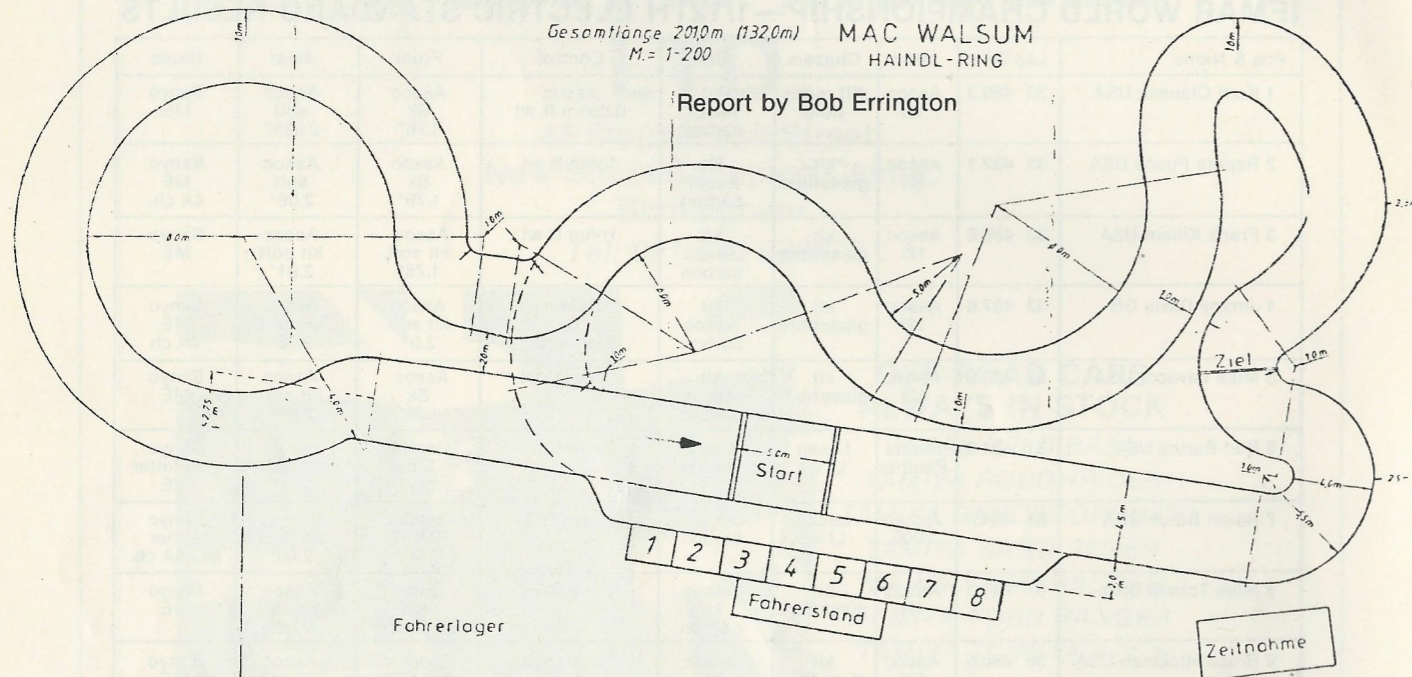


European Saloon Championships



Report by Bob Errington

The first ever European Saloon Championship for 1/8th IC cars took place on a short very smooth circuit close to the centre of Duisburg in W. Germany on August 21/22. The meeting was viewed by some as a 'fun' event mainly due to attitudes in Britain prior to the inclusion of G.T. size wings in the rules, and I believe this also applied to some other countries especially those not participating in saloon class racing. The overall effect was to get 92 drivers entered from the following countries:— England 11, Italy 11, Switzerland 10, Holland 9, France 7, Denmark 5, Sweden 4, Luxembourg 3, Belgium 1 and Germany with 31.

The English contingent arrived in two batches, one on Thursday and the remainder on Friday. The first lot came courtesy of a Ford Transit holding no less than 5 of them whilst the civilised section arrived complete with women folk in the normal manner (half drunk?)

The first delight was to see the race director on the rostrum; however he was standing on the ground. Upon distant investigation it was evident that this man stood no less than 8 feet plus, tall! We were informed that any complaints should go to him!! Funny how no-one complained all week-end.

The facilities provided for this meeting were really quite excellent and included beer, hot food, waffles, superb timekeeping, covered pits, really friendly people and a superb atmosphere. A sign quickly appeared to the rear of the English pits relating to events that occurred at a Euro-Champs earlier in the month and this caused great amusement to all the English speaking continentals

Practice was already well underway and with no less than 97 different frequencies to choose from, could prove quite exciting. Lap times started at around the 15 second mark and proceeded to fall to sub 14 by the end of the day. So with everybody quite happy and the rain beginning to fall we packed up for the day.

Saturday dawned with scrutineering from 7.30 am and first problems at 7.40.

"You will not cut ze holes in ze vindskreen" was heard, with the reply of "But how do we get fuel into the tanks without a Corvette body on?". The usual team managers meeting was called to iron out all the various problems and everything was sorted save Pieter Bervoets application to run a Toyota Celica Turbo "Cabriolet"!

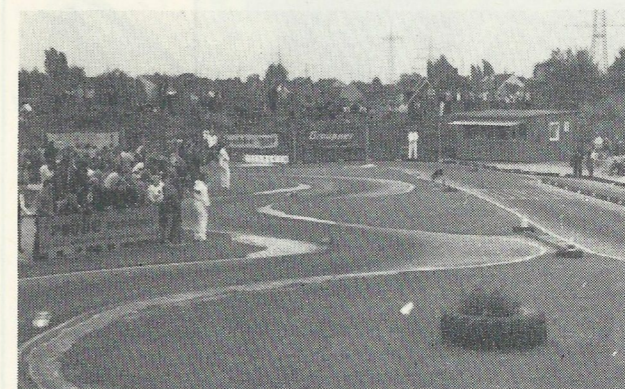
So qualifying heats commenced and the lap times started to rise. Just 32 drivers would be allowed to go into Sunday's finals and it wouldn't matter if you were 1st or 32nd you still had to go through a quarter final. At the end of the sessions the 32 drivers broke into countries as follows:— England 4, Switzerland 4, Holland 4, France 2, Denmark 1 and Germany 11.

Now the Germans had organised a nice peaceful steamboat party on the Rhein which most competitors attended, and peaceful it was until someone launched a single beermat across the table. A retaliation mat was launched which unfortunately missed and gently floated across the dining galley to a German table! A fierce battle continued for some time with the German organisers bringing huge piles of reinforcements to the British table! Britain certainly has the best long range beer mats with now legendary accuracy and in fact when the Germans upended a table and started to close in on us with armoured protection all seemed lost. We deployed troops to both flanks so when the German barrage began they immediately got caught in the cross fire and quickly showed the white hankie—well at least we had won one contest.

Sunday, and even though there are only 32 drivers left, the pits are full of activity and space is still a premium. Each of the 4 quarter finals is to have a 15 minuter slot for practice and then at about 10.15 the first qualifying run starts. Fifteen minutes racing on a



Top drivers with their cars and trophies—for once the Brits didn't do so well.



View of the track.



The pits with their wooden boxes.

circuit of 200m length with lap times now sub 13 secs, was going to be tight, again with a strange rule that the fastest 16 irrespective of position would then run in two semi-finals. Pieter Bervoets was the unlucky 17th qualifier with 59 laps and here also we said goodbye to Marley Parrant who classified 29th after not competing his 15 mins.

Now the breakdown of the 16 was like this; England 3, Italy 5, Holland 2, and Germany 6, so still the Germans were showing their strength although Bartolomasi (Italy) had set fastest time from the quarters. The semi's were of 30 minutes duration and were sure to take their toll and this is in fact what happened to yours truly with both rear tyres blowing out, at different stages. The A final now consisted of 5 serpent, 2 SG, and 1 'Flat Pan' BlackFire with 1 Dutch, 2 Italian and 5 German drivers. The Serpents looked really at home and with latest mods now including shock absorbers (for decoration only I was informed!) were very impressive.

A 30 minute B final was run first for classification and this featured the three remaining English drivers. I managed to win this one, with 129 laps and a change of ring gear from Ronnie Ton and his Serpent with Phil Hague placed 5th and Chris White 6th.

So to the big race—a whole hour of Saloon car racing. They all lined up on the grid and behold all eight cars were Toyota Celica bodied (anyone want a slightly used Corvette body?)

Right from the start the race was between Rody Roem (Holland), Klaus Hoschen (Germany) and Michael Mielke (Germany) with Franz Groschel keeping in touch. The leading three gradually pulled away from the rest taking it in turns to lead at the varying fuel stops. But with 5 mins to go Klaus Hoschen's car came to a stop never to restart and Rody Roem's hit something a bit hard calling for some hasty pitwork by Pieter Bervoets. Thus the final positions remained:-

- 1st Michael Mielke 264 laps Serpent (Germany)
- 2nd Rody Roem 260 laps Serpent (Holland)
- 3rd Franz Goschel 254 laps BlackFire (Germany)

The winner's average lap time including fuel stops was an incredible 13.6 seconds per lap, a really superb drive and surely another name to watch in the future.

So the end had come, but what a meeting and what team spirit. A meeting to be remembered both for the enjoyment and the superb facilities/organisation. All the English agreed that they would go again anytime and I think many of them will—given the opportunity.

Roll on next year!