

Vern Schuppan, leading the Formula Atlantic points chase in his Palliser, won the series meeting at Brands Hatch by a wheel over Norman Cuthbert's Brabham. (Nigel Snowdon photo)

Schuppan Takes Narrow Formula Atlantic Victory

By Mike Kettlewell

DARTFORD, Eng., Sept. 12 — It was superb stuff. Yellow Pages Formula Atlantic Championship leader Vern Schuppan, Palliser WDB4-Ford twin cam, beat Norman Cuthbert's Brabham BT29-Ford BDA by a wheel in one of the most exciting finishes ever staged in this Formula Ford series.

Third, only a second away, was Cyd Williams, Chevron B18C-Ford BDA, who had driven most of the race on the ignition switch owing to a stuck throttle. Despite the handicap, Williams set a new Brands Hatch lap record at 47.4 seconds, 94.18mph.

Pole position man Tom Belso headed the field for one lap in his Brabham BT28/35-Ford BDA, but his Steele-tuned mill let him down yet again. This gave Schuppan the lead over fellow-Aussie John Gillmeister, Palliser WDB4-Ford BDA, and Cuthbert, but these two collided at the Druids right-hander on lap three.

Gillmeister finished up traveling backwards minus his nose cone and Cuthbert carried on after a slight hesitation with a broken exhaust pipe.

The rest were some way back, having been blocked at the start by Bev Bond, whose works Royale RP8-Ford BDA was unable to get away when his transmission failed.

By the 16th of the 20 laps, Cuthbert, driving faster than ever

before, had closed on Schuppan and began to make his presence felt, while Williams was not very far behind the pair of them.

On the last lap Cuthbert tried either side, but to no avail, and on the run-up to the line he was almost alongside the Palliser of Schuppan. Williams was close behind, while Peter Wardle took fourth place well clear of the similar Lotus 69-Ford BDA of Chris Oates.

YELLOW PAGES CHAMPIONSHIP FORMULA ATLANTIC RACE AT BRANDS HATCH, KENT, ENG., SEPTEMBER 12

TOP NINE FINISHERS: 1 - Vern Schuppan, Palliser WDB4-Ford TC, 2 laps or 24.8 miles in 16:17.2 for an average speed of 91.36mph; 2 - Norman Cuthbert, Brabham BT29; 3 - Cyd Williams, Chevron B18C; 4 - Peter Wardle, Lotus 69; 5 - Chris Oates, Lotus 69; 6 - John Nicholson, March 702; 7 - Clive Santo, Palliser WDF3/B4; 8 - Eric Reeves, Brabham BT35; 9 - Patricia Sumner, Kitchiner K4B-Ford TC.

'A Painful Birth'

F/Atlantic Debut

By Mike Kettlewell

FARNINGHAM, Kent, Eng., Mar. 7 — The much-shouted-about Formula Atlantic season barely survived a very painful birth at Brands Hatch near here today.

Before the meeting started promoter John Webb apologized to the few thousand brave spectators in the Arctic-like conditions for the dismal entry. He said, "British manufacturers have either been too optimistic to their customers when quoting delivery dates or have been hit by strikes in the motor industry, notably Ford.

"The competitions department of Ford has been closed for over a month, so manufacturers have been unable to obtain new engines or spares," Webb continued. "On the other hand, some drivers have been let down by their potential sponsors at the last moment so have been unable to complete the purchase of their machines. We at Brands Hatch announced our formula and date plans well in advance (last December), but even if we started the season in July instead of March some people wouldn't be ready."

Webb's speech hit hard. The spectators had come to witness the first F/Atlantic race over 20 laps of the short 1.24-mile circuit expecting a full field. There were only two competitive cars, one of these without its proper engine, plus some make-weights and a few Formula/Fords thrown in.

Fastest in practice was Australian Vern Schuppan in his Palliser WDF4 (known as a Winkelmann in the U.S.). His time of 51.0 seconds compared unfavorably with the old 1000cc F/3 record of 49.6 or the Formula Libre record of 48.8, ironically enough established by a prototype F/Atlantic car in November 1970.

Unable to take delivery of his Ford BDA 16-valve engine (at present outlawed by the SCCA in F/B), Schuppan relied on a BRM-prepared Ford twin-cam. Favorite Ray Allen, driving the Daks-sponsored Royale RP8 powered by a Steel-tuned BDA mill, was back in the second rank, fifth fastest. A cam follower had broken in practice and he started the race using a low rev limit, expecting the engine to be spread over the South of England at any time.

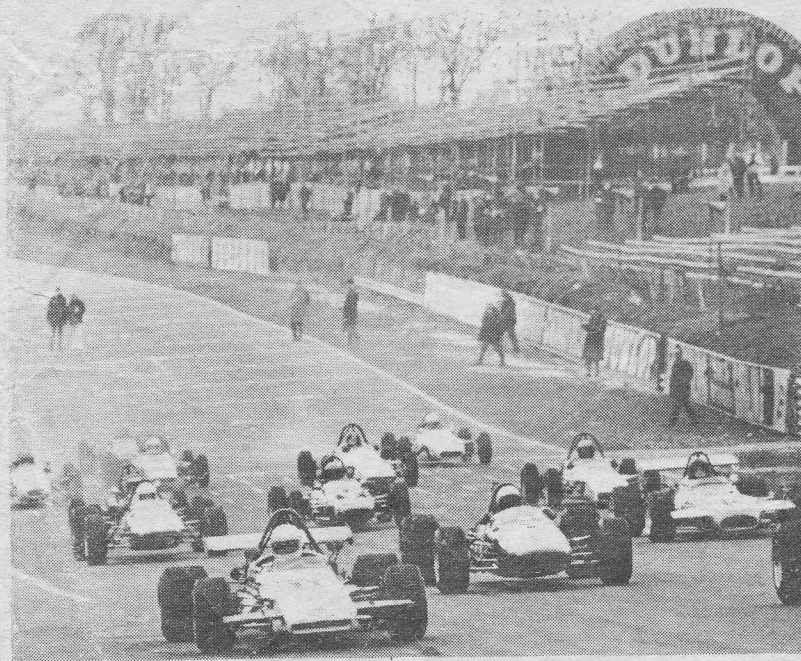
Second fastest in practice, Australian John Gillmeister, excused himself from the grid with seconds to go with smoke belching from the exhaust of his Brabham BT29-Ford. That was about the

most exciting part of the race. Schuppan led from start to finish, while Allen kept the Royale within sniffing distance until the expected happened on the eighth circuit. End of race. Schuppan and Allen shared fastest lap of 50.8 seconds, 87.87mph.

One thing is for sure: F/Atlantic can only get better.

YELLOW PAGES FORMULA ATLANTIC RACE, BRANDS HATCH, KENT, ENG., MAR. 7

FINISHERS: 1 - Vern Schuppan, F/B Palliser WDB4-Ford, 20 laps or 24.8 miles in 17:25.6 for an average speed of 85.39mph; 2 - Bob Ellice, F/B Chevron B15/17-Ford, 20 laps; 3 - Pat Longhurst, F/3 Brabham BT18-Ford, 19; 4 - Jeremy Gams, F/F Lotus 61M, 19; 5 - Colin Crang, F/F Merlyn Mk20, 19; 6 - Clive Santo, F/F Palliser WDF3, 19; 7 - Peter Slade, F/F Hawke DL2A, 19; 8 - John de Stefano, F/F Titan Mk6, 19; 9 - Buzz Buzaglio, F/F Palliser WDF2, 19; 10 - John Tait, F/F Lola T200, 18; 11 - Mike Stow, F/B Brabham BT29-Ford, 18.



A very limited F/B field, with some F/Fords filling in, sets off on the first lap of the Hatch.