1:80FF ROAD

REPORT BY MARK STITSON



The British cars all in line.



The British Team

village of Porici Nad Sazavou in the Czech Republic for the annual European Championships. This was the first time we had ever been as far afield as the Czech Republic and the event symbolised the extending membership of EFRA following the political change in Eastern Europe

over the last few years. The track that was laid out caused a few murmurings before the racing had begun. The track was essentially in three sections. The main straight and the following two bends were all on tarmac, so there was already a worry about tyre wear! The rest of the track was split between a grass section and a dry dusty section. As expected, the grass didn't last long, but the surface that was left was a dusty earth, not so much the hard compact slippery surface that is commonplace abroad. This meant that the tyre most widely used to

Turbo Rat, although later on the 'Whoops' tyre by the same manufacturer was the most popular. Having said that, the FTD car used Kyosho 'X' pattern tyres, although this was the exception rather than the rule

QUALIFYING

The first two days of the event were taken up with practice. There were quite a number of problems with the organisation of the meeting at this point which did not go down well with the drivers, but things would improve. Straight from the start the Brits showed they would be a force to be reckoned with and in the first round of timed practice Mark Stitson was a brilliant 3rd with the Mantua Futura, with Jamie Booth (MP5) 6th and Lawrence Harris (Crono) 7th. Setting the pace, even at this stage was World Champion, Alex Laffranchi from Italy with his Picco powered MP5. After all the timed practice had

finished, Laffranchi was top, but Lawrence Harris had finished a tremendous 3rd place after a brilliant run in R3 Mark Stitson was also well up there in 6th, with Jamie Booth looking very good as well. However, all this would be immaterial as all it did was to seed the heats roughly, and it would all be to no avail if the good performances were not repeated in the 'Real Thing'!

By the time the proper qualifying took place, the meeting was back on track as far as the organisation went, and I don't think you could fault the running of the meeting from here on. With five rounds of qualifying stretching over two days, not only did the driver have to be good in controlling his vehicle, but also adjustment of the car to the ever changing track conditions would be crucial. Qualifying was done on a 'round-by-round' basis with the best three scores to count from the five rounds. The Euro's is the

qualification working well. With 14 heats per round and five rounds of qualifying, track conditions change so much that it is quite often impossible to use the old FTD system. With R-by-R, each round is equally important, no matter how the track has changed, and the truly consistent drivers are rewarded. However, those that argue it is only the consistent drivers that benefit and not the quickest are talking rubbish because you have to be both consistent and fast with round-byround.

best example of this system of

The first round of qualifying saw Alex Laffranchi stun the rest of the field with an incredible 11 laps in 5:16.01. This was the fastest time recorded all week, and considering that the track had slowed considerably over the two days of practice, it was an

brilliant (as least from the British view) was the performance of Lawrence Harris (Crono) who finished 2nd in the round. This was an amazing run, the best I can remember from a British driver at any Euro's ever. Jamie Booth was not so far behind in 7th and David Crompton completed an excellent three in the top 10 for the Brits in 9th.

To illustrate how fast Laffranchi's FTD run was, he was actually just under eight seconds faster than the second place car. This is an incredible margin at this level. For example, further down the field. eight seconds was the difference between 25th and 62nd place! In fact this also shows another story from these Euro's. One mistake from a driver could lose you around 25 places. With three scores to count from five, this could mean around 75 points lost with just a couple of mistakes, a qualifying position difference that would be too hard to make up by moving up through the finals on the Sunday.

In round 2. Jamie Booth was obviously not going to stand for Lawrence Harris being the top Brit, so Jamie went out and equalled Lawrence's first round performance by finishing 2nd in the round, leaving him an excellent 4th overall. Jon Hazelwood, who up until this meeting had never been in a National A-final with his Bergonzoni Flash Super Racing 97 (catchy name!) put in the run of his

incredible run. However, almost as



life to end 4th in the round. This was a brilliant drive by Jon and set him up nicely for his overall total score. Lawrence Harris kept his excellent score ticking over with 10th place to add to his 2nd place in R1, but the other drive to note in the round was Philip Boyes in 13th place. Philip, who was now using his MP5 again, had auglified for this event by means of winning the Clubmans Championship last year and in his first ever Euro's to finish 13th in a round was excellent. Justin Mackey (Mugen) and Danny Conway (MP5) also made the top 20 in 13th and 16th places respectively.

The last round on the Friday and the third overall meant that World Champion, Alex Laffranchi (MP5) was almost guaranteed FTD overall, and an automatic place in the grand final that comes with FTD. Laffranchi finished 2nd in R3 to add to the two 1st places in R1 and R2. The top man in this



On track action at the Euro's.

David Cromuton again had another good performance at a European Championship making



Ex-European champion Didier Roumier from Switzerland is not quite the driver he once was, but he's still smiling.



Despite the large section of Tarmac, tyres held up

1997 EFRA European Championships - Porici Nad Sazavou, Czech Republic



















The ten grand finalists. (1-R) Alex Caffranchi, Daniel Reckward, Alessandro Catozzi, Jamie Booth, Philippe Lachat, Samuele Lenzi, Magnus Amilon, Lawrence Harris. Fabrizio Magi. Matteo Dannorto.



Chedini was once again with Crono but this may have been the last meeting we shall see!

number of the Italians, Included in

Champion Andrea Gennari and

Maurizio Monesi, who had used

Crono for the last couple of years.

excellent day's racing, finishing

3rd. With a 7th, 2nd and 3rd

place finishes, Jamie was 2nd

Lawrence Harris (Crono) could

also say the same as he was in

Philippe Lachat (Laro) from France.

Daniel Reckward, who won the

5th place overall, just behind

1995 European Champion,

International Indoor meeting

earlier this year, and who was

many people's pre-race favourite

alongside Laffranchi and Lachat

was disappointing in 18th place

semi-final place, before the

Saturday had even begun.

Jamie Booth (MP5) kept up his

behind Laffranchi and Dapporto in

overall and virtually guaranteed a

this were 1994 European

double World Champion,

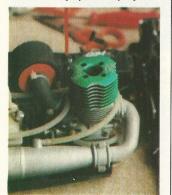
Kyosho for their last major

successes but had been with

FTD one year ago but Sebastien Leonard's MP5 wouldn't do it again!



Lawrence Harris again performed superbly.



New Nova-Rossi BX-21 Engine is a throwback to a traditional 3 port buggy engine



expected now that the former Mugen and Laro driver was with Kyosho. However, Reckward had obviously slept well Friday night particular round was another because in the first round on Italian, Matteo Dapporto. Dapporto had been using the Tag last year when he made the Euro's final in France, but this year he was using the MP5, as were a

Saturday morning (4th round in total) he recorded the fastest time of the round. He was one of only two 11 lappers which were becoming rarer and rarer due to the worsening of the track as far as bumps were concerned. The only other 11 lapper went to Alessandro Catozzi, the 1996 European Champion. Once again, Catozzi was using the Tag car, although there were rumours circulating that this would be Catozzi's final meeting for Tag. We will see next year...! Again Jamie Booth and Lawrence Harris were the two top Brits, but David Crompton (Laro) also put in an excellent run to go 8th in the round. Apart from R2, David had been in the top ten every round. so he deserved praise as much as the top two. David was already assured a semi-final place before

New Rossi engine made the final in it's first outing.

The engine has revolutionary ceramic components

overall. His three scores of 15th.

36th and 23rd were not what was

the final round had begun. In the 4th round, Laffranchi had a bad run for him, and there were a few people hoping that this was the sign of things to come, that the track was too bumpy now or something similar. Don't be silly! Final round and Laffranchi



lamie Rooth hard at work on his MP5

was again top, giving him the

maximum score with three 1st

places. This meant top spot overall and the one direct qualifying place for the main final on Sunday afternoon. The other nine finalists would come from the top four in each semi-final plus the fastest loser from the two races. The 5th round was disrupted by very strong winds and some rain for the last five or six heats of the round. which meant drivers were running around trying to guess what tyre would work in the wet and whether a good time for the round could still be found. This was the only bad weather we had during the week (luckily we missed the

floods) but even during this time,

on the board.

the top drivers still got good times

Overall, the Brits had done very well in qualifying with four drivers in the top 15 and therefore in the semi-finals directly. Jamie Booth had the best result ever from a British driver finishing 2nd overall, with a 2nd place and two 3rd places counting, Lawrence Harris ended 5th. Crono's best driver finally getting some notice from the factory staff that were present at the meeting. David Crompton kept up his remarkable form at European and World Championships with 7th place overall. However, the most remarkable result was that of Jon Hazelwood, who with a brilliant 9th place in the final round finished 11th overall. In only his second Euro's ever(?). Jon had qualified in the semi-finals, and was Bergonzoni's top driver at this meeting. To say Jon was well pleased was a bit of an

understatement! With Justin Mackey (Mugen) and Danny Conway (MP5) in the 1/4 finals there were six Brits in the top 30. an excellent qualifying. Could we keep this up in the finals?

THE FINALS

There were a few finals taking place on the Saturday afternoon with the majority of the finals taking place on the Sunday starting with the 1/64th finals and culminating with the 45 minute grand final. Drivers could progress from final to final by finishing in the top 3 of their race, but with the competition fierce, this was not easy, even in the lowest finals.

There were only two Brits to cheer on during Saturday afternoon and although Adrian Svenssson couldn't quite make it through with his MP5, Nick Simmerson, got through two finals, winning his second race with the Tag and ensuring he would have to get all his equipment ready for the final day.

First up on Sunday in the 1/64th final was John Zottl with the Futura. John had not being aoina too bad in qualifying, just the odd mistake here and there and that was enough to be halfway down the field. In the final, John's race had effectively run after just two laps as his exhaust pipe came off. Although this was fixed quite quickly, the time lost was too much as the pace of the finals was already very quick. Nick Simmerson added to the bad start for the Brits as his shock absorber broke on lap four of his 1/64th final, but at least Nick had his moneys worth

with three finals! Next up were the two Futura drivers of Mark Stitson and Darren 'Super Smooth' Warburton, Mark had a very disappointing aualifying after such promise in practice whilst Darren was more than happy with the performance of his car in qualifying. In the final the roles were reversed as Mark went much better of the two. In fact for the first half of the race Mark led for every lap, until Stefan Danz of Germany overtook. The race was so close that on the penultimate lap, Mark made only his second mistake of the 20 minute race, and yet this was enough to fall from 2nd to 5th!



Ready, steady, go! Nerves of steel are required for a European Championship final

Every effort on the final lap was in vain and Mark finished 5th, just 3 seconds off progressing in 3rd place. In fact this final was one of the quickest finals, and Mark's 5th place time would have won the next final that these drivers moved up into.

In the 1/16th finals, there were

three Brits in action so surely we could have our first success of the day here? It wasn't to be for lan Oddie (Crono) after he received a 10 second penalty courtesy of his pit-man, and a ten second penalty at this stage would leave you with no chance. Mike Cradock was gambling on refuelling just the once in his 20 minute race, but despite the fact that the OS engine managed to do this, it was not quite to be for Mick. Although he finished 'only' 6th, he was actually only 5 seconds off the all important 3rd place, showing how close the finals were even after 20 minutes. Nevertheless we did have something to cheer about as Stewart Wilcox (Laro) won the race to move up to the 1/8th finals. Stewart normally does well at European events and is one of the best finals drivers in this situation. He won comfortably by 10 seconds, although he would have liked to have been higher in qualifying but after missing round



Before the main final all the drivers were introduced to the crowd adding to the tension.

1 with problems, it was always going to be hard to get three good scores from four rounds. However, maybe Stewart would

go all the way from here? If Stewart was to move up he would have to work hard. The 1/8th final was an absolute brilliant race to watch although I don't know if Stewart had enjoyed it so much on the rostrum. Stewart worked his way up from 8th on the arid, and for almost the entire race there was a group of five cars all very close together, and only three of these would move up to the 1/4 finals. With three laps to go, Stewart had the lead of the race, but was under intense pressure, Thankfully, Stewart held on, but one mistake, even after 20 minutes would have meant that you were out of the top three. In

fact, 3rd placed Chaffardon from France moved up to the next race by 0.14 seconds!

Unfortunately, in the other 1/8th final, Tommy Chung and Philip Boyes both had their week's work end. Tommy's Nova Rossi engine expired on him, whilst one engine cut for Philip ended his chances. However, in his first Euro's ever, to make the 1/8th finals was a superb achievement. After a nervous start in the first-round Philip looked quite assured on the track, although I'm not so sure his Dad, Andrew 'Which Way On The M40' Boyes was so calm watchina!

The 1/4 finals are also notoriously difficult to qualify from as you have almost the top drivers with only three to qualify upwards for the semi-finals. This year was



finished a



1997 European Champion - Daniel Reckward of



Medial Pro ;'Whoops' tyre was used by the majority by the time the finals began.

no exception and like the finals before them they were very close indeed. Stewart Wilcox, in his third final with the Laro D2, looked like having a chance to complete an incredible drive through to the semi-finals, but two thirds of the way through the race a problem with a shock absorber meant that his chance had gone. It was very unlucky for Stewart, but his run was still one of the best of the day

The second 1/4 final was one of the best races you are likely to see anywhere. For the full 20 minutes of the race, there was a five-way battle for the three



Kyosho 'X' pattern tyre was used by top qualifier



Two new Medial Pro types on show in the Czech

OS RZB

OS RZB

OS R7R

Nova Rossi

Nova Rossi

Nova Rossi

Nova Rossi

Nova Rossi

Mantua Force

Mantua Force

Nova Rossi

OS RZB

OS RZB

Picco

Top

Picco

Pos	Name
3rd	Jamie Booth
6th	Lawrence Harris
14th	David Crompton
17th	Jon Hazelwood
22nd	Danny Conway
26th	Justin Mackey
33rd	Stewart Wilcox
45th	Philip Boyes
49th	Tommy Chung
53rd	Mike Cradock
60th	Ian Oddie
65th	Mark Stitson
75th	Darren Warburton
87th	John Zottl
90th	Nick Simmerson

Kyosho Inferno MP5 Crono S'6 Jaro D2 Bergonzoni Flash SR 97 Kyosho Inferno MP5 Mugen Super Athlete Laro D2 Kyosho Inferno MP5 Mugen Super Athlete Kyosho Inferno MP5 Crono S'6 Mantua Futura Mantua Futura Mantua Futura Kyosho Inferno MP5

qualifying positions, including Britain's Danny Conway (MP5). Danny was planning on re-fuelling only once in the race, and this strategy paid off in that he was in the second spot with around 8 minutes to go. With a few laps left, Danny actually took the lead, but there were five cars practically in a line with three laps to go. On the penultimate lap, Danny and 2nd placed Andrea Gennari (1994 European Champion) had a slight touching (unnecessary since both were in qualifying positions) which

First ever tyre from engine manufacturers Rossi

was very similar to Medial Pro's 'Turbo Rat'.

was enough to put Danny into 3rd. Any of five cars could have qualified as they went into the final corner, when Danny's car rolled. He'd lost the place for the semis. But no. The other two behind got caught up and Danny was back on his wheels. As the marshal put Danny's car back on the track, he just had a few metres until the line, but the engine cut! It had been thought that Danny's gamble of one stop had just failed to come off, but in fact there was enough fuel left, it was just that as the car rolled, the air gap in the fuel line meant the engine stopped.

It was the most unluckiest finishes I've ever seen, but a truly great race by all five drivers at the front. Justin Mackey (Mugen)

couldn't match this pace at the front, but a 1/4 final finish is still an excellent result at a European Championship.

108th Adrian Svensson

SEMI FINALS By the time the semi-finals were about to begin, the atmosphere was really building up and those still to race will have had the butterflies building up all day long. The atmosphere was even more electric when it was announced that Marco Grandesso from Italy (Tag) had been disqualified as it looked like he had a different chassis for the final to that he had used in qualifying, contrary to the rules. However, this caused much discussion because Grandesso said that he was using the same chassis, but that the mark put on the chassis by the scrutineer had been scrubbed off due to the chassis hitting the ground during racing. There were many rumours floating around that once the race had taken place the mark was found and so that he should have never been disqualified. However, another driver in the same race told me that Grandesso's chassis looked almost new, so it was right that he was

disqualified. Whatever the real truth. it was an incredible happening, something that's not happened for many, many years.

Once the race began, the top three of Reckward (MP5), Catozzi (Tag) and our own Jamie Booth (MP5) pulled away from the rest and were always going to qualify without any problems. Samuele Lenzi (Crono) from Italy captured the all important 4th place and fellow countryman Matteo Dapporto would have to wait to see if he would qualify as the fastest loser havina finished 5th in the race.

In the second semi-final Philippe Lachat from France (Laro) annihilated the rest of the field, almost winning by a lap. This is an incredible margin at this level and it looked like he was going to be hard to beat in the final. However, Lachat's time in this race would actually have only been good enough for 4th place in the first semi-final, so his winning margin had been deceiving. The rest of the field was extremely close and gave us the best race of the two semi-finals. With just one lap left, there were five cars together in

2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th with only three of these to go into the grand final. At the death it was Fabrizio Maai who nicked the 4th and final spot, his second close finish after being in Danny Conway's 1/4 final.

The Italian held off Frenchman Cyril Mogin by 1.26 seconds to secure his first ever Euro's final, with Gennari of Italy only 1.02 seconds behind these two. David Crompton (Laro) was not too far behind this group himself, but he would have to be content with a semi-final finish as would Jon Hazelwood who finished just behind David. Nevertheless a semi-final finish is superb and lon and David must have been very satisfied with their week's work.

THE GRAND FINAL

So, after almost five days racing, we were left with just the grand final to go. 45 minutes on the now rough Czech track would need everything to work well; car, engine and driver. Before the final everyone had their own ideas who would win. Lachat was many people's favourite, although Reckward had the best time from the semis. But what of Laffranchi? He had qualified directly for the main final and hadn't raced since Saturday morning, apart from a 10 minute practice. Would be adjust to the track?

The answer was almost immediately no. Laffranchi had a lot of mistakes in the first few minutes and he visibly lost his concentration. He did get back into some sort of rhythm but by this time you couldn't see him catching the leaders. These were Lachat from France (Laro), Reckward of Germany (MP5) and Catozzi of Italy (Tag) with Jamie Booth (MP5) flying the British flag in 4th. After about 15 minutes of the race. Catozzi left the race with a problem with his throttle linkage, leaving Lachat, Reckward and Booth

to battle it out. Catozzi's problems lost him far too much time and the reigning champion finished last in 10th place in what may have been his last race. Fabrizio Magi suffered engine problems from his new Rossi engine, but he was still delighted to have come through from the 1/4 final. Fellow countryman Matteo Dapporto (MP5) finished 8th in his second Euro's final in a row. Magnus Amilon of Sweden (MP5) also had engine trouble so ending 7th.

With 20 minutes left, Lachat's

1:8 RALLYCROSS EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS 1997

FINAL POS	NAME	RESULT	SPONSOR	CAR	ENGINE	FUEL	TRANSMITTER	SERVO	FRONT TYRES	REAR TYRES	QUAL POS
1	DANIEL RECKWARD (GER)	87 LAPS IN 45:12.47	KYOSHO RB RMV MEDIAL PRO	KYOSHO INFERNO MP5	RB CONCEPT	RB 20%	KO EX-1	KO 1006	MEDIAL PRO WHOOPS	MEDIAL PRO WHOOPS	6
2	PHILIPPE LACHAT (F)	87 LAPS IN 45:26.04	LARO PICCO MEDIAL PRO	LARO D2	OMEGA	PICCO	SANWA EXZES	KO 1013	WHOOPS	WHOOPS	3
3	JAMIE BOOTH GB	86 LAPS IN 45:22.54	KYOSHO RIPMAX OS SANWA THREE 5 MODELS	KYOSHO INFERNO MP5	OS RZB	MODEL TECHNICS SUPERGLO 25%	SANWA EXZES	SANWA ERG-ZZ	WHOOPS	WHOOPS	2
4	ALEX LAFFRANCHI (I)	84 LAPS IN 45:13.98	KYOSHO PICCO	KYOSHO INFERNO MP5	PICCO KS-21	PICCO	KO EX-1 EX-1	KO 1006 1006	KYOSHO 'X' PATTERN	KYOSHO 'X' PATTERN	1
5	SAMUELE LENZI (I)	84 LAPS IN 45:21.81	SVM/CRONO PICCO NVOVA FAOR	CRONO 5'6	PICCO KS-21	PICCO	FUTABA FF3	FUTABA 9303	WHOOPS	WHOOPS	16
6	LAWRENCE HARRIS (GB)	84 LAPS IN 45:37.63	SVM/CRONO PUMA RACING OS MEDIAL PRO	CRONO 5'6	OS RZB	SUPERGLO 25%	FUTABA FF3	FUTABA 9402	WHOOPS	WHOOPS	5
7	MAGNUS AMICON (SWE)	83 LAPS IN 45:05.25	KYOSHO RB FUTABA MEDIAL PRO MODEL TECHNIKS	KYOSHO INFERNO MPS	RB CONCEPT	MODEL TECHNICS	FUTABA 3PJ	KO 1013	WHOOPS	WHOOPS	9
8	MATTEO DAPPORTO (I)	81 LAPS IN 45:03.82	KYOSHO PICCO	KYOSHO INFERNO MP5	PICCO KS-21	PICCO	FUTABA 3PJ 3PJ	FUTABA 9402	WHOOPS	WHOOPS	12
9	FABRIZIO MAGI (I)	81 LAPS IN 45:19.30	ROSSI	KYOSHO INFERNO MP5	ROSSI CERAMIC	ROSSI	JR X-756	JR 4721	ROSSI RATS	ROSSI RATS	19
10	ALESSANDRO CATOZZI (I)	71 LAPS IN 45:17.18	TAG OPS	TAG	OPS	TAG	SANWA EXZES	SANWA ERG-ZZ	WHOOPS	WHOOPS	10

Omega engine was beginning to sound rather rough and no sooner had this been noticed that Lachat's car slowed considerably. He crawled round the track for a lap until his pit-crew could adjust the engine. Fortunately this seemed to do the trick which was surprising as quite often when an engine overheats, it never really gets back on song. However, the time lost meant the Frenchman would have to claw back almost a lap if he was to catch Reckward. He did actually manage to get passed Jamie Booth into second but Reckward was still some way off.

Lawrence Harris (Crono) had performed with some credit for the British and was always in top five throughout the race. With just a couple of laps, Lawrence was in 4th, but a broken shocker meant he had to limp around for the last few laps and he would eventually finish 6th. Despite the disappointing finish, it was another excellent result at a top international Championships. Samuele Lenzi (Crono) and Alex Laffranchi (MP5) ended 5th and 4th respectively, with no real problems to report. Laffranchi could well have been near the top

had he had a better fist five minutes. But he didn't...

The top three were well clear Jamie Booth again put in the best performance from a British driver, with a 3rd place finish. This was Jamie's best ever Euro's finish and followed on from his 3rd place at the World Championship at Beaulieu last year. Throughout the whole week lamie had been one of the best drivers at the meeting and the result was nothing less than he deserved. Lachat ended 2nd after his problems with his engine. There is little doubt that he was the fastest driver in the race but we have often said this about Lachat. However, it was still a privilege to watch him in he race, and the laptimes he was able to post with the condition of the track were breathtaking, going to show that he is one of the best drivers in the world - in any class.

Daniel Reckward of Germany driving the MP5 and powered by the RB engine was crowned European Champion for 1997 after his 14 second winning margin. There is nobody that could begrudge Reckward a major title, because he has been one of quickest drivers around, having recorded FTD at the last two World Championships, and

he has been in the position to win one or two, but for problems with his car. Now, with the MP5 he seems to have found that extra edge that he needs in finals and his victory was well deserved. He hadn't looked anything special earlier in the week, but you only need to be the quickest on the final afternoon! Once again. a Kyosho victory, adding to their World Championship success last

All in all the 1997 European Championships were a success. After the first couple of days practice, the meeting ran faultlessly, especially the finals which ran absolutely on time. Also, the track held up a lot better than most European tracks, and now with round-by-round well established in 1:8 Rallycross it is not such a problem as it once was.

The finals were also as close as we have ever seen, throughout all levels. Just one mistake, even if you had been leading the race for 19 minutes could have left you outside the qualifying positions after 20 minutes! The British team could go home satisfied with a very good performance with two finalists and six drivers in the top 30. Well done!