

## GROUP S TYRE AVAILABILITY 2006

Suitable tyre availability for Group S has always been a problem because of the wide range of cars used in these three groups coupled with the very limited availability of suitable 60% profile tyres required for this class of racing.

Poor availability has recently forced the Historic Commission to allow road legal race tyres with modern tread patterns into the Approved Tyre List, for Group N and S, but even these do not cover all the section sizes the competitors need.

While achieving strict parity does not form part of the Historic movement's policy, the Historic Commission does nevertheless not wish to see some cars excluded from a reasonably competitive position if minor changes to the tyre rules could redress the situation. The modern tread pattern approval is an example of that type of adjustment.

More recent changes to the range of section sizes have resulted in exacerbating the section size availability problem to the extent of some cars having virtually no tyres of a competitive nature available to them. In particular; the loss of 195x15, 175x14 possibly 205x14 tyre sizes will disadvantage a number of Group S competitors.

The latest offerings from Bridgestone, Falken and Toyo do nothing to help the availability problem because they are only offering a very limited selection of sizes and only the popular sizes where there is already more than one supplier already.

Rather than look at individual problems, it is probably time to seek a more comprehensive solution to cope with ongoing changes to the tyre supply.

Some options to overcome these ongoing availability problems might be:

1. Allow corrections to individual cars/tyre section sizes
2. Allow section size change, but make it the same upgrade for all cars
3. Allow section size change, but make it the same downgrade for all cars.
4. Allow rim diameter option (say +/- 1")
5. Make Dunlop CR65 the control tyre for all Group S classes

Option 1 is not really a solution because it will create a disparity between the cars that can use a different size tyre and those that must stick to the original section size.

The section size policy has served the Group S classes well for over fifteen years and there seems little reason to move to an alternative method of selecting appropriate section sizes for each Group S car type.

Option 2 does not help in that all it does is to move the zero availability from the small 14" size and the mid 15" size to the large 13" and smaller mid size 15". (See chart GrpStyres2006)

Option 3 is worse. It affects six of the common sizes. (See chart GrpStyres2006)

Note that not all the tyres shown on these charts have yet been approved by the Historic Commission.

Option 4 has been used in the past to overcome availability problems with Jaguars going from 16" to 15" wheels because of the total absence of 16" high performance tyres and Lotus Elites being allowed to use 14" wheels as a replacement for 15", with suitable tyre supply problems the reason. In each case there was no change in the specified tyre section size or aspect ratio.

Allowing the zero availability users to change wheel and therefore tyre diameter by 1" and keeping the section size the same means that the missing 175x14 would be replaced by 175x13 or 175x15; both sizes of which would have tyres available. The current 195x15 would become 195x14 where there are some four tyre options. The same goes for 185x15 to 185x14.

Option 5 cannot completely cover all Group S cars, but with some careful tyre selection of similar tyres we could create a relatively fair mix. Price and availability might need to be negotiated with the supplier.

Costs; while there is a wide range of different prices for the tyres that are considered worth using in Group S events, basing decisions on appropriate tyres cannot use cost as a serious factor. Our past experience is that the price of high performance tyres varies substantially during their competition life. An example is the introduction of a Street Legal race tyre from a small manufacturer in the US that on introduction was at very attractive prices in comparison to the well known racing tyre brands, which rapidly escalated as it became popular and ended up at almost the same price as the racing brands.

The major tyre suppliers' prices tend to be quite stable, but the same cannot be said for any limited production racing tyre and this price fluctuation tends to make tyre selection based on tyre costs unreliable. Interestingly, the Formula Junior Association has been able to negotiate a substantial reduction in cost for some Dunlop CR65 tyres, which might make these tyres more attractive.

Another cost involved in Option 4 would be the cost of different diameter wheels needed to take advantage of the tyre size change. As well as cost, a reduction in wheel diameter may well be difficult where the smaller wheel has to fit over brakes or uprights designed for the larger diameter wheel.

Rim widths: Like the section size policy, this has served Group S racing well over the same period, but minor variations such as adding 1/2" to cope with modern street legal tyre requirements, might be worth consideration, if that would open up the number of tyre options or help fill missing gaps in the section size range.

Summary: By choosing the option to change the wheel diameter and retaining the section size, means we can keep the current parity between the existing tyre users with respect to approximate contact patch and have a viable solution for future availability problems.

I believe we would still need to approve individual car model specification changes and not make the 1" change an automatic option.

A change to Dunlop CR65 tyres is alternative that would need careful consideration.

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