



The FRENC

Heat and dust will provide the most lasting memories for British drivers at this year's European championships for 1/10th scale buggies held in Bologna, Italy. Also the fact that in 1985 both British 1/12th and 1/10th scale electric car drivers have lost out to tough European opposition for the first time.

After this year's event the 1985 Euro's at Halifax can be viewed in its proper context. Europeans were few in number and those who were present can only have been amazed at the conditions we are prepared to race under. Little surprise then that only one European driver could find his way to the final through the mud and rain at Halifax.

Furthermore, success at the French and Austrian GP's by Pete Stevens and Richard Isherwood earlier this year can only have fuelled the notion that in European Buggy racing terms we Brits are *numero uno*. Closer examination of those results should have shown that success in Europe is not so simple and requires a different approach.

The advent of the Kyosho 'Optima' has proven beyond all doubt that four-wheel drive is the way ahead in major competition. Team Parma UK, led by Messrs Stevens and Isherwood

have shown that the 'Optima' is more than a match for the omnipresent 'Associated RC10' not only at home but also abroad. The British Grand Prix result for Jay Halsey and Associated can discounted from the equation only serving to bolster the illusion that 2WD is still competitive and ultimately diluting our challenge in Italy.

Nowhere was this fact so obvious than in Bologna where amidst the heat and dust 4WD cars all but dominated the proceedings.

If you take a look at a map of Italy you will find Bologna slap bang in the middle of the northern 'knee,' just south of Venice and equidistant from the East and West coasts. In the middle of nowhere basically. The Euro's were originally to be held further south in Naples but the organisers there insisted on running the race to their own rules.

The 18 strong British contingent found the going tough straight away firstly with the heat (104C), the currency (thousands of lire are needed for an ice cream) and then the language. Everyone has heard the joke that Englishmen abroad make themselves understood by talking loudly in ridiculous

accents; well it's true.

The track itself was situated in a suburb of Bologna at a small sports centre surrounded by high rise block of flats. To give you an idea of the difference between a typical European circuit and our own home examples compare the centre court at Wimbledon with the clay surface at Paris and you have some idea. Bologna was so; hard packed dirt, dust and a wide, open shape provided little grip and even less enjoyment to drive. To be fair three sides of the square had a bare covering of grass but the real challenge lay in the infield where smooth, dusty corners tested driver skills to the limit trying to keep cars from spinning out under power.

Practice

In fact practice made the situation worse as the passage of cars began to erode the racing line. There really was no need, the shape of the circuit was so simple that only a few runs were needed to set up the car.

Finding the right motor/battery/tyres combination was more difficult particularly for the 2WD cars. For them nothing worked! As the weekend wore

on tyres began to play a critical part in the pursuit of fast lap times. Theory was thrown out of the window in favour of trying everything that was available. 'Supershot' front and rear tyres found the most favour across the board and a black market quickly built up for new and used sets. Many drivers believed that new tyres for each run were the only way to go, others that partially used (bedded in) rubber gave better results. For most it didn't matter of tot; their cars didn't handle anyway.

Teams

Despite the fact that drivers are competing for their country the European championship is still an individuals contest. At this level of competition many of the drivers are signed to drive for a manufacturer. This is all very nice until a driver finds that his sponsor's equipment cannot compete with someone else's.

The British team was a case in point. Over half of the 18 strong team were sponsored drivers. The Parma drivers Pete Stevens, Richard Isherwood and Nino Athanasios headed the British challenge having won in Europe twice this season. Their 'Optima' cars feature the by now standard

**Despite having the best equipment
money cannot buy British drivers
found the going tough in Italy for the
1/10th scale Buggy European
championships. Lewis Eckett was there**

suspension modification using Associated dampers mounted on new shock towers. Continental 'Optima' owners have not been slow on the uptake and copies of the Parma set up abounded in the pits.

Parma power in the motor department found the team using some very hot winds to get the laps. These were less than forthcoming and Parma found themselves struggling against the Italians in particular. Heat was the enemy for both motors and Ni-Cads not helped by pitting outside under garden umbrellas. It was soon obvious why the faster Italians preferred to pit in the relative cool of the adjacent sports hall. Tamer winds were called for, with

Hungry eyes fastened on the 4WD feast on offer and Darron Harris was almost tempted to partake when Bill Jones offered his spare Supercharge Models 'Hotshot'. A test drive proved the point and Darron was hooked until he remembered the Fifth Commandment 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's car even if it is going better than yours.' Instead the MIP was fetched out of the box and raced in one heat whilst Mick Langridge, the UK importer for the kit, looked on. The car went well and could have gone better if Darron hadn't decided to disconnect the chain from the front wheels and make it 2WD again. Why? I don't know why!

Both Bill Jones and Wayne



H CONNECTION

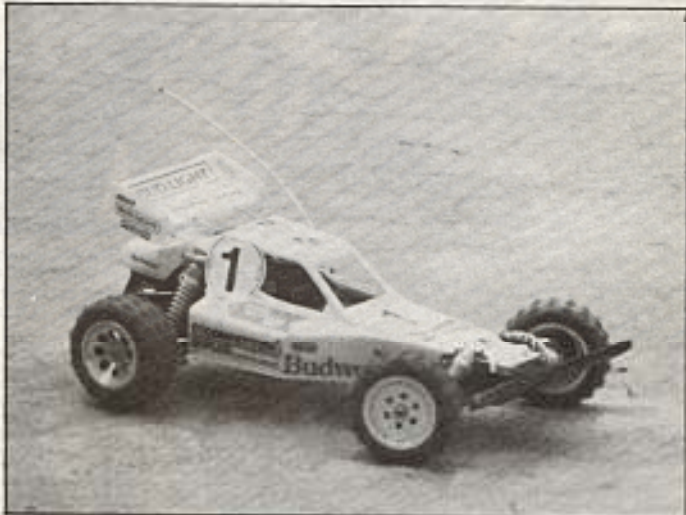
double winds as supposed to the triple and quad winds used before.

The UK Demon/Associated team minus 4WD found the going tough despite having the best of Reedy power to choose from. However Jamie Booth and co. had one ace in the hole which for reasons best known to themselves they decided not to use. Eustace Moore of MIP in the states has engineered a conversion for the 'RC10' to give all-wheel drive.

Associated themselves don't think it is the total answer but are prepared to give it their blessing if it wins races. A complete car was shipped out to put Jamie on a firmer footing against the 4WD opposition. Jamie tried it and promptly threw it back into its box claiming that it was no different to his own car. This was not surprising since the torque limiting clutch that regulates drive to the front wheels was loose and the car had been in 2WD all along.

Davis' vastly modified examples of the Tamiya 'Hotshot' performed well showing that there is still room at the top for individual enterprise. The various bits and pieces that they have manufactured for retail sale found an enthusiastic market. It seems that when it comes to selling bits and pieces for model cars British shopkeepers are second to none. Continental racers, starved of optional extras and even basic spares were happy to pay through the nose for any bits and pieces available. Tyres, motors, cells etc. were better than travellers cheques and independent of Italian exchange rates.

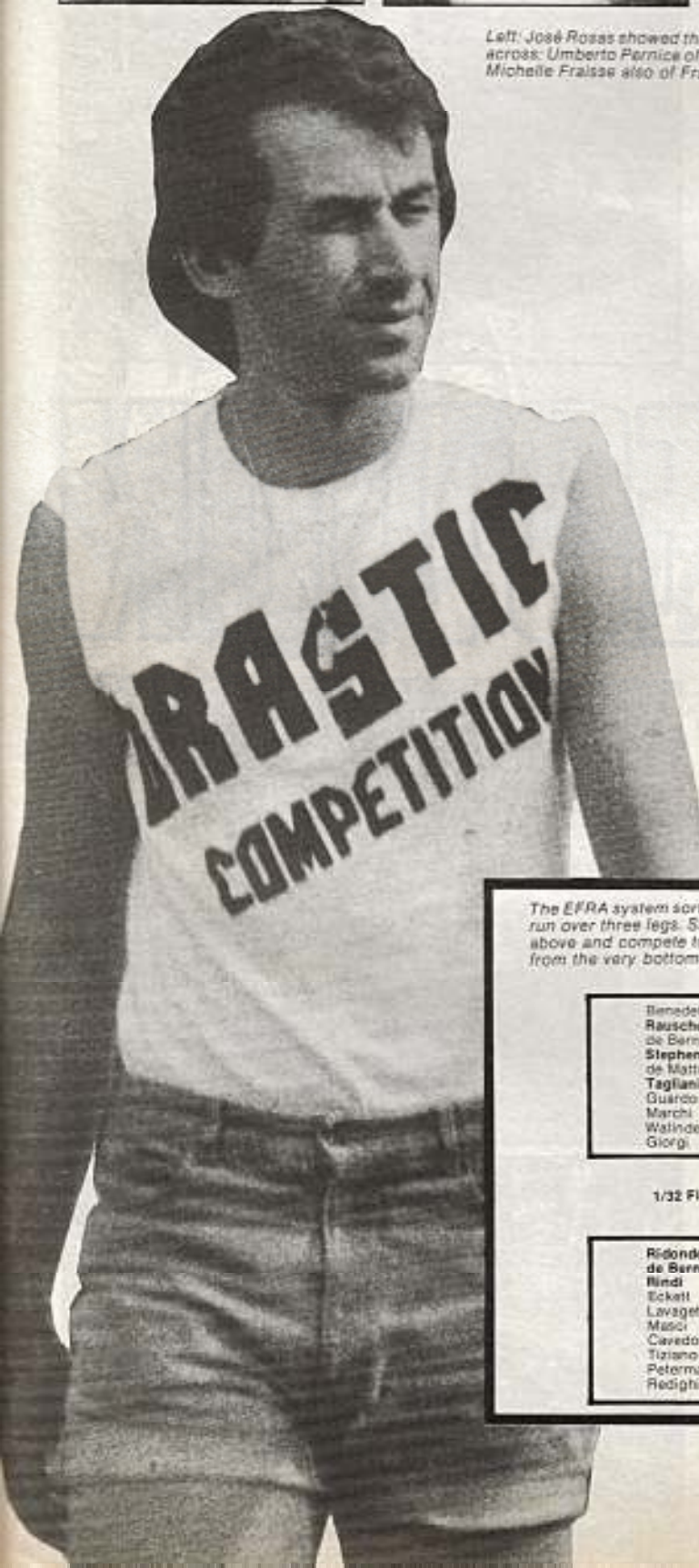
Whether it is patriotism, blind faith or just plain stupidity the British drivers were convinced that they were going to win. Talking in funny accents was one way of showing that we were on top. Swedish chef impersonations were a must until one of them made it known that the



Main picture: the extremely large circuit situated in a leafy suburb of Bologna. From the top right: José Rosas (centre) celebrates with his Drastic Competition team mates whilst Umberto Pernice (far right) looks for more champagne. Next, the impressive array of trophies. Next: Pernice's TQ winning 'Optima'. Next: main final grid start.



Left: José Rosas showed that French flair married to a calm methodical approach can win races. Top left and across: Umberto Pernice of Italy TQ and second overall. Denis Blandin driving for Drastic Competition. Jean Michelle Fraisse also of France. Bill Jones highest placed Brit in fifth place.



Muppet Show is very popular in Sweden.

If the British team were convinced of victory the French team had other ideas. Their strength lay in the undisputed driving talents of José Rosas and Jean Michelle Fraisse who are both international 1/12th scale drivers of note. Jerome Marsac of *Drastic Competition*, the French Kyosho importer, plainly knows quality when he sees it and signed the pair up to drive 'Optimas' in Bologna. If you can make the final of the 1/12th scale Euro-Champs then chances are buggy racing will come quite naturally, the technology is similar — all you have to do is throw racing etiquette out of the window. Along with Pierre Corval and Denis Blandin the French would provide firm resistance to all. Driving for *Drastic Competition* allowed them free choice of the latest Kyosho 'Option House' goodies. New and improved dampers, block pattern rear tyres and rear motor guard all featured on their 'Optimas.' *Drastic's* own motors and cells were more than a match for anything else present.

The Italian contingent was split between those driving the 4WD TAG Models 'Coyote' and the 'Optima' drivers who had more sense. Since its release under the auspices of SG Racing the TAG 'Coyote' has been improved mainly in an attempt to make it more reliable. It certainly is a much better car but still cannot compete against the Kyosho steamroller (mind you, neither can anything else). Marco de Marchi had forsaken his long standing relationship with *Associated* to partner Umberto Pernice with the (yawn) 'Optima.' These two were the fastest Italians on the track causing much discussion about what motors they were using. Their 'Mustang' motors are a product of the Italians' answer to Mike Reedy. The name Milanese was being mentioned but actually finding the man was more difficult. Perhaps he was quite content to let the results speak for themselves; FTD plus second and third places keeps the conversation going.

The rest of Europe's finest took a back seat although the Germans came closest. But just like their national football team

The EFRA system sorts everyone from qualifying into finals. The four fastest go straight in the main final, run over three legs. Starting at the bottom of the finals list the six fastest can move up into the final set above and compete to see which six drivers move up next etc., etc. Theoretically a driver can move up from the very bottom final to the top if he finished in the top three of every final set.

Benedetti
Rauscher
de Bernardini
Stephenson
de Mattei
Tagliarini
Guarido
Marchi
Walinder
Giorgi

1/32 Finals

Tachernollet
Baumgartner
Leir
Peyffers
Redigheire
Carali
Superchi
Stephenson
Rauscher
Tagliarini

1/16 Finals

Kleinmuth
Boninasgni
Ward
Ayer
Peter
Mashato
Chabert
Loir
Carali
Tachernollet

1/8 Finals

Ridondelli
de Bernardini
Rindi
Eckert
Lavagetto
Masco
Cavedon
Tiziano
Petersmann
Redigheire

Mascher
Nassetti
Langridge
de Iurbe
Antonazzo
Gobbetti
Raiman
Rindi
Ridondelli
de Bernardini

Smith
Athanasios
Cia
Yoshinaga
Steen
Littley
Antonazzo
de Bernardini
de Iurbe
Rindi



Top left and across: Richard Isherwood, top UK Parma driver meditates before the final, Marco de Marchi of Italy switched allegiance from Associated to Kyosho. Pierre Corval, another Drastic result from France. Pete Stevens tried to find the optimum point but could only manage ninth place. Jamie Booth taking it to the limit to get his 'RC10' into the final.

they couldn't compete against Latin flair when the chips were down.

If all of the above reads like a Kyosho benefit then I'm glad you're paying attention. Aside from magnificent drives from Bill Jones and Jamie Booth eight out of the ten finalists preferred 'Optima'. Mr. K. has definitely got it made but for how long? Associated have got to produce an answer soon if nothing else in time for next year's World Championships. The 'RC10' suffers in low traction situations not because of lack of grip but because a 4WD car has more when it comes to the crunch — literally. 'RC10' drivers in Bologna were constantly aware that it was futile to dispute corners since the more stable 4WD cars could drive straight through regardless. If the powers that be decide to form separate classes for 2WD and 4WD cars then it is not because the latter is faster but because it allows the bad mannered drivers to get away with murder. In this respect driving standards in Bologna were atrocious and the lack of an effective referee was noticeable.

Qualifying

The first round of heats was held late on Friday after official timed practice. For many the suffocating heat prohibited movement let alone five minutes of intense concentration on an uncovered drivers' rostrum. Lack of sleep is also bad for the concentration and the effects of late nights was evident. Many of the visiting drivers had accepted the offer of free accommodation in a huge converted mansion atop the hill overlooking Bologna. Although a fair way from the track the hostel was conveniently sited just down the road from the hottest nightclub in town. The lure of wine, women and song attracted many. It didn't matter that the girls were all good Catholics or that the drinks were watered down the sound of disco music was better than listening to the high pitched whine of Parma modified's at two o'clock in the morning. The sound of Parma modified's at four o'clock in the morning is even worse!

In the pits the sun was turning snow white English skin lobster red — the only protection: find

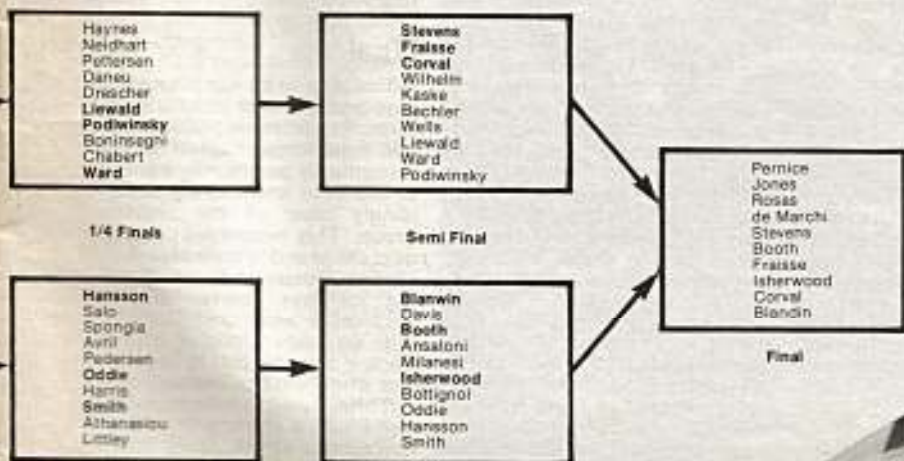
the nearest bar and stay put.

The first round of heats underlined the 4WD advantage. With only six cars in each heat it was possible to circulate around the track without ever meeting another car. Getting away quickly from the start was all important as the sharp left-hander onto the straight lay only ten yards away. Mediocrity held sway in the early heats as everyone waited for the faster boys to begin. The first 13 lap time of the day, set by Fralisse, caused a ripple of interest around the pits but this was nothing compared to the tidal wave of astonishment at the result of heat 13. Unlucky for some but certainly not for Jamie Booth who clipped a milli-second off the Frenchman's time to set the then FTD at 13 laps 5.23.2. The time was a testament to Jamie's immense skill as the car whipped round the track, front wheels constantly opposite locking to keep in a straight line. On the limit stuff such as this was thrilling to watch. Tony Wells could only manage 11 laps in the same heat.



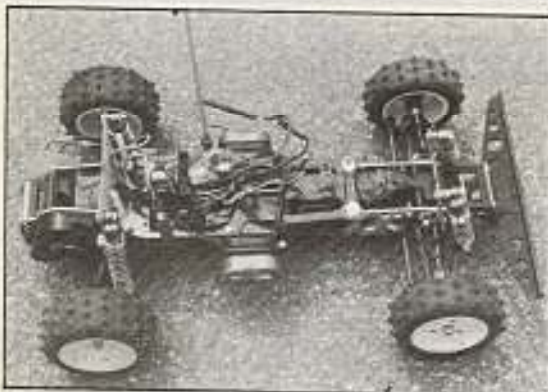
Below: 1985 Euro-champ Neil Ward showed determination in driving from the 1/8 final to the semi's. Neil even responded to sleeping next to the track to get more practice in.

The finals chart below shows how drivers move up from preceding finals right up to the A-final. Drivers' names shown in bold type are the movers. No driver qualified for the A-final from the 1/4 final or below.





Above: close racing action on the wide, slippery corners found the Associated cars coming to grief. Right: Pete Stevens' 'Optima'. Parma powered but still off the pace.



Left: Pete Stevens' 'Optima' up close. Associated dampers, new shock mounts and 'Supershot' tyres make the difference.

Right: Bill Jones' Supercharge Models 'Hotshot' sporting a host of competition racing extras.

Car	Motor	Speed controller	Cells	Radio	Rear tyres	Front tyres
J. Rosas	Optima	Kyosho 240S	CS FET	Drastic Sanyo	Sanwa	Kyosho blocks
U. Pernice	Optima	Mustang	KO	Sanyo	Multiplex	Supershot
D. Blandin	Optima	Mustang	CS FET	Drastic Sanyo	Futaba	Kyosho block
J. M. Fraisse	Optima	Drastic 300 RS	Novak FET	Drastic Sanyo	KO	Kyosho blocks
B. Jones	Supercharge Hotshot	SRM Trinity	Demon FET	Parma Sanyo	Futaba 2MR	Supershot
R. Isherwood	Optima	Parma	Lazer FET	Parma Sanyo	Futaba TZL6X	Supershot
M. de Marchi	Optima	Mustang	KO	Sanyo	Multiplex	Supershot
P. Corval	Optima	Drastic 300 RS	CS FET	Drastic Sanyo	Sanwa	Kyosho block
P. Stevens	Optima	Parma	Lazer FET	Parma Sanyo	Futaba 3EGX	Supershot
J. Booth	RC10	Reedy	Demon Pro-King	Demon Sanyo	Futaba	Playtron block

However with one more heat to come TQ was still up for grabs. Rosas and Pernice never let their personal race slow them up any and the result was the pair of them went into first and second spot respectively relegating Booth to third.

In European competitions it is unwise to let racing prevent good lap times. The purpose of qualifying is to achieve the highest place possible in the knockout finals system. The higher the placing the less work needed to get to the final. Best of all the fastest four drivers go straight through missing the lottery of a semi-final altogether.

Not until round three did the positions of the top four change. Bill Jones had been enjoying quick starts and clear tracks and this time took advantage of it to

leap into second spot. His time of three laps 5.12.0 even beat the best Rosas, Fraisse and de Marchi had to offer and was only a second slower than the TQ time.

Umberto Pernice put the final touches to qualifying in round four by destroying his own fastest time by 7 seconds. Bill remained in second to carry the Union Jack for Britain. Just outside the top four Pete Stevens' last round time was not enough. Wayne Davis also broke into the top ten but would have to take his chances in the semi's along with Jamie Booth, Richard Isherwood and Tony Wells.

Finals

The table shows the movement of the drivers through the

system of knockout finals. Of particular note was the progress of the 1985 Eurochamp Neil Ward who with gritty drives in the 1/8 and 1/4 finals made it into the semis. British spectators were given their money's worth of excitement as Neil wobbled between victory and failure. Peter Smith also showed that British drivers can mix it with the best of them and drove smoothly from the 1/8 to the semi. He was joined by Ian Oddie who displayed remarkable control of his 'RC10' along the way.

With eight drivers in the semi's things looked good for us but there was still a lot of work to do. Wayne Davis had to be the most unfortunate of all. Fresh from an overnight stay in hospital after a nose bleed that refused to stop his semi-final challenge faded

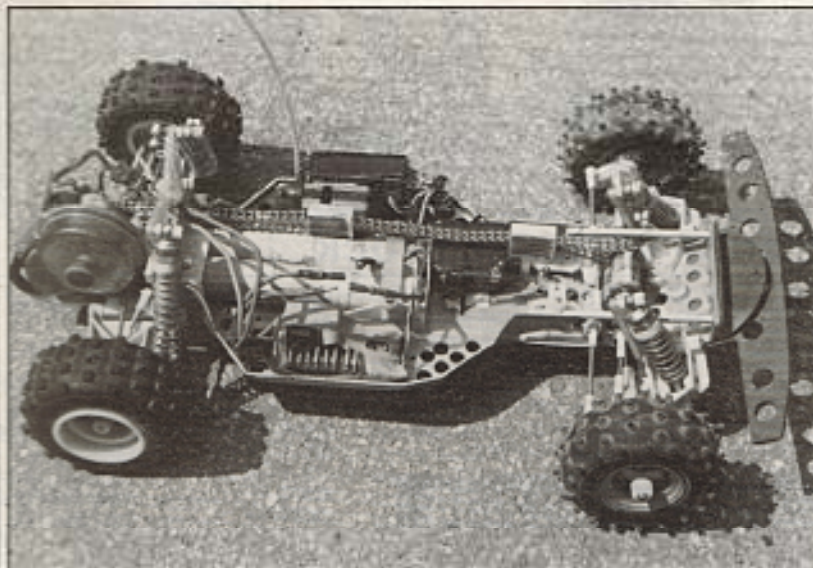


when he shed a drive shaft whilst in the lead. Pete Stevens kept cool despite the heat and went through smoothly. Jamie Booth achieved the unprecedented by driving the only 2WD car into the final with yet another 13 lap time.

Jerome Marsac of Drastic Competition watched four of his team drivers qualify and that along with Richard Isherwood made it eight 'Optimas' in the final.

Final

This was to be run over three legs and the first went true to form. Rosas moved up a gear and established himself as the favourite by positioning himself at the front and staying tantalisingly clear of the chasing group. This resembled a small dust cloud and in the middle was Richard Isherwood's car fighting for every corner against Pernice, Fraisse and Blandin. With so many 'Optimas' on the track it was difficult to tell who was who. Pete Stevens ended up last after trying to drive someone else's car; a sterling drive saw him achieve eighth. Jamie Booth was punished sorely for his



Below right: TAG Models 'Coyote,' Italy's answer to the 'Optima,' has been reworked to enhance reliability - they should have made it quicker too. Above: the MIP converted four-wheel drive Associated didn't stay like this for long in the hands of Darron Harris. Right: Tony Wells reflects on what might have been. Below: patching the holes in the track with water and clay.



impudence. Every time he put a wheel first at the corner he was punted off into the boards.

Final number two found Bill Jones in the lead. Bill disappeared into the distance and was still in the lead five minutes later. Only just as Rosas reeled in the leader with only seconds to spare. Bill crossed the line a scant two seconds in front to make him our only chance of a British winner. Rosas however looked like winning with only two finals gone.

The third final produced another different winner, Denis Blandin but by now it was clear to all that Rosas despite the outcome of the last leg was the 1986 European Champion.

Results

1. J. Rosas	F	26	10.26.7
2. U. Pernice	I	26	10.35.9
3. D. Blandin	F	26	10.36.2
4. J. M. Fraisse	F	26	10.49.8
5. B. Jones	GB	25	10.13.8
6. R. Isherwood	GB	25	10.15.0
7. M. De Marchi	I	25	10.23.3
8. P. Corval	F	25	10.25.1
9. P. Stevens	GB	24	10.07.5
10. J. Booth	GB	24	10.39.1

Below: one of the Drastic Competition Kyosho 'Optimas.'

