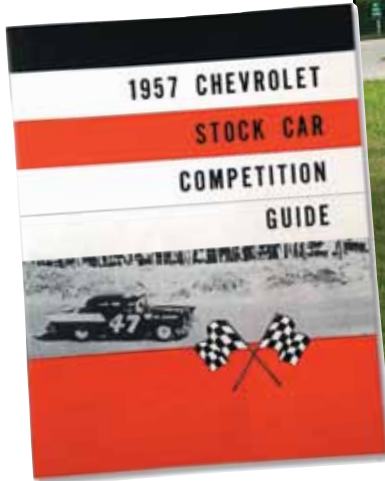


the '57 Black

**CHEVROLET'S '57'S
SPECIALLY MODIFIED FOR
STOCK CAR RACING**



The "White and Blacks," SEDCO and the Chevrolet Stock Car Competition Guide.

All 1957 Chevy enthusiasts have seen a "Black Widow" at one time or another. But do they understand what a "Black Widow" really was? Or how they came to be? These cars, originally referred to as the "White and Blacks" due to their white and black paint scheme (fans actually nicknamed the cars "Black Widow"), were much more than a specially painted 1957. They were modified versions of the production cars specifically built for stock car racing. In 1957 many Chevrolet dealerships were involved in stock car racing and Chevrolet backed a number of teams.

For the 1957 season, Edward N. Cole, Vice President and General Manager of Chevrolet sent the former head of Hudson's racing program, Vince Piggins, to Atlanta, to set up the Southern Engineering and Development Corporation Operation (SEDCO). He, along with Bradley Dennis, Paul McDuffie and the Clements brothers, Louis and Crawford built the 1957 Chevy's for Chevrolet's "cup" or NASCAR teams. It was set up as a division of Nally Chevrolet, in Atlanta, Georgia and they produced what is rumored to be a total of 10 cars and 2 test mules. Since there were other teams and organizations that built Black Widows and they never came off an actual Chevrolet production line, there is no record as to the total number of cars built.

In April 1957, Chevrolet distributed the "1957 Chevrolet Stock Car Competition Guide" to 411 dealerships. Essentially, the

guide was a "How To" book on building a 1957 Chevy stock car (one could assume that some of the information came from the test mules at SEDCO). It listed all the available GM part numbers of performance parts that could be utilized by someone outfitting a car for competition (all available over the counter at the dealerships), as well as a recommendation of which Chevrolets would be best suited for the task. It also recommended 170 modifications that should be made to the cars to make them safer and handle better. It covered licensing, car registration, insurance and inspection in relation to stock car racing and it included a list of sanctioning organizations. There was even a racing schedule laid out geographically on a map to make sure dealerships were equipped with knowledge of the sport (and the potential market no doubt) in their area.

Page one of the "Guide" is a letter from the Chevrolet Central Office, dated April 19, 1957. It reads:

To All Chevrolet Dealers:

Many Chevrolet dealers are actively engaged in the sport of stock car racing. Many others are aware of the tremendous interest in this challenging sport, which annually draws millions of spectators to observe automobile performance. To acquaint all dealers more fully with this sport, we have prepared the enclosed 1957 Chevrolet Stock Car Competition Guide.

The Stock Car Guide is the first publication of its type in the industry, and contains information that can be used to assist individuals who plan to participate in stock car racing. This valuable brochure is provided to acquaint dealers, as well as performance-minded individuals, with the techniques that permit greater safety and entertainment value for all who enjoy stock car competition in the highest traditions of the sport.

As you know, there are various racing associations that conduct stock car races. We are enclosing a map showing the geographical areas of activities of the five major associations. (Please note that SCCA sponsors sports car events only.) There are other racing associations well known in localized areas.

We hope the Competition Guide and the map will help you get a clear picture of stock car racing. We feel that the Competition Guide in particular, is a powerful aid in helping your dealership better service those individuals in your area, participating in stock car racing.

Very truly yours,

**Robert D. Lund
National Sales Promotion Manager**

Never before had a manufacturer gone this far to assist in automobile racing efforts, but it's assistance would turn out to be short lived.

Widow

EVER HEARD OF A BLACK WIDOW? TRUE '57 ENTHUSIASTS MAY HAVE, BUT TAKE A READ TO GET ALL THE DETAILS . . .

In early 1957, Congressional hearings were conducted about stock car racing. They claimed that the automakers racing advertisements were contributing to racing and reckless driving on the road. During these hearings, in February 1957, the Automobile Manufacturers Association prepared a resolution suggesting all manufactures stop auto racing activities, auto racing based advertising and the support of race teams. Chevrolet endorsed this resolution in May 1957 and in June, Ed Cole instructed Vince Piggins to shut down the SEDCO operation due to Chevrolets endorsement. When the SEDCO deal ended, Bradley Dennis and Paul McDuffie opened the "Atlanta Tune Up Service" which continued to build cars for NASCAR teams.

A Black Widow started out as a 1957 Chevy 150 Utility Sedan, Model 1512 (the number one suggestion in the "Guide" and the model that most of the cars were made from) equipped with a roll bar and a specially designed driver seat with a shoulder pad on the backrest. It was a perfect start as it did not have a rear seat and it was a stripped down bare bones

version of the car. It had no radio, heater, ashtray, passenger seat back or rear seat. Chevrolet also mentions that the model 1502 or in some cases model 2154 might be utilized depending on the type of racing being done.

Black Widows were painted in a black and white color scheme, which was chosen by the crew at SEDCO as the colors for their racecar. It sported regular 150 trim and a Fuel Injection Emblem was attached to the rear quarter panel at the upper rear of the fin. A Chevrolet script was attached at the rear of the front fender by the door. It was said, at the time, that the Fuel Injection Emblems were attached at the rear so other racers could easily

identify the cars they were getting beaten by.

The recommended engine was the brand new "Corvette V8" with Ramjet Fuel Injection, R.P.O. 578 but you could also order the engine with a single 4 barrel, R.P.O 410, or with dual 4-barrel setup,



Buck Baker #87, 1957 National Champion.

"NEVER BEFORE HAD A MANUFACTURER GONE THIS FAR TO ASSIST IN AUTOMOBILE RACING EFFORTS . . ."

Buck Baker poses with his "Black and White" on Daytona Beach, Florida 1957.



R.P.O 411. The "Guide" covered tuning and recommended modifications for each engine. (NASCAR actually ruled in February 1957 that the F.I. equipped cars could no longer run citing that late model convertibles and short track cars were limited to a single 4-barrel carburetor, and the F.I. units were not a carburetor. Even though the F.I. units were replaced with a carburetor and manifold, most racers kept the Fuel Injection emblems and flags on the rear fender just the same.)

Chevrolet recommended that a 3-speed manual transmission, with column shift, be used. The transmissions were available with a variety of different gear ratios so a suitable transmission could be chosen depending on the type of racing being done. A stronger rear end, originally used in ½ ton Chevy trucks, also had a variety of gear ratios available. The rear end was beefier and featured a removable 10-bolt rear cover. The rear cover was necessary, as the axles were "C" clipped and the "C" clips had to be removed so the axles could be removed before the carrier could be removed from the housing. The axles had 6 lugs, as did the front hubs, and a special wheel with greater strength was recommended. On the rear end a transverse rod was used to reinforce the axle; spacer blocks were recommended for some tracks to lower the rear of the car. Dual shocks were installed along with a larger capacity 20-gallon gas tank. (This tank was illegal in NASCAR and SEDCO / GM knew this. They contacted the company that was making the trunk

mats and acquired mats without the spare tire cutout. The thought was that the NASCAR judges would not notice that they had modified the trunk and removed the spare tire well, since the trunk mat looked original, so they would not be looking for a possible larger, illegal, tank.) Modifications to the frame are also outlined in the "Guide" to increase rigidity.

The front end also had special modifications. The lower A-arms had a steel plate welded to them to increase strength and rigidity and there were special hard rubber bushings used with a sway bar. An additional shock was also used which installed between a bracket attached to one side of the lower arm and a bracket attached to the upper part of the frame. The rest of the front suspension and steering was outfitted with special heavy-duty "shot preened" components as recommended in the "Guide." Special brake shoes were also used, front and rear

Front engine mounts were modified with a soft metal spacer between the rubber biscuits for additional support and a harder rubber rear transmission mount was used. A special radiator was installed with either more or less fins, depending on if the car was to be used on asphalt or dirt, and there was a "fan ring" installed between the core and the fan to prevent damage to the core from the fan.

Exhaust manifolds, as shown in engine photos in the "Guide", were a set of ram's

horn manifolds. However, SEDCO built cars are said to have run a special exhaust made by Fenton. They were a tubular cast that went from the cylinder head, including the header pipe, to the rear motor mount horns. They were extremely long and had the words FENTON cast into them between the 2 front cylinders. Whichever manifold was used the exhaust went from them out the side of the car utilizing a sleeve in the frame member and a notch in the rocker just in front of the rear wheel at the rear of the door.

As mentioned earlier, the Ram Jet with Fuel Injection was the recommended engine for the Black Widow, which was almost immediately banned by NASCAR. It is interesting to note that during development of the mule cars by SEDCO there were problems with the Fuel Injection. Barometric pressure under the hood caused the F.I. to malfunction over 80 mph. This was solved by cutting out the tops of the fenders and installing home heat register covers, a suggestion made by Smoky Yunick. None of the later cars have these cut outs, however, due to the ban of F.I. by NASCAR. Truth be known, the carbureted versions of the small block 283 actually made better horsepower than the 1 hp per cubic inch of the F.I. equipped cars, as much as 302 HP according to some sources.

The first time out for the Black Widows was at Daytona, in February of 1957. From that race forward they dominated NASCAR to become, hands down, the greatest stock

Johnny Beauchamp poses with his "Black and White" on Daytona Beach, Florida 1957.



car in history. Buck Baker, who joined NASCAR in 1946 and was runner up in 1955, won the 1957 Grand National Title driving a SEDCO built Black Widow after winning 10 of 40 races. All told, Black Widows won 59 NASCAR races, more than any other car, before they were grandfathered out in 1960. With it's engine placed from the factory behind the centerline of the front wheels the 1957 Chevy was a superior handling car on the short tracks and dirt tracks and from 1960 until the early 70's it was the car to beat in the lower local track sportsman divisions as well. Black Widows also won a disproportionate amount of demolition derby's due to their double walled trunk, extra strong frame and having a radiator that was mounted back from the grill making it hard to knock out.

The Black Widow was a major contender on the drag strip as well. Originally known, in early 1957 as the Duntov Chevy's, or simply, again, the "white and blacks" they dominated A/Stock drag racing. They were known as the Super Stock Chevy's when NHRA created the Super Stock class for them, and a few other factory built hot rods built by Ford and Chrysler, until the Black Widow name filtered down from NASCAR. 1957 Chevy's are still prevalent in Sportsman Drag Racing today.

The 1957 Chevrolet Stock Car Competition Guide is available as a reprint, from Danchuk (part #930), if you are interested in reading more.

Danchuk thanks Bev, author of the 1957 Black Widow website www.57chevyblackwidow.com and "Old Guy Scott" for allowing us to use some of their photos and for their help with information used in this article. Dedicated to the venerable "Black Widow" www.57chevyblackwidow.com is a site all lovers of these cars should visit. You will find additional information; photos, YouTube video links and a complete history in pictures of Old Guy Scott's authentic build of a Black Widow 1957 Chevy.



Rex White and the Clemens brothers racing team.



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