

# JACK BRABHAM

## -world champion driver

WHEN his car broke down in the last lap of the two-and-a-half hour American Grand Prix motor race at Sebring, Florida, in December last year—the race that decided the world motor racing championship for 1959—Jack Brabham had a moment of sickening disappointment. The finish was only five hundred yards away—a few seconds' driving in his Cooper Climax car, but now it might just as well have been five hundred miles.

Then Jack realized that even if he did not finish the race the world championship would still be his. His nearest rival, Stirling Moss, had broken down early on—no one else could beat him now.

For most men, that knowledge would have been enough—what more could they achieve? But for Jack Brabham it was not enough. He leaped out of the car and pushed it those last five hundred yards uphill to finish fourth. The crowds cheered wildly, but Jack scarcely heard them. Utterly exhausted after his gruelling experience, he collapsed and had to be helped from the track. Now he says, laconically: "It was a bit much."

### The driving force

What made him do it? Pride in the job he is doing and in the car he is driving, and a quiet determination which is an essential part of the man.

For determination has brought him from racing a home-built car in his native Australia to the very top of his chosen profession. It is not the thrills and the excitement of motor racing that are his chief attraction. "I regard it as a very, very interesting job, but half the fascination for me is in the technical development of the car," he says.

This is easy to believe, for there is nothing of the matinee idol about Jack Brabham. Tall and well built, he has a strong rather than a handsome face, tanned and firm jawed. His eyes are keen and the skin at the corners is wrinkled from years of peering at the road ahead, fast moving under his racing wheels.

Born in the Penhurst district of Sydney in 1926, the only son of Mr. and Mrs. C. T. Brabham, Jack was not brought up in an atmosphere of motor racing. He was trained as an engineer and got into racing "by accident" when he helped a friend to build a midget racing car. At the last moment the friend was unable to drive in

the race for which it was entered so Jack took over. He didn't win, but he had become so absorbed in the building of the car that he decided to try racing for himself.

Soon he was winning a name for himself in midget car racing, taking the South Australian and Australian championships in his stride. Then he was introduced to Cooper cars, the car that was to make his name. It was a proud moment when he bought his first Cooper Bristol, and in the next eighteen months he added a formidable list of wins to his credit.

His successes were so outstanding that his friends finally persuaded him that he should try his luck in international events.

He sold his car, packed his bags and said goodbye to his wife, Betty, and their small son Geoffrey, and set sail to try his fortune in England.

The first few months were very difficult for the young Australian. He was comparatively unknown in England and could not get races easily.

There were times when he felt like giving up the whole thing, but when his wife and son came over to join him he was encouraged to stay and try a little longer.

Then his luck changed. At one of the race meetings he met John Cooper of Cooper cars and the two became friends. Jack joined the Cooper works team of drivers and helped to develop their racing cars. This was the work he enjoyed more than anything; his technical knowledge and skill were used to the full in the development of Cooper cars. As their fame grew, so did his own as he raced and won event after event. Now he was recognised as a potential champion.

In 1958 he became Formula 2 champion, winning the final event of the international season at Casablanca and in the winter of that year he returned to Australia, to race. He finished second only to Moss in the Australian and New Zealand Grand Prix.

### Race to the top

Now Jack felt that both his car and himself were ready to concentrate on Formula 1 racing and from the very first event of the 1959 season, he led the World Racing Drivers' Championship, closely challenged by Britain's Stirling Moss and Tony Brooks.

Sebring was the deciding race and Jack flew to America alone. His wife, who often acts as his time-keeper, could not go.

At their home in Dorking she sat by the



Jack gets a helping hand from Betty and Geoffrey

phone with his friend and manager, Phil Kerr, waiting for the result. Her relief when she heard that he was safe and had won was overwhelmingly, and news of his success was quickly told to delighted neighbours and friends. Mrs. Brabham was at the airport to welcome him home, but Geoffrey, his seven-year-old son, had to wait until the following morning to congratulate the champion—it was much too late for a small boy to be up, even for so special an occasion.

In the office above his neatly painted white garage at Chessington, Jack admitted that he was pleased at his success. "In my early racing days I had longed to be world champion but I never thought I would."

Before the vital race in Florida he seized the chance to do some water skiing; his favourite sport and one he always tries to fit in when he goes back to Australia each year, to compete in motor racing events.

He regards motor racing very much as a job to be done to the best of his ability and is always quiet calm before a race. "I never let it worry me, because, if the car isn't good enough to win it is just too bad." He intends to go on racing this year and maybe he will learn to fly as well, something he would dearly love to do.

Jack is a modest man and his successes have not altered his way of life to any great degree. A life of luxury in the spotlights does not appeal to the Brabhams. They live in an ordinary house in Dorking though soon they will be moving to be nearer the business. Geoffrey goes to a local school. He has inherited much of his father's attrac-

tive modesty—and his interest in cars.

Each morning when Jack is not in training for a race he drives to his garage, which was opened a few months ago, to do an ordinary day's work and he can often be found tinkering with his own Cooper car. This car, in the British racing colours of dark green and white, occupies pride of place in his showroom. Small boys press eager faces to the window to gaze with admiration and longing at this super racing car. Sometimes they venture in to ask for an autograph.

### His wife's support

Betty, Jack's wife, who comes from Katoombs, New South Wales, is resigned to his racing career. She realizes that he is a very careful driver who takes no unnecessary risks and Jack is the first to admit that her wonderful support and encouragement make all the difference in the world to him. Like his parents she has never attempted to stand in his way or to let her own natural fears worry him. She realizes that racing is his life.

Betty drives herself, and Jack doesn't mind at all if she wants to take the wheel when they are out together. "He is very good about it," she says.

This year for the first time, the Brabham family went home to Australia to spend Christmas with their parents. For Betty and Geoffrey it was their first visit since they came to England and they were terribly excited. Proud too—proud to be returning with Jack, the first Australian to be world champion driver.