

Chris Champion on his 1968 MGB GT Sebring V8

By Darryl Simpson



First time out for Chris Champion and the restored 1968 MGB GT Sebring

As you are all aware Chris Champion likes a challenge!!!

It all started with the purchase of a converted MGB GT by Derek Hulse, who wanted to build the car for racing. The car went through several hands before Chris bought it. Firstly, the car belonged to, Roger Pearce in Johannesburg, then Rod Paxton in East London then back to Roger in Johannesburg, then on to "tinsnips" (his nickname for good reason) Brian Tyler, then back to Rod Paxton who started with the 'Sebring' conversion including the Rover V8! This was modelled on one of the original Sebring MGC's number 35 and one of about 6 cars in 1968. A similar

car won its class and came 10th overall at Sebring 12 hour. Rod Paxton never got around to racing the car and sold it to Norman Frost in Knysna, who campaigned the car at Simola Hill Climb. The car did not do well at the Hill Climb, due to clutch failure and was sold on to Chris unseen, in January 2019.

Chris found many issues with the car and did what he could, before entering the Simola Hill Climb a few months later. Once again, it was not successful with accelerator problems amongst other things, but the car did show Chris potential.

With the car back in the workshop redevelopment started in earnest. Engine mods came from JE Developments including high

compression die cast 10:1 piston, harmonic damper, poly V Serpentine belt pullies. A crank driven oil pump & oil cooler, with off take from the front cover, improved oil flow and minimised strain on the distributor and cam shaft drives, by doing away with the original cam driven geared oil pump.

The camshaft is Piper 228, suitable from 2500-6000 RPM. The cam gives plenty of 'grunt' without being too wild. New 'Vernia' cam gears, valve guides, double valve springs, adjustable push rods, adjustable forged steel rockers, high strength valve spring keepers and modified thrust plate were provided for the cam and modified big end bearing shells & rocker shaft end pillars for added strength.

The modified Mallory ignition system has been converted to single point with no vacuum. Idle 16 Deg ATDC and all in at 37 Deg ATDC at 2500 RPM. A MSD 6AL ignition module, that boosts voltage spark is triggered by the distributor. This allows the distributor points to act as a low voltage switch. The MSD has a rev limiter built in, which has been set to max 6000 RPM. Magnicor HT leads all with matching MSD blaster 2 coil. The fly wheel has been lightened by approx. 8 Kgs. All reciprocating parts have been dynamically balanced. Heavy duty clutch and plate has been fitted and cylinder heads have been ported.

The large capacity sump has been extensively baffled to control oil surge. Large aluminium radiator and oil cooler fitted for max cooling. Gearbox is Toyota 21R, a strong well-respected box for this kind of application. Bell housing is Rover with mechanical clutch release lever and thrust bearing removed and replaced with a

concentric hydraulic release bearing. A new aluminium flange was fabricated to mate the bell housing to box.

Body modifications to the engine firewall and gearbox tunnel have been made to raise the gearbox and align the prop shaft and diff. This also allows for easier installation of the engine. The rear axle was modified with Pannard rods and new mountings and the axle 'load' height has been modified with suitable blocks and new self-fabricated 'U' bolts made from EN8 steel. 2 spring leaves were removed.

The front brakes have fabricated aluminium adaptors to fit Willwood aluminium 4 pot callipers to VW vented 280mm discs, which are machined to the correct PCD of the standard MGB front hubs. Rear brakes are standard drums. Willwood adjustable brake bias mechanism included.

Other modifications include fitted, fabricated full flow 4 into 1 exhaust headers by Warren Steyn of BSE Performance and twin exhausts by Andrea Bates of Powerflow, Salt River. A new roll cage was fitted to allow extra head room for Chris's height. The accelerator pedal was modified to allow heel and toe operation in corners. An engine stabilizer bracket was fabricated to prevent engine sideways movement as well as an aluminium oil catch tank, required for racing. The boot and bonnet straps provide Chris with added confidence when racing.

The Club would like to thank Chris for his time and effort in presenting this wonderful example of meticulous work to build a fun racing car, on a minimal budget.



Carburetion is via a 4-barrel Holley 390 CFM 'Double Pumper' with Offenhauser 360 deg manifold which allows the carb to sit lower on the engine, giving space for the bonnet to close.



The final engine



Once again:

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