

Area backing in race car

By GRETCHEN HITCH

"This car will be the center of attention at all the big international races," said Gordon Chance, weekend visitor from Toronto and president of Canadian Racing Motors.

The Toronto racing specialist was eyeing the sleek red Corvette Abex-American Eagle before a test drive Saturday on Graton track near Grand Rapids.

Area men have pooled their talents and resources for the 1974 IMSA (International Motor Sports Association) G.T. Series which opened with the Sebring Race April 21 on the Road Atlanta track near Bainsville, Ga. The February Sebring was cancelled due to the energy crisis.

The Abex-American Eagle, owned by Harold Van Arnen of Birmingham, was built and will be driven by a foremost racing driver, Jerry Thompson of Troy. Harry Quackenbush of Bloomfield Hills, Terry Satchell of Rochester and Troy's Ken Van Arnen are part of the Van Arnen racing team.

VAN ARNEM proudly gazed at the low-slung Eagle and mused fondly. "Look at that car. It's just ready to race. The raciest race car I've ever seen."

"An experimental prototype development of a Chevrolet Corvette utilizing the latest computerized design techniques," was Van Arnen's description. "The car is designed with aerodynamics unique to production race cars."

Chance agreed. "The Corvette is highly competitive already. This is certainly a new concept. The first of a special prototype."

Friction Products Group of Abex is sponsoring the car. Ron Cutler, Birmingham vice-president in charge of national and international Abex sales, said, "We're anxious to be involved in this racing effort to test performance of Abex friction products (brakes) under racing conditions."

THE COMPUTERIZED suspension system is unique and was implemented by Van Arnen, a computer pioneer. Team member Quackenbush is a computer analyst and a mechanical engineer who also works with his hands and was under the chassis making last-minute suspension adjustments.

At the windy Graton track Saturday, driver Thompson strapped into the special harness within the safety roll cage and zipped along the narrow track for a fast five laps.

The VROOOOOO echoed over the field prompting Van Arnen to describe the roar like "a dragon in the valley."

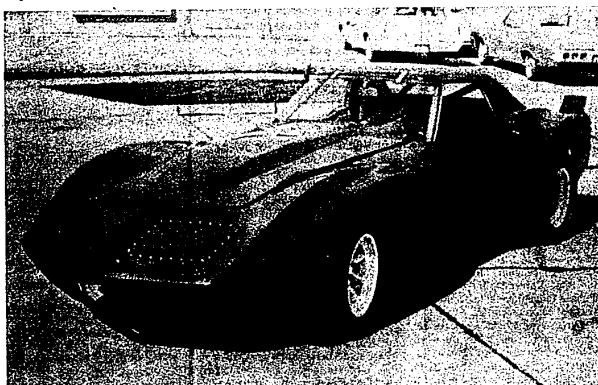
After the test run Thompson climbed out. "She has nice manners . . . a good personality," and then went into technical changes with the team members. Thompson, Van Arnen and Cutler marveled at the improved cornering control. "You

can throw it into the turns," Thompson said.

"Now we get down to the serious work," he said as the red hood came off once again. The Corvette is being shipped to Georgia for the April 21 international six-hour endurance race with drivers from all over the world.



Jerry Thompson of Troy (in white jacket), race car builder and driver, checks out his engine. (Photographed by GRETCHEN HITCH)



Van Arnen-owned Abex-American Eagle

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Net match for girls on its way

Area junior high girls are eligible to enter Kingswood School Cranbrook's third annual singles tennis tourney May 5 at Seaholm High in Birmingham, 2439 W. Lincoln.

The tourney will feature flights for seventh, eighth and ninth graders. Registration will be 9 a.m. the day of the tourney at the courts.

Prospective contestants below the seventh grade may enter the seventh-grade flight.

Trophies will be awarded to the winner and runner-up in each flight. There is an entry fee.

The past two years, the tourney was held at Kingswood. This year, however, Kingswood's courts are unavailable because of resurfacing.

For further information about the tourney, call Harriet Secrest, tourney director, at 646-5877.

Ice star

Birmingham's Richard Hasse experienced plenty of ice time this past winter as a rookie forward on the varsity hockey team at St. Lawrence University, Canton, N.Y.

The Skating Saints capped their campaign with an over-all mark of 12-15-1.

A sophomore, Hasse was graduated from Detroit Country Day.

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