

RACING

FIFTY

MOTORCLUB

DAVE WALKER TRIES TWO VERY DIFFERENT SE7ENS AT SNETTERTON

→ It's been two years since I sat behind the steering wheel of a car at Snetterton race track so it would be fair to say I was a bit rusty. I was there to sample two kit cars that race in different formulas of the 750 Motor Club – a club noted for its low cost approach to racing.

For a lot of PPC readers there's more appeal in racing a car they've built themselves rather than just buying a car and driving it or renting a car to race. If the car goes well it gives you extra satisfaction in knowing that you put it together



yourself and that every penny and skinned knuckle contributed to that performance. (Or if it's dreadful that you only have yourself to blame.)

But before you get too excited about racing your kit car you need to take a long hard look at what series are open to you. Race series always have tight regulations and you don't want to end up building a car that's not eligible to race anywhere at all. If you're looking at the Westfield or Caterham series then you're limited straight away to both the choice of car and the engine spec. If you take a look at the 750 Club Kit Car series you still have rules but your choice of car is more open and there are differ-

ent classes to suit different budgets. Let me say straight away that there's no such thing as cheap racing. Cheap's a relative term and to a millionaire any club motorsport looks cheap. For the rest of us you'll need to find somewhere between £6000 and £10,000 if you want to do every round and that doesn't mean staying in five star hotels and having a team of helpers to feed. That's a lot of money and you can get more track time for less money with a track-day. But you're not racing.

Until you've experienced out-braking or out-thinking an opponent under racing conditions you've no idea what a buzz it gives you. I've lost

count of the number of times I've helped a driver out of the car at the end of a race – his eyes like saucers and talking at 100mph – oozing adrenaline from every pore!

750MC Locost Series

This is a separate race series within the 750 Club and it's very well supported and very competitive. Cars can be home built with the aid of Ron Champion's Locost book but check the regs for what's allowed and what isn't. You can't just add a few rose joints or a slipper diff because you think it will improve things. Most people buy a chassis that conforms to the regs and build on that.



750MC Kit Car Series

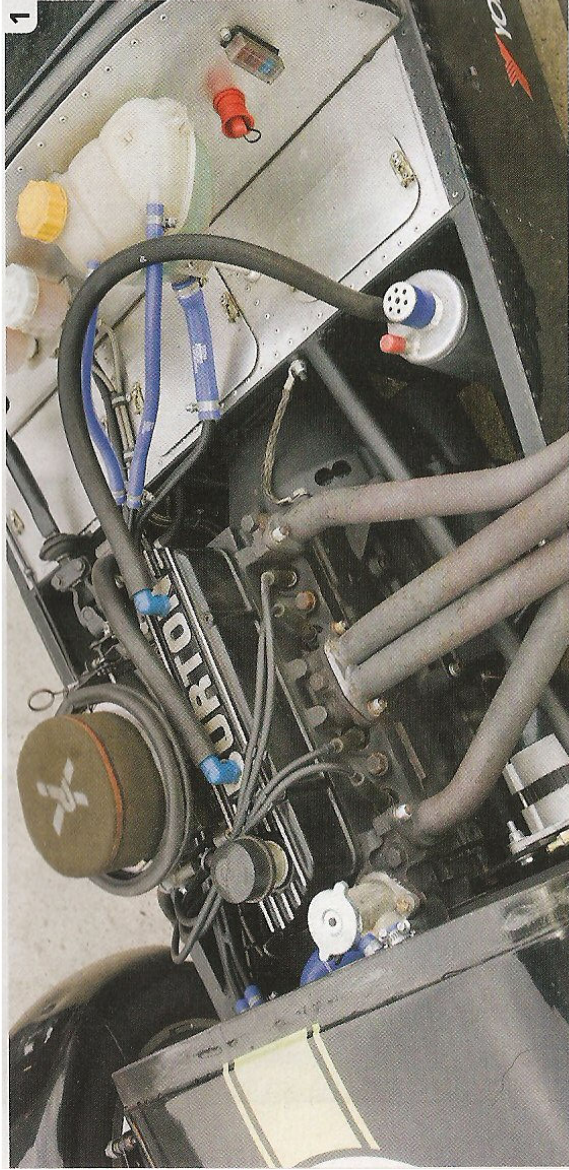
I'll not bore you by running down the regulations in detail but basically there are three classes: quick, very quick and not for the feint hearted. What's more the classes are going to be faster than ever in 2008 thanks to a few rule changes. For the full story go to 750mc.co.uk.

The most popular class is probably the 1800 Ford Zetec engine with limited modifications in Class C. For the 08 season the choke size will increase to 36mm but still with 40DCOE carbs, plus there's a control Kent cam set allowed. I was driving a Class C car to last year's spec so there may be a bit more to come when this is brought up to 08 specification. It's not for me to bitch here but when I flow tested a 40 DCOE carb some years back I never found any flow gain with a 36mm choke – the auxiliary venturi becomes the restriction after 34mm (or it did on the carbs I was testing). That's something worth investigating when you rolling road your engine because the bigger the choke the harder it is to get clean carburation.

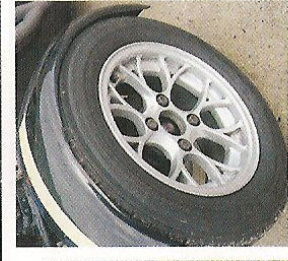
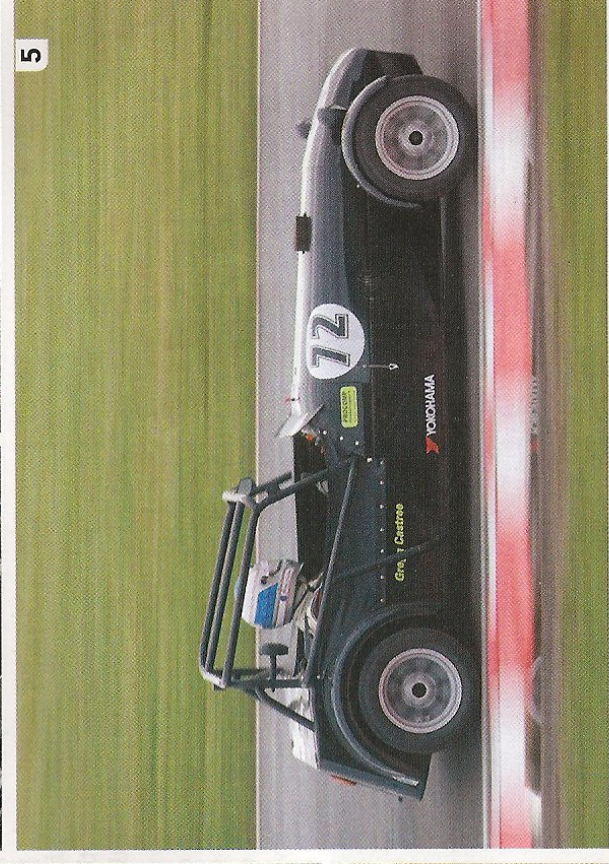
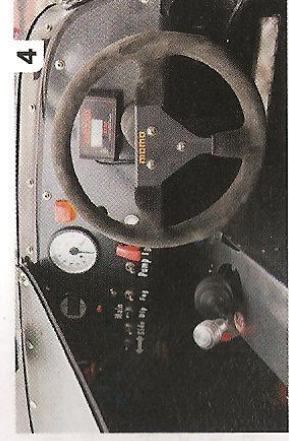
My 07 Class C car had a bit of a hole in the carburation when driving up the pit lane but once you got it on track you never noticed it again.

As you might imagine, you get a mix of front and rear wheel drive cars but the most popular are what I call Caterfields. The orange car here is an LA Gold (live axle) and it was built by Ivan Gilmour of ProComp Engineering. This engine makes a little under 160bhp – what many people reckon is the ideal power output for cars of this type, neither too much power or too little to have fun.

I took this car out first on a very slippery damp track and went very gingerly into the first corner – and found myself totally sideways. My first session was a case of feeling for grip and trying not to fall off. The relatively short wheelbase of the LA Gold made the corners interesting while it was too slippery to use full power most of the time. Once the track started to dry out the



1. 1300cc Crossflow engine in 750MC guise is limited to about 80bhp.
2. Most Locost racers are built on a chassis supplied to 750MC specifications.
3. The Locost racer's single downdraft Weber carb is distinctly old tech...
4. ...whereas the cockpit has a modern digital dash and data-logging equipment.
5. Dave Walker felt totally at home in the Locost but found the lack of power...
6. ...meant he got passed on the straights by more powerful machinery.



LA Gold was nicer than the Locost to drive, simply because it's more like a race car. Ivan has it set up fairly soft so it can ride the curbs if you get it wrong and the balance feels really neutral. I've raced one of these cars in the past and I find it superb in every department.

The advice I was given from the regular pilot was to 'get it to the apex and don't mess about, just nail it'. Possibly the car was still on wet settings but I found it was lifting the rear wheel at the hairpin and hence spinning up if I did the animal impersonation on the throttle pedal. The better bet in those conditions was to drive the car on the throttle

second apex comes back and it's a case of feeding in the power to make the car drift to the outside kerb – but not too much throttle or you run out of road. The next right hander onto the main straight comes up quick and I know this is a place where it's very easy to out-brake yourself. Every lap you think you can brake later but when you do, you fall off!

Hard on the brakes, ease them off so that the nose doesn't pop up and roll the steering in to aim for the apex. If you do overcook it there's plenty of run off but don't try using all of it during a race – you're supposed to use the same area of track as everyone else and if you're

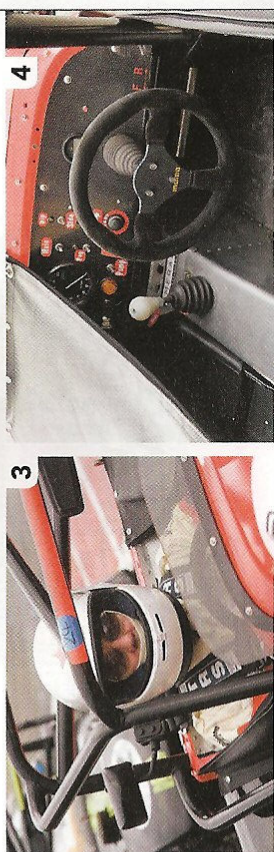
so up the road.

Pull it left and heel and toe down to second (it's a four speed box in this car) for the next hairpin right. You can't snatch at the steering but you do have to roll on the lock in a bit of a hurry to make the apex. If you get it right you feed on the power and just run over the edge of the curbs on the exit – when you feel a satisfying rumble you know there's no more to be had there. Get it wrong and you find yourself spinning off on the damp grass.

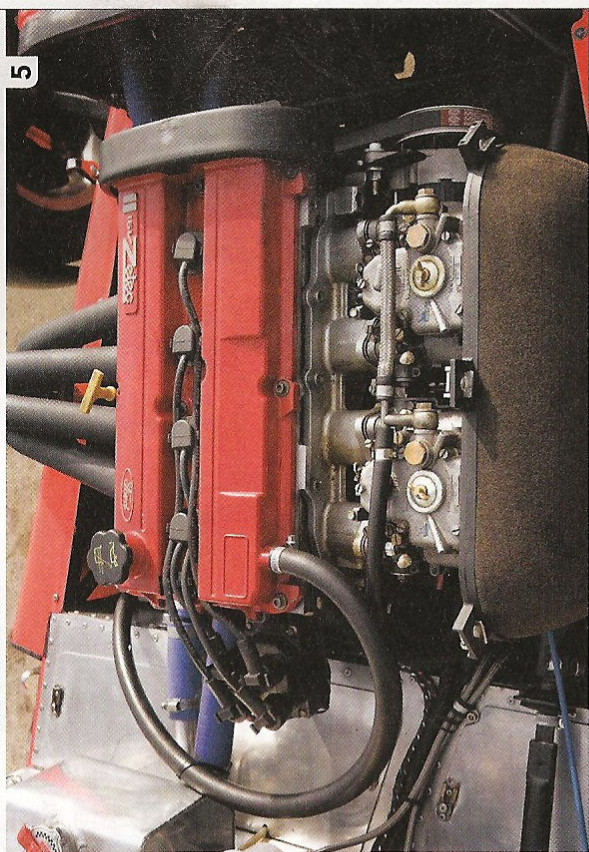
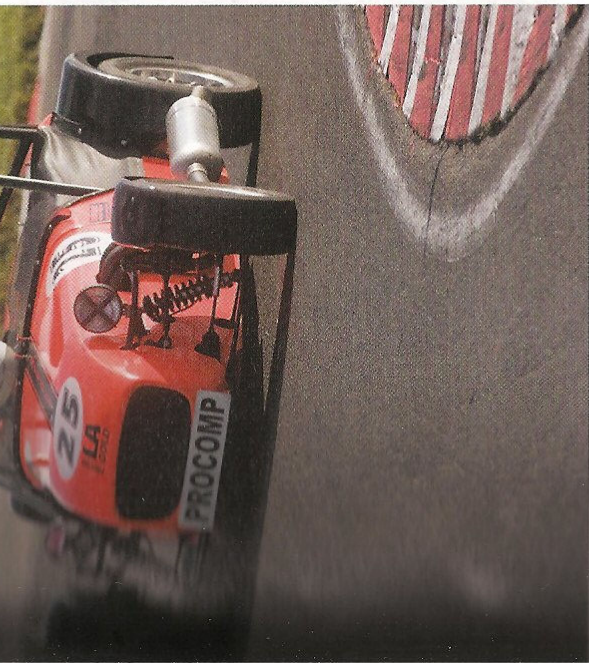
The dash to the bomb hole's short and a hero takes this flat out – but I'm having a little confidence lift before dropping down and clipping the inside curb. Up the slight incline towards Corum, which is a very fast right hander. There's a dry line which pretty much dictates where you're going to place the car but beware of opening up the corner too soon with the throttle, it's easy to run out of road and have a very high speed off.

The right/left flick at the new (much slower than it used to be) hairpin is a place where you can really only lose time, not gain it. If you're not defending the line the best place for the car gives you the best exit speed and allows you to run down the pit wall. I've heard it said that the aerodynamics work better if you hug the wall but I have no idea whether it works or not. On a track-day this is where you do a lot of overtaking so it's not really relevant. Over to the left and pass the start and finish line to try another lap.

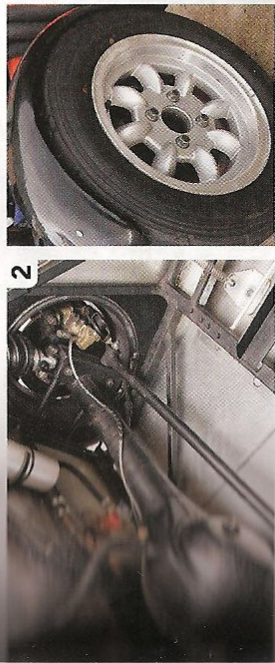
If you want to race a kit car the Locost series at first appears to be the best starting place, but it may not be. Grids are full and there are a lot of very experienced drivers in this series ready to show you up. A mixed class race like the Kit Cars will allow you to gain experience, perhaps finding a car or two to have a tussle with, plus you'll have a car you can use on track-days and still have a lot of fun while your driving expertise builds up. If I were racing again that's where I'd go.



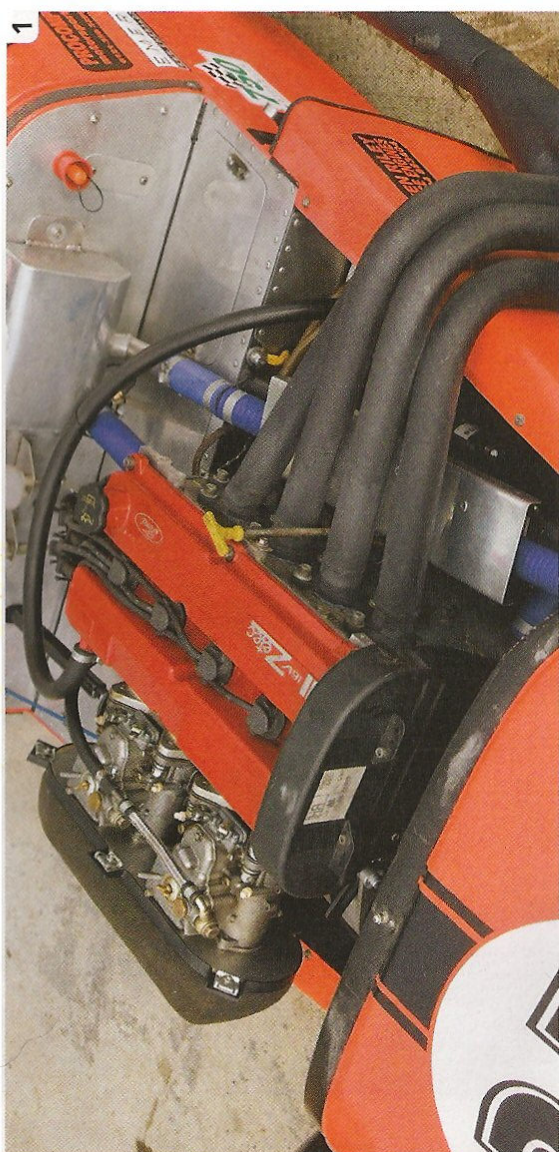
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1. LA Gold has 1800cc Ford Zetec with twin Webers and mapped ignition.

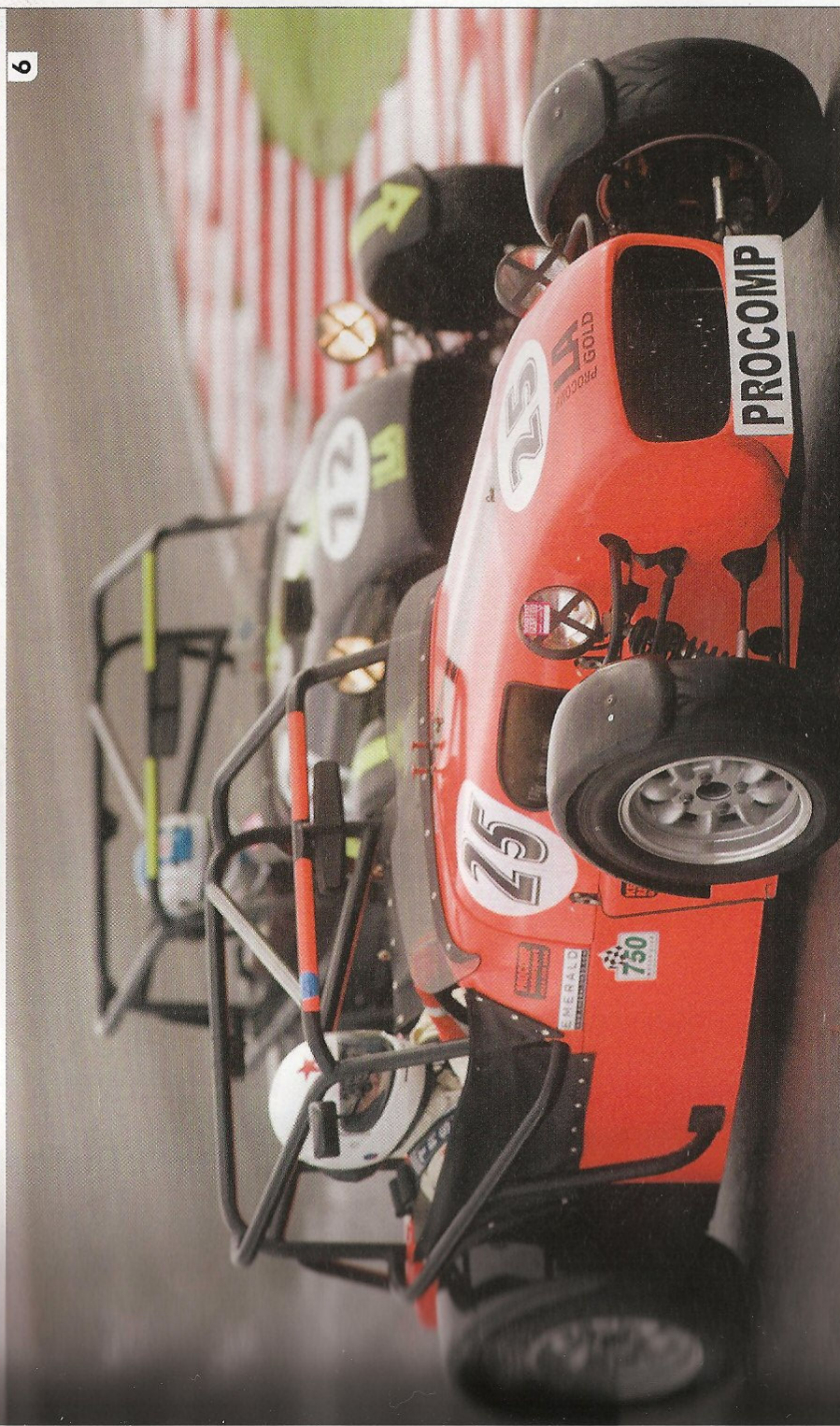
2. Live axle still the preferred choice in the LA Gold Se7en.

3. Racing shades – make Dave no faster but look cool when he spins off.

4. LA Gold's cockpit has similar feel to Locost but on the track...

5. Zetec twin-cam makes it a much faster car. Carb chokes limited to 36mm.

6. Dave carves up the competition – it's those shades that do it.



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