

EPCM '76

**Your guide to the 1976
European Production Car Masters**



When a group of club racers got together in a Northamptonshire pub in 1971 to come up with a new saloon car racing series, few would have imagined that, five years later, their brainchild would become the basis for a championship featuring races in four countries, as well as involving a number of works squads and some of the best saloon car drivers in Europe. But, with the creation of the European Production Car Masters, that is exactly what has happened. Their British Production Saloon Series was so successful that it has become the ECPM for this season, giving British teams a chance to take on the best that Europe has to offer.

THE CONCEPT

The idea behind the ECPM (and its predecessor, the BPSS) is to have a championship that is easy to follow for the casual observer, as well as cheap-to-run cars. The British Saloon Car Championship features a four-class system, and often the champion is someone who has not won a race outright but had won their class every time. The Production Car Racing Association, which runs the ECPM, didn't like this as they thought it would be confusing for people watching the races. Hence the ECPM has just a single class of car, running to an approximation of the FIA's Group 1 (series production touring car) rules, known as Production Touring 2000 (PT2000 for short).

THE CARS

PT2000 cars are essentially Group 1 touring cars, albeit with some modification allowed. They must be four-door, four-seat cars, with engines of less than 2050cc (to allow for two-litre cars that are slightly over 2000cc). To be eligible, production for the whole range of a particular model must exceed 5000 units per year, with 2000 units per year being produced for the specific model being raced. In other words, if a team wished to race a Triumph Dolomite Sprint, the whole Dolomite range must be produced at the rate of at least 5000 a year, with the Sprint model comprising at least 2000 of those. Cars are eligible for three years after they have gone out of production or after the production level has dropped below the required numbers.

Although PT2000 cars are largely standard, teams are free to modify them in certain areas:

BODYWORK Must be standard, although some badging and chrome trim can be removed. Only cars with four doors or more are allowed.

INTERIOR The seats, carpets, sound-deadening and such can be removed, but the dashboard must remain, although the steering wheel can be replaced with a racing wheel. Two racing seats must be installed in the front. Window glass must be replaced by Plexiglas for safety reasons.

ENGINE The engine block must be standard, although some tuning is allowed (cylinder head, air filter, cooling etc). Forced-induction engines are not allowed. Capacity must be less than 2050cc.

TRANSMISSION The standard gearbox can be replaced with a racing gearbox. Only manual gearboxes are allowed. Four-wheel-drive is not allowed.

WHEELS / TYRES The cars race on slick tyres (unless it is wet, of course). Any size wheel / tyre combination can be fitted, but because the bodywork cannot be altered, the wheel must fit inside the standard wheelarch.

BRAKES The standard braking system must be retained (so if a car is fitted with drum brakes, a team cannot replace them with discs) but the size of the drum / disc is limited only by the size of the wheels.

SUSPENSION The suspension system (geometry, mountings etc) itself must be standard, but springs and dampers can be replaced with racing items.

MISCELLANEOUS Racing exhausts can be fitted but must exit in the position that the standard exhaust does. The fuel tank must be replaced with a more robust racing fuel tank for safety reasons. A fire extinguisher system must be fitted.

THE RACES

The 1976 season consists of 15 races over eight rounds. Most rounds take the form of two 25-minute races separated by at least an hour to allow for repairs. A 30-minute qualifying session takes place on the Saturday, which establishes the grid order for the first race on the Sunday. The fastest lap of each driver in race one makes up the grid order for race two. Points are awarded to the first ten finishers of each race, with the allocation 20-15-12-10-8-6-4-3-2-1. The only exception is the round at the Nürburgring, which consists of a single hour-long “endurance” race with pit-stops allowed for fuel and tyres (although not mandatory), and with double-points awarded.

The calendar is as follows:

ROUND 1 Brands Hatch, UK, 4th April

ROUND 2 Silverstone, UK, 18th April

ROUND 3 Nürburgring, West Germany, 9th May (endurance round)

ROUND 4 Paul Ricard, France, 6th June

ROUND 5 Monza, Italy, 4th July

ROUND 6 Rouen-les-Essarts, France, 25th July

ROUND 7 Oulton Park, UK, 15th August

ROUND 8 Brands Hatch, UK, 5th September

TEAMS AND DRIVERS

Official entry list:

2	Terry Stevens	Dealer Team Vauxhall	Vauxhall Magnum
3	Jim Palmer	Dealer Team Vauxhall	Vauxhall Magnum
4	David MacDonald	Saturn Sport & Racing	Saturn Star
6	Pete MacDonald	Wilson Racing Team	Triumph Dolomite Sprint
8	Paddy Clarke	Paddy Clarke Motorsport	Ford Cortina Mk3
10	Mick Ledger	Thames Ford Dealers	Ford Cortina Mk3
11	Martin Davies	Blue Star Racing	Opel Ascona B
12	Kevin Spencer	Blue Star Racing	Opel Ascona B
14	Tony Johnson	Saturn Sport & Racing	Saturn Star
15	Gareth Baker	Flare Racing Team	Saturn Star
16	Liam O'Rourke	Paddy Clarke Racing	Ford Cortina Mk3
20	Tom Hughes	Flare Racing Team	Saturn Star
21	Jurgen Hoffmann	Dealer Opel Team	Opel Ascona B
22	Armin Huber	Dealer Opel Team	Opel Ascona B
23	Martijn Rensinck	Dealer Opel Team	Opel Ascona B
25	Andrew Edwards	Ryton Motorsport	Hillman Hunter GLS
26	Graeme Gould	Ryton Motorsport	Hillman Hunter GLS
27	Paul Danson	Samuri	Datsun 180B
30	Niklaus Werner	Werner Rennsport	Ford Taunus TC
33	Paul Howson	BL Dealer Team	Triumph Dolomite Sprint
34	Allan Harris	BL Dealer Team	Triumph Dolomite Sprint
36	Louis van Royen	Declerck Engineering	Ford Taunus TC2
39	Kort Dunnewold	Van Hummel Race Team	Audi 100
40	Michael ten Huizen	Van Hummel Race Team	Audi 100
42	Eliseo Simioni	Autodelta Alfa Romeo	Alfa Romeo Alfetta
46	Giannino dell'Oro	Autodelta Alfa Romeo	Alfa Romeo Alfetta
50	Florian Schmitz	F. Schmitz Race Team	TBA

No's 10, 36, 42, 46, and 50 are part-time entries.



DEALER TEAM VAUXHALL

Team principal Bill Blydenstein

Base London and Luton, UK

Established 1971

Drivers Terry Stevens and Jim Palmer

Car Vauxhall Magnum



Despite an indifferent 1975 with the Vauxhall Magnum, Dealer Team Vauxhall continue with their ageing cars for this season, reasoning that, with several new teams in the field, reliability will be more important than outright pace. Privately though, the team acknowledges that it didn't have much choice other than to stick with the Magnum, as Vauxhall doesn't have another suitable car in its line-up. The cars are slow in a straight line, and with the likes of Silverstone and Monza on the calendar, a season-long struggle looks likely. Drivers Terry Stevens and Jim Palmer are undoubtedly talented, but they will struggle to show it this year.



SATURN SPORT & RACING

Team principal Richard Daniels

Base Sheffield, UK

Established 1973

Drivers David MacDonald and Tony Johnson

Car Saturn Star



SSR's title defence was a trying one. Their new car was troublesome to begin with, with neither Tony Johnson nor new recruit David MacDonald getting to grips with it until the season was half over. However, by the end of the year, the Star was probably the best all-round car in the field, setting the team up nicely for a title tilt this season. Testing has been very impressive indeed, particularly with MacDonald at the wheel. The car is only beaten by the Triumphs in terms of straight-line speed, and probably has the best handling in the field: the team are understandably tipped as favourites this season. The SSR cars aren't the only Saturns on the grid this year, as they have also prepared a pair of Stars for its new "Junior Team", run under the Flare banner. Four works Saturns are going to be very difficult to beat.



WILSON RACING TEAM

Team principal Sid Wilson

Base Oxford, UK

Established 1964 (as Sid Wilson Engineering)

Driver Pete MacDonald

Car Triumph Dolomite Sprint

Sid Wilson's squad was the nearest thing to a challenger to BL's works team last season, driver Pete MacDonald really getting to grips with the Triumph Dolomite and providing many moments to cheer with his exuberant, tail-out style. Barring retirements, MacDonald never finished lower than fifth in 1975, and he'll be hoping to take that form into this season. There's certainly no reason why he wouldn't: Wilson has been in this game for many years now and he knows how to engineer a car, while MacDonald knows how to make best use of it. If everything goes right, the championship could well come their way.



PADDY CLARKE MOTORSPORT

Team principal Paddy Clarke

Base Northampton, UK

Established 1968

Drivers Paddy Clarke and Liam O'Rourke

Car Ford Cortina Mk3



Paddy Clarke's first season in the BPSS started off promisingly, but tailed off in the second half of the season, the team failing to score a single point in the final six races. Clarke maintains that lessons have been learned, and he hopes to give Liam O'Rourke the car he deserves this season. The team continues with its Ford Cortinas, but a bigger budget thanks to Clarke's efforts in sponsor-hunting should help them in the quest to become more competitive. O'Rourke is definitely one to watch, although Clarke is no slouch either, and if the car is up to it then both drivers could impress.



THAMES FORD DEALERS

Team principal Martin Green

Base Reading, UK

Established 1972

Driver Mick Ledger

Car Ford Cortina Mk3

The switch to four-door cars for 1975 didn't do Thames Ford any favours: despite their best efforts, the season was something of a disappointment, and the team were not enamoured of the move into Europe for this season. As a result, they are planning to enter only the British rounds. Driver Mick Ledger is no slouch, but the team are likely to struggle: their Ford Cortina is not seen as a particularly brilliant car but they are capable of scoring points if the cards fall for them.



BLUE STAR RACING

Team principal Andy Buchalski

Base Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK

Established 1975

Drivers Martin Davies and Kevin Spencer

Car Opel Ascona B



After a disappointing 1975 with a Vauxhall Magnum, Blue Star links up with DOT to run a pair of works-prepared Opel Asconas, as well as hiring former DOT driver Martin Davies to partner the promising Kevin Spencer. The team are aiming for regular points finishes this season, and if the Opels are up to it there's no reason why they shouldn't get them. However, question marks remain over finance: Spencer brings with him a lot of sponsorship cash, but with the squad expanding to two cars for the first time, will there be enough to run them effectively? Only time will tell.



FLARE RACING TEAM

Team principal Tony Williamson

Base Nottingham, UK

Established 1976

Drivers Gareth Baker and Tom Hughes

Car Saturn Star



A new team for this season, Flare is essentially a second Saturn works squad, described as SSR's "Junior Team", intended to bring on young talent with a view to promoting them to the senior team in the future. Their choice of drivers for this season is impressive: Tom Hughes showed terrific speed with Ryton Motorsport last season, although he tended to get himself into trouble a little too often, while Gareth Baker was steadier but more consistent. It's certainly a promising combination, and most observers expect both drivers to win races in 1976.



DEALER OPEL TEAM

Team principals Tony Fall and Gunther
Irmischer

Base Bradford, UK and Rüsselsheim, West
Germany

Established 1974

Drivers Jurgen Hoffmann, Armin Huber and Martijn Rensinck

Car Opel Ascona B



After a desultory 1975, DOT way. The team has forged German counterpart for this suggest that they will be much car, the Ascona replacing the new drivers, with the highly Jurgen Hoffmann and Armin Huber joining Martijn Rensinck in an expanded three-car line-up. The Ascona is smaller and lighter than the car it replaces, and with Hoffmann and Huber at the wheel, it should be a competitive proposition. DOT are also preparing cars for the Blue Star team, and hope to field a fourth works-run car as the season gets under way. The revitalised squad certainly can't be accused of lacking ambition!



has rung the changes in a big closer ties with its West season, and there is much to improved. There is a new corpulent Rekord, and two rated West German pairing



RYTON MOTORSPORT

Team principal Roy Hall

Base Coventry, UK

Established 1973

Drivers Andrew Edwards and Graeme Gould

Car Hillman Hunter GLS



Chrysler UK's de facto works team had a reasonable 1975, thanks largely to the efforts of young hotshoe Tom Hughes. Hughes moves on this season, replaced by Graeme Gould, and with Chrysler's financial problems necessitating a budget cut for the team, plus an ageing car, the squad are expecting more of a struggle. Gould and team-mate Andrew Edwards are certainly both capable of scoring good results if the car is competitive, but the Hillman Hunter is hardly cutting-edge and so a season in the lower reaches of the field looks likely.



SAMURI

Team principal Spike Anderson

Base Silverstone, UK

Established 1973

Driver Paul Danson

Car Datsun 180B

Samuri's move into the BPSS last season didn't go well. Driver Paul Danson found the car tricky to drive, and ended the year with just two points-scoring drives. The team has worked hard on the handling of the Datsun over the Winter and are hoping to be more competitive this season. Bearing in mind their history with making Japanese cars quick, only a fool would write off their chances of improving in 1976, but even regular points-scoring would be a huge achievement. Realistically they'll be fighting it out towards the back of the field.



WERNER RENNSPORT

Team principal Lothar Werner

Base Cologne, West Germany

Established 1972

Driver Niklaus Werner

Car Ford Taunus TC

After a successful few season racing in West Germany, Werner Rennsport moves to the ECPM for this year. A real family affair, driver Niklaus Werner is the son of team owner Lothar. Werner Sr.'s aim is to get his son noticed by the wider racing world, and judging by his performances in the Deutsche Rennsport Meisterschaft at the wheel of a BMW CSL during the past couple of years, Werner Jr. should certainly achieve that. An impressive young driver, he doesn't make many mistakes and drives intelligently. However, with an old Ford Taunus TC, he may find life in the ECPM a little more difficult. He has shown encouraging form in testing, though.



BL DEALER TEAM

Team principal Ian Moore

Base Birmingham, UK

Established 1955 (as BMC Competitions)

Drivers Paul Howson and Allan Harris

Car Triumph Dolomite Sprint



Last season was largely dominated by BL, and Triumph Dolomites in general. Allan Harris took a record four wins from the first four races, and consistent results elsewhere meant he took the title in the penultimate round. The Triumph was the best car over the season, giving the beleaguered company reason to be cheerful. For this season, the squad is clearly subscribing to the "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" philosophy: there are no major changes to either personnel or car, and that continuity should ensure that they remain successful. However, they will be wary of the threat posed by SSR, who looked very good at the end of last season and have looked dangerous in testing. The prospects look good for a thrilling season-long battle.

DECLERCK ENGINEERING

Team principal Jan Declerck

Base Genk, Belgium

Established 1970

Driver Louis van Royen

Car Ford Taunus TC2

Declerck Engineering moves into the ECPM for this season, although it doesn't plan to join the series until the Nürburgring round as it is yet to complete work on its car. The team will run a Ford Taunus TC2, the road-going version of which was only launched in January, so the delay is understandable. Driver Louis van Royen is highly rated by those who have seen him race, and if the new Taunus is an improvement over its predecessor the young Belgium driver may be able to pull off a surprise or two.

VAN HUMMEL RACE TEAM

Team principal Jeroen van Hummel

Base Rotterdam, Netherlands

Established 1969

Drivers Kort Dunnewold and Michael ten Huizen

Car Audi 100



The Dutch Van Hummel team joins the field for 1976, with a pair of patriotically-liveried Audis. The squad comes with a solid reputation, and they are tipped in some quarters as potential dark horses. The Audis are certainly quick in a straight line, although they are probably the largest and heaviest cars in the championship, so the twistier circuits may prove troublesome for them. However, with Kort Dunnewold and Michael ten Huizen on the driving strength, they should do well at the faster circuits such as Monza. Team owner Jeroen van Hummel is an ambitious and talented engineer, and it would be no surprise to see his team pull off some good results.



AUTODELTA ALFA ROMEO

Team principal Carlo Chiti

Base Milan, Italy

Established 1961

Drivers Eliseo Simioni and Giannino dell'Oro

Car Alfa Romeo Alfetta



A famous name in racing, Autodelta plans to enter the ECPM later this season, perhaps at the Nürburgring round. Its cars have already tested and look pretty quick, although they give away a couple of hundred cc's compared to the likes of Saturn and Triumph. Boss Carlo Chiti describes this season as an "evaluation" ahead of a possible full assault in 1977, as Alfa Romeo expands its racing programme. Drivers Eliseo Simioni and Giannino dell'Oro are not exactly household names, but those in the know rate them highly, so don't be surprised to see them do well when they eventually join the rest of the field.

F. SCHMITZ RACE TEAM

Team principal Florian Schmitz

Base Hanover, West Germany

Established 1975

Driver Florian Schmitz

Car TBA

West German businessman Florian Schmitz aims to race in his home round at the Nürburgring, although at the time of writing he is yet to confirm what car he will be using. Rumours suggest that he is trying to convince the PCRA to give him dispensation to race a two-door BMW 2002, despite the fact that it doesn't quite conform to the rules. Whichever car he ends up using, he is unlikely to be a factor.