



First appearance of the Buchanan-Fiat was at the October Bathurst meeting where the car won the sports car championship on handicap.

Fast future

SUNDAY, October 6th, 1957.
Mount Panorama, Bathurst.
The occasion — the New South
Wales Road Racing Champion-
ships.

From an early hour thousands
of spectators packed the famous
Australian mountainous road rac-
ing circuit, and as these followers
of the sports scanned the pro-
gramme they queried an entry in
the fourth race, the N.S.W.
Championship for Sports Cars.

It read: 74. N. H. Buchanan
Motor Co. Pty. Ltd. (Driver:
Bruce Maher). Buchanan-Fiat.
1089 c.c. Handicap. 1.31 sec.

To the regulars of motor racing
this was an unusual entry.

Up to this time Buchanan's cars
had been either M.G.'s or Ford
Zephyrs. Also Maher had always
been behind the wheel of a M.G.

The result of this championship
is now well known, for in the
handicap section victory went to
the Buchanan-Fiat driven by
Maher.

Since this Bathurst meeting the
all white Fiat and Bruce Maher
have competed with success at Mt.

Druitt and Schofields and on per-
formances recorded it would ap-
pear as if this combination will
go a long way in sports car
racing.

Furthermore, this car could be
built by any keen "backyard"
engineer who is anxious to enter
the racing field. Its cost is well
within the grasp of the average
enthusiast.

The Buchanan-Fiat originated
from a wrecked Fiat 1100 sedan,
and at the time of writing was
still running in virtually standard
tune with very few modifications.
This position will no doubt alter
as soon as Maher gets the time
to work on his new sports car.

But let's have a good look at
this car and see just what makes
it perform so well.

The Fiat's fibreglass body is
taken from the mould which is
turning out Buchanan-M.G.'s at a
regular rate. However, it has
been shortened by approximately
4" at the division which runs
across the body near the middle
of the doors. This was rebonded
and is not easily detected. A

full floor, tail shaft housing, etc.,
has also been fashioned from
glass to provide added rigidity.

All-up weight of the sports car
when fully fitted with spare wheel
and tyre, slats, etc., is 11½ cwt.

The bonnet lid, which opens in
the normal Buchanan style, ex-
poses a lowered Fiat motor
mounted some 16" behind the lat-
ticed metal grille. As it is 3"
closer to the roadway than when
fitted in a standard sedan the
usual Fiat radiator is able to sit
beneath the sleek fibreglass
bonnet.

The sump has been lowered by
the addition of a 2" deep oil tray.
This has necessitated lowering the
oil pick-up to overcome any tend-
ency that the motor might have
had to run the bearings because
of oil surge when the car is being
pushed to the limit. Furthermore
the additional sump area tends to
keep the oil cooler.

The generator has changed
positions. It is now mounted on
the opposite side (near side) to
permit the rev. counter to drive
directly off the camshaft.

Hot contender for Under 1100 c.c. class honours, is this well planned sports/racing car, built around Fiat parts and fitted with a fibreglass shell.



Regular M.G. and now Fiat special pilot, Bruce Maher, built up the car especially for competition use.

FIAT

by ALAN GIBBONS

Maher claims that the Fiat is one of the best handling vehicles he has driven on the track, and puts this down largely to the Morris Minor rack and pinion steering he has installed.

Two S.U. electric petrol pumps have replaced the conventional mechanical type, while a pair of 1½" S.U. carburettors supply fuel to the engine.

Maher has used a specially cast inlet manifold in an effort to improve the motor's efficiency, but the exhaust manifold is standard. Another modification is four ring pistons, while the compression has been raised to 10:1.

At the time of writing Maher was still using standard valves, but he hopes to have a set of oversized valves fitted in the near future.

The gearbox, differential and brakes are standard Fiat components.

Fiat 1100's do not have a chassis, so Bruce Maher has utilised a tubular steel foundation for this car. It comprises of two 16 gauge tubes 2½" in diameter linked by

a cruciform of 17 gauge steel for added strength. The front springs which are basically Fiat are set lower and softer than is customary, to counter the reduced weight of the car. The rear springs are made-up, being shorter and lighter than the normal Fiat components.

The shock absorbers are also "foreign". Those on the front of the car are tubular and adjustable, while the rear shockers, lighter than the standard type, are non-adjustable.

Although termed as a sports car the Buchanan-Fiat in its present form is not a car for touring over Australian roads. The clearance (this will be adjusted shortly) is less than 4" at the sump plug (its lowest point when not fitted with a muffler. When this "accessory" is fitted to the car the clearance shrinks to a bare 3". On Sydney roads a muffler might last a couple of miles if you could bypass the potholes).

So much for what makes the Fiat tick.

The cockpit of the car is well appointed, and supplies the driver

with all the required information during racing. On the instrument panel there is an M.G. tachometer, a speedo and water and oil pressure gauges. There are also amp and fuel capacity indicators. The normal switches pertaining to headlights, tail lights, dashboard restat, etc., are well positioned, while the ignition switch is the key type of a standard Fiat.

One of the features of the car is the position of the gear stick in relation to the steering wheel. The lever, a cut down Fiat stick, is mounted on a rather high gearbox housing, but less than 3" from the wheel rim. As a result, Maher is able, by the flick of his left wrist, to change from one gear to another.

He has made up a linkage so that the gear positions are in an identical position to those on a T.C.

Door catches are Healey or T.R. type and they are operated on a cord-pull-catch system. Both doors afford some room for personal items in deep, built-in pockets.



Luggage locker houses spare wheel and fuel tank, leaves little space for anything else in this sports/racer.

Some of the finer decorations of the cockpit were not completed when this article was written, but by now the car will have an upholstered red crash pad above the dash.

The two bucket seats are built on fibreglass frames and well upholstered in red plastic material over sponge rubber. A matching tourneau cover closes off the passenger's seat when required.

Maher races the car fitted with a single nine inch high curved windshield, but provision has been made for a full width, one-piece screen should race regulations ever require it. To date, no provision has been made for a hood or hard top, but according to Maher this item can be rectified simply and inexpensively.

The tail of the Buchanan-Fiat

contains a reasonably large luggage boot, which houses the spare tyre and protruding petrol filling pipe. Stop and tail lights are moulded into the rear guards.

The lighting system is Lucas throughout, and the headlamps are moulded into the wings to conform with the graceful contour of the body lines.

In order to get the car ready for the Bathurst meeting Bruce Maher and his mechanic worked late into the night for weeks. The car had not been tried out prior to its appearance on the Panorama circuit.

"The car, considering it was new and untried," stated Maher, "came up to my expectations. It passed all tests with flying colours and I found I was able to outbrake all the M.G.'s and it

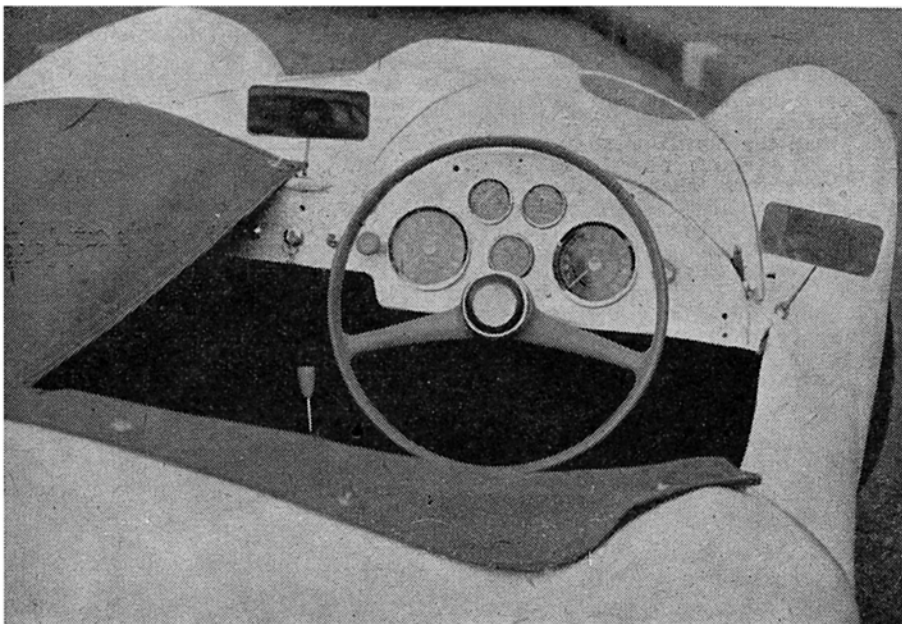
handled like a dream.

"I was timed down Con Rod Strait at 102 m.p.h.—a speed I hope to equal on the flat once I get the car hotted-up.

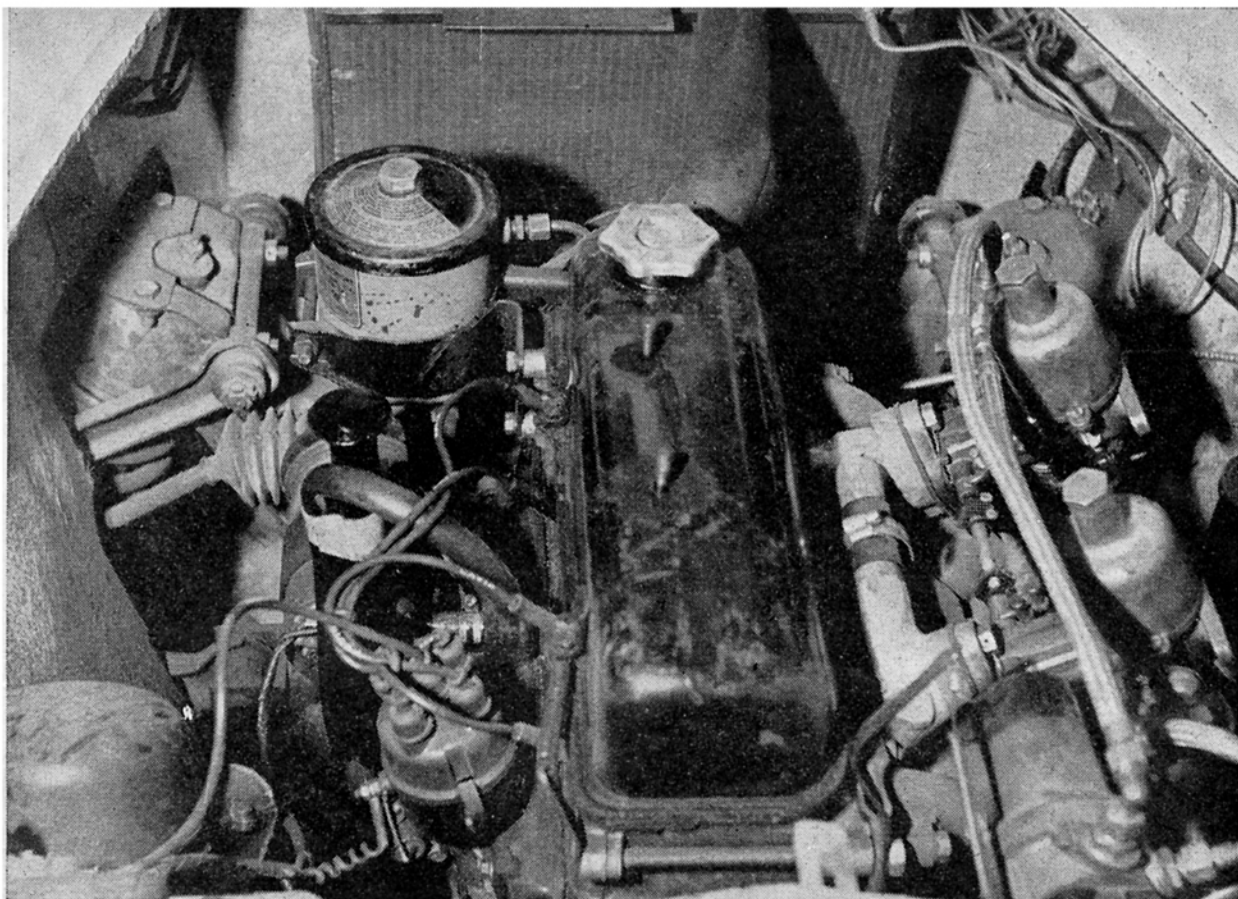
"Just how far I can go with this hotting-up process I don't know, but I feel sure by the time it is completed I shall be faster than any M.G.," he concluded.

During the Mt. Druitt meeting in November Maher chased his colleague, George Websdale, throughout a three-lap scratch event. On the corners he thrashed the M.G., and it was only along the straights, where the M.G. could wind up quicker, that Maher was beaten. He finished less than one second behind Websdale in this event.

By the time Bathurst comes along at Easter, Maher should be



Dashboard of the car is simple, but has all the required instruments including a speedo. Steering wheel is Fiat. Note position of gearchange lever.

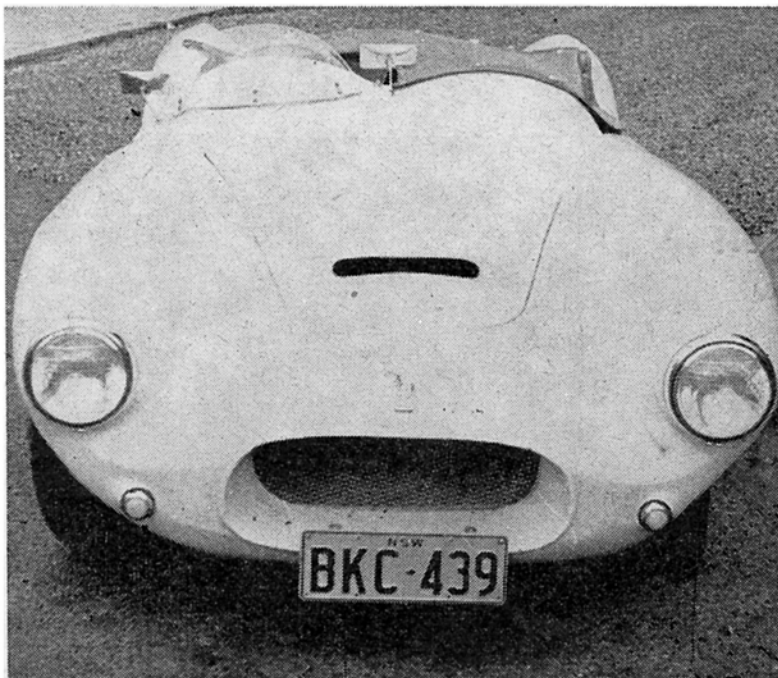


The Fiat's motor is not in a high stage of tune yet. Apart from twin SU carburetors and high compression, its virtually standard.

ready to get the best from his Fiat special.

When questioned regarding the total cost of the Fiat Maher explained that as he has a garage and therefore no expenses for engineering work, he would not know the amount of money involved in the car. However, he was of the opinion that it would amount to well under £1,000, excluding labour.

At this price, Maher's Fiat represents much more than just a successful sports car. It is a machine which the average motor racing enthusiast can afford, while at the same time should do well in competition work.



Front end of the Buchanan-Fiat is clean and the air intakes provide plenty of cooling for the motor, which is placed 16 inches back from the grille.