



Electric Off-Road Euro-Champs

European buggy drivers met for the first time at Halifax on July 28 to contest the title of European Champion. Steve Newey and Charlie Formby report

PRACTICE BEGAN on the Friday morning in changeable weather conditions with many cars on the track at any given time due to the numerous amount of frequencies available. The only drivers not making use of the first uncontrolled practice were the Italians, most of whom had turned up at the circuit with brand new SG cars still unassembled and in cardboard boxes. These were built during the course of the day (some still weren't completed when racing began on the Saturday) and looked very impressive which seemed to have a very unnerving effect on some of the British, and other foreign drivers. Yes the psych-outs had begun already.

The Germans were the first to put the

organisations awareness of the rules to the test. Turning up with the new Kyosho's 'Le Mans 360 PT' motors, with one being brought into the team managers meeting for inspection. This motor is of course a 550 type and is not legal for BRCA or EFRA sanctioned events and, after some nifty work with a vernier gauge by John Russell, the motor was disallowed.

The track, which had come in for some criticism a month earlier, had been suitably altered with an extension to the straight running away from the drivers rostrum and also, the whole track had been widened to allow the cars more room to manoeuvre (See Fig. 1). The track seemed to be accepted as OK by most competitors,

but had a little more space been available it would have been nice to have a few more longish straights and more bends to make it faster yet more challenging for the competitors.

After uncontrolled practice the first and only

controlled practice session took place at 2pm. Drivers were given a ten minute 'heat' (with the other drivers from the respective qualifying heat) to set the car up. No real clues as to who was going well emerged from the

Below: Niel Ward, 1985 EFRA European buggy champion collects his winner's laurels, trophy and champagne. He seems reasonably pleased.





minutes. These were sorted into order and the top four drivers would go straight through to the main final and the rest qualifying through 1/8, 1/4 and semi finals. In European racing the 'Christmas Tree' system of running finals is used.

The first round of heats were quite a close affair, 13 drivers with 12 lap efforts. Tony Wells and Steve Haynes had an interesting dice in heat 3. Steve taking fastest time of the round to win from Tony by 6 seconds. Also of note was the Jamie Booth/Niel Ward scrap in Heat 5. 'Nelly'

Above: the Yorkshire Model Car Club circuit situated at Halifax was revised for the event. The lane width was widened to accommodate ten car heats and the main straight lengthened. Covered drivers' rostrum and pits were a blessing.

Peglar, Newey, McRae and Booth, all forcing their way into the top ten. The 12 lap tally going up to 17. Some notable names were still not up there. Richy Isherwood was having problems with his 'HotShot' cutting out. Kevin Blears had the fastest 11 lapper when a minor fault stopped his 'RC10'. Steve Haynes improved his time by two seconds to take the fastest time to 12 laps in 306 seconds.

The best dice of the day came in heat three of the third round. Steve Haynes, Tony Wells and Steve Newey all had a hand in this one. Newey got a great start only to be turned around by a car at the end of the main straight. Wells and Haynes took up the lead with Newey third. The lead must have changed three times per lap for the next few laps until Wells clashed with a back marker. The same clash slowed Haynes allowing Newey to get away, but Wells and Haynes continued entertaining the crowd for another few laps. The most noticeable factor in the race was how the three drivers had the advantage over the different sections. Well's car was quickest overall although Haynes seemed faster over the rough stuff and Newey quickest through the tight bends and infield. How Steve Newey failed to improve his time is beyond me, but the commentator, Jeff Lindstrom was out of breath at the end of that one.

Someone who did improve his time was Glyn Peglar. Over the jump on the return straight he gave what can only be described as a flying display. He was hitting the hump flat out and sailing eight to ten feet through the air (not up, along) only once did he come to grief and then he landed on his wheels after doing a triple toe loop worthy of John Currie. Glyn took the provisional FTD with that performance and must have been very satisfied with his car and his technique.

Mr. Peglar's Joy was short-lived however. An Islander from Bolton by the

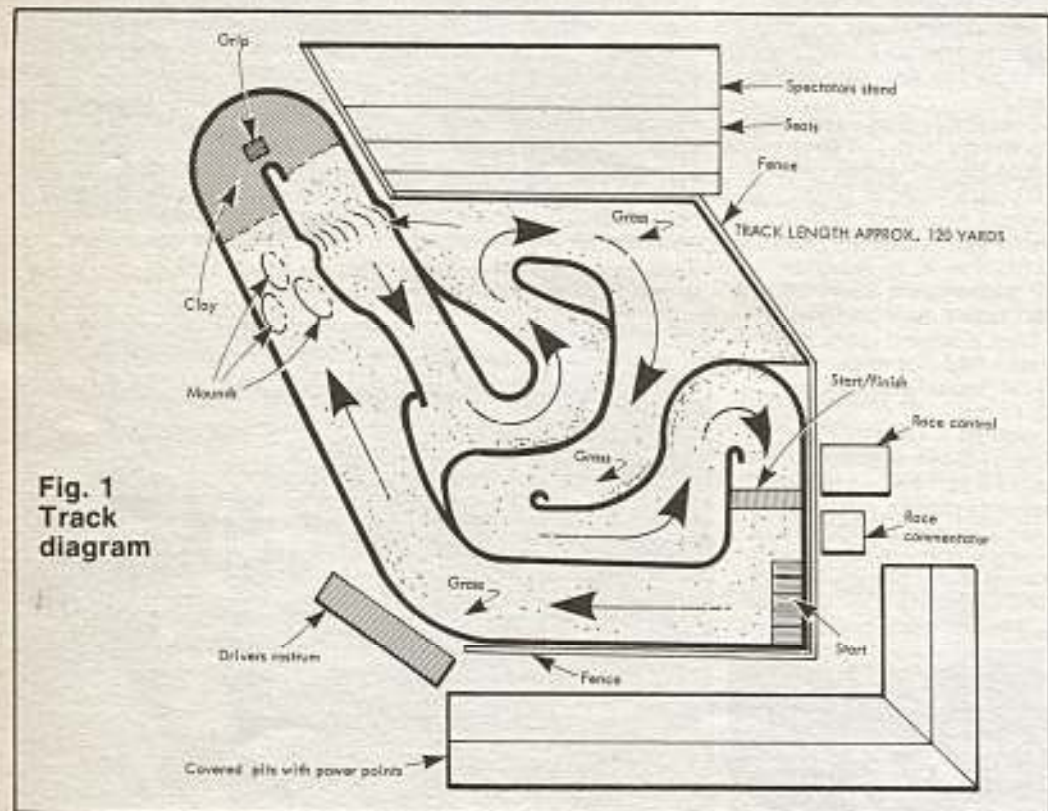


Fig. 1
Track
diagram

controlled practice as cars appeared on the circuit at different intervals during each heat and with the practice being untimed, it was impossible to compare driver and car performance. The organisers hoped to run two rounds of controlled practice but due to the unsettled weather conditions only one round was run. So, back to

uncontrolled practice which lasted but a short while before being wiped out by a tremendous thunderstorm.

Qualifying

The format for racing on day one was, four rounds of heats with everyone racing for the best time and highest number of laps in 5

getting the best of that one. The best non-British performance of the round was by Evhard Liewald of Germany and Marco De Marchi of Italy who both put in a 12-lappers in 317 seconds, Evhard getting the higher position by two hundredths of a second. (5th and 6th for the round). Round 2 saw the fast lads get it together, Ward,

Race Report



Above: one of only two Kyosho 'Scorpions' in action at Halifax. Derek McLarney's car negotiated a corner.

name of Niel Ward gave yet another display of faultless driving to notch up an absolutely Magic 13 lapper which had all the crowd and competitors applauding the effort. Who could top that?

In round 3 Marco de Marchi (Italy) became the top non-British driver with a creditable 12 in 309 to take the 5th fastest time of the day so far. Down at the other end of the field were two more Italians, Giuseppe De Bernadine and Daniele Spongia who had brand new and untried SG Cars which they spent all day Friday building. Because of this they didn't get any practice and it showed in the general performance of the cars. All cars, it doesn't matter who builds them, need some

sorting out before any serious racing can be undertaken. All the more credit to these lads who came to Halifax from Italy to show the flag with Italian cars.

Everybody was expecting big things in round four. Could Steve Haynes get his FTD back? Could Glyn Peglar? And what of Tony Wells, Jamie Booth, The Harris Twins, or Austrian GP winner Pete Stevens who was surely on form.

That sleeping giant Kevin Blears had not done much so far, would round 4 be his round?

Well as is usually the case in these situations, round 4 turned out to be a real anti-climax, although there was some good racing going on. Nobody in the top thirty drivers except

Darren Harris improved his time in Round 4. Darren moved from 27th to 26th changing places with Christian Kiel taking two seconds off his best time. Congratulations.

Well that was the qualifying rounds finished with, but the day was far from over. A disco had been planned for the evening so best tyres and body shells were hastily fitted.

Notable absentees were the British Team Manager and the 1/10th Secretary who both had to go home to Liverpool. (I've got a sleep man). It was plain by the look of some of them the next morning that 'falling down water' had flowed very freely indeed, but I take it that they all enjoyed Saturday night.

Yorkshire is famous for puddings, cricket, Emmerdale Farm and rain, so it was no surprise that on Sunday morning a few of the tents had flown away.

Halifax is Swahili for — Horizontal driving rain — well they all got horizontal

Below: Model Cars correspondent, Steve Newey, puts his Associated 'RC10' through its paces during a qualifying run.

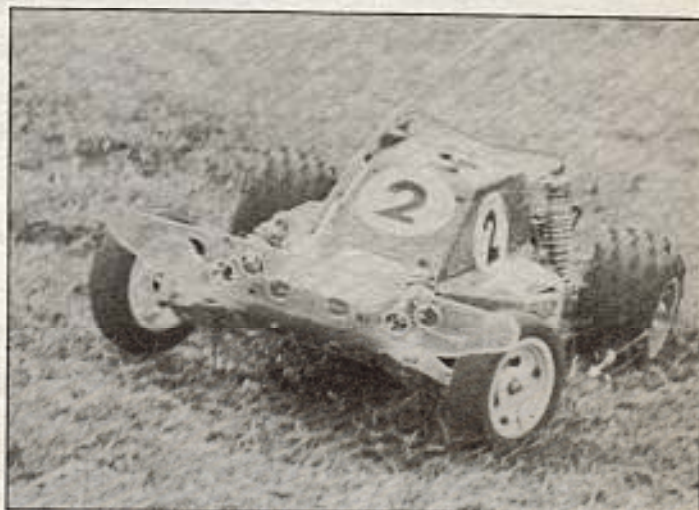
the start of racing back yet further to 13.15 hours and we'd all wasted a morning in bed.

The top qualifiers for finals day were Jamie Booth, Steve Haynes and Glyn Peglar. Just three seconds covered their 12-lap efforts, but in pole position with that unrivalled 13-lapper was Niel Ward. These four would go straight through to the final. The next six would all win through from the coming days racing.

The 1/8th A-final was the first to get under way. This was an all Continental affair with five Germans, two Italians and one Swede making the numbers up.

Stefan Grosse (D) led this final from start to finish with Daniele Spongia (I) and P. Markkula (SW) featuring in the early fight for a top three place. It was S. Grosse (D), D. Blandon (G) and G. Bechler (D) who got put through to the 1/4 B-final in the end.

The 1/10th BRCA Chairman had the dubious honour of being the lowest placed Brit in Saturdays



last night so here comes the driving rain. It was horrible. So bad in fact that they (quite sensibly) cancelled the 10.30 practice because it would cut the track up too much.

There were only four drivers for the 1/16th final, so when a competitor retired, the other three automatically went up into the 1/8th B final. This put

heats. To say there was a more determined look on the face of George Land for day two of the Euro-Champs, would be an understatement. He drove like a demon (albeit a Parma one) in the 1/8th B-final to win by a comfortable margin from M. Kleinhaus (G) and the Austrian, P. Srna.

The British contingent

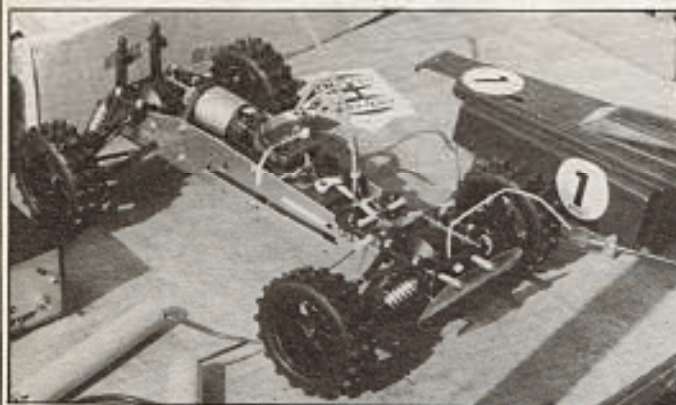
MODEL CARS

Below: measuring jigs to check dimensions of all competitors' cars against the EFRA construction rules.



SG Racing/TAG Models 'Coyote' 4WD

Italian drivers arrived at Halifax with brand new, unbuilt 4WD cars from SG Racing and TAG models. Lack of track time let the cars down and forced drivers to revert back to their original cars. Right: Daniel Spongia prepares his car prior to qualifying.



The SG/TAG 'Coyote' employs shaft drive between front and rear from an in-line motor. Ni-Cads are carried in two, three cell, sticks mounted either side of the chassis. Limited-slip differentials feature front and rear.

started to feature in greater numbers as the finals got higher. This was understandable as we had the largest team and we were on home ground.

Six out of the 10 1/4-A finalists were British including Europe's top lady Jane Adams.

The competition was very fierce in this final. Derek McLarney led for the first part of this race after a start line pile-up allowed him to get clear during the course of the race. Derek, who's 'Scorpion' seemed severely down on power, was overhauled by Darren Harris' 'RC10' and Richard (Ishey) Isherwood's 'Hotshot'. This was the way the race went with Jane Adams, Klein Schmid (Germany) and Mel Bettison all having a go at Derek's No. 3 spot. It was curtains for McLarney at the end of the straight a collision with Mel Bettison gave the rest of the field a chance to pass and put him out of the proceedings. The furious fight for the third place continued right to the flag, but Mel Bettison was the

eventual third qualifier. A near upset happened when Ishey's car slowed and allowed Darren Harris' to take the winners laurels, but the 'Hotshot' still managed to crawl home second. Jane Adams was the unlucky 4th from Derek McLarney 5th.

The 1/4 B-final was another one horse affair, Nick Adams was determined to get one of the Adams family into the semi's. Nick got a good start and led for most of the race, Christian Kiel (Germany), Pier Corval (France), Stefan Oberle (Germany), all featured early on in the minor placings. A four-wheel drive *Hirobo* in the distinctive blue of George Land was the eventual winner when unaccountably, as in the previous race, Nick's batteries dumped on the last lap. Fortunately for Nick he had enough of a lead to hang on to the second spot, but it must have been a heart-stopping moment for him when George's 'Zerda' went past. 1/4 B-final result: Land,

Adams and a Swedish driver S. Hansson in third place.

Semi-final A

On to the semis. The main final was getting close and tension was beginning

to show on the faces of some of the drivers.

Semi-final A featured some of Britain's better known drivers. The Harris twins, Andy Benson, Pete Stevens and Steve Newey all on the start line for that one chance of glory. Umberto Pernice (Italy) and S. Kaske (Germany) were the only non-British entries. Kevin Moore, Ishey Isherwood and Mel Bettison made up the rest of the field.

Steve Newey led from pole position until a mass pile-up at the top hairpin. After the sort-out Lawrence Harris found himself in the lead which he increased as the race went on. Pernice managed to grab second place, driving a steady race finishing just in front of Andy Benson's 'Scorpion'. Young Kevin Moore showed skill and nerve far beyond his tender age to head home many established drivers to take fourth place. This semi had been quite scrappy with lots of cars colliding with each other, therefore making it quite a slow race. The first two drivers from each semi automatically qualify into the main final. The next two fastest drivers from both semi's then go through.

Semi-final B

This was a much cleaner, faster race, almost professional featuring

Below: EFRA supplied the AMB Automatic Lap counting system to back up the manual counters. Transponders fitted to each car transmitted a signal to the computer every time the car passed underneath the receiving coil stretched across the start/finish line. Lap-counting was 100 per cent accurate as a result.



Race Report

Tony Wells and Simon McRae in a terrific dice for the lead. Wells was always in front, but McRae was trying to scrape his motor lable off with his front bumper. This went on for the whole race with Simon looking content to take second place knowing full well this would be good enough to progress him through to the final.

George Land completed his minor miracle by taking third place with another superb drive the *Hirobo 'Zerda'*, well suited to the now awful track conditions, completing the race in a faster time than the third place man in the first semi which brought a rather large smile from this big man once he realised he was 'in'. I thought, Ian Littlely had taken fourth place just behind George, but De Marchi was credited as fourth finisher again with a fast enough time to put him in the final in the bottom position on the grid.

The final was to be run over three legs with each

driver's best two times to be added together to determine the winner and placement.

Euro Final 1

Niel Ward took full advantage from pole position to lead the first race, but was soon overhauled by Lawrence Harris whose car looked incredibly fast in the early stages of the race. George Land retired after two laps with a broken *Hirobo* with Simon McRae also retiring a little later on.

Meanwhile, Lawrence had increased his lead to about a quarter of a lap and looked set to win the first race until his Ni-Cads started to lose power. Into the final lap and Lawrence's car was now crawling, allowing De Marchi to take the lead closely followed by Niel Ward, these two enjoying a great scrap.

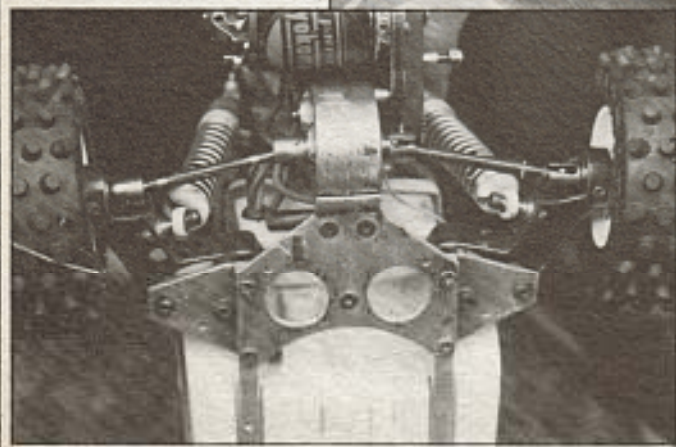
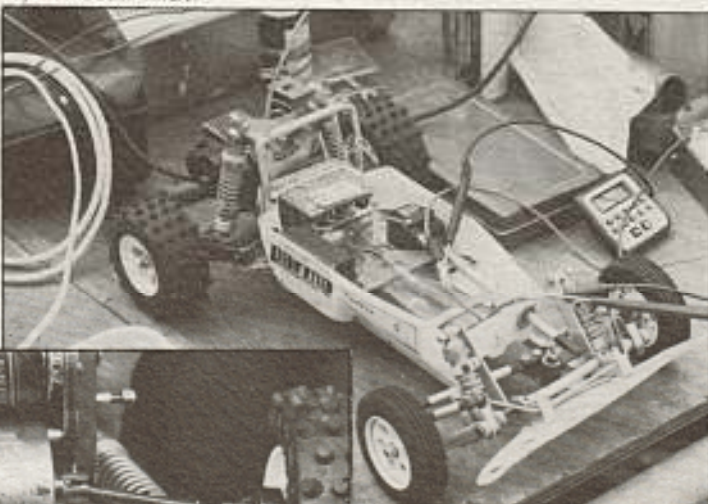
It looked odds on that De Marchi would win, but he went a foot wide at the hairpin just before the



Above: drivers await the start of the first Final of three to decide the European championship.

Andy Benson's belt drive 'Scorpion'

Andy Benson's hybrid 'Scorpion' provoked much interest mostly because it ran so soundlessly. Father John did much of the preparation but Andy failed to make it past the semi-finals.



Above left: belt drive for the Benson's 'Scorpion' provided the answer to noisy and inefficient gear mesh. Left, John also produced their own rear trailing arms from steel to allow breakages in this area. Above: Associated 'RC10' shocks provided the damping and a lexan radio crate kept the weight down. Front anti-roll bar was also fitted.

finish line which was enough to let 'Nellie' through and take the flag by half a second, much to the delight of the many spectators and English drivers. Lawrence limped home in third place almost being caught by Tony Wells and Steve Haynes on the line.

Jamie Booth (despite suffering some interference problems) finished just in front of Glyn Peglar after a close race with Pernice being the last finisher.

Drivers had fifteen minutes to prepare their cars between finals and much frantic activity took place between races cleaning the cars, changing gear ratios, motor, Ni-Cads etc.

Euro Final 2

Tony Wells didn't start the race, having got water in the electrics. Niel Ward again lead the pack away and this time managed to get clear after the first corner pile up, completing the first lap about eight seconds clear of the field. Lawrence had to come from behind again fighting

his way through the field to do battle with Steve Haynes for the rest of the race. Simon MacRae again had to pull out of the race, this time after eight laps (one more than before). Two laps later De Marchi dropped out with flat Ni-Cads leaving Glyn Peglar at the rear of the field

completed a disappointing weekend by having his Associated stood on by a marshall before completing a single lap and, apart from the first four, everybody was having problems which were blamed on the short space of time between races to prepare the cars and recharge Ni-Cads.



Above: the top three drivers in Europe. Left to right: Lawrence Harris (2nd), Niel Ward (1st), Stephen Haynes (3rd).

suffering from various problems. At the front was still Niel Ward slightly increasing his lead to ten seconds at the flag with Lawrence just beating Haynes over the line for second and third places.

George Land managed to hold off Jamie Booth to snatch fourth place with Pernice finishing sixth, twenty-two seconds down on Jamie.

Euro Final 3

The only man with a realistic chance of snatching the title from Niel was Lawrence Harris, who immediately built up a very large lead from the start signal (Lawrence needed a 12-lapper in 305 seconds or less to win, providing Niel didn't improve on his first two times).

Niel was having a slow race this time, so it looked like his first two scores would be the ones to count. Pernice was now running second to Harris with Ward third and De Marchi fourth. Tony Wells

After three minutes Harris had built up an incredible lead and was on for a really quick time when disaster struck.

The car touched a barrier and a track rod end came off, Lawrence completed the lap and drove the car to the pits where sponsor, and wrenchman Dave Bannister reconnected the offending part and sent the car on its way without losing the lead. Lawrence went on to win the race easily from Pernice with Ward third and De Marchi fourth.

So, congratulations to Niel Ward for becoming the first 1/10th Off-Road Euro Champ, taking the title by eight seconds from Lawrence Harris with Steve Haynes making it a one, two, three for Britain. Well done also to the two Italian drivers who made the final, in particular De Marchi who looked a very useful driver.

A big thank you must also go to the Yorkshire club for their efforts and to all the overseas drivers who made it a true international event.

Results Qualifying Round 1

1. S. Haynes	GB	12	308
2. L. Harris	GB	12	314
3. T. Wells	GB	12	316
4. A. Benson	GB	12	316
5. E. Liewald	Germany	12	317
6. De Marchi	Italy	12	317
7. P. Stevens	GB	12	320
8. I. Little	GB	12	320
9. S. Kaske	Germany	12	322
10. G. Peglar	GB	12	324
11. S. Oberle	Germany	12	325
12. N. Ward	GB	12	338
13. K. Moore	GB	12	343
14. D. McLarny	GB	11	300
15. J. Booth	GB	11	301
16. U. Pernice	Italy	11	301
17. G. Kleinhaus	Germany	11	302
18. M. Bettison	SPLT	11	302
19. M. Howard	GB	11	305
20. C. Keil	Germany	11	307

Round 2

1. S. Haynes	GB	12	300
2. N. Ward	GB	12	308
3. G. Peglar	GB	12	308
4. S. Newey	GB	12	309
5. S. McRae	GB	12	309
6. J. Booth	GB	12	311
7. L. Harris	GB	12	314
8. T. Wells	GB	12	314
9. A. Benson	GB	12	316
10. E. Liewald	Germany	12	317
11. De Marchi	Italy	12	317
12. P. Stevens	GB	12	320
13. K. Moore	GB	12	320
14. I. Little	GB	12	320
15. S. Kaske	Germany	12	322
16. S. Oberle	Germany	12	325
17. U. Pernice	Italy	12	330
18. K. Blears	GB	11	300
19. D. McLarny	GB	11	300
20. G. Kleinhaus	Germany	11	302

Round 3

1. N. Ward	GB	13	325
2. G. Peglar	GB	12	305
3. S. Haynes	GB	12	306
4. J. Booth	GB	12	308
5. De Marchi	Italy	12	309
6. S. Newey	GB	12	309
7. S. McRae	GB	12	309
8. L. Harris	GB	12	311
9. T. Wells	GB	12	314
10. A. Benson	GB	12	316
11. E. Liewald	Germany	12	317
12. P. Stevens	GB	12	320
13. I. Little	GB	12	320
14. K. Moore	GB	12	320
15. C. Merli	Australia	12	320
16. U. Pernice	Italy	12	321
17. K. Blears	GB	12	322
18. S. Kaske	Germany	12	322
19. N. Adams	GB	12	323
20. M. Bettison	SPLT	12	325

Round 4

1. N. Ward	GB	13	325
2. G. Peglar	GB	12	305
3. S. Haynes	GB	12	306
4. J. Booth	GB	12	308
5. De Marchi	Italy	12	309
6. S. Newey	GB	12	309
7. S. McRae	GB	12	309
8. L. Harris	GB	12	311
9. T. Wells	GB	12	314
10. A. Benson	GB	12	316
11. E. Liewald	Germany	12	317
12. P. Stevens	GB	12	320
13. I. Little	GB	12	320
14. K. Moore	GB	12	320
15. C. Merli	Australia	12	320
16. U. Pernice	Italy	12	321
17. K. Blears	GB	12	322
18. S. Kaske	Germany	12	322
19. N. Adams	GB	12	323
20. M. Bettison	SPLT	12	325

Euro-Final 1

1. N. Ward	12	316.7
2. G. Peglar	11	305.3
3. S. Haynes	12	327.1
4. J. Booth	11	301.9
5. L. Harris	12	322.8
6. U. Pernice	11	322.3
7. T. Wells	12	323.6
8. S. McRae	7	300.0
9. G. Land	2	300.0
10. M. de Marchi	12	317.5

Euro-Final 2

1. N. Ward	12	302.5
2. G. Peglar	10	303.1
3. S. Haynes	12	324.6
4. J. Booth	11	310.5
5. L. Harris	12	320.1
6. U. Pernice	11	319.8
7. T. Wells	0	300.0
8. S. McRae	8	300.0
9. G. Land	11	307.1
10. M. de Marchi	10	300.0

Euro-Final 3

1. N. Ward	11	301.0
2. G. Peglar	9	300.0
3. S. Haynes	9	334.4
4. J. Booth	10	300.0
5. L. Harris	12	314.6
6. U. Pernice	12	324.6
7. T. Wells	0	300.0
8. S. McRae	4	300.0
9. G. Land	5	300.0
10. M. de Marchi	11	302.3

Euro Finals

	Final 1	Final 2	Final 3	Best 2 scores	
1. Ward	12/316.7	12/309.7	11/300.6	24/626.4	Associated
2. Harris	12/321.6	12/319.8	12/314.6	24/634.4	Associated
3. Haynes	12/327.0	12/324.5	9/334.3	24/651.5	Associated
4. De Marchi	12/317.2	10/300.0	11/301.6	23/618	Associated
5. Pernice	11/321.6	11/320.3	12/325.8	23/646	Associated
6. Booth	11/302.1	11/310.5	10/300.0	22/612.6	Associated
7. Peglar	11/305.6	10/303.0	8/300.0	21/608.6	Associated
8. Land	2/300.0	11/307.3	5/300.0	15/607	Arco
9. McRae	7/300.0	8/300.0	4/300.0	15/600	Associated
10. Wells	12/323.3	—	—	12/323.3	Associated

Official Final Positions

1. N. Ward	15. S. Kaske	25. D. McLarny	43. H. P. Lohr
2. L. Harris	16. S. Newey	30. J. Adams	44. G. Walther
3. S. Haynes	17. K. Blears	31. M. Schmeider	45. A. Schmeiderberg
4. M. De Marchi	18. N. Adams	32. S. Grosse	46. Y. Tetsuo
5. U. Pernice	19. I. Little	33. G. Beckner	47. E. Cavodon
6. J. Booth	20. P. Stevens	34. P. Sini	48. A. Boutin
7. G. Peglar	21. R. Isherwood	35. M. Langridge	49. W. Marini
8. G. Land	22. E. Liewald	36. M. Kleinhaus	50. G. De Bernardini
9. S. McRae	23. D. Harris	37. D. Blandin	51. L. Horst
10. T. Wells	24. S. Hansson	38. G. Kleinhaus	52. W. Fester
11. A. Benson	25. M. Howard	39. D. Scognia	53. P. Putters
12. C. Merli	26. C. Keil	40. K. Oberle	
13. K. Moore	27. C. Corval	41. B. Lohr	
14. M. Bettison	28. S. Oberle	42. P. Markula	