



## NEIL TRUNDLE

Tom Pryce  
Monaco F3 GP  
May 25th, 1974  
March-Holbay 743

The race of my life was the Formula 3 race in Monaco in 1974. It's quite a long story to explain how I got there, but basically it went back to Rondel Racing.

Rondel was a team formed at the beginning of 1971. It was inspired by Ron Dennis. He and I were working for Brabham up to the end of 1970. Jack Brabham retired and I went off to become a racing driver. Ron decided to set up his own team. He rang me up and said: 'I think I can find some money, let's do our own team'.

We needed some money to get it off the ground and Ron approached Tony Vlassopulo, a friend of Ron's girlfriend's family and a shipping magnate. He was a Goodwood commentator and very keen on racing.

He helped us to fund the thing and get it off the ground so Rondel was formed with Tony as the chairman. Ron and myself were directors and on-hands mechanics. The team grew and grew for three years but, at the end of 1973, just as we were building the Rondel Formula 1 car, we ran out of funds and folded. Ron went off and did his own thing. Tony salvaged the Motul/Rondel F1 car and formed Token Racing.

Ray Jessop was the designer and myself and Chris Lewis, another ex-Rondel guy, finished the F1 car in a little lock-up workshop. We had Tom Pryce who wanted to drive it.

We did a couple of races with the Token, but at Monaco the F1 constructors would not give us an entry. We fought the system, we fought Bernie (Ecclestone), Ken (Tyrrell) and all of them, but we could not get an entry.

At the 11th hour Tony Vlassopulo said: 'Okay, sod 'em, we'll run Tom in an F3 car and we'll stick it up them by winning it'.

Tony was involved with an F3 team called Ippokamos Racing. It had

Buzz Buzaglo and an Indonesian driver called Hany Wiano. They had two Marches. Within a couple of days we went in and took over Buzz's car.

There is a sad side to the story, because Buzz was heartbroken. He was virtually in tears. He probably never forgives us to this day. The other mechanics could not believe what was happening and fought us a bit. I was very much the outcast.

Anyway we all pitched up at Monaco. Ray Jessop did a quick assessment of the March and did some very important mods. He put a huge rear wing on it and massive flaps on the front on the nose.

Everyone was running Holbay engines and the same Goodyear tyres.

The hot drivers to win were Europeans. Brian Henton was in a works March and Tony Brise in a GRD. We arrived at the last minute and they were all a bit taken back by it.

We were quick straight away and it put the works March team's nose out

of joint. It was in two heats and a final, and we practised in heats as well. With just 10 minutes to go Tom put it on pole for his heat. He went out again and trying to pass a backmarker he was put into the wall. It took the whole rear corner off the car.

We were up against it because it had broken the gearbox bellhousing. The only spare was with the works March team. Robin Herd was not sure what to do. He was in with a chance of a win with us, but it would be up against his own works car.

I stripped the car down. I had to pull the tank out and weld the pick-up back on. March kept us waiting for the bellhousing until the last minute before they finally said we could have it.

I worked all night on the car. The other mechanics went home because we were a split team.

I had never put a March F3 fuel tank back in and I wrestled with this thing and just could not get it back in.

I am indebted to a couple of March

mechanics who walked past and said: 'Oh yeah, you've just got to flatten it down, put a plug in it, and slide it in.'

Anyway I got the car back together and in the short warm-up the car was good. It was very hot and we had a temperature problem, so we cut the nose about and put extra fins and extractors and we could just about run at 105 degrees.

Henton, he was laughing. He was mickey-taker and kept coming up and saying: '105! Forget it, you won't finish.' I didn't know Brian then and I was really angry. I know better now.

Anyway we did the first heat and Pryce was magic. I watched from behind the pits, round by the swimming pool, and he was just poetry, tail out all the way, beautiful slides into Rascasse. He won it by miles but, when he came back to the pits, the water temperature was almost 110. We checked the car over and everything was OK so we felt fairly confident for the final.

The irony was that Henton was leading his heat when he came up to a backmarker and was put off.

Anyway Tom was on the front row of the final with Tony Brise. We warmed the car up for the final and there was water coming out of the exhausts. I figured that the head-gasket had gone. We were not going to make it. I scrounged around and put a whole can of sealant in as a last ditch effort. I topped it up with water and started her up again.

We put it on the grid, but when we came to start the engine it would not fire. I did not have a jump battery, so I grabbed another Varley and I stuck it upside down on top of the first. One of the works GRD mechanics - Nick Jordan - rushed up and said: 'You can't do that!' So we rowed on the grid.

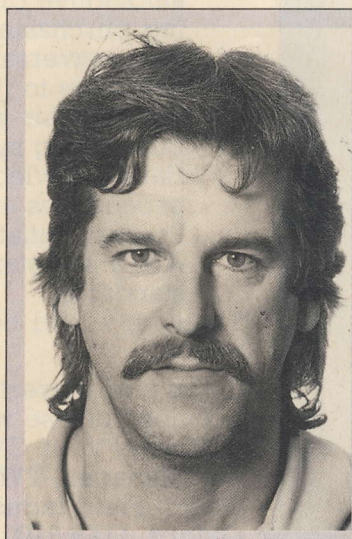
The car started. And off Tom went in the lead. I spent the whole race out at the back again. Every lap I was convinced he was going to drop out, but he won by a mile. It was magic. Really magic. We really stuck it up them.

Neil Trundle was talking to Joe Saward

**NEXT WEEK**  
**GERARD DUCAROUGE**

**AUTO SPORT, JUNE 28, 1990**

***"I figured that the head gasket had gone. We were not going to make it. I put a whole can of sealant in as a last ditch effort"***



Neil Trundle (45) was a Ford apprentice and spent his early career working at the Dunton Research Centre. He joined Alan Mann Racing in 1968 but moved on to Brabham to work on the Indycar programme. He left Brabham at the end of 1970 and formed Rondel with Ron Dennis. The team folded in 1973 and he helped set up Token. At the end of 1974 Trundle joined Tyrrell but two years later Ron Dennis persuaded him to work at Project 4 in Formula 2 and he remained with the team until the amalgamation with McLaren in 1980. He left McLaren at the start of 1981 to set up Neil Trundle Racing in British F3. NTR continued in F3 until 1983, but then switched to FF2000. At the end of 1983 Trundle quit racing but in 1985 Dennis lured him back to McLaren before becoming the travelling fabricator. In 1988 and 1989 he was McLaren's chief mechanic and is now the head of the team's gearbox department.



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## THEN AS NOW?

**10** Jean-Pierre Jarier scored another of his customary Formula 2 wins in his STP March-BMW — despite feeling unwell — at Mantorp Park this time, to further extend his points lead in the European F2 championship 10 years ago this week, (AUTOSPORT, August 2, 1973). Second was Jochen Mass in the works Matchbox Surtees who was shadowed for the whole event by John Watson having his first outing in the works Chevron B25. Tom Pryce drove particularly well in the Titan Properties Motul and was rewarded with fifth overall and his first championship points.

Jackie Stewart scored his record breaking 26th Grand Prix victory at Zandvoort in the Dutch Grand Prix. However, it wasn't an achievement that Stewart will want to remember, for the race was marred by tragedy when Roger Williamson was killed in an horrific accident. Trapped upside down in his burning car, his friend David Purley stopped at the scene and single-handedly tried to rescue Williamson, there being a lack of marshals and fire-fighting equipment to help.

The incident led to an inquiry being urged in the Dutch parliament — the accident was widely seen on television and had much media coverage — as to why the organisers did not provide experienced marshals with fire-fighting equipment and to why the race was not stopped. The organisers had no answers to these questions. Yet again motor racing had to learn its lessons the hard way. . .

Tony Brise scored a popular victory at Brands Hatch in round 9 of the John Player International Formula 3 Championship. His March-Holbay 733 led from lap 2 onwards in the 30-lap final, held on the club circuit, with a truly international entry, with France and Scandinavia being particularly well represented. Pictured below is Brise leading his heat into Paddock



**25** Pictured on the front cover of AUTO-SPORT (see above) 25 years ago this week was a spectacular picture of Bill Harris driving his V8 Special sandracer in the recent New Zealand beach racing championship held near Christchurch, (August 1, 1958). Not one of the most popular forms of sport over in England — excepting the Channel Islands — but on the other side of the globe the sport had a long tradition and was very popular. . .

*Pit & Paddock* news. . . Jean Bloxham and Michael Salmon were arrested at Bouley Bay after competing there with their excessively noisy Aston Martin and Jaguar respectively. They had been released on bail at time of going to press. . . Stirling Moss expected to be seen at Brands Hatch again before