

IFMAR 1/10th World
Championship Report

Masami Does It Again!

No Stranger To The World Champs,
Or To Victory In These Events,
Masami Hirosaka Of Japan Puts
Another Notch In His World
Championship Belt

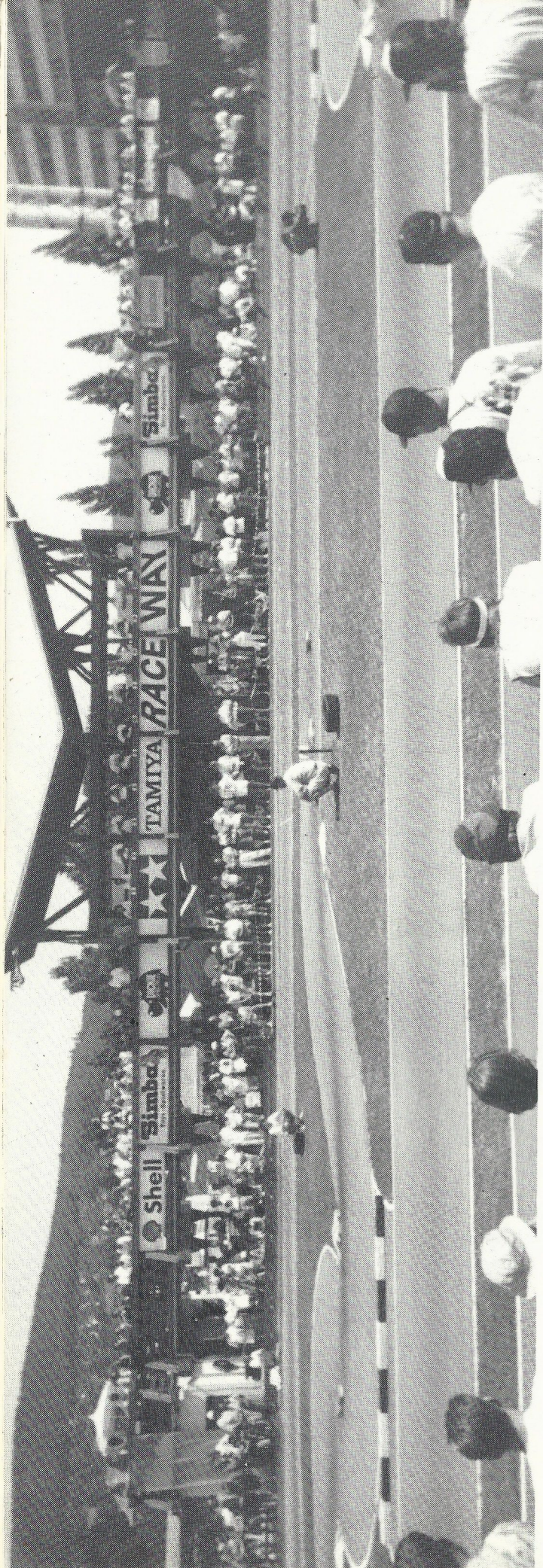
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The best 1/10 scale road racers in the world gathered at Tamiya Race Way Sonneberg, Sonneberg, Germany for the 2nd Pro 10 World Championships on July 19th to the 24th.

Major sponsorship and racing facility was provided by Dickie-Tamiya. Race Director and management was handled by The Deutscher Minicar Club e.V. Race Director Wolfgang Petermann and Assistants Dieter Niechial and Heiner Martin were directly responsible for keeping the program on-time and moving smoothly

One of the true "nice guys" in our sport, Masami Hirosaka is always a crowd favorite.





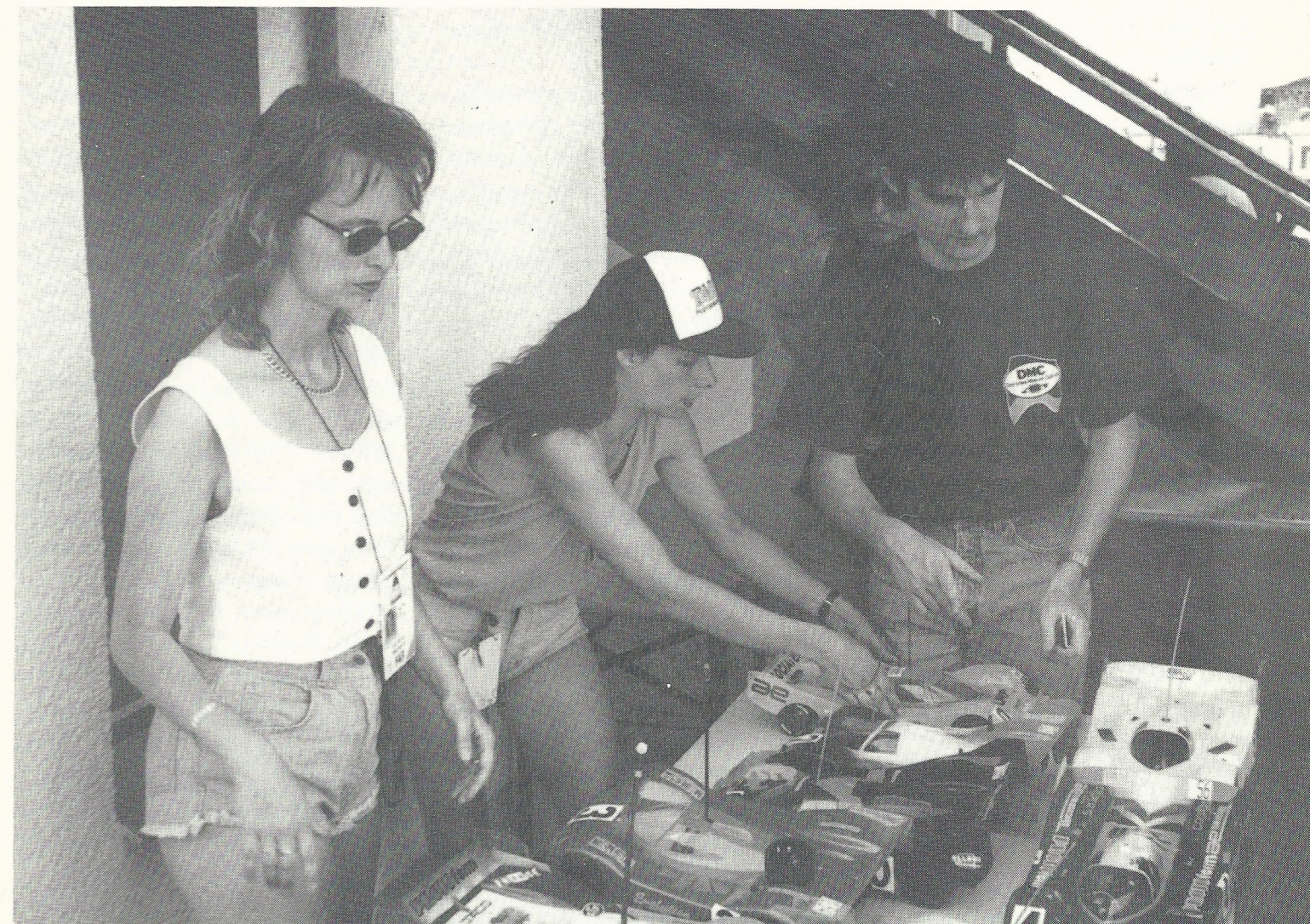
the entire week. When I jokingly remarked to Wolfgang that I thought that he was running the event like the Germans run their railroads, he said, "That's almost correct, the fact is, I'm running the race Better than the railroads!" That statement proved to be correct. Every day of the event had a printed time schedule that was posted. Simply put, you looked at the heat or main assignment, follow the line that would give you the exact times you would be on the track. Racing started daily at 9:00 a.m. . . . SHARP! A race was run every ten minutes throughout the day, no ifs, ands or buts. If you were scheduled to run at 10, 12, 2 and 4 o'clock, be there or be left behind . . . no exceptions.

Keeping in mind the strict German mentality pertaining to rule enforcement, the order of the event was, follow the rules. This was very refreshing, everybody on the same level playing field.

Something we don't see here in the states was the strict control of radio frequencies. Before a competitor went on the track for the first of two practice qualifiers, every radio was tested on a "radio spectra-scope" to insure the frequency was the same you registered with, then checked band width and how "clean" the output signal was. If you were lucky enough to pass the test, your radio was then sealed. If, for any reason, the seal was broken, without the authority of the race director, you were disqualified from the event. The frequency director wanted to be sure that the event was as "glitch free" as possible. And for

To say that this facility in Germany was great would be an understatement. Here is a shot of the driver's stand, pits, and some of the spectator viewing areas.

Competition Plus



you racers that use illegal 40 band radios here in the states, the rules are the same in Germany, only 75 band equipment. One racer was tested and found to have an illegal 75 band radio and that radio was impounded and he had to find other equipment to use. To save the day, the Tamiya people

The scrutineering tech crew.

provided that racer with legal equipment.

Open practice sessions were controlled by frequency, but there were as many as fifteen cars on the track at a time. All practice "T" times were ten minutes long. You're probably thinking, how could fifteen cars run together? I failed to mention that the track had a centerline length of nearly 800 feet and lanes that averaged more than 13 feet wide. Now you can see why the track accommodated so many cars. Tuesday and Wednesday were get acquainted days. Thursday was the official beginning of qualifying.

Heats were set by computer to select as many heats as possible by frequency and country with no more than two racers from any country in any one heat. Two practice heats were run so that racers could work out any problems that might be encountered before ac-

tual racing began. IFMAR starts for qualifying, that is, each car would race against its own clock. Thursday included the two practice heats and the first of nine rounds of qualifying. This was followed by the official opening of the event with a parade, complete with the Oberland Wind Orchestra, followed by the Concour's D' Elegance.

After the first round, USA's Jon Orr was at the top of the qualifying heap with a 16 lap, 4:11.64 effort, followed closely by Germany's Martin Fliessbach, 16, 4:12.25, Great Britain's Chris Grainger, 16, 4:14.04, and recent 1/12 World Champion, David Spashett, 16, 4:15.62. One of the strong favorites, Masami Hirosaka, was back at 27th position after his batteries dumped on lap 14 and ended with a 15, 4:06.81. That would be the last time Masami would be in any

other position than TQ for the remainder of the event. The qualifying battle would then be for the second and third positions.

Friday's schedule included qualifying rounds two through five. Great Britain's David Spashett was determined to find that kink in Masami's armor, round after round, but kept falling "oh, so short". He ended up in the number two slot by the end of the day. Americans Kevin Jelich and Jon Orr continued to be hopefuls through round five, finishing the day, third and fourth respectively. Rounding out the top ten at the end of round five were Oscar Jansen (Netherlands), Martin Fliessbach (Great Britain), Josh Cyrul (USA), Werner Bergbauer (Germany), Chris Grainger (Great Britain), and Marek Kaminski (Germany). At the end of the day, the racers were treated to a concert in the hospitality tent by the Oberland Wind Orchestra.

Overnight, the officials reshuffled the qualifiers into new heat assignments for rounds six through nine. The procedure was somewhat different than we are accustomed to. The top 36 would be shuffled into the top four heats, the next 36 in the next four heats

There have been many changes in Germany, politically speaking. Changes have also occurred in South Africa as well, allowing a contingent of these racers to participate in the IFMAR Worlds. Right: Here (left to right) is Team Manager Alistair Rundlett, Dave Briant and Gary Briant all from South Africa. Opposite Page: The U.S. Team lining up for the parade.

and so on down the ladder. In effect, the same format was followed as in the initial heat set-up.

Masami fired the final TQ shot in round six with a "nobody can touch this" run of 16, 4:03.69 that included ballistic single lap times of 14.88 and 14.97 seconds. American team member, Barry Baker made a serious bid for the TQ spot, jumping from 15th to 2nd with a charge of 16 laps in 4:07.61. Great Britain's David Spashett put a scare in everybody in round nine when he came, "Oh, soooo close", falling just .92 seconds off the TQ mark. As it turns out, David ended in the number two qualifying spot overall. Rounding out the remainder of the A Final were USA's Barry Baker, USA's Josh Cyrul, USA's Jon Orr, Germany's Martin Fliessbach, Netherlands's Oscar Jansen, Germany's Ralf Helbing, Switzerland's Reto Konig and USA's Kevin Jelich. Keep this fact in mind, only 7.66 seconds separated the TQ from the tenth qualifier. That's

close racing!

At the close of qualifying, the mains were set. Then it was "party time", that is, time for the racer's banquet. Everybody got to let their hair down and enjoy some of the local food delights and locally brewed beverages. The Oberland Wind Orchestra played the night away. Friendships were made . . . the melding of nations!

Sunday would be the day . . . nail biting - nerve racking - butterflies in the stomach day! After a week of practice, more practice, qualifying and more qualifying, this was "Showdown" time!

Everybody got one practice main, just to be sure that everything was okay. The first of the triple A Mains was underway. Japan's Masami Hirosaka did what everybody thought, got off to a good clean start, then put it on "cruise control". He paced himself comfortably out front. Spashett, the number two man, got





tion, with the throw out run acting as a tie breaker, if necessary. Points were awarded for finishing position, ten for first place, nine for second, and so on down to one point for tenth. Total of the best two would give you your final standings. With that in mind, the second A Final began. You know the story, before the race, you check and recheck to be sure that everything is ready. So thought Masami, that is until, the "go"

Left: The World's are always a busy time for motor man Mike Reedy.

into trouble the first couple of laps and was pressed hard to recover, eventually finishing sixth with 15, 4:00.90. If you weren't the TQ, it seemed a rear starting position was the place to be. This was witnessed from the hard charges put in by USA's Jon Orr, the number five qualifier, and Germany's Ralf Helbing. Orr finished second, well from Masami's 16, 4:05.75 finish, with a 16, 4:12.72. Helbing was well back from Orr, finishing with 16, 4:15.68. USA's Josh Cyrul had the pressure on Helbing the entire race and finished fourth with a 16, 4:15.98. USA's Kevin Jelich made a strong bid, finishing fifth from his tenth starting position, with the only other 16 lap run at 4:16.78. The remainder of the field all finished with 15 laps as follows, Baker, Jansen, Konig and Fliessbach.

The best two of the three runs would determine the World Cham-

Right: Masami is so good he can beat most racers driving with his feet!



buzzer sounded for the start . . . oh no!!!, the TQ car of Masami got off quickly but then slowed drastically after the first lap . . . what happened? Batteries not charged? Electronic failure? No! The problem was later tracked down to a hung-up motor brush. Masami pulled the car and was relegated to watch the remainder of the round while David Spashett drove like the champion he is, to win round two. (David was the winner of the 1/12 scale World Championship earlier this summer). Spashett did the same thing as Masami, got out in front and cruised to a great 16 lap run in 4:07.65 finish. Fliessbach recovered from his disappointing tenth place finish in round one to finish second, with a 16, 4:13.25. In hot pursuit, Jon Orr kept the pressure on and finished third just a tick behind Fliessbach with a 16, 4:13.72. And talk about pressure, Oscar Jansen, finished just .08 seconds behind Orr at 16, 4:13.80. Helbing finished fifth with 16, 4:14.00. Jelich and Cyrul finished sixth and seventh, both with 15 laps, Konig and Baker were eighth and ninth, dropping out early with 11 laps. You remember Masami, he finished tenth.

At the end of round two, Jon Orr had a commanding point lead with 17, Spashett had 15, Helbing 14, Hirotsuka, Cyrul and Jelich were in a log jam all with 11, Jansen had 10, Fliessbach 9, Baker 6, and Konig 5 points. The nail bitin' . . . nerve wrenching . . . butterflies in the stomach . . . were now at a fever pitch. It looked like the Championship was still up for grabs from any of the top four drivers.

What more could you ask for in a World Championship event, final round coming up!

The third and deciding round of competition assembled on the grid. The huge crowd was ready! The pressure was at the boiling point. "30 seconds", the race director announced, "ten seconds . . attention drivers", hearts pounding, the start buzzer sounded. This time, Masami was off to a clean start, quick start, no mechanical problems. Well there was one small problem, Masami had David Spashett hot on his tail, so much so, it looked as if Spashett was in tow. Turn after turn, lap after lap, Masami and Spashett went at it. With each lap, the crowd reaction grew louder. Barry Baker was putting on a driving show, putting everybody on notice that he really is a world contender. Ralf Helbing had the misfortune of being the only driver that had major trouble and fell out on lap two. Kevin Jelich, making a serious bid from his tenth starting spot, moved up to the fourth position. All the while Masami and David Spashett were in the heated battle for the lead. Spashett pressing hard and Masami protecting his lead, that is until lap ten, when Spashett slipped and slid his car into the grass. That miscue opened the door for Baker to make his bid for second. Grass flying, Spashett recovered but all hopes for a second championship were dashed! As time was winding down, Masami again put his car on the cruise mode, while Spashett and Baker waged the final battle for second. At the buzzer, it was all Masami, the new 1/10 World Champion,

Batteries, Batteries, Batteries

As is the case with most major racing events, the buzz word is usually, who has the biggest, baddest batteries at the event? Who is going to command the track with overwhelming battery power? These questions would be put to rest early on in the event. You see, the Scutineers . . . a funny European word for Tech Inspector . . . made it clear that everybody would be checked for legal batteries. The rules were clearly printed in the IFMAR Rule Book as to what to expect. When asked, usually after a qualifying run, the top three finishing cars were thoroughly checked (random checks were also made throughout the event) and then you were instructed to remove the battery pack at the provided table area. As was the case with most racers, when the batteries were in the assembled form, they came up heavy. Then the other shoe dropped, take the packs apart and weigh only the cells. Things were usually okay at that point. The scrutineers then handed you back a pile of cells and braid, they put an ID mark on the cells, then said . . . have a nice day! As aggravating as this might seem, we personally had to tear down three packs, it kept things on a VERY level playing field. It meant that, in almost all cases, the big team efforts and the privateers could compete. It was refreshing to see the BIG guns dumping on the final laps just like everyone else. A tip of the hat to IFMAR for enforcing the rules!

with 16 laps in 4:04.68, Spashett ended up second with 16, 4:09.37, Baker was a close third with a 16, 4:09.67. Jelich made the biggest move of the race, finishing fourth with 16, 4:14.10. Jon Orr, who was the USA's best hope for the Championship, ended the race where he started, fifth. Jansen, Konig, Fliessbach, Cyrul and Helbing rounded out the finish as listed.

The race officials had to literally tally the scores, tech the cars, tech the batteries, verify that all was correct before the official final standings were announced. It was clear, that unless there was a technical problem, Masami Hirosaka would be crowned World Champion. With a deafening cheer, the final results were announced:

Without a doubt, a great event. Well planned, well executed, well enforced. Thanks to Tamiya, The Deutscher Mini Car Club, and the great people of Sonneberg. Congratulations to all the great competitors from around the world, well done!

FINAL RESULTS

FINAL POSITION	DRIVER/COUNTRY	MOTOR/CHASSIS	ESC
1ST	Masami Hirosaka/Japan	Reedy/Yokomo	Tekin
2ND	David Spashett/Great Britain	Corally/Corally	GM
3RD	Jon Orr/USA	Reedy/Assoc.	Novak
4TH	Ralf Helbing/Germany	Evolution/Assoc.	GM
5TH	Kevin Jelich/USA	Reedy/Assoc.	Novak
6TH	Oscar Jansen/Netherlands	Corally/Corally	GM
7TH	Barry Baker/USA	Reedy/Assoc.	Novak
8TH	Martin Fliessbach/Germany	Reedy/Assoc.	Novak
9TH	Josh Cyrul/USA	Reedy/Assoc.	Novak
10TH	Reto Konig/Switzerland	Peak/Corally	Novak