



Teddy Pilette brings the winning Lola off the ravine bridge into the streets of the town.

## VILA REAL

# Belgian Lola wins — British Chevrons 2 & 3

By PAUL WATSON

NOMAD 4<sup>M</sup>

This year's Vila Real race, reduced from 6 hours to a more sensible 500 kms, was won by Teddy Pilette in the Racing Team VDS Lola T70, ably assisted by Taf Gosselin. Chris Craft led the early stages in the Ecurie Evergreen FI Cosworth-engined McLaren M8C, but retired after 18 laps with a broken metering unit. Pilette and Gosselin then led for the remaining fifty-five to win by over four laps from a remarkable John Bamford in the WRA Chevron B6/8. Third place went to Edward Negus (Chevron B8) who just pipped a tiring Mark Konig in the Nomad 2. Fastest lap and a new outright circuit record went to Craft in 2 m 30.42 s, an improvement of 1.52 secs on Frank Gardner's 1969 record. Unfortunately, Vila Real 1970 is not really a race that will be remembered. Too few big cars and names started, and it certainly didn't do the race's reputation any good. That all too common factor, clashing of dates, was responsible.

## ENTRY

The Vila Real race dates back as far as 1931, since when it has been run for a variety of formulas and classes, including F3 and more recently sports and prototypes. It is a fascinating circuit running through the outskirts of the town of Vila Real which is situated up in the mountains two hours by road from Oporto in Northern Portugal.

The organisers are an enthusiastic group of local notables, and year by year they make considerable improvements to their circuit, although it still lacks a number of vital safety factors and could well do with some more Armco in vital positions. However, Vila Real is a real road circuit with street corners, houses, trees and lamp-posts and all those hazards that make a visit to a circuit this so very enjoyable.

The entry was dominated by just two cars, with a collection of 2-litre Group 5 and 6 cars to back them up, plus a motley bunch of very slow Porsche 911s and the like driven by inexperienced Portuguese pilots. So slow in fact were the local Group 3 and 4 cars, that after practice the organisers wisely decided to eliminate them from the race.

The Group 6 category for which there was regrettably no 2-litre class, was dominated by one car and one driver, namely Chris Craft with the fearsome 3-litre McLaren-DFV M8C. The car had not raced since the BOAC at Brands Hatch in April, had missed the Nor-

ring through lack of an engine, but arrived at Vila Real with its regular '68 Cossy engine up-dated to 1969 spec but giving something like 30 bhp less than its normal 430.

Since Brands Hatch the McLaren had been extensively tested by Craft and now has a very modified rear end, the tail having been cut right away to expose the naked sub-frame and the fully raked radius rods which due to the extreme V of the Cosworth engine have to be mounted on the sub-frame. Craft had done all his testing at Silverstone and reported having lapped the car consistently in the 1 m 24 s bracket on the GP circuit. Last year Craft co-drove David Weir's Porsche 908 to win the Vila Real race, so naturally Sandeman's were anxious to sponsor Ecurie Evergreen once again, and their decals thus appeared on Craft's and de Cadanet's cars plus Weir's GT40.

The next quickest Group 6 car was the Evergreen Lola T210 which was being driven for the first time by Alain de Cadanet. Mark Konig had his faithful Nomad-BRM 2, while Bill Tuckett turned up with the pretty little Gropa-BRM CMC which was having only its second race since being built up by Peter Sadler. Both Konig and Tuckett were using their regular central-exhaust V8 BRM engines which sounded delightful against the Cosworths and BMWs.

The Group 6 class was completed by Mo Skales with his FVC engined Chevron B16, having its first race since Le Mans, and Claude Larrieu of France in an old Porsche

906 with its roof hacked off to turn it into a 908-like Spyder.

As in the G6 category, one car dominated the sports category for G5 cars, this being Teddy Pilette and veteran Belgian Guy 'Taf' Gosselin with the VDS ex-John Weir Lola T70 Mk 3B, using their same Le Mans engine prepared by the Swiss Morand.

The only other over 2-litre G5 cars were the three elderly Ford GT40s which were turned out were to be humbled even by 2-litre cars during the race. Potentially the most powerful of this trio was the David Weir ex-Strathaven car, looking decidedly potent in black with a broad band of fluorescent tape and using a 4.7-litre, 2-year-old Gurney Weslake V8. Basically a '67 car chassis No 1078—its last race had been the 'Ring 1000 kms in the hands of de Cadanet and Piers Forester. Weir was driving single-handed.

The second GT40 was the Trevor Graham Racing vehicle, owned by Sadler in 1968 and '69 and driven earlier this year at Daytona and Sebring by Forester and Andy Hedger. For Vila Real the wheel was given to the car's interim owner Willie Green and John Gerard who replaced Clive Baker some time before the event. Completing the GT40 race was the Portuguese Luis Fernandes with the Team Palma chassis.

The remaining G5 cars were all of two litres or less. Firstly there were four Chevrons, BMWs, led by John Bamford in the original WRA B6/B8, formerly owned by Digby Marshall and David Good and now with a gap of four seasons racing behind it. James Tan had his ex-Vestey B8 also running for William Edward Negus came down from Switzerland with the ex-TorLine B8 and then there was Roger Heavens with the B8 he shares with Mike Garton. Lord Angus Clydesdale is known to have got as far as France at Vila Real which no more was seen of him!

There were four Porsche Carrera 6s, including the open 908-like Spyder of Larrieu, easily the fastest of these being run by Portuguese Carlos Santos. Mike Coombe trailed down with Healey man John Chatham sharing Coombe's ex-Bradley/Shardlow car. One-time Formula 3 driver Filipe Nogueira had the ex-de Cadanet/Gold Carrera 6 while Nogueira had crashed in this race last year. Only one 910 arrived, this being the Road Racing Accessories car for Paul Vestey.

Completing the competitive entry were Ernesto Neves in his indecently quick Le Mans Europa 47 which uses a BRM tuned twin-cylinder and which was destined to find its way to the third row of the grid after practice!

The entry was completed by a handful of terribly slow 911s, the Elan of Manuel Assis, Pinheiro Santos Silva and the Lancia Fulvia HF of Miguel Correia/Artur Santos. Of the 911s the fastest was the Bio-Strathaven scored 911s of Americo da Silva Nunes, Fernando 911s were driven by Joao Carlos Ferreira Moura, "Onimir"/Nascimento Costa and Jose Lampreia/Christian de Vila Real. None of these cars ran in the race.

## PRACTICE

Practice opened on Friday with a two-hour session, all 25 cars soon getting under way. Bill Tuckett went out to get used to the Gropa which he was driving in a race for the first time, but a plastic breather off the gear shifted in the heat and the engine caught alight. Tuckett pulled up quickly and a fire marshal shouting a fire marshal was persuaded to use his extinguisher and the fire was out with little damage.

Craft at once set the pace, and although he did few laps, he quickly managed a 2 m 26.45 s lap, an average of just over 170 mph and 2.5 secs quicker than Gardner's best in the 1969 race.

Pilette and Gosselin rumbled round the circuit slowly in the first session, running in a crown wheel and pinion, which allowed de Cadanet to score second fastest time (2 m 27.55). The two Portuguese heaviest, Santos and Neves really showed what an advantage it is to know a road circuit.