

## Formula Three

The little open Formula Three cars were a delight to their drivers and to spectators, but they often annoyed much bigger bore cars by zipping around them on hairpin turns—and sometimes, even on the long straights!

Formula Three originated right after World War Two in Britain where 500cc motorcycle engines were put into ultra-light bodies and chassis made by such manufacturers as Cooper and Effyh (shown here) as well as Kieft. Stirling Moss and Peter Collins, among others, started out in F3 and several top PNW drivers did as well.

The first F3 in the Northwest was George Keck's JBS Norton powered Cooper, an ex-Peter Collins car. Soon many of the guys associated with Team Empire were running them, including Ralph Ormsbee and Tommy Meehan. Other prominent F3 drivers included Lew Florence, who achieved great things in an Effyh that had a Triumph Twin engine. In it, Lew came in second overall at the 1957 Mary Hill hillclimb!

Meehan and Keck both remembered the cars fondly, calling them, "the best way to learn to race. Even if they gave you a false sense of security." George: "you felt that you could do no wrong in them. That low center of gravity—if you spun, you just spun!" Good things that the cars actually did have good safety records, since the boys were often seen racing in T-shirts and leather jackets, no seat belts or roll bars, cork or aluminum helmets and sitting just inches from the ground. The little cars occasionally ran in their own race, although usually there were too few to make a grid and they mixed it up in the open modified, where they circled around at the back of starting grid pack since they had to be push-started. In these races they plagued so many of their bigger brethren.

George Keck remembers Tom Carstens being so annoyed at being passed by F3 cars that he challenged them as "non-sports cars." To razz him, George subsequently ran on

white walls. The most successful F3s ran twin-cam Norton Manx, J.A.P. engines and ran on either alcohol or gasoline. Any over-revving would destroy these engines, so they did not last long. The Formula faded out in the late 50s, partially due to the growing popularity of Formula Junior.