

RALLY CROSS

by John Chamberlain

The month of July has provided some of the most exciting racing for rallycross fans and has barely enabled yours truly time enough to write the monthly column. But of course, having such a strong sense of duty to all you devoted readers (everything crossed at this point!) the dreaded publication deadline was just met, bringing you the latest from the wonderful world of rallycross. The major dates for those drivers racing in the BRCA championship event were June 28 for the Slough meeting, July 12 for the Halifax meeting, and July 26 for the Gloucester meeting. However the pressures of publication and space have meant that these events will be covered in the next issue, so watch this space as they say! The cause of this delay you may well be asking? The answer is the 1987 European Championships for off road cars, organised by the EMVC club at Velp in Holland on the 17/18/19 July. So without more ado, lets get on with the action.

The 1987 European Championships for 1/4 Off Road Cars

The highlight of the 1987 calendar for Europe's best drivers, the European Championships, was hosted this year by the EMVC club, at their permanent 1/4 racing facility at Velp, in Holland. With twelve ten car heats featuring 120 of Europe's top drivers there was a promise of off road racing at its most exciting best — and that is exactly what it was.

The eleven drivers representing Great Britain were essentially selected from their results in the 1986 BRCA Championship series, and certainly saw us presenting our strongest team ever at a European event.

The team consisted of the following drivers.

With all of them now driving proven competitive cars, hopes were high in the British team that real success was possible this year.

Thanks to the efforts of BRCA vice-chairman and Ace P.B. preparation man, Ray Wilcox, all the British team enjoyed special concessionary travel rates with Sealink arranged through Alternative Promotions. Thus the British team all gathered at Harwich on the evening of Wednesday July 15, for the night crossing on Sealinks excellent, modern ferry for the eight hour voyage to the Hook of Holland. This was to provide a superb start to the trip with a good meal in the restaurant followed by a visit to the ships cinema to see *Crocodile Dundee* — brilliant! Our thanks to Ray and Sealink.

Leaving the ferry on the Thursday morning for the 90 mile drive to Velp, we were dismayed to find overcast skies and light rain, which certainly did not bode well for the open practice later in the day, with Richard Stitson leading the convoy the rain turned from drizzle to torrential, but our man pressed on undeterred, leaving behind him a wake that all but engulfed the rest. Later Richard was heard to complaining of lack of traction and occasional wheelspin at 90mph in a straight line! Still it was to prove good practice for model car racing later on.

On arrival at the track, we found the rain had died out but the track was very wet. Already the covered pit tables were occupied by many drivers ready to begin practicing as soon as possible. The track itself was large, mainly grass covered with the exception of two sandy earth sections, and a large jump on one of the middle straights. To add to the excitement a large, high ros-

trum with timekeeping and scrutineer offices below looked good, as did the permanent bar and rest room to the side of the adjacent 1/4 tarmac circuit. Why oh why can't we have something like this in England we all asked ourselves ...?

With the weather looking to improve, the British cars were unpacked and cars prepared for action. By mid afternoon, we had all driven the track and in the main found it to be fast, bumpy and basically unlike our normal British circuits. Some of the other foreign drivers seemed already to be finding the circuit to their liking and were circulating rapidly. It soon became clear that 25 second laps were possible by the fastest drivers and that 26/2 second laps were attainable by many drivers when really trying. With the grass sections rapidly losing their grass, it became obvious that tyre selection was going to prove crucial to obtain the correct handling balance, and that accurate driving to find the smoothest and thus fastest line around the track was to be more essential than ever.

Friday July 17

The morning began with two hours of free practice before the official welcome, drivers briefing and then timed practice runs in heat order. The first good news was that our first reserve driver, Ralph Allum was given a place due to the non arrival of another driver, unfortunately second reserve, Keith Plested was unlucky and was not able to race. However Keith was immediately put to good use as one of the official race scrutineers, although he promptly informed us that we should rightly expect no favours!

After the mayors welcome address and drivers briefing, timed practice got underway right on schedule using the new EFRA start system, cars depart from the staggered grid at intervals providing it is no later than 60 seconds from the official start flag, each car with its computer timing transponder on board then triggers the lap counter when passing under the start/finish line, commencing the five minute heat. The system eliminates the first lap chaos that can otherwise occur and was favourably received. After all qualifying is about posting a fast time, and not racing other cars in the heat, enjoyable though it may be!

By the end of timed practice, Stuart Wilcox had posted the fastest time in the British team with 11 laps in 306 seconds and was fifth overall. Most of the British team were fairly happy with their cars and late into the night discussions continued within the team as to the definitive set-up for the following days qualifying.

P.B.'s Guv'nor Keith Plested lends his expert touch to James Weedons Mustang XR3.

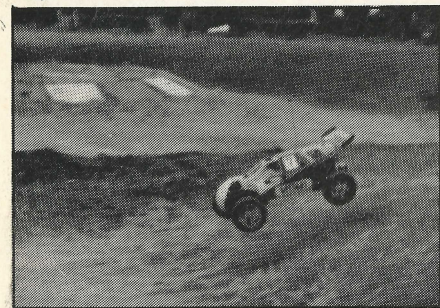
Driver	Car	Engine
James Weedon	PB Mustang X3	Nova Rossi .21 RE
Michael Allison	PB Mustang X3	Nova Rossi .21 RE
Stuart Wilcox	PB Mustang X3	Nova Rossi Eco .21 RE
Paul Leach	PB Mustang X3	Nova Rossi .21 RE
David Allison	PB Mustang X3	Nova Rossi .21 RE
John Chamberlain	Siccom Magnum 4 x 4 OPS .21 RE	
Alan Harman	Siccom Magnum 4 x 4 OPS .21 RE	
Richard Stitson	Siccom Magnum 4 x 4 Rossi .21 RE	
Roger Giles	Siccom Magnum 4 x 4 OPS .21 RE	
Tommy Chung	Siccom Magnum 4 x 4 OPS .21 RE	
David Hill	Yankee 4 x 4	Nova Rossi .21 RE
Team Reserve		
Ralph Allum	Siccom Magnum 4 x 4 Nova Rossi .21 RE	



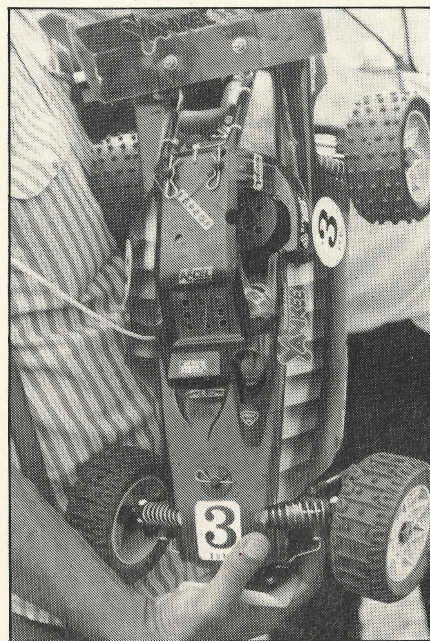
Saturday July 18

Qualifying day, and an obvious tension pervaded the pits as men worked on machines, endeavouring to find that perfect handling balance for the vital best of four qualifying runs. British team Siccom drivers were making new wheel and tyre combinations following discussion with their French counterparts. This essentially involved mounting the tyre on the hub, gluing the outer tyre flange to it and then leaving off the outer hub flange. The result was a soft walled tyre which appeared better suited to the bumpy, fast track. Fine tuning of the P.B.'s springs and damper settings saw James Weedon and Stuart Wilcox post respectable early results, but the sensation of the meeting, certainly for the British, was Ralph Allums performance in heat 10, round one Ralph flew around the track, blasted his Siccom Magnum 4 x 4 past the similar car of Fenchy factory driver Pascal Gueye and never putting a wheel wrong posted the only 12 lap time inn round one, shocking no one more than Ralph himself! In fact he remained top qualifier until round three when Philip Boeri of France with a Yankee 4 x 4, and Pascal Gueye with the Magnum posted faster 12 lappers. However, Ralphs third place in qualifying must be some sort of record for a driver who only started off as a reserve. Well done Ralph — sir! A just reward for one of the most dedicated British 1/8 rallycross drivers.

So by the end of qualifying, which incredibly finished at exactly 6.00pm and according to the published timetable, Ralph Allum and John Chamberlain had qualified third and fourteenth respectively, ensuring their places in the semi finals. Richard Stitson, Alan Harman and Stuart Wilcox qualified for the quarter finals, James Weedon and Michael Allison for the eighth finals, Roger Giles, David Allison and Paul Leach for the sixteenths and unlucky David Hill was dogged by troubles and did not qualify through to the finals day.



Ralph Allum drove superbly to hold F.T.D. for the first two rounds of qualifying with his Siccom Magnum 4 x 4.



The winning Yankee.

Sunday July 19

The slippery track conditions for the sub-finals saw the appearance of the Garbo paddle type front tyre on many of the faster cars, and indeed they were to prove essential to obtain a good balance of handling, one of the big shocks of the meeting was the failure of European and World Champion Frédéric Veyssière driving his Yankee 4 x 4 to qualify higher than the eighth final, and then to break down in this one on his 32nd lap, apparently feeling under great pressure after such a brilliant year in 1986, he has been unable to retain this form in 1987. Commiserations, Frédéric and better luck in '88.

James Weedon, driving smoothly and fast with his Mustang qualified through to the quarters, then while looking set to finish in the top three in that race, had a



John Chamberlain Siccom Magnum 4 x 4 started up for start of semi final.

driveshaft U.J. from a pre-production batch work loose from its shaft and put him out of the race. Then Richard Stitson and Alan Harman looked certain to both qualify from their quarter, when Alan's silicone manifold to exhaust pipe joint split, causing him to stop for repairs destroying his chances, but allowing Richard through after a clean run to qualify for the semi final.

With just three British drivers through to the semi it was left to the Siccom triumvirate of Ralph Allum first to race in semi final 'A' and John Chamberlain and Richard Stitson in semi final 'B' to uphold British honours and gain final places.

Unfortunately, Ralph away first had elected to run spike grip tyres on the front, with normal block rears, and suffered terminal understeer for the whole race, eventually breaking his car on the 39th lap, failing to qualify in the top five for a final spot, and an unfortunate finish to such a good weekend.

In semi final 'B', Richard and John both were in the running for a top five finish until when past the halfway stage, Richard had a self tapping screw holding the output disc to the steering servo come loose causing him to lose all steering. A quick pit stop by Tony Miller refitted the disc, but Richard was now out of contention. Meanwhile, Pascal Gueye was also having problems with handling. Having made special rear dampers with a single oil bypass hole in the piston, rather than the normal two, was finding the rear damping much to firm, particularly as the sun had disappeared, and the temperature had dropped, with even the hint of drizzle in the air. As a result, his car bucked all over the rapidly deteriorating track ending his chances for a crack at the European crown that was so far eluded him. For the British, John Chamberlain continued to circulate steadily and finished in the top five to qualify for the sole British drivers spot in the final.

The Final

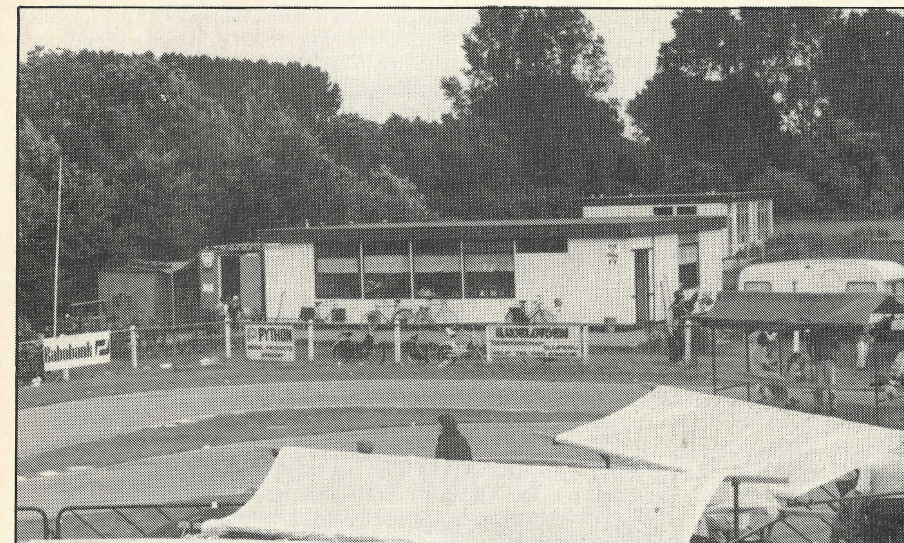
For the ten drivers who qualified for the forty-five minute final, feverish activity was the order of the day in the pits. With alleys on them, cars were checked and final adjustment made to provide the best set up possible. With the temperature looking to drop, yours truly decided to change rear dampers to a softer set up to improve rear traction and balance otherwise, the Magnum was left in the same form as for the semi with the exception of fitting a larger receiver battery pack to last the forty five minute race, plus a new OPS Gold plug for the OPS .21 RE motor. A final pit briefing with Alan Harman and Tony Miller with an initial plan to fuel at six and a half minutes. the ten finalists were called to the track for a photo-call before lining up to start the race, and it was interesting to see the mix of nationalities and makes of cars competing.

Nationalities

- 1 British
- 2 Swiss
- 2 Italians
- 1 Austrian
- 1 German
- 3 French

Cars

- 4 Yankee 4 x 4
- 2 Siccom Magnum 4 x 4
- 1 SG Tigre 4 x 4
- 1 Micro Racing Cougar 4 x 4
- 2 Garbo 4 x 4



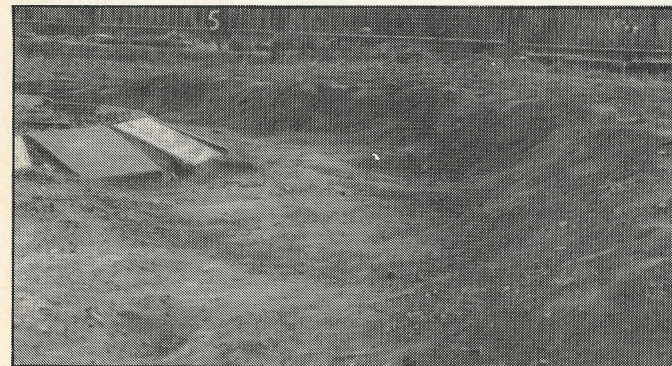
Maybe we could learn a thing or two from this impressive complex, this was the on site restaurant.



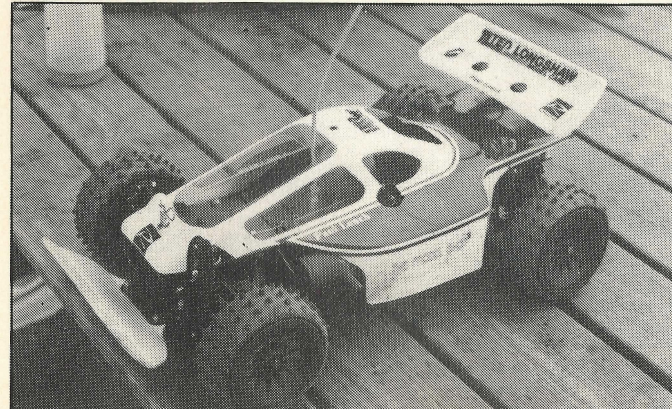
Drivers and cars line up at the start of the final.

Right: interesting rear end set up on the winning car, note each rear damper consists of two normal dampers screwed together.

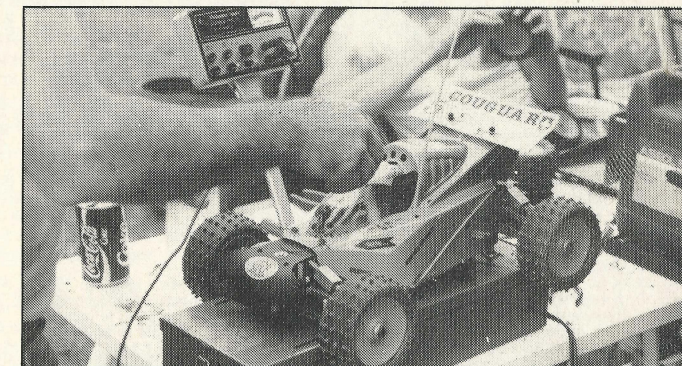
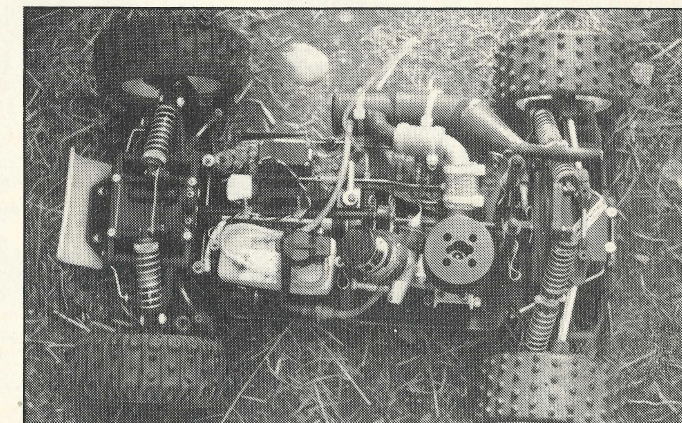
The dreaded "trench", once in this turn the cars were lost apart from the very top of the aerial, this made for some interesting racing.



While it lasted Paul Leach's P.B. was fast and furious.

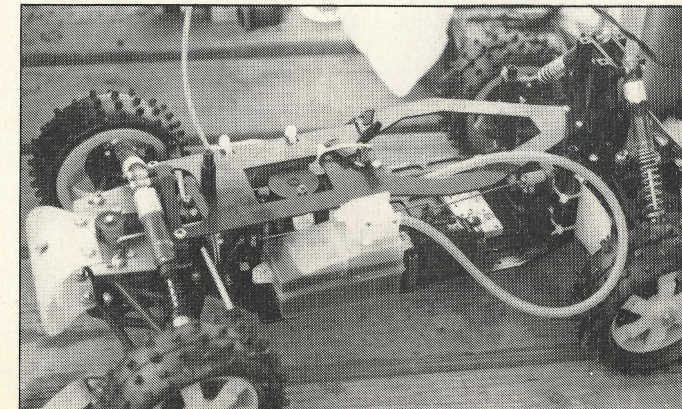


1987 European Champion D. Boulmier with winning O.P.S. S.E. powered 4 x 4 Yankee.



Above: New Micro Racing Cougar was an unusual choice and went well qualifying for the final.

Below: Pascal Gueye's Siccom ready for its engine.



The Race

Philip Boeri from France, driving the Yankee 4 x 4 shot away from pole position at the drop of the flag, closely followed by the rest of the field. However, his race was unfortunately finished on lap nine when he broke his car. At the front, Olivier Daniere from France driving the Magnum 4 x 4 was storming away, aiming to avenge the disqualification he received at last years European Championships after winning the race clearly on the track. In hot pursuit was Didier Boulmier of Switzerland with his Yankee 4 x 4 looking smooth and stable with Gian Baruchello from Italy driving his Yankee 4 x 4 close behind. John Chamberlain was finding the car a handful compared to the semi final and wondered on his choice of softer rear dampers. The only thing to do was drive as smoothly as possible and hang on in there! Great encouragement was given by the British flag waving contingent at the end of the straight, thanks chaps!

Daniere was looking good still at the 30

minute mark when disaster struck. A wheel nut worked loose then came off, followed rapidly by the wheel. Panic, the Frenchmans pit crew had no spare wheel nuts in the pit and then lost some five laps searching for a nut and subsequently re-fitting a wheel. Daniere was back on the track and drove an inspired drive consistently breaking the lap record, despite the condition of the track, but there was insufficient time to regain the lead, meanwhile Baruchello was driving brilliantly and had taken the lead with Boulmier only metres behind. Standing next to the Italian on the rostrum, I have to admit to the occasional smile as the least problem he encountered was followed by heated Italian expletives as the tension built up with minutes to go, Baruchello appeared to be baulked by another slower car allowing Boulmier right up to his back bumper. The referee, Bill Burkinshaw ordered the slower car to pull over, the Italian followed by Boulmier went past then Baruchello made a mistake, flipping his car over at high speed, allowing the Swiss driver into the lead to great cheers, Didier Boulmier held it together

and crossed the finish line for the final time to become the 1987 European Off Road Champion. A brilliant finish to a superbly organised and run championship.

Post Mortem

J.C.'s car was found to have a seized centre differential causing some of the cars waywardness during the final, most of the European finalists appear to get amazing economy of around ten minutes to a tankfull compares with out maximum of seven and a half minutes, this is an area we will investigate. Didier Boulmier appeared to pull higher gearing than we normally use, preventing some of the excessive wheelspin that we often induce on exiting slower corners, resulting in a smoother handling car.

Finally we must work at achieving some permanent racing facilities in Great Britain, with the same size of tracks (large and loose!) If we are to see the sport grow and provide the training ground for a British European and World Champion.

Just about wraps it up for this month. See you all at the track soon.

1 D Boulmier	Swi	40915	98/08.5	Yankee 4 x 4	9 C Lachat	Fra	35090	61/00.0	Yankee 4 x 4
2 G Baruchello	Ita	41200	97/19.8	Yankee 4 x 4	10 Ph Boeri	Fra	40860	9/00.0	Yankee 4 x 4
3 L Verne	Swi	40975	96/04.0	Garbo 4 x 4	16 R Stitson	Eng	26500	40/14.4	
4 R Ghedini	Ita	35150	95/14.6	Garbo 4 x 4	18 R Allum	Eng	26700	39/00.0	
5 R Pintaric	Aus	40785	94/17.1	Micro Racing Cougar	31 A Harman	Eng	27095	38/34.7	
					32 J Weedon	Eng	26645	32/00.0	
6 J Chamberlain	Eng	40675	94/22.0	Siccom Magnum 4 x 4	43 M Allison	Eng	27075	34/00.0	
					59 R Gines	Eng	27095	34/17.6	
7 O Daniere	Fra	72160	93.23.7	Siccom Magnum	62 D Allison	Eng	27045	27/05.5	
					77 P Leach	Eng	72250	40/02.6	
8 M Mielke	Ger	26935	80/00.0	SG Tiger 4 x 4	88 D Hill	Eng	27125	8/00.0	