

EUROPEAN

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Dateline: Lilford

The 'once in ten years' occasion of hosting the **EFRA EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS** presented a challenge to the **BRCA** and the **LILFORD PARK CLUB** that all were quick to take up. Tom Martin, **BRCA** secretary, **RACING/CIRCUITS** contributor, and prime mover at Lilford, took all the necessary steps to enthuse his merry band of helpers though there seems to be never quite enough of them on these occasions.

Their first task was the extension of the circuit to meet the **International** requirements. This was completed and offered earlier in the year to visiting Europeans as a *taster*, but it was really the opening shot of the campaign for further improvements. Their second task was the rebuilding of the covered pits, which a severe winter had blown down. Since these had to be rebuilt a different style was decided upon, providing about the same covered space as before, but with a much enlarged open concreted area.

Lilford Park itself is a country estate of great charm, with its own miniature zoo, children's farm, and some exotic birds, plus all the necessary essentials of a restaurant, toilets and camping facilities. All that was needed was dry weather.

The circuit was open for practice a full week before the event, with some racers arriving on the previous weekend, so there was every opportunity to get well acquainted with this truly taxing circuit. The weather was mixed during the run up period with more than the usual amount of rain. Timed heats were run on the pre-race Thursday with mandatory timed runs on Friday to establish some degree of grading.

Lilford Park authorities organized a splendid printed programme well supported with trade advertisements and even a few curious non-R/C car ads for things like beef and even car repairs (yes, we know it was along way for some to come unscathed!). Times and entrants were duly listed, all except Italy, who could only provide their team upon their arrival at the circuit.

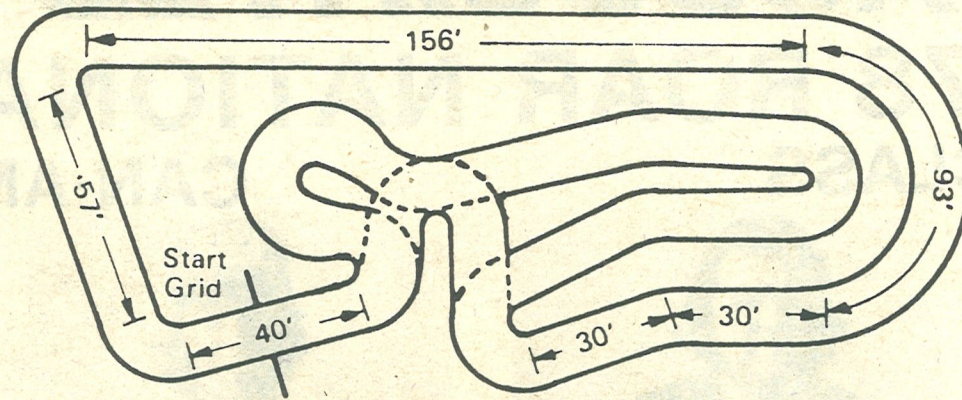
Under the current **EFRA** rules, entries are allotted to each country on a previously agreed basis, which is arrived at by the relative numbers of their respective past participation in the series and/or their **EFRA** association strength. The quotas for this year were as follows: Austria-4, Belgium-8, Britain-11, France-8, Germany-8, Holland-11, Italy-11, Monaco-6, Spain-4, Sweden-8, and Switzerland-11, with everyone taking up their full compliment of drivers.

Lap times looked fairly even across the board with 20 secs a lap, making a 15-lap five minute heat seem about the qualifying level. The Formula programme for Saturday's racing was arranged to take the slower cars in the earlier heats, working down to the aces for heats eleven onwards. The Italians who had arrived later than most did not practice very hard, and were generally allotted fairly low heat numbers.

FORMULA

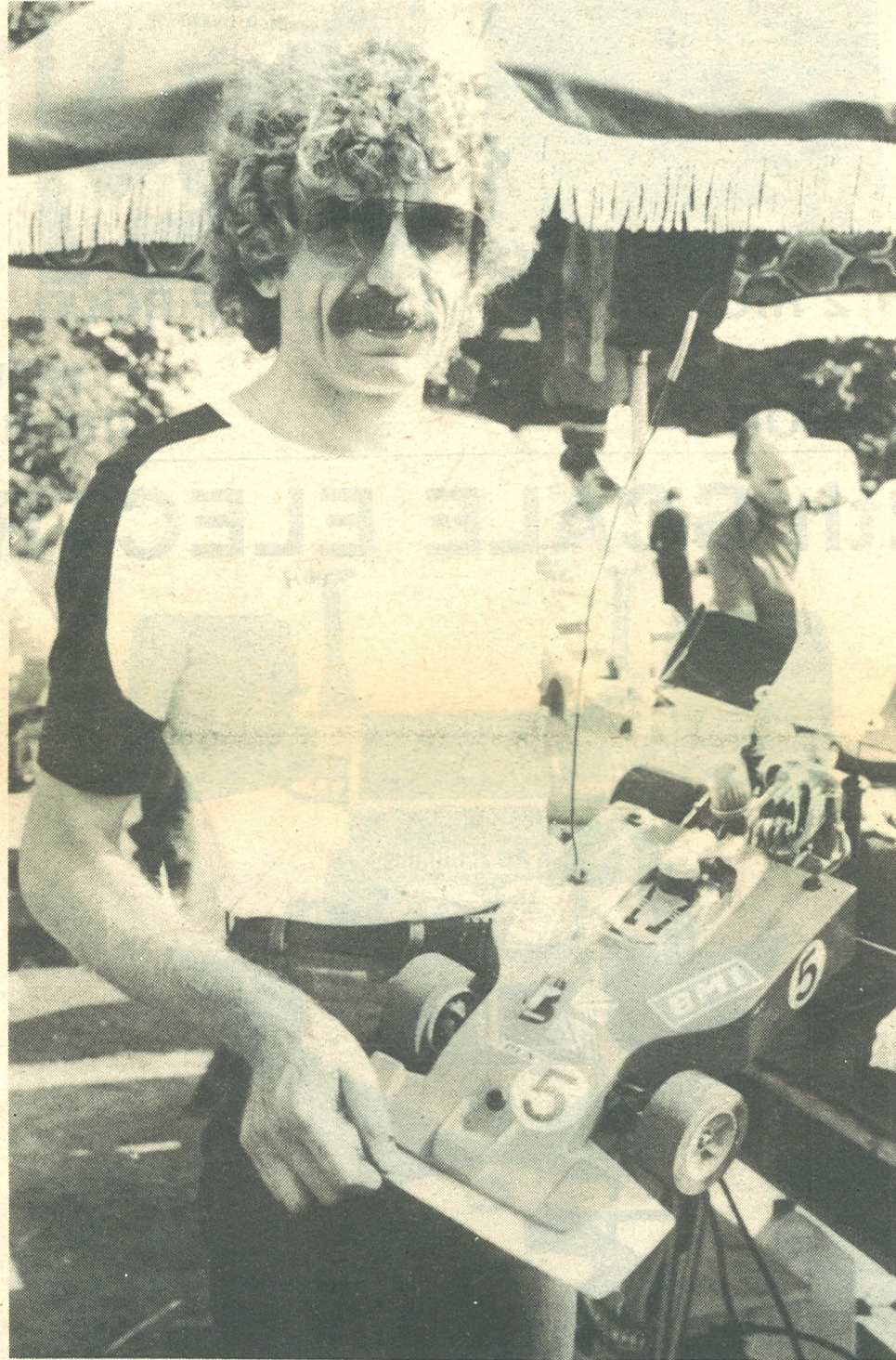
This then was the pattern for Saturday. Racing started immediately after breakfast, and from heat five onwards times were getting better and better with thirteen laps to the 5-minute heat coming up fairly freely, plus a couple of fourteens and one solitary 15 lap turned in by Franco Sabattini with his **SG Futura**. Then at about heat ten of the first round, disaster struck! The rain, which had been threatening with occasional spitting, came down in buckets and brought the racing to an abrupt halt.

Under the rules, the maximum break in a day's racing must not exceed one hour, during which time organisers



Lap length — 250 yd. Drivers Width — 15ft.

The Circuit at **LILFORD PARK** site of the '78 Euro Nats'



Surprise winner of **FORMULA** event **G. THIRAN** of Belgium running an 'out of the box' **PB International** fitted **PB Differential** and Mantua fuel tank.



Washout on 1st day's racing at **Lilford Park**. After resumption, no one could match early times, so many aces were excluded from the final by bad luck.

and team managers must agree on the procedure for continuation, abandon the meeting, or postpone to another day. Some years ago in Italy (of all places) a similar situation arose, and it was then agreed that the show must always go on, whatever the weather.

Consequently, when a vote was taken, all but two votes were in favour of a straight continuation after the one hour pause. However, a suggestion that heats already run should be cancelled and a new start made, was not adopted. The rain had nearly stopped by 12:30, when resumption was required. Brooms were sweeping the circuit, and an escape hole for the surplus water had been driven into the off circuit concrete.

Swirling round with spumes of water spurting from their wheels, these aces of R/C cars were given the almost impossible task of getting on terms with the early runners. No one in fact achieved even another 14-lapper... best being Vincent of France, Bob Denton of Britain, Bernascone of Italy, and Errington of Britain...with the big names down among the high twenties to forties.

This produced a straight in the top four of Sabattini of Italy; Olsson of Sweden; Thirans of Belgium; and Collina of Italy. The two Italians had indeed been Euro-champions in their day; the other two were amongst the up-and-coming youngsters. The sub-final had Ruchat of Switzerland, Strupler also Swiss, Kruhsberg of Sweden, Van Helden of Holland and two newcomers from Austria, Maringer and Andexlinger. Ruchat and Andexlinger proved to be the wet winners and moved into the final.

The race was run in the rain at a very moderate tempo, with Collina and Andexlinger trailing behind the tightly bunched leading four who stayed on the same lap virtually throughout the race with lap times only in the 26 second range! Thirans and Sabattini enjoyed their advantage, for the most part, of being out of the spray cast up on the following cars, but this was a very minor gain since Ruchat and Olsson were so close on their heels.

Significantly, all were running with differentials of one type or another, of the makes now available. As the finish hooter sounded Thirans was in the lead, with Sabattini closing fast on Ruchat, with only feet between them, and Olsson a lap behind. With Thirans over the line the crowds surged onto the track and Sabattini slowed up instead of pressing on to the line where he would very probably have overtaken Ruchat.

A heated enquiry followed, with Sabattini claiming he was unaware of the rule requiring the last lap to be completed, and claiming that in any event he was impeded by the crowd and could not have run on at full speed. The race result stood as given, and Sabo was a very unhappy man. He declared he was going straight home without further participation; this he did not do, however he refrained from running in the Sunday event.

With bad weather as the villain of the piece, the one virtue that came of it was that comparative newcomers to racing, the Austrians, managed to get two places in the top ten, to their great joy and encouragement, and that Thirans, a very competent and hard-working driver was given his first share of the limelight.

EURO CHAMPIONSHIPS 1978 FORMULA CLASS

- | | |
|----------------------|----------|
| 1. G. THIRANS | B |
| 2. Ruchat | CH |
| 3. Sabattini | I |
| 4. Olsen | S |
| 5. Collina | I |
| 6. Andexlinger | A |
| 7. Kruhsberg | S |
| 8. Strupler | CH |
| 9. Maringer | A |
| 10. Van Belden | NL |

(CONTINUED OPPOSITE)

NATIONALS

11. Vincent	F
12. Denton	GB
13. Bernascone	I
14. Errington	GB
15. Seveso	I
16. Dognon	F
17. Fiocchi	CH
18. De Permentier	B
19. Blouet	F
20. Kuttner	D
21. Hassig	CH
22. Poulain	F
23. Preston	GB
24. Quiette	B
25. Groen	NL
26. Bergdahl	S
27. White	GB
28. Plested	GB
29. Fruhwirth	A
30. Reintjes	D
31. Gehrler	A
32. Gustafsson	S
33. Bervoets	NL
34. Carlsson	S
35. Radsma	NL
36. Angelin	F
37. Botta	MC
38. Martin	GB
39. Booth	GB
40. Catalano	I
41. Greeno	GB
42. Bortolomasi	I
43. Robkothén	D
44. Pagdin	GB
45. Meijer	NL
46. Collete	F
47. Mares	I
48. Alberti	CH
49. Preston, Debbie	GB
50. Gabbiani	MC
51. Stanzani	I
52. Born	CH
53. Ton	NL
54. Marzocchi	I
55. De Carro	S
56. Coosemans	B
57. Wright	GB
58. Edvallius	S
59. Johansson	S
60. Levesy	MC
61. Sommerauer	CH
62. Anderson	CH
63. Cromberge	NL
64. Mayerhofer	D
65. Feuillet	B
66. Tassaux	B
67. Van der Meerssche	B
68. Auriot	F
69. Lopez	E
70. Sukkel	NL
71. Antognelli	MC
72. Schuh	F
73. Schneider	CH
74. Marani	I
75. Meerseburger	E
76. Georgetti	I
77. Zahnd	CH
78. Hoyer	D
79. Alexandri	E
80. Van Nijlen	B
81. Bevacqua	MC
82. Follete	MC
83. Merlin	CH

SPORTS/PROTOTYPE

With the usual inconsistent English weather, Sunday dawned bright and lovely and times immediately reflected the better conditions. Fourteen laps became almost the norm (35 out of 87 achieved this or better); the leading eighty drivers all got 12 or more laps in. The leaders with 15 laps were Ronny Ton (SG), Phil Greeno (PB), Peter Bervoets (Serpent) and Peter De Carro, distinguished as the only one of the top ten in each day's racing NOT RUNNING WITH A DIFFERENTIAL. As a Delta driver it rather points the truth of the Delta claim that their road holding is superior.

The Sub-Final saw a strong British contingent in pursuit of a final place in the shape of Dave Martin (PB), Debbie Preston (Associated), Steve White, Ken Wright, Bob Errington, with Mares (SG) of Italy, the solitary European visitor to make it. Dave Martin and Debbie Preston proved the popular winners after a race long battle, setting the stage for the final.

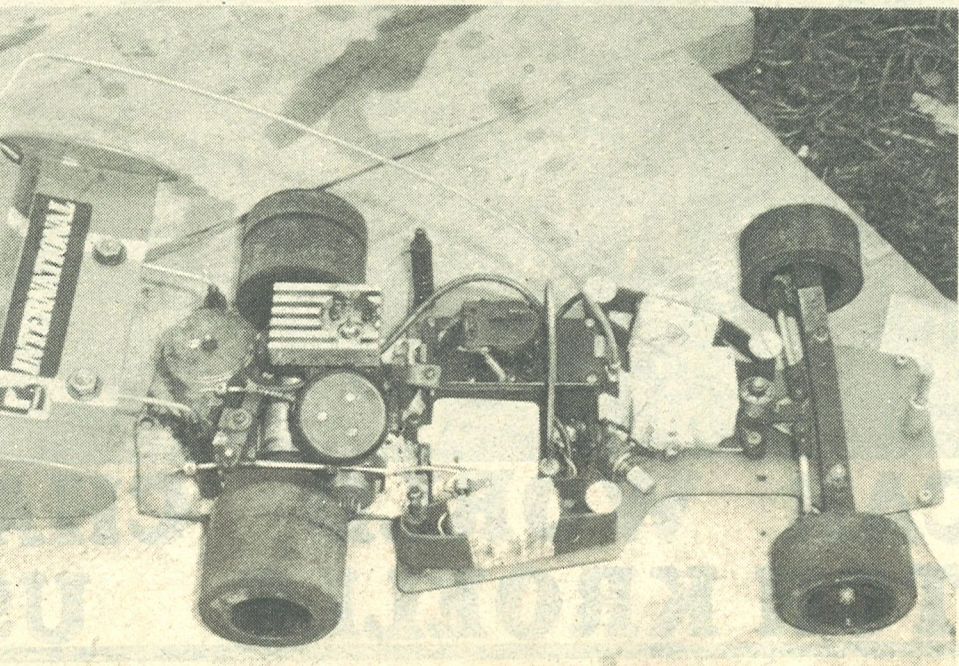
The Final had a nice range of cars involved, with two PB Internationals, a Dutch Serpent, an Italian SG Futura and two from the USA, Debbie's RC



Line up for start of **SPORTS/GT EVENT**. Drivers standing behind cars, mechanics kneeling in front. L to R: **Ronny Ton**, Holland, SG Futura and differential; **Debbie Preston**, GB, Associated RC-200 with AMPS differential; **Peter Bervoets**, Holland, Serpent with AMPS differential; **Dave Martin**, GB, PB International and differential; **Peter DeCarro**, Sweden, Delta (no differential), and **Phil Greeno**, GB, PB International with AMPS differential.



DAVE MARTIN took the **SPORTS/GT EVENT** with a remarkable performance with his boxstock **PB International** and **PB differential**.



A **PB International** won both **FORMULA** and **SPORTS/PROTO** events. This is PB proprietor Keith Plested's own car fitted with his latest slide valve carb, and differential (spur gear type). Note plastic waterproof covers on the two servos - needed!

200, now with an **AMPS differential** and Peter De Carro's **Delta** - the latest **Super J**, first seen in Art Carbonnel's hands at Monaco.

The race got underway and once again this final also split into two groups with Dave Martin leading from the hotly contesting Debbie Preston and Peter Bervoets. Phil Greeno never really showed as radio failure, principally servo trouble at the steering end left him a trailing sixth. When he was going he went extremely fast as his qualifying 15-laps showed and could have provided strong competition.

Dave Martin, running what was a very nearly standard **PB International**, with the latest glassfibre chassis and **PB Differential**, put up such a remarkable performance that only a superman or woman could have bettered his 93 laps in an official time of 30:13.7. If we take out his refuelling time and one flame out that gives him an average lap time, over the half hour better than the fastest qualifying time!

That Peter Bervoets and Debbie Preston were within one and two laps of him at the end, is also a great credit to their driving skills. But alas, poor Peter seems fated to always be Number Two on these occasions, as it must be his fourth 2nd place! Debbie, too, did excellently with impeccable driving, and a furious dice with Bervoets they continually traded places lap by lap to the joy of a large and enthusiastic crowd. Ronnie Ton and Peter De Carro were by no means disgraced in a really racing pace event.

As a graceful tribute to a great occasion *Lord and Lady Lilford*, whose estate Lilford Park is, hurried back from their holidays to enjoy the final and present the prizes. BBC television cameramen were also present to tape material for use over the Christmas period in a new *Modeller's World* programme.

EURO CHAMPIONSHIPS SPORTS/PROTOTYPE CLASS

1. DAVE MARTIN	GB
2. Bervoets	NL
3. Preston, Debbie	GB
4. Ton	NL
5. De Carro	S
6. Greeno	GB
7. Errington	GB
8. White	GB
9. Mares	I
10. Wright	GB
11. Plested	GB
12. Marani	I
13. Pagdin	GB
14. Angelin	F
15. Johansson	S
16. Booth	GB
17. Alberti	CH
18. Coosemans	B
19. Bartolomasi	I
20. Collini	I
21. Tassaux	B
22. Soderholm	S
23. Robkothén	D
24. Gustafsson	S
25. Ulitzka	D
26. Schneider	CH
27. Naser	D
28. Hassig	CH
29. Olsson	S
30. Mayerhofer	D
31. Ruchat	CH
32. Fiocchi	CH
33. Georgetti	I
34. Marzocchi	I
35. Bergdahl	S
36. Strupler	CH
37. Agostina	I
38. Radsma	NL
39. Maringer	A
40. Bates	GB
41. Bevacqua	MC
42. Cromberge	NL
43. Vincent	F
44. Zimmer	D
45. Kruhsberg	S
46. Haberl	D
47. Anderson	CH
48. Dognon	F
49. Fruhwirth	A
50. Gabbiani	MC

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