

# The VI IFMAR 1/8 Gas Off-Road World Championship

*By Mike Haswell*

**T**he Sixth 1/8th Gas Off-Road World Championships took place at The National Motor Museum near Beaulieu, England. The Museum forms part of Lord Mantagu's estate in the picturesque New Forest and has over 250 vehicles on show, including the record breaking Bluebird.

The track was massive at just a shade under 1300 feet in length with a nice wide (20 ft.) straight that was over 200 foot long. The surface was basically flat grass but soon wore away to a hard-packed dirt and had two wooden jumps that were covered in astro-turf. When you consider that the week before all there had been was an empty field, the organizers had done a fantastic

*Left: Winner Alex Laffranchi of Italy with his Kyosho MP5, powered by a Picco engine. Top right: As you can see the off-road circuits in Europe tend to be a bit more "natural" with respect to the racing surface. Middle: Nothing flies quite like an 1/8 scale gas car. Bottom: Top U.S. performers Cliff Lett and Mark Pavidis. Both made the final and had an excellent World Championship.*

job getting everything completed on schedule. The driver's stand was nice and high, giving all the drivers a clear sight of the track, and there was even 12 volt power laid on for the mechanics in the pit lane. Along with a grandstand from where you could see all the action. The pit area for the drivers was very spacious and there was plenty of table space for each driver, as well as benches to sit on. Thanks to Exide there was a number of large 12 volt car batteries available to those who needed them. All the race officials were looking extremely smart in the red polo shirts and the boy scouts, who were turn marshaling for the week, were all decked out in Kyosho T-Shirts and caps.

The round-by-round qualifying system was being used (it will also be used for next year's Worlds at the Ranch), whereby you are awarded points on your finishing position in each round - 155 for first, 153 for second, 152 for third and so on down. With only the TQ driver going straight through to the Grand Final and four rounds out of the six were to count. Consistent quick runs would be required rather than one banzai effort. When you consider that the TQ time in the sixth round would have been only good enough for 65th in the first round, it is definitely a more equitable solution. The heat order was also shuffled each round to ensure that everybody got a fair crack at the TQ. With bump-up mains being utilized, even if you hadn't had a particularly good time in qualifying you could still make it through to the Grand Final.

There were three practice rounds, which were also used to





seed the heats, with each driver getting a few minutes to warm-up before starting a 10 minute timed race. Having fifteen cars all out at once wasn't a problem for the drivers on a circuit of this size. Some did have problems with their car's traction rolling, but they quickly sorted things out and were happier once the grass had been worn away to leave a hard dirt surface. Initial tire choice varied with some running Proline XT/XTR or Medial Pro Pulsars, by the end of the week most had settled on running the Medial Pro Turbo Rats. Fortunately Medial Pro was one of the manufacturers present and had

a container load of tires with them, so there wasn't much likelihood of them going short. Mugen, Kyosho, Laro, Bergonzoni, TAG/OPS and Gandini were the other manufacturers who were making their presence felt.

### QUALIFYING

The first round saw the Italian TAG/OPS duo of Marco Grandesso and Matteo Dapporto go fastest from the Mugen/Rex of Mark Pavidis. Round two went to Spain's Daniel Vega - Mugen/Tops, making the most of his early heat. Daniel Reckwagd then took rounds three, four and five in a dominant display of driving to ensure that

he went straight through to the Grand Final in pole position. Mark Pavidis took a pair of second places, while Cliff Lett, Kyosho/Picco, popped up with a seventh and Matt Ledger, Mugen/Rex, got it all together on the final day to record a pair of eighths in rounds five and six. Daniel's Laro had been modified so that it had a longer center of gravity, along with a visit to weight-watchers. He had also fitted twin disc brakes and had different shocks and shock mounts. Mark's Mugen was essentially standard except for the black chassis, some trick looking blue shock towers and he had MIP

*Look at the size of this track! Gas machines on a circuit this large can really show their stuff.*





Cvd's fitted.

With qualifying over, the French had converted one of the pit tables into a drink table! Then we were off to the banquet which was good and relatively free of any boring speeches - even better. This was followed by an excellent band called "Magic", who covered Queen hits. BJ was down at the front of the stage with a bottle of Newcastle Brown Ale taking some in, but he wasn't quite as demented as one of the Brits. One of the Finns then started stage-jumping and it was a good thing some of the drivers weren't racing until

Sunday.

## MAINS

First out for us was Eric Hyatt in the 1/1024 B Main, but he wasn't to progress any further finishing in fifth place. There was mixed fortunes in the 512 B main with Jim Williams going out after one lap with servo failure but a win for Bruckner's Tom Baffer. Mike Paganelli was in the 256 A Main with Canada's Peter Head, who had picked up third in concours, but neither went any further with Mike having a problem with his throttle linkage and Peter had an engine that kept on cutting out on

him. Sadly for Tom, he didn't even make the start in his next main, having stripped a spur in the warm-up. Eustace Moore, Mr. MIP himself, was in the 64 A Main but finished well down and wasn't happy with the set-up he had for the tires he was using. In the 32 A main we had B.J. Christensen who had a handling problem when his sway bar came off and Jay Haley who suffered two engine cuts, so neither progressed any further. Greg Dennett finished second in the 1/8 A main to move on up, as did Cliff Lett in the 1/8 B main by virtue of winning. The quarter fi-

nal A main saw Greg go out, but Kris Moore had hung in there to finish third and go on to the semi's. The B quarter final saw Cliff win again, while Matt Ledger went out with a broken screw on the steering. The first semi saw an initial battle develop between Alessandro Catozzi, the European Champion, Mark Pavidis, Jamie Booth and Trevor Cadby, who departed the fray when his engine cut after a roll. Kris Moore had made his way up to fourth and was challenging Alessandro for third and when he eventually did get past, his motor quit going down the straight costing him the better part of a minute. Mark was the eventual winner with Jamie, Alessandro and Phillipe Lachat making up the rest of the automatic qualifiers. Matteo Dapporto held off Erwin Weinmann for the fifth place, by a mere six-tenths. We will have to wait and see if his time was quick enough. Kris was left with an engine cut that otherwise would have seen him through. The second semi saw Alex Laffranchi take control early in the race to lead from Marco Grandesso, Lawrence Harris and David Crompton, who suffered an engine cut and then went out of the race with a mechanical failure. This left a battle for the last automatic qualifying spot between Britain's Danny Conway, Cliff Lett and Japan's Yuichi Kanai, which saw Yuichi move into fourth when Danny and Cliff got together at the end of the straight. Then Danny's engine cut on the last lap and Yuichi ran out of fuel on the table top jump just yards from the finish line, how unlucky can you get. All this allowed Cliff to take a fortuitous

fourth behind Alex, Marco and Lawrence, while Matteo got the nod for the last spot in the final.

The Grand Final saw Marco grab the initial lead from Alex and the pole sitter Daniel, while Mark was at the back of the pack having flipped over on the opening lap. Marco went for a tumble coming off the jump, allowing Alex and Daniel to go by with Phillipe Lachat sitting pretty close in fourth. Mark was busy making up ground until a kingpin screw went, a lengthy pit stop ensued ending any hope Mark had been harboring of a win. Cliff was next to hit problems when his engine cut on landing off a jump, costing him nearly two whole laps. Alex was now pulling away from the field and building a nice cushion over Daniel, Phillipe and Marco. Daniel was next to hit trouble when the battery connector started playing up and an engine cut in the pit lane, both of which were quickly rectified but cost him time. This left Alex even further ahead of the battling Phillipe and Marco, while Jamie Booth had moved up to fourth. On the penultimate lap, Marco trying to regain second place went end over end coming off the jump and his engine cut, giving Jamie third place. Alex was the worthy winner to become the World Champion, second was Phillipe, then Jamie and Daniel recovered to take fourth.

A big hand has to go to the organizers, the BRCA, who showed the rest of the world how to put on a World Championship.

**1st - Alex Laffranchi**  
Italy  
Kyosho MP5/Picco

**2nd - Phillipe Lachat**  
France  
Laro/OPS

**3rd - Jamie Booth**  
Great Britain  
Kyosho MP5/OS

**4th - Daniel Reckwald**  
Germany  
Laro/RB

**5th - Alessandro Catozzi**  
Italy  
TAG/OPS

**6th - Marco Grandesso**  
Italy  
TAG/OPS

**7th - Cliff Lett**  
USA  
Kyosho MP5/Picco

**8th - Matteo Dapporto**  
Italy  
TAG/OPS

**9th - Mark Pavidis**  
USA  
Mugen/Rex

**10th - Lawrence Harris**  
Great Britain  
Kyosho MP5/OS

## Other US Drivers Results:

**18th - Kris Moore**  
**29th - Greg Dennett**  
**32nd - Matt Ledger**  
**70th - B. J. Christensen**  
**74th - Jay Halsey**  
**88th - Eustace Moore**  
**118th - Mike Paganelli**  
**119th - Tom Baffer**  
**132nd - Jim Williams**  
**135th - Eric Hyatt**

*A look at the field of drivers that would participate in the Sixth 1/8 Gas Off-Road World Championships. While the class is still not that popular in the U.S., it's all the rage in Europe.*

