

SportsCar's

1999 New Race Car Buyers Guide

Our 15th Annual Survey of the New Race Car Market

by Richard S. James, R.A. McCormack and Ryan Lee Price

A few years ago we were almost ready to pronounce the new race car market dead. Well...not dead, but on life support. It's a good thing nobody pulled the plug, because the new race car market is well on its way to recovery.

On its way, yes. Out of bed and dancing a jig, not quite. But with a robust economy and an even brighter forecast for the future, it's definitely a bull market.

The healthiest categories by far are Formula Mazda and Formula Ford 2000/Formula Continental. After FMazda's introduction as a National class last year and with regional series all around the country, a lot of racers want these spec open-wheelers. Valley Motor Center expects to sell at least 50 cars for the upcoming season, and possibly more. As for two-liter FFords, the number of sales can be attributed to the U.S. F2000 National Championship. The dominant manufacturer in the category, Van Diemen—through its U.S. agent, Primus Racing—has orders for 26 cars in hand. Protoform appears to be the sales leader in an otherwise quiet FVee market, with 10 orders placed after Brad Stout's impressive Valvoline Runoffs® win in the marque.

Less robust business can be found in some surprising places. Manufacturers in Formula 500 blame slow sales on uncertainty over the engine situation—Is the Rotax going to prove to be the superior power plant, or is the tried-and-true AMW the way to go? Another surprise is that only six Spec Racer Fords were sold by SCCA Enterprises in '98. However, now that more than 750 have been sold, the used market for these never-out-of-date racers is huge, and buyers are shopping there first.

Last year, there seemed to be a lot of new players in the Sports Racer category. However, few sold any cars and at least one of the new manufacturers we introduced last year seems to be out of business. Omni-Fab showed the most success in this category and expects to sell five of its Cheetahs in 1999.

There are still new manufacturers entering—or re-entering—the market. After success with its S2000/ACRL contender, Carbir introduced a FF2000 car late last year. By March, they expect to have a FFord in production. Lee Stohr is building FFords again and, if our cover car goes as good as it looks, it will be a contender.

All signs point to a rejuvenated new race car market. And this is good even if you can't afford a brand-new racer—most new race car buyers have older cars to sell, and that makes for a great used car market. The classifieds in *SportsCar's* Marketplaces bear this out.

So, whether you're in the market for new or used, enjoy this 15th annual edition of *SportsCar's* New Race Car Buyers Guide, and happy racing.—Richard S. James

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