

Chevrolet Corvette

Like their drivers of the period, Corvettes had a rather rough image; the Detroit cars were often looked down upon by the sports car purists for having big loud engines, lots of straight-ahead speed, and nothing else. But they were popular, fast, won a lot of races, and are remembered now as having one of the most attractive body styles of their day. So who gets the last laugh! They sure did not start out in a big way as the first Corvettes of 1953-55 did not have much speed and their unique body styles are only "interesting" today. The first V-6 models did not even offer a standard transmission. The last model of that era did upgrade to a V-8 engine and Ralph Roper drove one of those bigger-engined early models to 10th overall at the Mary Hill Hillclimb in 1957. But by then the first of the real Corvettes was out: the single-headlight 1956/57 model which offered fuel injection (as well as dual quads) and a four-speed transmission to keep its 4639cc, 250 hp V-8 engine under control. Many performance upgrades were available, and drivers took advantage of them both nationally and locally with a lot of success. Jack Murray and Dave Troffer did very well with that early model. In 1958 the twin-headlight look was in which caused even more grumbling among sports car purists, but the car was upgraded in performance too and began to push for domination in production races. Tad Davies' crew of drivers plus Tad himself, Dean Geddes, and Tom Luce were among the more successful "Corvetters" of that period. When Ray Rairdon switched to Corvette in 1960 he won everything in sight before leaving the marque for the 1961 season.