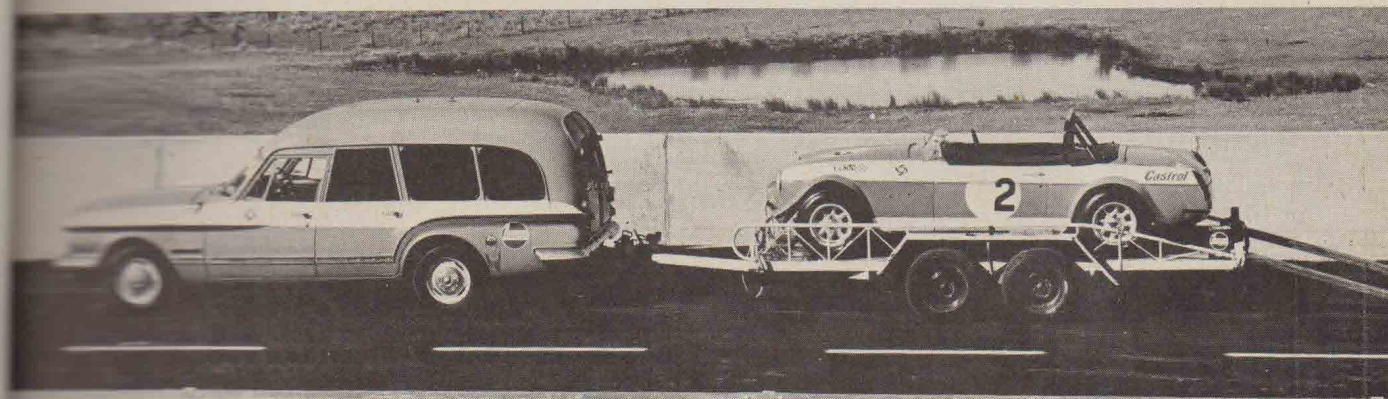
The Corness Super Bee is well within striking distance of the marque sports car records and the extra potential was quite evident during a track test at Oran Park recently.

Arrangements were made to test the car after the last Warwick Farm meeting, where it started on pole position in the marque sports car race. Unfortunately, Iain tangled with Les Carne's

Sprite on the Western Crossing and both cars failed to finish. So Iain and Carole flew back to Brisbane — where Iain has a medical practice — and the car was left in Sydney to be de-dinged. As neither Iain nor Carole was around, the Oran Park test arrangements were made by British Leyland PR man Brian Tebble.

A few days before the car quit the panel shop, we got a list of instructions from Iain on what to do and what not to do. His special notation on revs read, "Limit for approved track testers is 5500 rpm. His concern was understandable. He was 600 miles north and the mighty MGB was the family's pride and joy.

Iain, Carole and friends spent inestimable time building up the car under their house in Brisbane. They started with an old body from a wrecker's yard and used the mechanicals, including engine, from a previous Bee they had raced. This had also astounded the critics with its performance.



The body is still standard — to comply with marque sports car regulations — and lightened only by the removal of the windows and their door frames. Doors and boot lid are now held shut by straps. Bumper bars have gone. Switches for the heater system, windscreen wipers, etc have been removed and the holes alloy-pannelled. All the driver sees is the oil gauge on the right, the speedo, a tachometer with the redline point upward and a temperature gauge. The key ignition has been replaced with a toggle switch and a solenoid switch. A switch for the horn is mounted over the oil gauge (regulations only) and the light switch is between the speedo and the tachometer.

Starting procedures are quite complicated. The battery is connected (the normal six volts have been replaced by one 12 volt on the passenger side), ignition switched on and the solenoid switch pressed. When the engine kicks, it is immediately switched off and the process repeat-

Iain Corness sits on the line, in pole position, at Warwick Farm in Super Bee just before the start of a Marque sports car race.

Super Bee and its tow-wagon, a converted ambulance, also painted in the British Leyland team colors of blue and white in the pit row at Sydney's Oran Park during our track test.

ed until the oil pressure registers on the dial. The engine is then warmed up to about 140 degrees on standard spark plugs which at running temperature are replaced with Champion N 57 Rs.

The car had been idle for about two weeks and we marvelled how easily the full house motor started. Once it was warmed up, there was no problem: it started first kick.

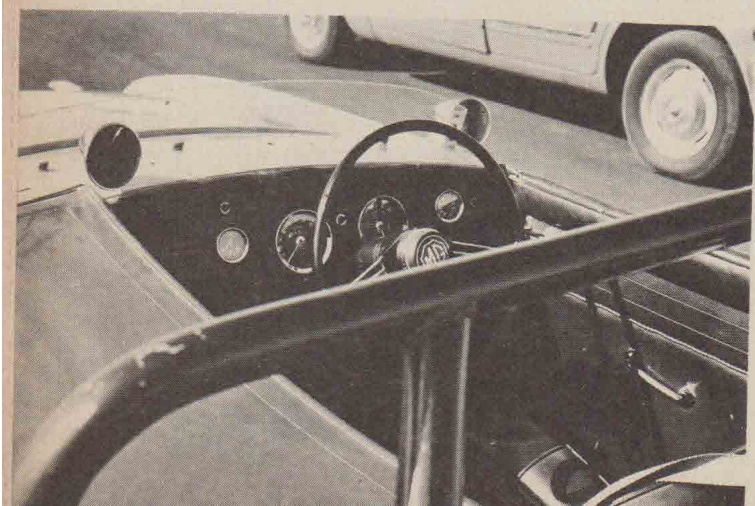
The engine uses all factory bits from British Leyland's special tuning manual and a few ideas



SUPER BEE—THE RECORD KEEPER

Iain brought back from a trip to England. The motor was built up by Col Vaughan, an ex-MGA man who used to keep Iain's old MGA running. It has been modified to stage six as per the special tuning booklet, using a cross-drilled nitrided crank, special bearings, flat top pistons 40 thou oversize, a deepened sump (baffled) and steel timing chain sprockets as well as a full factory cam. Everything was balanced and the distributor modified to the curve recommended by the factory.

Joe Camilleri, of Grand Prix Auto Service in Brisbane, worked over the head. Valve and valve trains are standard other than double rocker posts, solid tappet adjusting screws and Terry's "extra strong" valve springs. The compression is still only 10.2:1 and the breathing is done through a 45 DCOE Weber. The standard gearbox is still used, the diff modified to a form of



The Corne MG B looks and is heavy. About the only lightening is the removal of the bumper bars and the windows and frames from the doors. The rest is standard.

"limiting" operation and the clutch replaced by an Austin Freeway diaphragm. This is only 25 percent stronger than the standard clutch but also half the price of the special competition unit.

The suspension is still virtually standard. When modified fully it will certainly lower times. Cost is one factor here and, as Iain says, "I want to develop with the car. I never modify until I'm faster than the car. Then I do a little more and catch up again. Some people have said 'Why don't you go all out and catch Ross Bone Healey?' I've had him in my sights for the past year. We are getting very close to his times and still have a lot of development left."

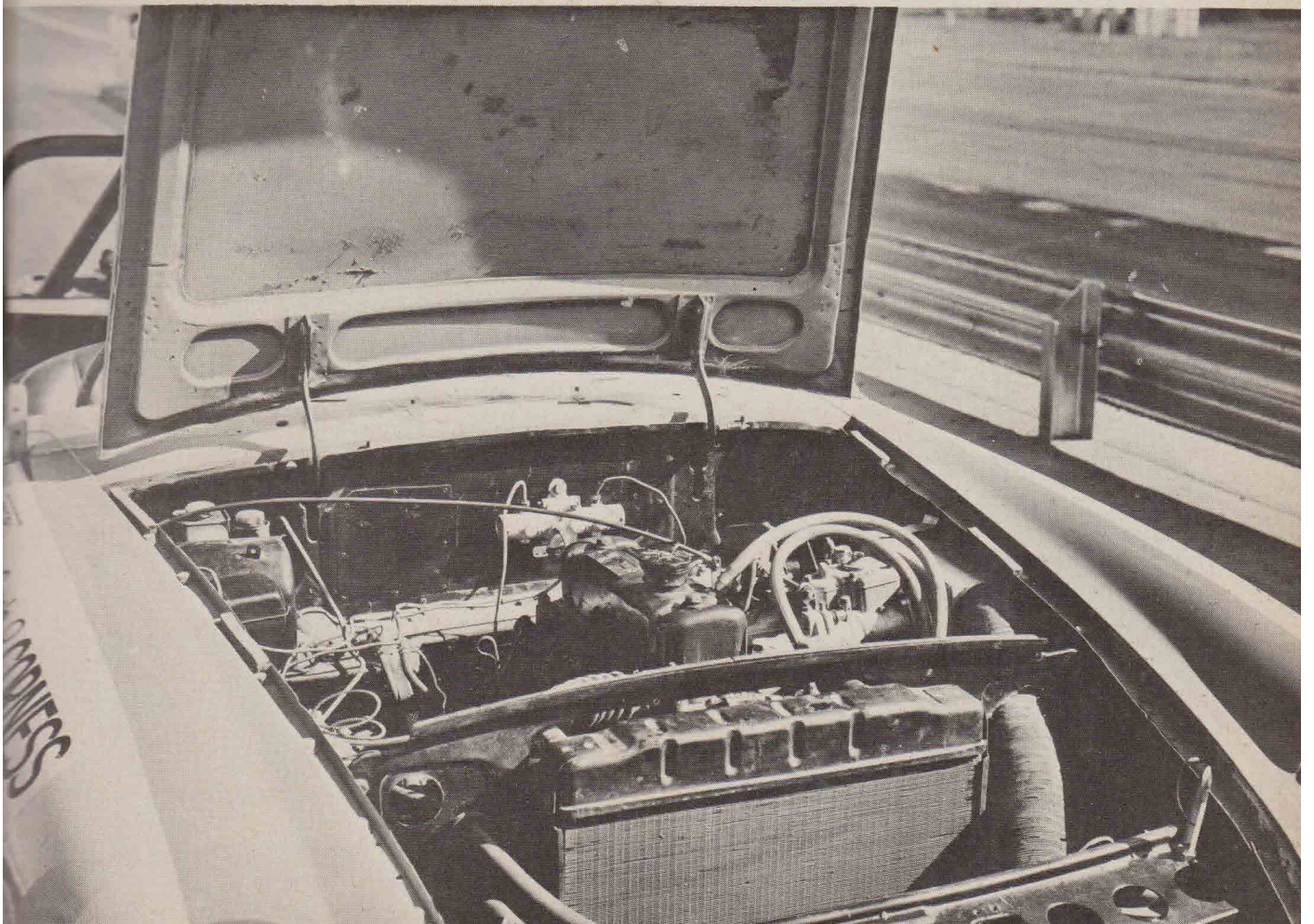
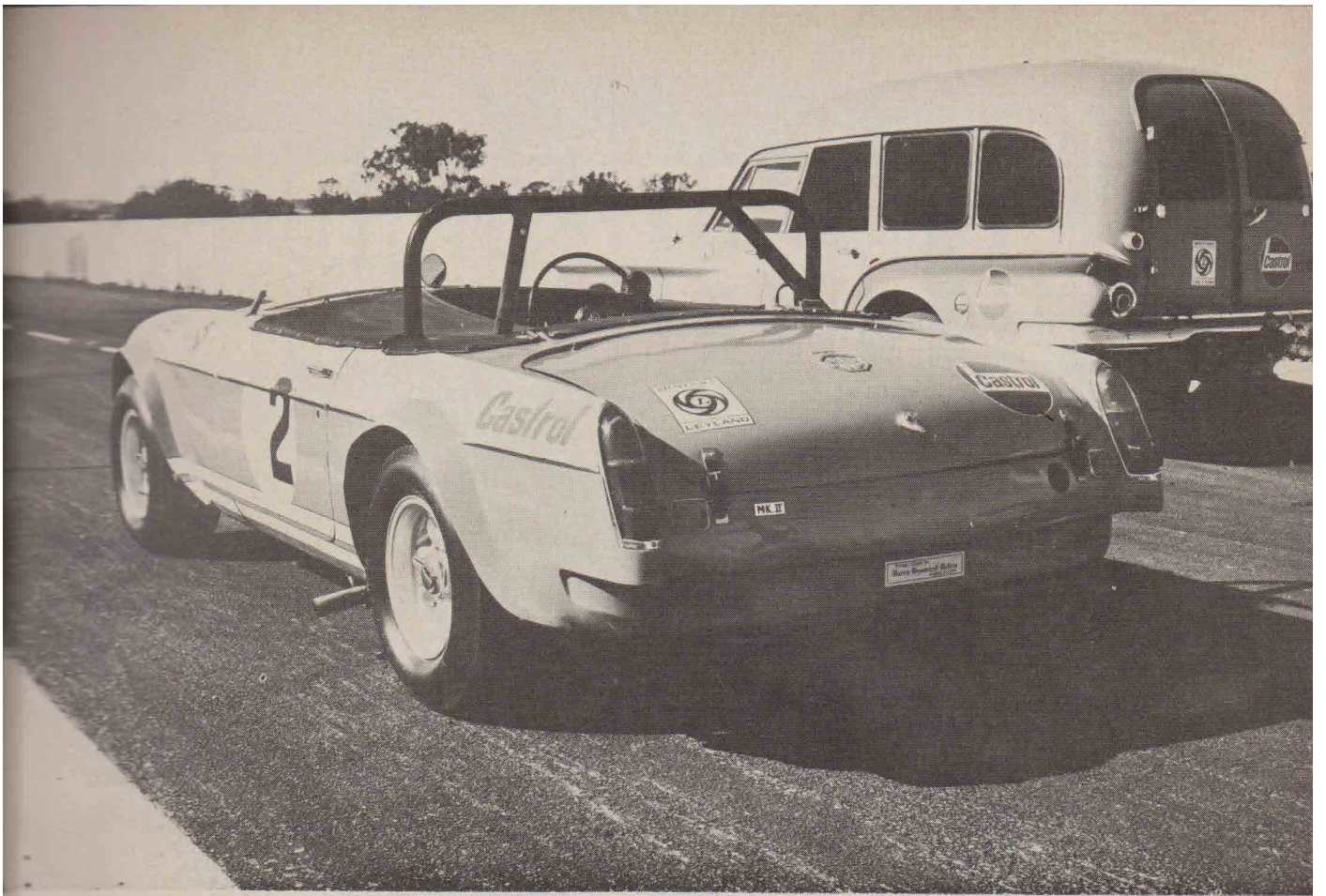
Stiffened shockers are essential for MGB racing but as well as being expensive, are hard to get in Australia. The standard ones were retained but the valves were turned upside-down and screwed well into the body of the shocker.

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The boot lid and the driver's door is held in place with special straps while the exhaust pipe has been re-routed out of the left hand side just in front of the wheel.

Except for the 45 DCOE Weber replacing the usual twin-SUs there is nothing to suggest the engine is not a standard unit. But the car's performance proves otherwise on the track.

The dashboard has been revised and all unnecessary gauges and switches removed. The standard steering wheel has been retained because of the extremely heavy steering caused by the big tyres.

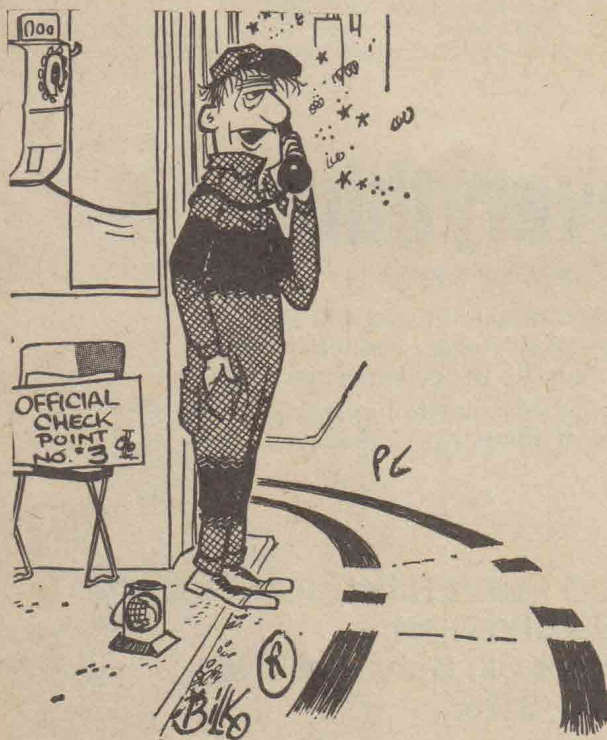


SOUTHERN CROSS PART OF SOUTH PACIFIC SERIES

For 1970 the prizemoney will be on par with the last few years' with \$2000 backed by further unconditional. However, Lawson hopes next year the "booty" will be back to near Rothmans' standards for the inaugural 1966 event of \$17,000. A major sponsor will back the event which will be the wind-up to a five-event inaugural South Pacific series. The series (which has been in the melting pot for two years and acclaimed by works teams) will start in New Caledonia in January with the Safari rally. Many Australian crews have already competed in this, and sung its praises. Top works crews from Holden and British-Leyland are promised locally while overseas teams from Lancia, Renault, Volvo and Japanese companies are expected to contest the South Pacific rallies. The events will be in New Zealand (April), Indonesia, New Guinea and finally Australia's "Cross".

Appealing to overseas competitors will be the International classes and categories which they can easily understand. Unlike the Ampol marathon with its "one-off" series production regulations, the South Pacific series and this year's Southern Cross will conform to Groups Two, Three and Five of the FIA's Appendix J. That means series production with suitable modifications for rallying (lights, sump shields, tanks and so on for touring cars), and anything goes group five for touring cars and a group for sports cars. That means you could see full-house Renault Alpines and the like contesting the Southern Cross, and, if Lawson's true to his word, they would come back without shattered springs and shackles.

Motto for this year's event is "even if you don't win, you'll have fun in the Cross". Interpret that to mean you can have fun in this professional sport but the winning will be done by the true aces who deserve to. Australian rallying has grown up so let's let the non-existent aura of men and machine against the outback die-hard, as it should have done 10 years back. Let's back Australian rallying with expertise, not amateurism. #



"Hello . . . check point 4? . . . in about 28 minutes you're going to be in for a heck of a surprise."

SUPER BEE THE RECORD KEEPER

(Continued from page 24)

To increase stiffness, the valves are screwed up. A sway bar was added to the front and tramp rods at the rear. The springs were retempeted to lower the car 2 in. at the front and 1½ in. rear. MGBs have a non-adjustable front suspension but Iain has got over this problem by making-up his own cambered bushes for the wishbones. This gives the front wheel the required negative camber.

"When we built the car we looked at it and asked ourselves what would break if we did this or that and modified it accordingly, even to the brakes. These are fitted with a Tri-safe unit, a gadget which splits the braking system. If one side fails, we still have some brakes left for emergencies." The backing plates at the rear were drilled and the front dust covers on the discs removed.

Originally, the car was fitted with heavy one-piece steel wheels. Now it's the proud wearer of a set of 7 in. wide Mini-lites carrying Firestone Indy tyres.

We picked Super Bee up from the panel beaters in the tender vehicle, a converted ambulance painted British Leyland blue and white to match the racing car. It makes "appropriate" transport for the racing doctor. But for the lack of power from a well-used engine, it's the ideal tow wagon. "It has little compartments everywhere," Iain told us, "and they're ideal for stowing all our gear. On long trips, we can sleep a couple in the back. Before we painted it, we used to have a lot of fun. We could park it in outlandish places and get away with it." Other motorists were shaken to see an ambulance towing a racing car on a trailer."

We arrived at Oran Park with our list of instructions, Brian Tebble and Gus Staunton (BL's competition organiser) and found everything happened just as Iain said it would. The starting procedures showed the engine must be one of the most reliable racing jobs around. Except for some minor tuning it isn't touched from one meeting to the next. As Iain said, "About the only problem was it used to run out of fuel at high revs. This was solved by fitting a two-line, two-pump system from the tank. One time the engine moved forward on the mounting under brakes and hit the radiator and we blew third gear once. But the box came from a '65 model and had already done 60,000 road miles. The engine feels unburstable and will go for ever. We pulled it down after it had done 1400 racing miles and could have used the bearings again".

We started up and moved slowly down the pit lane, expecting the engine to be lumpy with the full race cam — but the power came in progressively and there was no sudden jump-to-life as the cam started to work. A couple of sighter laps and we felt we could get with it. Keeping the 5500 rpm limit in mind (Iain and Carole pull 7000 rpm) we came up out of Energol and headed down the straight.

At 5500 rpm in top gear it was pulling 110 mph — using 7000 at top speed of 125 plus is quite conceivable. Down to the 200 yard braking marker and a squeeze of the brakes . . . Almost panic, as we expected the pedal to take up straight away . . . and then we remembered the Tri-safe unit, pushed a little harder on the pedal and the speed started to wash off. Down to third, which is just a little too high for the left-hander (CC) but second is far too low, so you're stuck with it. Third is held into the esses, but on the first lap we made the mistake of backing off. The car became a little twitchy but was quickly brought back into line with more power applied. It was then we remembered Iain telling us the diff could be bluffed and if you had to back off in a corner you were in all sorts of trouble.