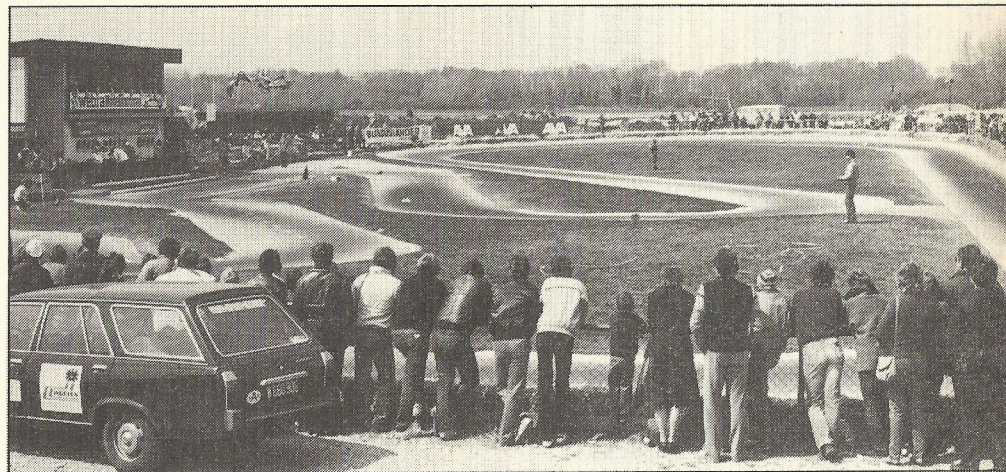


European Corvette Championships

Bob Errington was there to race and report

WELL THIS IS what the meeting should have been called as no less than 90% of the entrants were running 'Corvettes' of one style or another, the highest placed non 'Corvette' was Rody Roem's (*Serpent*) who finished up 13th.

Beautiful Downtown Sollenau, south of Vienna was the image impressed on my mind as I for one packed shorts, sandals, sunglasses, short sleeve shirts, etc. ready for the start of the



Above: spectators' view of the 'awesome' Sollenau circuit. Note excellent pit/drivers' rostrum and crowd control facilities.

tanning season. The Easter meeting at Southampton had just passed with the fabulous weather, further stressing the point that good times were ahead.

So to the racing. The circuit looked as immense as ever, the straight truly formidable only lacking a rubbish Skip to place all the broken engines in, or so I thought! Gearboxes would be an obvious choice here. But no — only about a dozen cars were using them. Engines would surely be blowing every few minutes — but again — very few 'blew' over the whole meeting. Gary Culver's was the first seen, one of his Mark IV 'thrompers', No. 46 to be precise.

The practice was good and all cars seemed to circulate nicely. The race sheets were produced and the last three heats looked like the final line up by themselves. These were going to be the heats to watch. So with Thursday drawing to a close it was back to the hotel for a nights rest.

At the start of the qualifying it was actually snowing, although not laying and the first four heats were quite

greasy. Thereafter the snow ceased, but the track remained damp. Out with the *Drinkwaters!* was the cry heard as most of the English contingent delved deep into their tyre boxes to find the Ken Drinkwater specials.

At the end of Round 1 the qualifying chart looked like this:

				Laps
1.	Michael Mielke	I	SG/OPS	12 5:18.8
2.	Bob Errington	GB	SG/OPS	12 5:22.5
3.	M. Constantini	I	SG/OPS	12 5:26.4
4.	Francesco Placenti	I	SG/OPS	12 5:35.6
5.	Viltoriano Orazi	I	SG/OPS	11 5:00.3
6.	John Chamberlain	GB	SG/OPS	11 5:01.5

At this stage it started to snow again, but only for the first few heats and so Round 2 looked as if it would be similar to Round 1. The track seemed greasier somehow and where as our *Drinkwaters* were not quite so good, the Italians managed to find something that worked a little better thus giving results as follows:

1.	Domenico Colce	I	SG/OPS	12 5:10.7
2.	Viltoriano Orazi	I	SG/OPS	12 5:12.2
3.	Roberto Bartolasi	I	SG/OPS	12 5:12.6
4.	Steve White	GB	SG/OPS	12 5:19.1
5.	Massimiliano Constantini	I	SG/OPS	11 5:00.0
6.	Luilio Gherso	I	SG/OPS	11 5:00.0

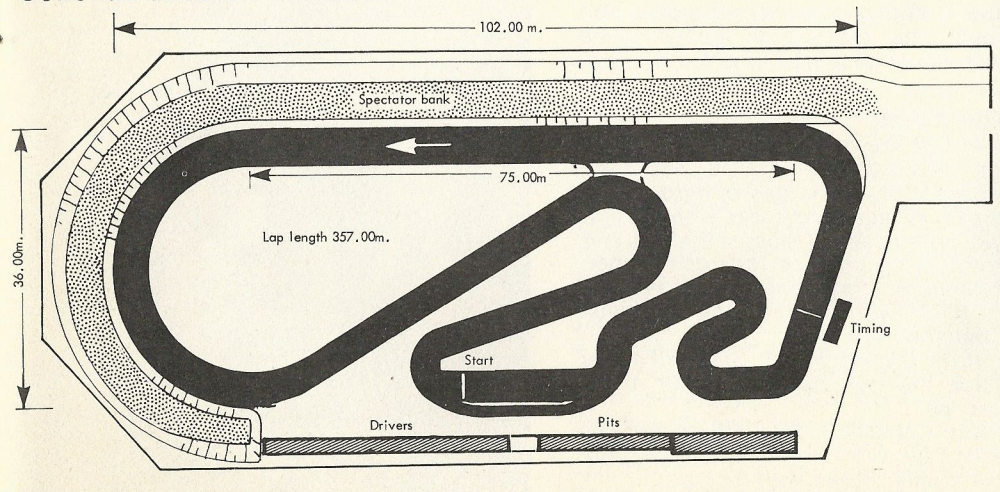
English drivers were fairing well and after these two rounds the lunch break was called and the overall result chart displayed their qualifying positions thus far.

12.	Phil Greeno	SG/OPS	11	5:04.6
21.	Paul Pagdin	PB/Picco	115:25.6	
34.	Dave Dixon	SG/OPS	10	5:23.8
38.	Nigel Sayles	PB/Picco	10	5:34.2
41.	Phil Hague	PB/Picco	9 5:04.5	
53.	Gary Culver	PB/Picco	9	5:29.2

The remaining 5 English drivers all had problems and had not had complete heats.

By the end of the lunch-break the track had dried completely and it was obvious right from heat 1 that the previous two rounds were going to count

Sollenau circuit — Austria



Chequered Flag



Italian SG team driver, Vittoriano Orazi after winning his first European title. Vittoriano is SG's chief test driver and also qualified for the Carnoux World Championship Final.

for nothing, as the track characteristics returned to normal. The leader board again contained the same names as follows:

1. Lullio Ghersi	I	SG/OPS	15	5:03.9
2. Roberto Bartolamsi	I	SG/OPS	15	5:04.1
3. Vittoriano Orazi	I	SG/OPS	15	5:06.5
4. Stefano Calpista	I	SG/OPS	15	5:07.0
5. Francesca Placenti	I	SG/OPS	15	5:09.7
6. Massimiliano Constantini	I	SG/OPS	15	5:09.9
7. Franco Sabattini	I	SG/OPS	15	5:11.4
8. Phil Greeno	GB	SG/OPS	15	5:12.4
9. Steve White	GB	SG/OPS	15	5:15.2
10. Bob Errington	GB	SG/OPS	15	5:15.4
12. John Chamberlain	GB	SG/OPS	15	5:15.6
16. Gary Culver	GB	PB/Picco	14	5:00.0
18. Phil Hague	GB	PB/Picco	14	5:02.1
24. Paul Pagdin	GB	PB/Picco	14	5:13.1
27. Debbie Preston	GB	PB/OPS	14	5:21.6
30. Keith Plested	GB	PB/Picco	13	5:00.1

The fourth and final round was set to be faster than ever with no less than 80 of the 100 entrants going faster than before. This made the last three or four heats a bit 'scrappy' at times. Fast — but still scrappy.

The final qualification print-out looked more like an Italian 'open' meeting with no less than 9 Italians in the top 13. S.G.'s seemed to have a reasonable domination too with 12 out of the same 13.

After 4th Round

1. Roberto Barolomasi	I	SG/OPS	16	5:15.4	Main
2. Vittoriano Orazi	I	SG/OPS	16	5:16.4	Main
3. Stefano Calpista	I	SG/OPS	16	5:19.3	Main
4. Domenico Calce	I	SG/OPS	16	5:19.9	Main
5. Michael Mielke	D	SG/OPS	16	5:20.2	Semi
6. Steve White	GB	SG/OPS	15	5:03.7	Semi
7. Giulio Ghersi	I	SG/OPS	15	5:05.1	Semi
8. Franco Sabottini	I	SG/OPS	15	5:06.6	Semi
9. Klaus Hosechen	D	SG/OPS	15	5:07.6	Semi
10. Michael Salven	S	Serpent	15	5:08.0	Semi
15. Bob Errington	GB	SG/OPS	15	5:09.9	Semi
16. Phil Hague	GB	PB/Picco	15	5:10.1	Semi
17. Phil Greeno	GB	SG/OPS	15	5:11.2	Semi
19. Gary Culver	GB	PB/Picco	15	5:13.2	1/4
22. John Chamberlain	GB	SG/OPS	15	5:15.6	1/4
24. Paul Pagdin	GB	PB/Picco	15	5:16.3	1/4
25. Debbie Preston	GB	PB/OPS	15	5:17.3	1/4
38. Dave Dixon	GB	SG/OPS	14	5:05.03	1/8
41. Dave Preston	GB	PB/OPS	14	5:07.3	1/8
43. Keith Plested	GB	PB/Picco	14	5:08.0	1/8

Gary Culver was the unlucky 19th qualifier, just missing the semi's and thus would have to run in one of the quarter-finals. All finals in European meetings are run on the Sunday now and encompass the top 80 qualifiers in what has been described as a 'Christmas Tree' arrangement.

Colin Strauss made the first English appearance in the second of the 1/32 finals and again luck deserted him leaving him 75th overall (coincidentally his entry number was 75). Nigel Sayles on this his first big meeting, finished 84th after a fine display of driving before troubles beset him.

The second 1/16th final saw John Russell drive a steady 47 laps in the 20 mins. but unfortunately 51 were required to reach the 1/8th finals and this left John in 58th place.

Dave Dixon's 23 laps and radio interference left him 49th after he had led his 1/8th final for the first 5 minutes.

Keith Plested and Dave Preston both featured in the second 1/8th final, Keith drove 43 laps to place 45th whilst Dave achieved a worthy 52 laps to get him into the second 1/4 final where luck too left him, leaving him 38th.

John Chamberlain and Paul Pagdin both drove well in the first 1/4 to make the semi by achieving 54 and 53 laps respectively.

Gary Culver and Debbie Preston teamed up, yet again, for the second 1/4 final, Gary with 41 laps and 34th whilst Debbie drove 53 which was just 1 short of a semi-final placing leaving her in 27th.

And so to the first Semi-Final with no less than four Englishmen competing. Steve White drove his usual smooth race to second place with a guaranteed place in the final. The other three could not match Steve's 56 laps and were left as follows: John Chamberlain 54 laps — 16th, Phil Hague 50 laps — 22nd, Paul Pagdin 47 laps — 23rd.

The second semi looked fairly hard and was at a quick pace straight from the onset. Phil Greeno arose to the occasion (*again*) and won with a worthy 57 laps, where as yours truly had irritating mixture problems and could only manage 53 laps to place 18th (Must be a sign of old age).

The Final:

At last the main final was upon the ten worthy contestants with the prospect of 45 minutes of hard racing ahead. What a race it was with the first two, nose to tail for most of the time and both taking pitstops for fresh rubber. Eventually Orazi took a 1 lap lead on Bartolomasi to become the European Champion for 1984.

10th: Constantini, I. SG/OPS never made the start due to chronic interference.

9th: Calpista, I. SG/OPS up with the front runners for the early part, but eventually retired with 82 laps.

8th: Steve White, GB. SG/OPS an early clutch problem cost him dearly in time leaving him with only 103 laps at the end.

7th: Mielke, D. SG/OPS cheered by the German contingent in the crowd, Michael drove well to reach 115 laps.

6th: Bergonzini, I. SG/OPS another rising Italian ace scored 118 laps.

5th: Veronesi, I. Mantua/OPS, Sergio had come through from the quarter-finals and the speed of his lightweight Mantua was impressive eventually amounting 120 laps.

4th: Phil Greeno, GB. SG/OPS, Phil drove well to make 123 laps.

3rd: Calce, I. SG/OPS yet another fast Italian, a name to watch, made 124 laps.

2nd: Bartolomasi, I. SG/OPS. A superb drive by this experienced man, lead for the first half of the race and totalled 127 laps.

1st: Vittoriano Orazi, I. SG/OPS his 'Pink Panther' look-alike car was always impressive. A magnificent 45 minutes faultless drive to secure 128 laps and the title — European Saloon Champion 1984.

A great meeting and one to remember. Interestingly very few motors blew despite the length of the straight and the fact that Windscreens on the bodysells had to remain intact thus restricting airflow. 20% Nitro was all that was used by all the leading runners, perhaps this helped, but it certainly didn't reduce the performance. Next year, however, sees only one class of European Championships to be raced, with the class to be decided at the EFRA A.G.M., unless of course they decided to do otherwise.

What do you think is best?

Making a splash! Andy Stafford (dry) obviously fed-up with Colin Strauss' (very wet) verbal gymnastics uses the Stonehaven river to good effect. Mr. S. Goary of Benfleet, Essex, took the picture and includes a message from Colin to Andy with it, "Watch out Stafford - you're next!"

