

Around the block

Bruce Ashmore, a well known figure in motor racing circles on both sides of the Atlantic, talks to William Kimberley about his current activities

Bruce Ashmore is one of those characters who have been on the motor racing scene for more years than he would perhaps like to remember. He was at Lola for 17 years, starting there as an apprentice, working his way through an apprenticeship scheme ultimately ending up as the chief designer on the IndyCar project for six years from 1988. He then joined Reynard to head up Reynard North America. This led to his working in Indianapolis for seven years, starting as the company's first American employee and leaving just over a year before the company ran into serious financial difficulties and going bust in 2002.

While it was little more than a satellite operation for Reynard's Champ Car programme, providing customer support and parts sales for the Series, after a couple of years it expanded with the purchase of racing car manufacturers Riley & Scott, the introduction of the 2KQ sports racing car and the opening of the Auto Research Center (ARC) which included a 50% scale rolling road wind tunnel in its facilities.

Whilst everything went to pieces, ARC was fortunately unaffected by the Reynard situation. In fact, the business is currently expanding and is close to putting the finishing touches of a new two-storey, 31,000-square-foot building to accommodate its expanding operations.

After a spell with the Player's ChampCar team which found itself in the unfortunate position of having purchased Reynard chassis just before the collapse, Ashmore joined Menard with the idea of starting Menard-Cheever Technology. However, the company had bought Tom Walkinshaw Racing which became a bigger project than Eddie Cheever wished for as he was more into his race team, so the association split up.

After a while, though, Ashmore resumed his relationship with ARC, switching his technical sales role from MTC to ARC. Late 2005, though, brought a new chapter in his life when he joined C&R.

"Chris Paulsen, C&R's president, and I started a relationship when I first came to Indianapolis years ago," says Ashmore, "and we have done quite a few projects together over the years. Our current one has been the Silver Crown cars. What was important for me, and one that Chris fully endorsed, was maintaining the Reynard tradition of winning the race first time out with a new car. This we achieved with victory on the car's debut in the first race of the season, although the win was spoilt by the being protested by the other teams. However, it was eventually declared the winner, and then went on to win the second race in the series."

Whilst designing racecars is an important part of the business, Ashmore believes that the racing world, and C&R and ARC in particular, have a great deal to offer automotive manufacturers.



ABOVE The C&R Silver Crown car that has maintained the Reynard tradition of winning first time out.

LEFT After a long spell with Lola, Reynard and ARC, Bruce Ashmore is now working for C&R in Indianapolis

"The relationship between C&R and ARC means that you can turn up in Indianapolis as a road or racecar manufacturer with just a handful of sketches and we can run a full wind tunnel programme. Our major target is the OEMs. With the fuel prices going up and tighter regulations to meet, the car companies realise just how important aerodynamics are on the car. Internal flow, CFD and all the things that we use to improve racing cars is something they want. They can use that know-how to save fuel and improve the car's aerodynamics. It is something we very much want to get involved in."

C&R manufactures and distributes parts and equipment for the motorsport industry including thermo protection products for high performance applications – complete cooling systems, chassis and drivetrain components, and wind tunnel models. ■