

Datsun 280Z & BMW 530i Road Tests
FERRARI'S 175-MPH BERLINETTA BOXER TESTED

ROAD & TRACK

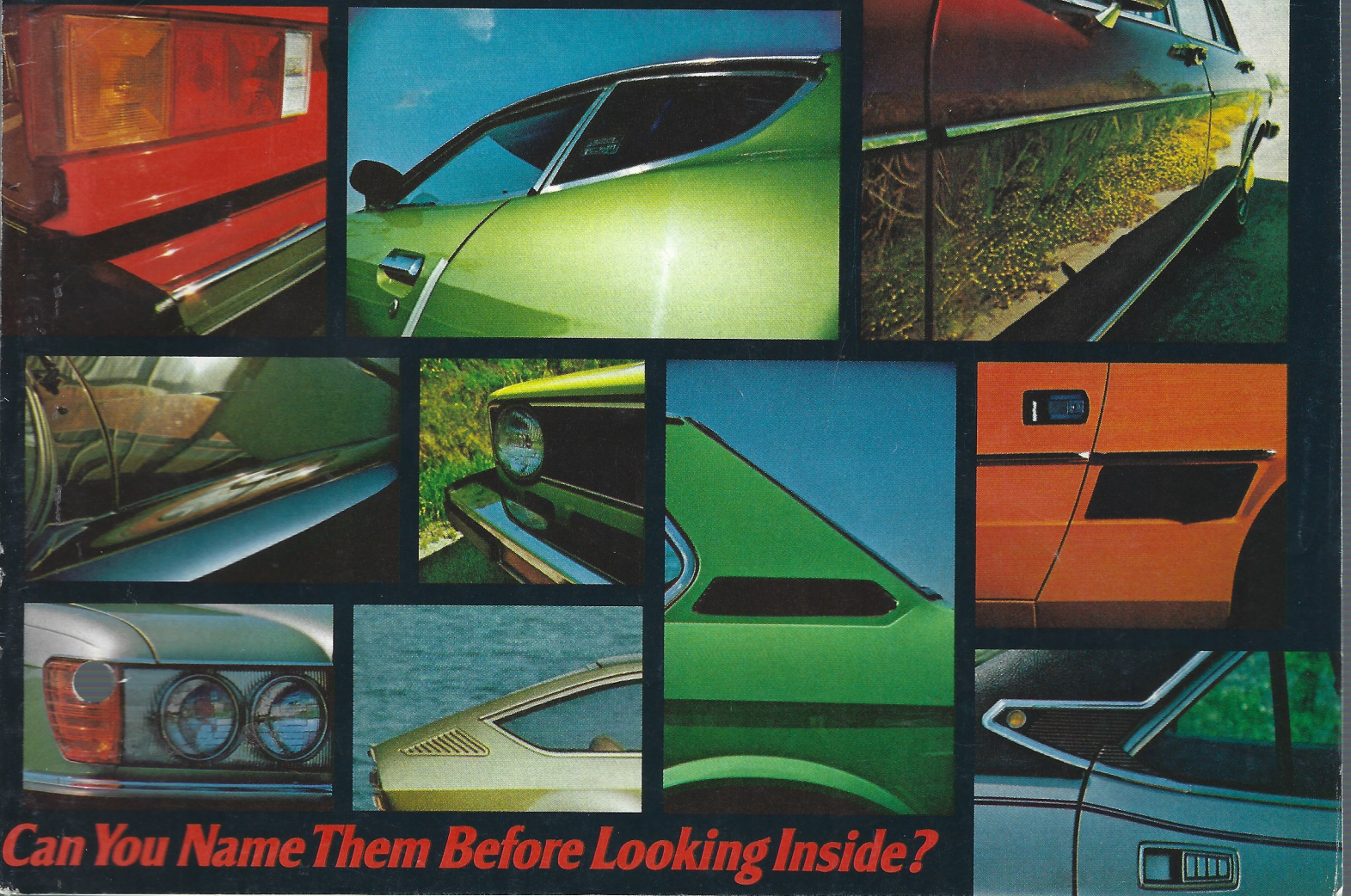
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ONE DOLLAR

1975's 10 BEST CARS For A Changing World



Can You Name Them Before Looking Inside?

America's Newest Race Car:



ALL-AMERICAN GT CHEVROLET MONZA

Challenger to the Porsches, BMWs & Corvettes

BY GARY L. WITZENBURG

“WE PROPOSED THIS category to the SCCA two years ago,” says salt-and-pepper-haired John Pierce of Chevrolet’s Product Promotion Engineering Department. “We had rules drafted up over two years ago. Cameron Argetsinger and Lee Hall were in the office with Vince and myself and we said, ‘This is what you’ve got to do. The Trans-Am is dead right now, or it will be dead, and we’re handcuffed with the FIA homologation certificate. So you’ve got to create a class with the medium-size V-8 engine in the subcompact car.’”

“So they said: ‘Yeah, yeah, that’s nice,’ and went away and did nothing about it.”

Pierce and his boss Vince Piggins were once instrumental in Chevrolet’s devastating, unofficial, back-door Trans-Am Camaro program with Roger Penske in the late 1960s. They make no secret of their intense interest in keeping the Chevy “bow tie” in the winner’s circle in U.S. GT racing. The venerable Corvette and Camaro are still strong in the hands of such capable competitors as John Greenwood and Warren Agor,

but the cost of fielding such a car has spiraled alarmingly in the past few years. And the recent finishing records of these exotic machines, stretched far beyond their reasonable engineering limits, has been less than impressive. Clearly something is needed to combat the growing Porsche Carrera hordes: something lighter and more agile than the thundering dinosaurs of Detroit’s past decade, yet still with plenty of smooth, torquey and reliable V-8 power.

SCCA’s Argetsinger says he loved the idea, “but those cars are expensive,” and without a series sponsor to help pick up the burden of substantial purse money for the series there was just no way they could be incorporated into the Trans-Am. Instead, the Trans-Am program for 1975 will move in the other direction—to a semi-pro series with reasonable purses for relatively cheap sports cars and sedans prepared to amateur rules.

But IMSA’s John Bishop had the necessary support in the form of Camel Cigarettes. “We proposed the same thing to Bishop,” Pierce continues, “and he just jumped off his seat. He took the rules with him.”

TONY DELORENZO attended his first driver's school at the age of 21 at Watkins Glen in a Corvette. He couldn't afford to race that year (1964) but he finally got underway the following season with a Corvair, winning the first race he ran.

In 1967, with two years' experience on his own in the Corvair, he went sponsor-hunting. "I knocked on the door of probably every business establishment in Detroit," says DeLorenzo, "including all the dealerships. The last one I came to was Hanley-Dawson Chevrolet. I gave him my pitch and he said 'Yes,' and I said 'Well, thanks anyway.' I was halfway out the door before I realized that he'd said 'Yes.'"

With Hanley-Dawson's help DeLorenzo soon became a serious contender in a fullbore A Production Corvette in both local and SCCA National events. He was runner-up for the AP National Championship at Daytona that year and still thinks he might have won it except for a first-lap, multi-car altercation which slowed him down at the start.

In 1968 DeLorenzo teamed with Jerry Thompson "on not much money" and the pair started winning with regularity. Some mid-season assistance came from Z. Frank Chevrolet in Chicago; then late in the year one of these proposals surfaced on the right desk and a call came from Owens Corning Fiberglas. "Say, we have your proposal here," said Alan Kerivan of OC, "and we'd like to get involved with you." At that point the Owens Corning Racing Team was born.

The National Championships were at Riverside that year and the new team produced a pair of impressive but still frustrating 2nds: DeLorenzo in A Production and Thompson in the B Production class. But in 1969 they dominated big-bore amateur road racing with a pair of large-block AP cars, and Thompson won the National title at Atlanta while DeLorenzo was slowed by mechanical problems.

The 1970 season brought more support from OC, but not enough to run the schedule the team attempted. A pair of Camaros were prepared for the Trans-Am pro sedan series while

the Corvettes were still being campaigned in SCCA Nationals. The result of trying to do too much with too little was a loss (to John Greenwood) of the AP title at Atlanta and very little Trans-Am success either.

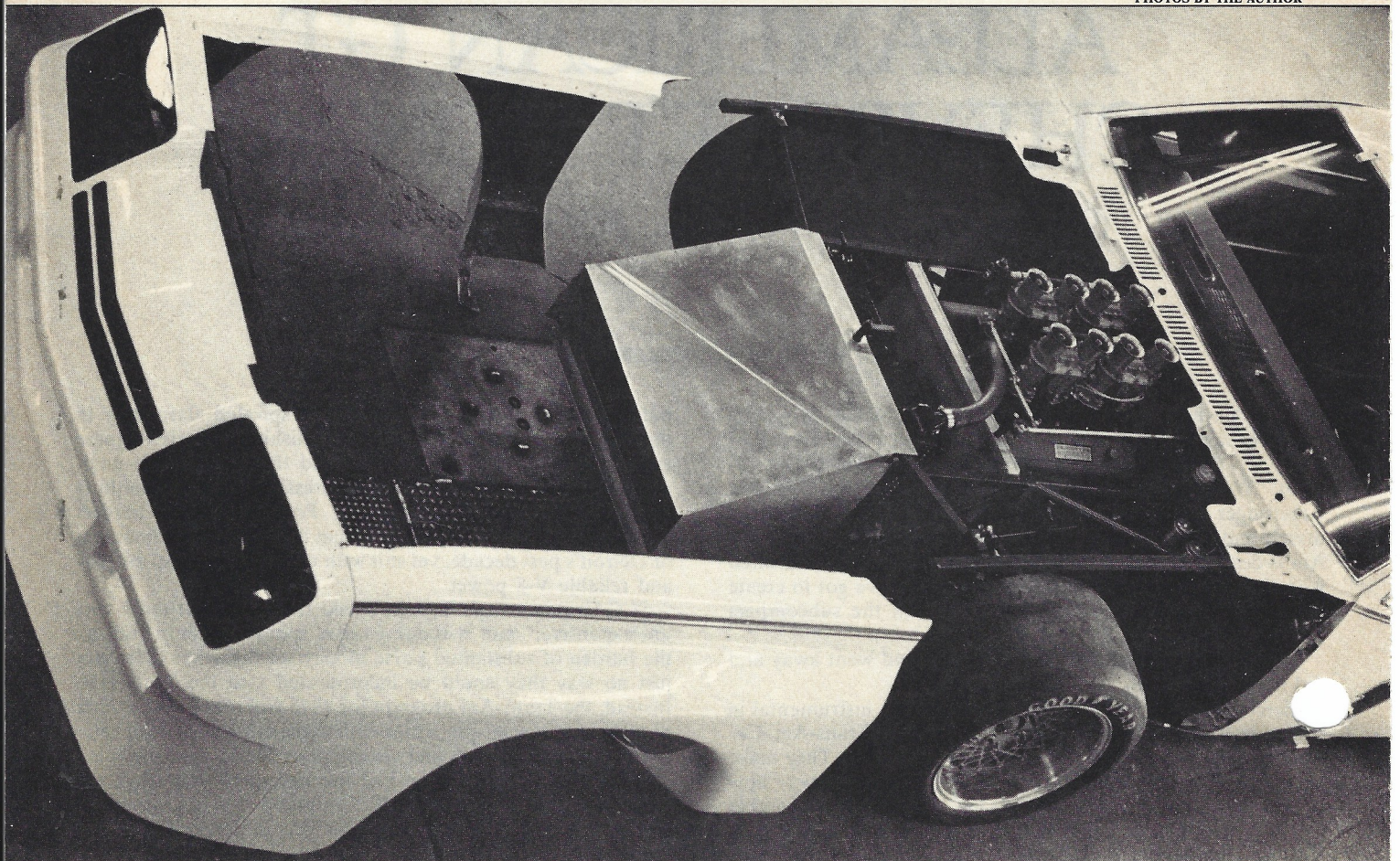
Teamed again with Thompson the following year, DeLorenzo formed Troy Promotions with private backing and ran a pair of ex-factory Mustangs very competitively in the Trans-Am. But the four-year partnership dissolved in 1972 and DeLorenzo struggled on with one Mustang and occasional drives in Corvettes. A contract came through in the fall to build a new Corvette to run in '73 for The Budd Company, but he had nothing but bad luck with that effort: "We qualified well, ran well and then usually broke the engine."

DeLorenzo did at least make use of the bad times to establish himself as a very capable co-driver, having good success in both Trans-Am and IMSA events in Mo Carter's Camaro. Last season was spent solidifying that reputation with Carter and others, wiping out his own newly built Corvette in a freak accident during the Pontiac, Michigan Wide Track Drive street race and plotting his boldest move yet: the preparation of the first All-American GT Monza, with which he hopes to become the major force in IMSA Camel GT racing this year.

"The first interest was shown here in April and May 1974," relates John Pierce on the subject of the IMSA Monza's body-shape evolution at Chevrolet Engineering and GM's Design Staff. "Jim McDonald was General Manager at the time and he wanted something different and sporty to spring on the 1975 press preview in July—something more than just the routine introduction of the new models.

"So we worked with the styling people, Jerry Palmer's studio, with the full approval of Bill Mitchell and the other powers over there. We had an idea of what we needed for tire clearance, and that evolved into what you saw last July at the proving ground in about six weeks' time. That car was never really drawn up. It was a sort of committee decision, patterned after

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR



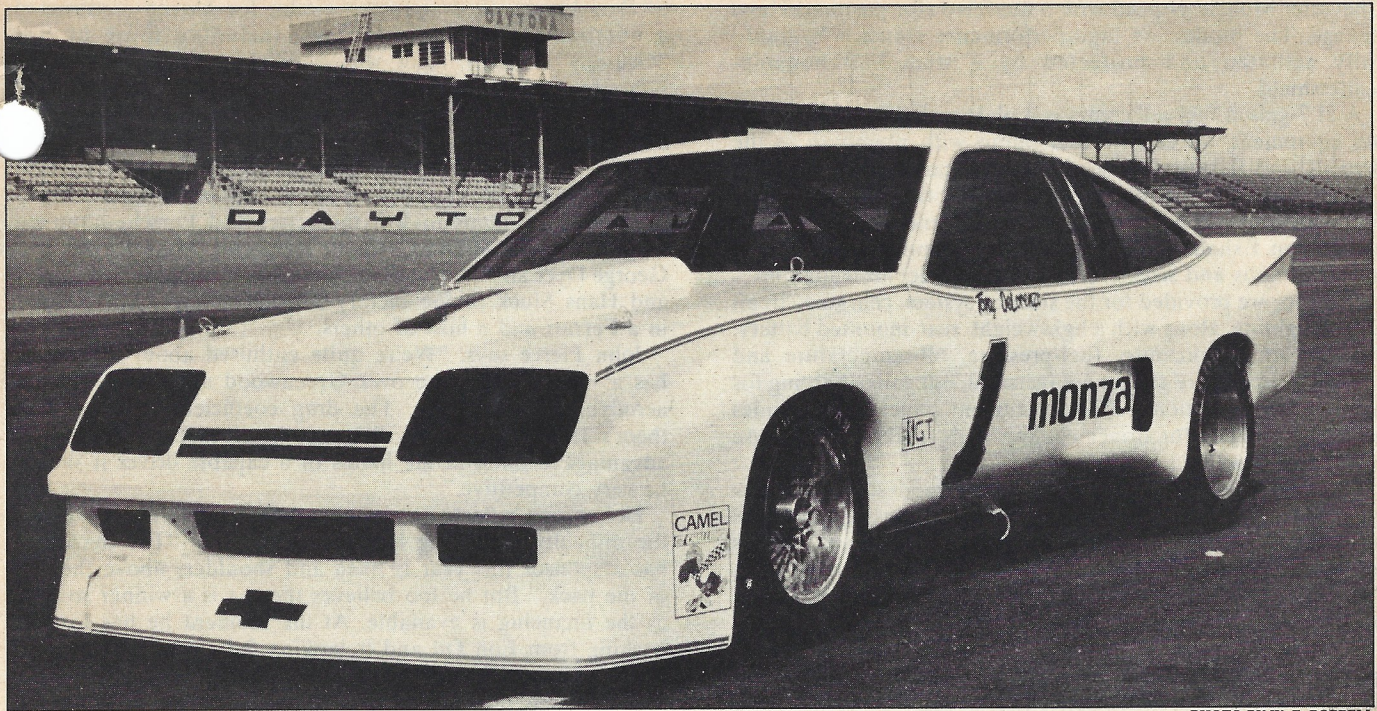


PHOTO BY W. E. POPPELL

the state of the art in European Group 2 cars—the Porsches, BMWs and Ford Capris—and what looked right to us at the time.”

The flared and spoiled white, red and blue mockup IMSA racer was displayed in its own tent at the July show, complete with “All-American GT” identification, and it created such a buzz among sports-minded journalists that pictures of it soon appeared in every automotive magazine in the country. It was an enviably successful exercise in new product promotion. But there was a lot more to the program than merely getting print on one faked-up car at one press show. “After the show we took it down to the Lockheed wind tunnel at Marietta, Georgia,” continues Pierce, “and made quite a few surface changes trying to obtain certain downforce properties with minimum drag. We had a fairly firm target of what we wanted in aerodynamic drag, which is one of the problems of the Camaro and Corvette. We wanted to stay at 72 or 73 inches maximum body width although the rules allow up to 82. Our primary target was to make a minimum-drag car, and I think we were pretty successful in the wind tunnel. Then we brought it back to Detroit and contracted an outside company to produce the fiberglass pieces, since we don’t have the capability for short runs. The company is Diversified Glass Products in Rochester, Michigan, which also makes Greenwood’s Corvette pieces.”

Chevrolet is not, however, developing special axles, suspension parts or anything else for the car. A competitor can buy the existing Corvette-Camaro “heavy duty” components to build into his Monza but will have to fabricate any other special pieces himself.

“The rules are so liberal I think there’d be 10 different ways to build it,” Pierce adds. “There are people talking about putting the Camaro subframe under a Monza, but that would be a bad compromise at best. The rules the way they are allow you to build a proper suspension and a proper race car and then put the body back over it.” The body panels are special-ordered through Ernie Callard at GM’s Parts Division in Flint.

MEANWHILE, a Detroit company called DeKon Engineering had decided to build a car back in January of last year, when the first word of the new IMSA class had begun to get around. Horst Kwech, of Trans-Am Mustang, Alfa and Capri renown, was involved in the project with some qualified engineering talent from one of the major Detroit car manufacturers. By April DeLorenzo had been brought into the deal and plans

had been made to go ahead with it whether or not Chevrolet got involved; when the GM stylists began working with the body shape in June, DeKon was already designing its own chassis-rollcage structure. Construction of the DeLorenzo car was financed solely by the individuals involved.

The car is an object of beauty to any fancier of first-class racing machinery. Its space frame-rollcage is handbuilt from mild steel tubing and has removable subframes front and rear for radiator ducting and mounting of the fuel cell. Alloy engine mounts, an alloy Corvette radiator and an oil cooler are installed along with an oil tank for the dry-sump engine lubrication and all the necessary plumbing.

The central body structure and doors are production, less door beams, windows and window regulators, but the rest of the exterior body is the Chevrolet-developed fiberglass panels—even the rear hatch. Side and rear windows are tinted plexiglass; the windshield and trim are production Monza. A Scheel racing seat is fitted with both fore-aft and vertical adjustment, and the alloy instrument panel is frame-mounted.

Interior panels (complete with heat insulation for the driver) and the cage-frame members are fully painted, but the exterior will be finished in primer and ready for custom-painting by the purchasers of “customer” cars. Both brake lights and windshield wipers are provided in addition to wiring and mounting provisions for head- and taillights.

The suspension is completely computer-designed and Can-Am in concept, with forged spindles, alloy hubs and oversize wheel bearings. The front system consists of tubular wide-base wishbones (to spread the load over two bulkheads) in conjunction with coil-over-shock units. The solid rear axle is located by trailing arms and a lateral Watt link and suspended by coil-shock units as at the front. Wheels are presently BBS units, 11 in. wide front and 15 in. wide rear; but alternate rims as well as various springs and anti-roll bars are available.

Brakes are Lockheed Can-Am units, powered by twin master cylinders with a balance bar. Rotors are of 11.90-in. diameter in front and 11.67-in. at the rear. The system includes flexible Aeroquip hydraulic lines at the front wheels and rear axle. Steering is rack-and-pinion, the position of the steering wheel being tailored to the customer’s preference.

The car has a tubular driveshaft mated to a Ford 4:11 full-floating, locking differential with a 9.0-in. ring gear and large tapered roller bearings; the “pig” is easily removable and alternate units and ratios are available. Transmission is a heavy-duty

Chevrolet Muncie 4-speed with a modified (for position) Hurst linkage. The production high-performance clutch is hydraulically actuated and protected by a steel bell housing-scattershield.

A 31.7-gallon fuel cell comes complete with dry-break refueling equipment, an electric fuel pump with plumbing to the firewall, and throttle linkage for Weber carburetors. The DeLorenzo car will probably use Webers, but the rules also allow fuel injection so long as it can be stuffed under the 2-in.-high hood scoop. Exhaust is all-tubular with side-mounted collectors; header lengths and sizes are to Chevrolet recommendations.

Electrics are provided for the starting system, charging circuit and all lighting, along with a lightweight, rear-mounted battery. Tachometer, oil-pressure, fuel-pressure, oil-temperature and coolant-temperature gauges are installed, but gauge lighting for night racing is optional. The instrument panel also includes adjustable outlets for driver cooling with intakes at the base of the windshield.

The whole lovely package sells for a modest \$23,500 less engine, making a DeKon Monza a \$30,000-plus commitment just to load on the trailer. DeLorenzo's car will have engines built by McLaren, conservatively estimated at 530 bhp from 350 cu in. in endurance-racing trim, although a Prototype Engineering 305-cu-in. unit was installed for early testing.

RUMORS THAT everyone from Eric Broadley at Lola, to Dan Gurney, to Porschemeister Peter Gregg was interested in constructing IMSA Monzas were rampant last fall. As of February there were cars being built in at least four shops including DeKon's, which was already hard at work on customer cars and nearly ready to test DeLorenzo's machine.

Well-known Indy Champ Car constructor Grant King was building a pair for Tom Nehl, the second of which will probably be sold. King said the first car was scheduled for testing by March 1 and work on the second was underway. His will retail for \$22,000 for the rolling chassis, and he added that he thought he could sell about six of them once the initial car is sufficiently developed. Other efforts were gathering steam in Warren Agor's shop and at a Malvern, Pennsylvania outfit called SRD Cars.

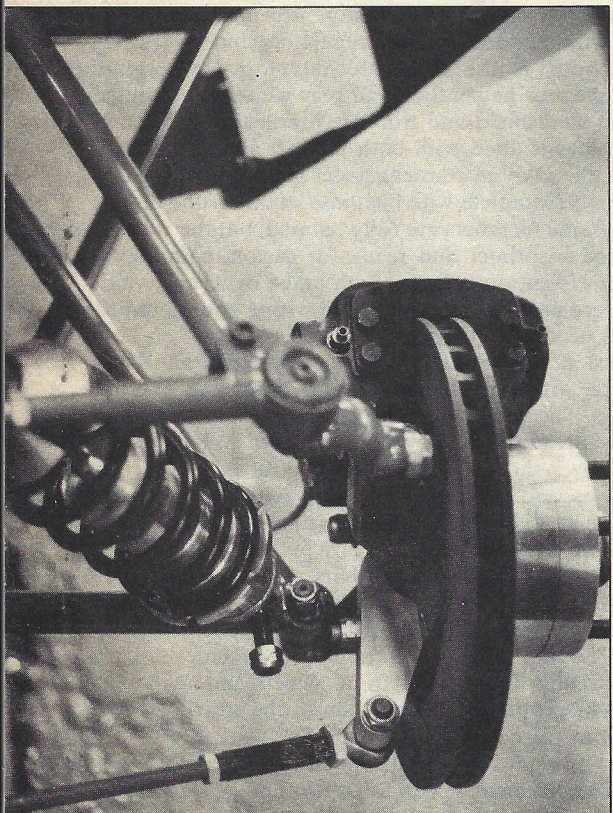
SRD is known in drag-racing circles for having constructed a number of winning machines, including those of Bill "Grumpy" Jenkins. Agor was building a single Monza for himself, which he hoped to introduce at Atlanta in April.

How will the Monzas fare against the light and agile Porsche and BMWs and the formidable big-block Greenwood "Bmobile" Corvettes? They look good on paper, with sophisticated chassis and 530-plus hp for only about 2600 pounds, but Greenwood says he plans to win the series and Porsche-mounted Peter Gregg, Al Holbert, Hurley Haywood, Mike Keyser and George Dyer all have the same idea—not to mention Sam Posey and Hans Stuck in the factory 3.5-liter BMWs, Milt Minter in a Ferrari and a host of others.

John Pierce says, "We're quite enthused about the car. It has a weight advantage over Greenwood and it also has an aerodynamic advantage. The drag coefficient is better and there's less frontal area, although he does have the power advantage. I think in the hands of a capable driver it should be very competitive."

DeLorenzo reflects on the country's economic climate and the difficulty of finding high-dollar support: "The man who has a sponsor this year is head and shoulders above the rest of the pack." But he too believes the car is a winner so long as the financing is available. At the moment he has lost his backing from Eon Oil and is looking for a new sponsor, but he's the first and foremost of the All-American GT challengers. This is his greatest opportunity to shine and the pressure will be on him to make the project work.

Greenwood is still fastest wherever he shows up to race, but he failed to finish Daytona when a backmarker put the car into the wall at 200 mph. Gregg and Haywood won the 24 Hour, giving Porsche the advantage going in. DeLorenzo's and the other All-American GTs will at least need considerable development before they realize their full potential. It's entirely possible that a Chevy "bow tie" will take the series, but there's no doubting that the German marques will be extremely tough to beat on reliability alone. It's also an absolute certainty that the fast-maturing Camel GT Series for 1975 will be the best yet by far.



The Monza's suspension is pure race car in design.

SPECIFICATIONS COMPARISON

	Production Chevrolet Monza 2+2	All-American GT DeKon Engineering Monza*
Approximate Price.....	\$4000.....	\$30,000.....
General:		
Curb Weight, lb.....	3200.....	2600.....
Weight Distribution, front/rear, %.....	58/42.....	48/52.....
Wheelbase, in.....	97.0.....	97.0.....
Track, front/rear.....	54.7/53.6.....	58.0/56.5.....
Length, in.....	179.3.....	179.3.....
Width, in.....	65.4.....	73.5.....
Height, in.....	50.2.....	47.9.....
Ground Clearance, in.....	4.9.....	3.5 f/4.5 r.....
Fuel Capacity, U.S. gal.....	18.5.....	31.7.....
Engine:		
Type.....	ohv V-8.....	ohv V-8.....
Displacement, cc/cu. in.....	4302/262.....	5747/350.....
Compression ratio.....	8.5:1.....	11.5:1.....
Bhp @ rpm, net.....	110 @ 3600.....	530+ @ 7200.....
Torque @ rpm.....	150 @ 2200.....	440 @ 5200.....
Carburetion.....	one Rochester (2V).....	four Weber (2V).....
Body & Chassis:		
Brake system.....	9.9-in. disc front, 9.0-in. drum rear.....	11.90-in. disc front, 11.67-in. disc rear.....
Wheels.....	steel disc, 13x6.....	magnesium, 11x15 f 15x15 r.....
Tires.....	BR78-13.....	11.40-15 f/25/13W-15.....
Steering type.....	recirculating ball.....	rack & pinion.....
Body/frame.....	unit steel.....	steel, fiberglass/ tubular steel.....
Final drive ratio.....	2.93:1.....	4.11:1 (others opt.).....
Lb/bhp (curb weight).....	29.1.....	4.9.....

*Some figures are approximate.