

A NOMADIC PARODY



Fax Dunn, Mark König and Tony Lanfranchi attempt theory and gear box mechanics.



Mark König grins with satisfaction to NOMAD designer Bob Cure after practice.

'Fasten seatbelts for the away!'



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NOTHING – ABSOLUTELY nothing more could be done in the way of preparation to the sports racing car stood in echelon in front of the pits just before the start of the 1969 24 Heures du Mans. Three weeks of sweat, toil and microscopic preparation had gone into getting Nomad Mark II ready for this – its finest hour. Not your army of mechanics. Not your works backed effort. Not your factory model. Just one Mark König awaiting the tri-colour to drop. Fifteen disenchanting days, seven nights without sleep, not a component overlooked, and here he was three minutes to go before the start asking me if I had seen his goggles.

Any other driver, it would have been an unforgivable sin to have walked the whole pit-lane, geared to the hilt and ready to go. It was almost ironic and yet somehow excusable. Mark König had dreamt of this moment since 1962 when he started racing in a Lotus Elite. How he had longed to construct a motor car of his very own to actually compete in the 24 Heures du Mans.

His concealed excitement, the rather bland manner, hid the triumphant moment as he crossed the road to the little circle marked 62. Thirty-thousand people packed those terraces in front of the pits. Surely somebody cared about this incredible, almost single-handed effort?

I became involved in this likeable man and his little world at a cocktail party in London during the winter months. Stupid questions floated over the champagne bubbly, like – 'Why the name Nomad, Mark?'

'Well, it was like this you see. I was pressing on down this road one day when I see a Ford Anglia full of Indians, chickens, donkeys, beds and thingu-bies. I commented to my passenger at the time – 'Rather nomadic don't you think? And my passenger replied – 'Yes – just like us'. 'Strange really'. More champagne, and Mark warmed to his immediate plans for the future. He mentioned a second stab at the Targa with his wife Gabriel as co-driver. A possible Martini at Silverstone. And then LE MANS. The latter said with relish. I warmed to his enthusiasm as the evening wore on, and before we parted he casually mentioned 'Why

not come over in June, be nice having you?'

The weeks drifted by and nothing more was heard. The story was then picked up again in the club house bar at Brands Hatch where I had met Tony Lanfranchi. His conversation was full of this Nomad thing.

'You ought to see this car. Oooh it's beautiful. The best I have ever seen'. Tony's superlative remarks and his little girl Tina peppering them every now and then with 'its true' grabbed my curiosity. Tony raves on about birds but this was crazy. He must have seen something very special. Every week the superlatives got more and more outrageous. Still I had not seen the car, or, come to that, I had neither seen nor heard from Mark since our initial discussion.

One thing was for sure, Mark had put an entry into Le Mans and had been accepted as a sixth reserve. At this stage it looked very favourable the Nomad would race. Previous experience told me not all entries turn up or qualify. Tony then approached me very quietly one day with a problem on his mind.

Apparently Mark had asked him to co-drive the Nomad at Le Mans. Meanwhile, Tony had got himself involved up to his neck in Formula 5000 drives for a meeting at Silverstone the same weekend as the 24 hour race. What should he do?

I told him quite frankly Le Mans was worth three F5000 races. It may not be so lucrative as driving the powerful single-seaters, but there is something about being a finisher at Le Mans which has a special flavour. Tony's loyalty immediately turned to Mark's effort, and from this moment onwards I could see a cross section of characters converging on Le Mans which would be a story on their own.

The team was made up of Mark and Tony driving the car. Julian Pratt was at one time race mechanic to Roy Pike. Richard Essany is a male model with looks and torso that withered every mademoiselle on sight. He wielded a wrench on occasions. Arthur Rotham is a fibre glass specialist from St Leonards-on-Sea. He snores but is worth tolerating because he knows his job and possesses a child-