

Local firm readies cars for Indy race

By MAURIE WALKER

When the familiar cry of "Gentlemen, start your engines" is heard at the Indianapolis Speedway May 27, one of those roaring engines may be a product of a Livonia-based firm.

McLaren Engines, at 32233 W. Eight Mile Road since 1970, is an English based firm that has been in-

volved in racing for years.

Steve Roby, chief mechanic and a native of Australia, is one of some 20 employees at the Livonia site that builds and breaths engines and racing.

"Right now we are preparing our McLaren Team car for the Indy 500," he said.

"Johnny Rutherford, who has won two world championships with our

cars and captured the Indianapolis 500 for us in 1974 and 1976, is scheduled to drive our car this year."

The body of the low, sleek car is built at McLaren's headquarters in Colnbrook, England, 20 miles from London.

"They ship the cars over here, where we install the engines," Roby said.

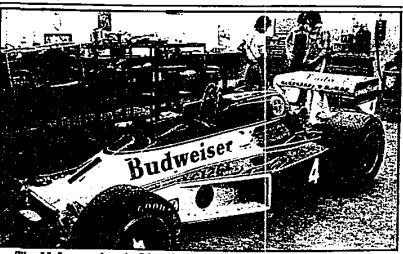
"We don't actually manufacture all the engine parts but we do put the engines together here, test and rebuild them. Some of the engine components come from a variety of manufacturers."

Building engines for the Indy type cars is just one of the jobs done at McLaren. The BMW, a foreign engine, is also built by McLaren.

"We have cars in the Grand Prix races which call for a different type engine than the so-called pit-stop racing such as Indy, Phoenix, Atlanta, Michigan International Speedway and Ontario," he said.

In addition, the Livonia shop performs durability tests of various engines for numerous auto manufacturers.

The shop contains a maze of sophisticated machinery and tools.



The McLaren shop in Livonia is getting the racing machines ready to compete in the Indianapolis 500. The car bodies are built in England and the engines in Livonia. (Staff photos by Bob Woodring).



Steve Roby of Australia (left), chief mechanic at McLaren, and Roger Bailey of England, in charge of the BMW engines discuss preparations for the Budweiser McLaren.

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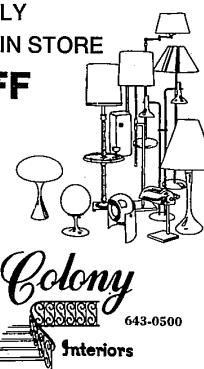
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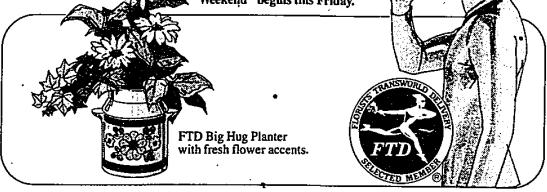
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