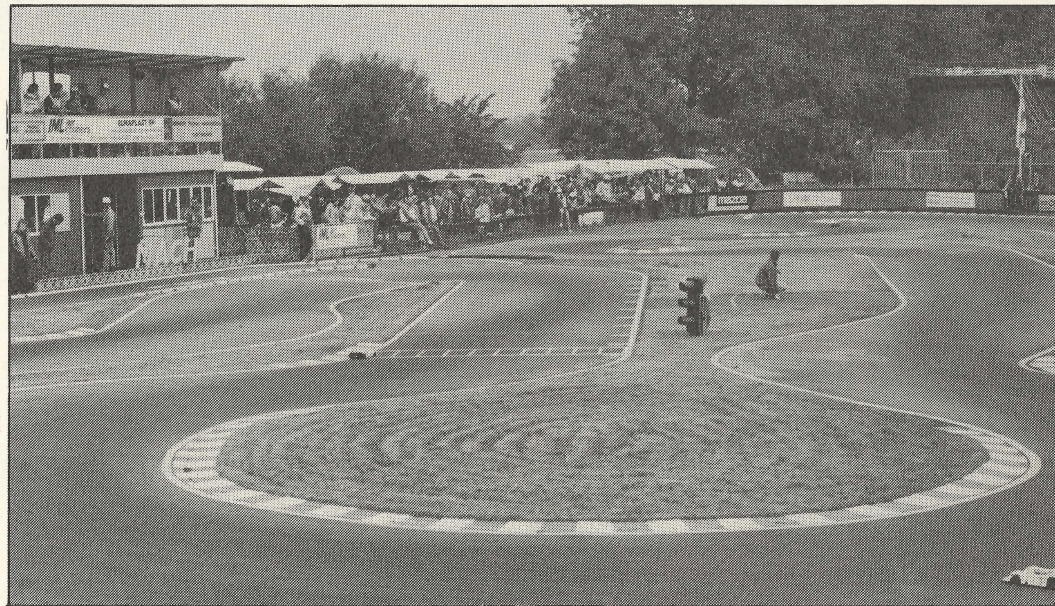


Race Report

by Bob Errington

THIS BEING THE VENUE of many Dutch Grand Prix's, and also the home of the legendary 3 hour team races, many drivers were already familiar with the circuit layout and of the Dutch rainfall. The fact that *Serpent* cars have won everything here since the track was opened and that the *Serpent* factory is a mere two minute car ride away, merely adds salt to the wound since this year to date the *Serpent* 4-wheel drive car is the most consistent winner in England and most of Europe. Indeed many people in the know predicted a ten *Serpent* car final for these Eurochamps.

Practice was available from Monday but most



Above; the smooth curves of the Heemstede circuit, one of the most favoured purpose built tracks in Europe.

Sports/GT Eurochamps

The premier 1/8th scale circuit racing event of the season at Heemstede, Holland. Bob Errington was there.

people arrived either Wednesday or Thursday. Wednesday was wet — surprise — and horribly so at that. However it did dry out by 4 pm and many decided to try their hand. The circuit has the ability to drain quickly and with the help of a little sun becomes very useable. The worst point though was at the base of the banked bend onto the straight where a mini lake remained, which was rather unfortunate if you happened to take the bend perfectly. Lap times were recorded at 17.9 secs.

Thursday dawned in a similar manner, i.e. wet. Although it had ceased raining the track did not dry properly until mid afternoon whereupon times were, recorded down to 17.1 secs. Most drivers had arrived by now and the adjacent caravan/campsite was almost full. Sounds of

barbeques spluttering into life, or in some cases just spluttering, were abound with many a competitor endeavouring to work on their respective cars whilst feeding and indulging in the compulsory beer. (It was compulsory because it was less than £3.00 for a crate of 24 bottles.)

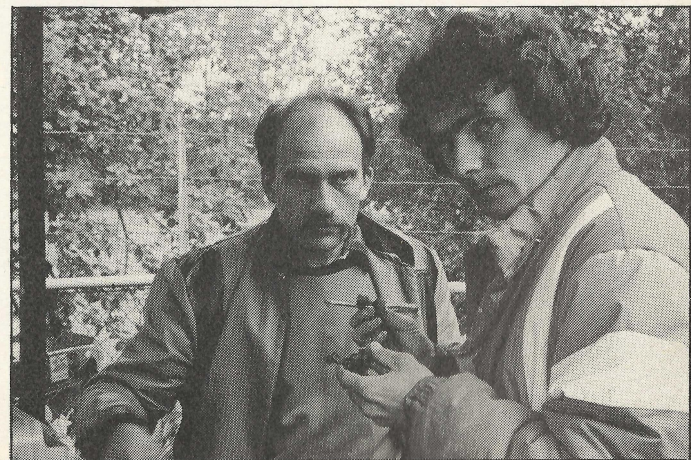
Friday morning again was wet yet this was scheduled to be the two rounds of official practice. The organisers decided to postpone this till 12o clock and then to run only one round of organised practice which left time to browse around the pits.

The Italian contingent was dominated by SG cars with 2 *Garbo's* and 3 *Serpents*. Vittoriano Orazi was using the 'Mk2 Columbia' (2-wheel drive) car with his own 4-wheel conversion kit which looked really professional but expected it to be pricey

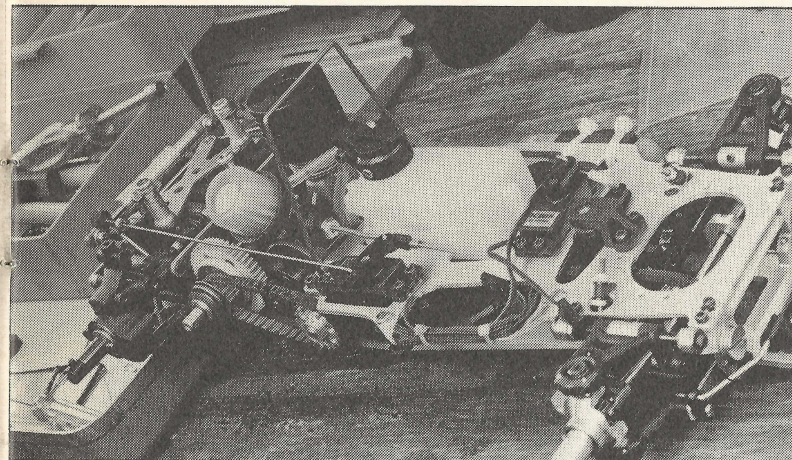
exactly praising its virtues. Italy had a total entry of 15 drivers whilst Germany and the home country, Holland had 12 a piece with France 11 and Switzerland 9. Holland, as you would expect was mostly *Serpent* with a couple of SG's thrown in whilst Switzerland seemed totally *Serpent*. France had a mixture of *Serpent* SG and PB whilst Germany just had a mixture. 25 drivers made up the entry from 7 other countries with Britain topping the list with 16 entrants. Two of which were granted during the meeting due to last minute cancellations which allowed Debbie Preston and Steve Fagg entry.

This resulted in the England line up of Debbie Preston, Gary Culver, Paul

Below; Vitto Orazi (right) makes some minor adjustments to a component of his 4WD converted SG 'Columbia' Mk II.



MODEL CARS



Above; Vitto Orazi's 4WD version of the SG 'Columbia MkII' employing a belt drive system similar to that of *Serpent*.

Padgin, Chris White, Nigel Sayles, Mick Drury and Andy Stafford with PB cars and Steve White, Bob Errington, Phil Greeno, Charlie Dudfield and Steve Fagg with SG's leaving Phil Hague, Walt Bailey, Paul Cook and Colin Strauss representing *Serpent*.

Having now compiled this list of useless information, the practice session was able to take place as the weather had improved, so the organisers entered the first round of qualifying.

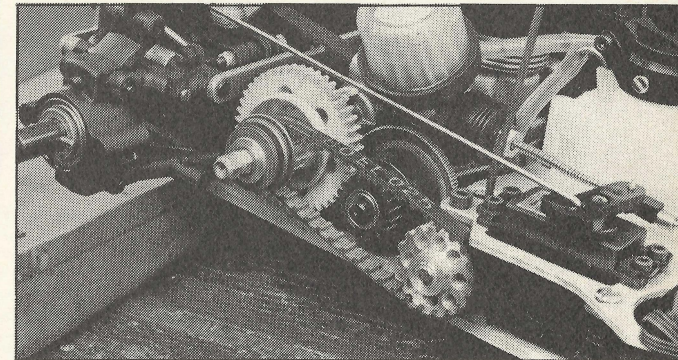
It was already apparent that quick seventeen lappers would be needed to qualify for the semi's from previous visits to the circuit and indeed these were

appearing by the end of heat 6. However in heat 8 Rody Roem driving his four-wheel drive *Serpent* on this his home circuit got a perfect start and with a faultless drive recorded 18 laps in 5 min. 13.1 secs to break the track record and set tongues a wagging throughout the pits. This obviously established FTD for the first round and surprisingly was never bettered. What was unbelievable was that Etienne Guitte from Belgium (*Serpent* 4WD) set 2nd fastest time with 17 laps in 5:2.8. Etienne was in the same heat as Rody and the speed of his *Nova Rossi* engine on the straight was ridiculous. However a score

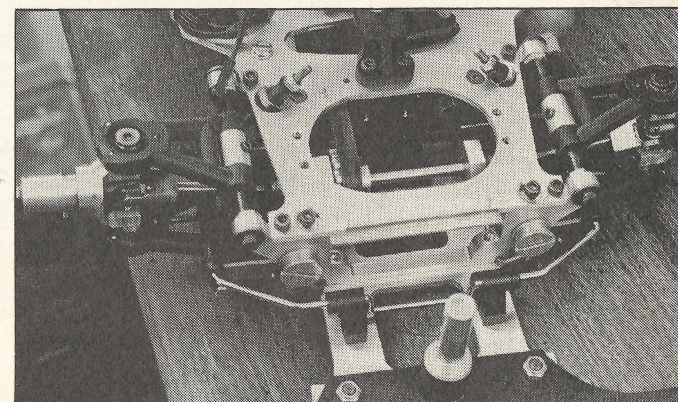
he certainly deserved.

Also in the same heat was Michael Mielke of Germany (17 in 5:06.5) with his SG and Ernes Tadiello of Italy (17 in 5:12.2) returning to European racing together with Bob Errington (didn't complete first run), this heat was certainly well on the

pace. Normally, with Guitte in the same heat it's usually difficult attempting to lap him. Here it was a problem just trying to stay with him. Nobody knew what has caused this dramatic improvement but they certainly were trying to find out.



Above; close up of the primary drive belt. Below; the front-end in detail. The front hubs are fitted with one way roller bearings.



Motor development - the pace heats up

The horsepower war took on special significance at Heemstede with the top three Italian manufacturers putting their reputations on the line in this hot-bed of International competition.

Mr. Picco (left) had cause to look worried without a motor in the top twenty and reaction to the new Picco mixed. Rossi junior (centre) on the other hand has good reason to look happy with Rossi Motors vying with OPS for the top honours.

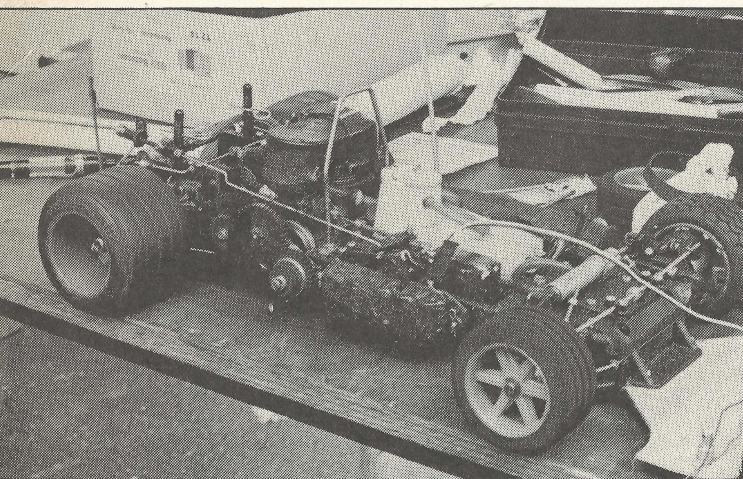
Piero Muzio (right) the impresario of peak performance must have left Heemstede a very happy man with the first three drivers using OPS motors.



So with no less than twelve 17 lappers already on the leader board, the second round followed straight on.

Mielke and Salven from Germany, Lecat from France, Haechler from Switzerland and Errington, Culver and Steve White from Britain all improved their times to go into the top twenty at the end of the first day of qualifying. Already there were twenty three 17 lappers not including the lone 18 of Roem. Roem was still top with Guitte still in 2nd and Buehler still in 3rd but now Errington was in 4th with a 17 in 5:03.8. Phil Hague was 11th, Gary Culver 12th and Steve White 15th to give England 4 in the top 20. Chris White, Paul Cook, Debbie Preston, Phil Greeno, Charlie Dudfield and Walt Bailey all had registered 16 lappers with Colin Strauss and Mick

Race Report



Above; Paul Pagdins PB 'Nova X4' featuring an interesting choice of front tyres to suit the changeable conditions!

Drury on 15. Nigel Sayles had risen to 14 but the other three Britons were yet to finish a heat.

So a nights rest seemed the order for most but not the British of course, who played noisier card games to the early hours of the morning devouring in the process another couple of crates of beer and singing (at least that's what it was meant to be), 'here we go... Here we go...' to the annoyance of fellow campers.

Saturday morning rose bright and early for some, (heavy and hazy for others), to only a damp track this time. Could this be signs of a dry weekend — no chance, but at least it was to stay dry on the Saturday.

Free practice for twenty minutes allowed the track to dry completely for the start of the third round and by heat 5 we already had Colombini of Italy and Debbie Preston adding to the list of 17 lap times. Then all hell broke loose in the second half the heats as no fewer than 21 drivers (out of 50) improved on their best times. Calpista of Italy and Buehler of Switzerland also attained the dizzy heights of 18 lappers whilst Pieter Bervoets and Tenthof of Holland with Guilio Gherisi, clocked fast seventeens leaving Errington back in 8th place. Gary Culver shaved one and half seconds off his time to rise to 15th whilst Steve White shaved half a second off only to drop to 20th. Paul Pagdin eventually finished a

heat with a fine 17 in 5:08.2 to take him right up to 19th place, but now there were 31 drivers with 17 laps or more.

So into the fourth and final round with many drivers sweating it out wondering how many would improve. Well believe it or not forty one, yes forty one drivers improved their times to reshuffle the leader board. Bob Errington and Jurgen Bahr clocked 18 lappers to push Pieter Bervoets out of the final direct and into the semi whilst Pieter's partner, Ronny Ton was similarly pushed out of the semi's and into the quarter finals. Steve White took 3.7 secs off his time to rise to 15th Phil Hague half a second to stay at 17th whilst Gary Culver slid to 18th the last place for semi finals.

The final qualification chart looked like this.



Final

| | | | | | |
|---------------------|----|----|--------|---------|-------|
| 1. Rody Roem | NL | 18 | 5:13.1 | Serpent | OPS |
| 2. Stephen Calpista | I | 18 | 5:14.5 | SG | Rossi |
| 3. Jacob Buehler | CH | 18 | 5:15.6 | Serpent | OPS |
| 4. Bob Errington | GB | 18 | 5:16.1 | SG | Rossi |

Semi-Finals

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|--------|---------|---------|
| 5. Jurgen Bahr | D | 18 | 5:20.9 | Serpent | Mondial |
| 6. Pieter Bervoets | NL | 17 | 5:01.5 | Serpent | Rossi |
| 7. Milko Tenthof | NL | 17 | 5:02.7 | Serpent | OPS |
| 8. Ettiene Guiette | B | 17 | 5:02.8 | Serpent | Rossi |
| 9. Guilio Gherisi | I | 17 | 5:02.8 | SG | Rossi |
| 10. L. Visentini | I | 17 | 5:04.5 | SG | Rossi |
| 11. Michael Mielke | D | 17 | 5:04.5 | SG | OPS |
| 12. David Lecat | F | 17 | 5:04.6 | PB | Rossi |
| 13. Ermes Tadiello | I | 17 | 5:05.4 | SG | OPS |
| 14. Michael Salven | D | 17 | 5:05.4 | Serpent | OPS |
| 15. Steve White | GB | 17 | 5:06.3 | SG | OPS |
| 16. A. Haechler | CH | 17 | 5:06.6 | Serpent | OPS |
| 17. Phil Hague | GB | 17 | 5:06.8 | Serpent | Rossi |
| 18. Gary Culver | GB | 17 | 5:06.8 | PB | OPS |

Other British Placings were

| | | | | |
|----------------------|----|--------|---------|---------------|
| 21. Paul Pagdin | 17 | 5:08.2 | PB | Rossi |
| 23. Walt Bailey | 17 | 5:09.0 | Serpent | Picco & Rossi |
| 25. Paul Cook | 17 | 5:09.8 | Serpent | Rossi |
| 34. Debbie Preston | 17 | 5:14.3 | PB | OPS |
| 45. Chris White | 16 | 5:03.8 | PB | Picco |
| 50. Phil Greeno | 16 | 5:06.8 | SG | Rossi |
| 65. Charlie Dudfield | 16 | 5:12.8 | SG | OPS |
| 66. Colin Strauss | 16 | 5:13.8 | Serpent | OPS |
| 67. Nigel Sayles | 16 | 5:14.9 | PB | Rossi |
| 78. Steve Fagg | 15 | 5:03.1 | SG | OPS |
| 86. Mick Drury | 15 | 5:15.0 | PB | OPS |
| 87. Andy Stafford | 15 | 5:16.6 | PB | OPS |

Philip Collet of France who you may recall, became European Saloon Champion at the end of April this year, only managed to qualify 92nd. Oh how the mighty have fallen.

With qualifying now complete and lunch well and truly over the 1/32nd finals started with what was to be a

remarkable run for Colin Strauss. It should be pointed out here that Colin had swapped allegiance to *Serpent* and had a new *Serpent kit* at the trackside on Wednesday afternoon which he was then starting to build. This was duly finished late on Thursday and so didn't leave a lot of

proceedings it started to rain heavily, very heavily, in fact heavy enough to delay the semi finals and to have an extended lunch break. When the first semi started it was raining but by the end it had stopped and was starting to dry. Despite this David Lecat, Gary Culver and Ettiene Guitte made it

although there were six *Serpents* with 2 PB's and 2 SG's just to make up the numbers.

By the time of the start the track was once again perfectly dry and everyone was anticipating a good 45 minutes thrash. At the off Roem, took the lead followed by Buehler, Calpista and Errington with Guiette moving up fast. After four minutes Guiette had faded and now Roem was still leading with Buehler and Errington in very close pursuit. At six minutes Errington was out and met Hague who was yet to complete a lap. At twenty minutes Roem was still leading followed very closely by Buehler but there were exactly half the cars in the pits with one problem or another. At forty minutes disaster struck Roem when an engine cut lost him the lead and it was some 5 laps before he was again circulating.

The forty fifth minute mark came quickly and still Buehler was in the lead with 5 laps in hand over second place Jurgen Bahr and a further lap on Rody Roem in third. Fourth place went to Phil Hague who was 36 laps behind third. Now Phil is an able driver and this only illustrates the amount of problems had by the finalists. Only Buehler and Bahr managed the forty five minutes with no problems, thus leaving final placings as:

| | | | |
|---------------------|----|---------|----------|
| 1. Jacob Buehler | CH | Serpent | 151 laps |
| 2. Jurgen Bahr | D | Serpent | 146 laps |
| 3. Rody Roem | NL | Serpent | 145 laps |
| 4. Phil Hague | GB | Serpent | 109 laps |
| 5. Paul Cook | GB | Serpent | 99 laps |
| 6. Gary Culver | GB | P.B. | 92 laps |
| 7. Bob Errington | GB | S.G. | 77 laps |
| 8. Stephen Calpista | I | S.G. | 73 laps |
| 9. David Lecat | F | P.B. | 62 laps |
| 10. Ettiene Guitte | B | Serpent | 52 laps |

had qualified from the quarter, together with Jurgen Bahr and Phil Hague. So now we had the final line up with one Dutch, one Italian, one Swiss, one French, one German, one Belgian and four British. A more mixed bunch you could hardly wish for

A well deserved victory for Jacob Buehler and a good result for *Serpent* — congratulations to all concerned, but when you look at the lap differences and the obvious amount of problems one wonders whether this was a good testament to 4WD?



Above; a *Serpent* one, two, three with Jacob Buehler about to uncork the winners Champagne, Rody Roem (left) looks on whilst Jurgen Bahr waits for the bubbly.



Above; directions from the pits via radio link to supply all the relevant data, lap times, whose in front etc.

Left; the four British finalists. L. to R. Bob Errington, Phil Hague, Gary Culver, Paul Cook.

time for practice. Never the less he qualified 66th and was in the 1/32nd final. This he duly won which moved him into the 1/16th finals which he again won so gaining him a place in Sundays 1/8th finals.

Saturday evening saw the traditional gathering or banquet, this time at a beach restaurant and included an IC Off-Road demonstration by some of the drivers present. How Ronny Ton could get his car to jump so high and still land on its wheels will always remain a mystery, still, a good display and helped make the evening a very pleasant one.

Sunday came too quickly and the roar of engines at 8am woke many a camper trying to remember what had happened to the Saturday night. Colin Strauss was not one of these though as he again did what was necessary and qualified through to the quarter finals. This time however luck deserted him as a servo failure curtailed any chance of reaching the semi's.

At this stage in the