

Lotus 7 – 9 – 11 - 15

Lotuses (Loti?) were one of the most prominent cars on the Northwest racing scene in the 1950s. This car was the first to be issued by the team of Colin Chapman and aerodynamics expert Mike Costin. The 9 had an FWA Coventry Climax engine and a cheaper version with a Ford engine was also available. It appears that a 9 was the first Lotus raced in the area, appearing at the 1956 Seafair Trophy race in the hands of California driver. At least one Lotus 9 was raced in the Northwest later on without a much success due to repeated engine failure. Owner/drivers included Dr. Frank Becker before his Ferrari days.

Some Lotus 7s could be found around the same time. The standard Series 1 Lotus 7 came with a live (solid) rear axle, drum brakes all around, a 40 hp Ford or Austin engine and a three-speed transmission. It weighed about 950 lbs. and sported cycle front fenders. Lotus soon began producing a more powerful Super 7 with a 75 hp, 1098cc and four-speeds.

The Series 2 Lotus 7 appeared in 1960. A number of unnecessary chassis tubes were eliminated as well as making suspension improvements. In 1961 the new Lotus Super 7 was introduced with a 95 hp 1340cc Ford-Cosworth engine to lower its acceleration time (0-60 mph) to around 7 seconds. Scott Redfield raced a Lotus 7 in those days in Class F production. When people think of Lotus racing in the Northwest, it's the 11 that usually come to mind. The 11 was a 1000-lb Chapman-designed space frame car with an alloy stressed skin, sporting a beautiful, aerodynamic body the form of which was designed by aerodynamicist Frank Costin. The 11 surpassed these earlier Lotus cars both in its competition successes and number: some 270 units were produced. Two versions of the Lotus 11 were raced here: the LeMans and the Club. Engines available for the 11 were the Coventry Climax FWA (1098 cc) and FWB (1459 cc) engines. The 11s offered discs all around and a DeDion rear axle. The LeMans usually had the larger engine and also featured fully independent wishbone suspension. The model first appeared in Northwest races in 1958, with Pete Lovely and Pat Pigott driving LeMans models and Paul Nau and Pierre Phillips in Clubs. By 1961 leading Lotus 11 guys included Arleigh Pilkey, Ron Lee, Wade Carter, and Roy Sender.

A few Elites were raced here as well, but without marked success. This attractive coupe had the standard Lotus 4-cyl engine and made 75 hp from 1220cc.

The Lotus 15 was a far superior car to the 11, and often won feature events outright, especially in the very capable hands of Lew Florence, Pat Pigott, and on occasion, Pete Lovely.

Engines available for the 15 ranged from 1.5 to 2.5 litres. The 15 was also the first Lotus with fully independent rear suspension.