

# Book Reviews for Porschephiles

by Bruce Herrington, Orange Coast Region

**Champion of the World: How Jackie Stewart, Matra and Racing Blue Made it to the Top**  
by Edouard Seidler, published 1970 by Automobile Year

*Champion of the World* is largely a picture book. It has no table of contents and no index, at least in part because the pages are un-numbered. It does have pages of text interspersed within the pages of largely full-page pictures. The text introduces the situations depicted in subsequent pages and the pictures provide an insight into a long lost era – when motor sport was a sport, not a business (pardon the blatant bias of this 'ol phart').

The ostensible subject of this book is the 1969 Formula 1 season, when a Scotsman (Jackie Stewart) cinched the world championship driving a French car (Matra) for a team managed by an Englishman (Ken Tyrell). It is the pictures that make this book significant. They show a time when an ordinary spectator can have physical contact with a World Champion (to be, or in fact); can touch his car; when race photographers take pictures of drivers at speed where you can see the whites of their eyes. This book, perhaps because of its *French Connection* tends to present *arty* images (i.e. cover shot), rather than sharp photos of cars frozen in time. Also included are snap shots of drivers faces and cockpits. Notably, captions are provided for only a few of the pictures.

*Champion of the World* begins with mention of how Matra expanded from airplane bodies, to missiles, to cars, to racing in Formula 3. Next comes the formation of Elf as an oil company, and the creation of the Matra-Elf team of Formula 2 and 3 cars, secretly eyeing Formula 1. Though not dealt with in detail, the Matra racing story is amazing: In October, '64, an aerospace company buys Bonnet, a very small manufacturer of unremarkable cars, the Djets. In less than 4 years, and only 14 months on the Formula 1 project, Matra's systems engineering approach results in a Formula 1 win, with a car using engine, transmission and suspension designed,

and largely built, in-house. A story worth much more coverage than it is given in this book.

Stewart came into Matra's Formula 3 program with Ken Tyrell, or maybe it was the other way around. It was not all smooth sailing from there, but

Jackie Stewart did come in second in the World Championship during Matra's first year in Formula 1. Matra also made a significant showing in the '68 Le Mans despite only being pressured into participating at the last minute. In 1969, Le Mans became the major focus for Matra, leaving Ken Tyrell pretty much to his own devices with Formula 1. Ironically, Matra-Elf's Le Mans cars were DNF, whereas Tyrell's cars made Stewart Champion of the World.

The actual discussion of the 1969 Formula 1 races is strangely brief. This is in part due to the fact that the season was basically dull: Stewart starts; Stewart wins. After only 6 of 9 races, Stewart cinches the World Championship. Some exciting moments are described in the two pages of text relative to Stewart's F1 drives.

With a little over 100, 9-1/2 x 12 inch heavy weight pages, it is a well produced book. The many double page pictures are in perfect registry. The text is a small fraction of the total book, so it is an easy read. It is more of an overview rather than a complete story of Matra-Elf racing and Stewart's first world championship.

*Champion of the World* is not available from Motorbooks, or even Amazon. Searching the internet is challenging because there have been many individuals in diverse disciplines written up as "Champion of the World". One site that currently has copies (ranging in price from \$6.93 to \$83.56) is <http://www.alibris.com/>

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