

The lighter side

An alternative technical formula to the premiere LMP 900 and LM GTP 900 categories in sports car racing is the LMP 675 class. As the name suggests, it is an open-topped prototype race car with a minimum mass of 675 kg (1490 lb) instead of 900 kg (1985 lb). Obviously, a lighter car would be faster if the rules were otherwise identical, so the LMP 675 class specifies a 2.0-L turbocharged engine or a 3.4-L atmospheric engine, with a maximum of six cylinders.

The front-line factory and better-financed private entries at Le Mans have concentrated on the bigger LMP 900 class, but

Lola Cars International builds a LMP 675 car for customers in the belief that, with proper development, the lighter car has the potential for greater speed.

"That is the main reason we built the 675 car," said Lola design engineer Adam Airey. "It is the faster way around a lap," he said. "We've done a lot of simulation work and, as a result, we believe the 675 is the faster way around any track."

To date, no 675 car has outpaced the front-running 900 cars, but the 675 cars are usually fewer and have a smaller budget, so it may truly be a matter of numbers. Dimensionally, the 675 cars are identical to the 900s, so designing them to weigh 225 kg (495 lb) less is a task. "Probably more effort goes into the design of a 675 car," Airey asserted. Because they are endurance racers, the 900 cars have parts that are typically made a little heavier than is absolutely necessary, so the components are whittled down for service on 675 cars, he said. The Lolas—even the private entries—race with an **MG**-badged 2.0-L turbo four-cylinder engine mated to a **Hewland** gearbox.

The MG factory entries have run quite quickly at times, but the team's budget doesn't approach that of juggernaut **Audi**. With Audi gone in 2003 though, perhaps the smaller cars can prove their potential. **aei**



The MG-powered Lola LMP 675 car might prove to be the ideal compromise between weight and power.