

□ Just north of the 401 Highway, on Kennedy Road in Scarborough, Ont., lies Canada's top car racing organization, the Comstock Racing Team.

Inside this racing plant there is always a beehive of activity as mechanics move about preparing various competition cars for rallying or sports car racing. And tucked away in one corner of the building is an office belonging to a man who is responsible for the preparatory planning of these competition cars.

In title he is Comstock Racing Team crew chief, and in name he is Paul Cooke, but no matter which way you look at him it soon becomes obvious that he is a man who knows his business.

While the name of Paul Cooke may not be as familiar to racing fans as is Ludwig Heimrath, Craig Fisher or Eppie Wietzes, the success story which has been written by Cooke is one that will be matched by few.

It was 15 years ago that Cooke sat behind a high school desk and started to take an interest in sports cars. Once he had discovered that this was a hobby he wished to pursue, he seriously set out to make this a successful venture. Since that time he has won many trophies in various phases of motorsport competition as well as becoming crew chief of Canada's top racing team. And yet Paul Cooke doesn't intend to rest on his laurels.

Cooke is the first to admit that there is no end to learning about racing cars.

"I'm just starting to get that feeling which tells you what makes racing cars react in their own peculiar style," said Cooke.

Cooke is one of those types who likes to listen and learn. He says that recently he has noticed he is able to easily absorb what he reads and when certain incidents come up on the race track he is able to apply his reading background to a given situation.

"If I'm stuck then I ask around," explained 30-year-old Cooke.

Cooke's introduction to driving race cars came suddenly.

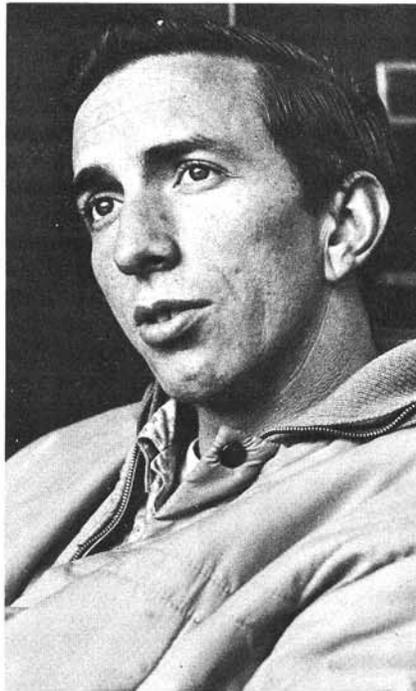
"It was back in 1957 at Harewood Acres. I had been helping Dave Graham prepare his MG TC when 10 minutes before the race he turned the car over to me and said 'here you are.' Prior to this I only had some experience dragging. Fortunately I got off to a good start and led the pack into corner #1. I stayed out in front for 12

of the 15 laps. However, on lap 13 the car lost two of its wheels and needless to say I had to retire," quipped Cooke.

In 1959 Paul won a Class 6 championship in a Sprite. However, it was during that year that Cooke started to take a real interest in working on cars and was more concerned with exploring their reactions on a race course, than winning.

But his most satisfying event came in 1960 when he teamed with popular Montreal driver Barry Martin to place first in class in the Sundown Grand Prix staged at Harewood Acres.

Another car Paul did extremely well with was a Ford Falcon sedan prepared by Holman & Moody. When the regular driver withdrew, Paul took over the driving chores as well and won the first long-distance sedan race held in Canada in 1964.



Paul Cooke

It was in December, 1963 that Cooke left his job as an advertising and sales promoter to join the Comstock company. He saw this as a big opportunity and since that time both he and Comstock have enjoyed many victories. While Paul is not ready to accept congratulations and claims that working at Comstock is strictly a team effort, it is obvious that he has been responsible for much of the factory's success.

Paul is like the quarterback on a football team. He directs the plan

T&T GUEST OF THE MONTH

Paul
Cooke

of attack and as shown by the result is often victorious, but possibly even more important is the fact that Cooke's record book says that he is a winner and some of his winning spirit has no doubt rubbed off onto his teammates.

Cooke's biggest challenge was preparing the Ford GT's for the Canadian entry at Sebring. He realizes that this is finally the big time.

"I knew things would be tough preparing for Sebring, but I guess I never did realize just how rough and challenging this type of event could be," explained Cooke.

"The most important phase of your plan of attack is to be prepared or mentally equipped. Then if something does happen the possibilities of panic or disorganization are decreased," he said.

Today Cooke has little time for hobbies. Toronto-born, Paul did at one time maintain an interest in rugger. In fact he was running on an interlocking schedule with motor racing and rugger for four years. His most serious injury was a broken thumb, however, despite an arm-length cast it did not stop him from racing the weekend after he sustained the injury.

Despite the opinion of many people, Cooke stressed the fact that neither Comstock nor Ford have a bottomless pit of money to spend on Canadian motor racing.

However, he does feel that much of the success of both Ford and Comstock in Canadian racing has been the result of deriving good value from available money.

"Naturally it is important to win. If you stop winning then you could be out of a job," said Cooke.

Somehow you get the feeling that Paul Cooke will have a job for a long time to come.