

taking your breath away!

I.F.M.A.R.

1/8 SCALE GAS WORLD
CHAMPIONSHIPS

In part one of his race report on the 1/8th Gas World Champs, Mike Myers introduces us to Toluca, in Mexico, and a race track that literally does take your breath away!



Aerial view of the Pegaso RC Club at Toluca. Showing the RC track and RC flying field.

entire racing facility is the very definition of 'perfection'. There's also an equally awesome R/C airplane facility, but that's another story!

The R/C car track is 970 feet long.

It's a high-speed track, dead flat (no bumps), with three-dimensionally sculptured concrete track barriers surrounding the inside track boundaries and the pit area. A "Tarpaulin" fence (it feels like rubberised canvas) surrounds the entire outside of the track. In areas where spectators might be standing, there is a double-row of cloth fencing. If the first fence doesn't stop the cars, it slows them down enough that the second one does. When cars run into the fencing, the cloth absorbs the impact of the crash, usually with little or no damage to the car. Along the straightaway, the fence is 12" high. In the curves, it is 25" high.

Club RC Pegaso

Mr. Blake and Club RC Pegaso set out to build the ultimate R/C racing facility, with no expenses spared, getting advice from all the experts in the field. Every feature of the track and the

THE TRACK

The 1997 I.F.M.A.R. 1/8 Scale Gas Nationals were held at the Club RC Pegaso track in Toluca, Mexico. About a hundred fifty racers from twenty different countries attended, making this a truly international event. Usually at R/C races, you think of the track as little more than the stage upon which the racing action is held. Not so in Pegaso. I

think the highlight of this race was the track itself! Under the direction of Luis Garcia Blake, Club RC Pegaso has built what may well be the world's finest R/C racing facility. Mr. Blake's enthusiasm for R/C racing is the reason that the Pegaso track, and this race, came to be. He's also a perfectionist, and the Pegaso facility shows that.



970 feet long, high-speed and dead flat track. And boy, what a track!

The timing and scoring area occupies most of the second floor of a large building at the right end of the track. A huge picture window gives the timekeepers an unobstructed view of the track. One of the rooms was converted into an office, where Pieter Bervoets set up a computer with internet access. Race results and Pieter's comments were posted to the internet as soon as an event was completed.

Every night (or if it rains, during the day) the entire track is covered up with dozens of huge tarps. The tarps not only help maintain the track in perfect condition, but when and if it rains, because the track is covered it only takes an hour or so to dry off the track and get back to racing.

The pits are recessed several feet, so the mechanics work on the cars at 'table-height'. This makes it easier to work on cars, perform refuelling, etc. A computer monitor is provided next to every pit space, so the pit crews have complete information on the race.

The technical inspection area is situated right below the stairs. After each event, cars are checked for a proper body (cut out as per specification) weight, width, fuel, and fuel capacity. A team of two or three technical inspectors went through every car after each event.

A series of work benches near the pit area are used as the work area for club races, but this only accommodates 30 or so racers. For the World Championships, a large canopy was mounted above the tennis courts. Tables were set up, creating a work-area where the 150 racers and their mechanics could work on the cars in comfort. AC power was available. Large plate-glass set-up boards were available, for setting up suspensions, etc. They were heavy, but perfectly flat.

Once the racer and pit crew brought the car back to the work table, the track provides all the necessary facilities for getting ready for the next event. A long car-wash area with individual sinks and wash areas provides car cleaning spaces for ten or so racers to use simultaneously. Each work area has its own sink, a spray gun which you can load up with solvent, running water, and compressed air for drying the cars after washing them.

A separate building away from the work area is provided for engine break-in, and another building is set up for tyre truing. The tyre-truing building has six stalls, each surrounded on three sides, with enough space for your tyre truing machine, a battery, and compressed air to clean things up afterwards.

The track also has a restaurant, a snack bar, a gift shop, an ambulance/first-aid station, an information centre, and a dozen or so grandstands set up for spectators, and a 'lost and found' area. There was also a series of locker areas, where you could leave your race equipment when the day's racing was done - a miniature 'Gasoline Alley'.

The track was very well maintained. At the end of each day, a crew was out on the track vacuuming it, scrubbing it, and making it look freshly painted and like new. When the cleaning was completed, the track was covered with the tarps until the next day.

Welcome to Club R.C. Pegaso.





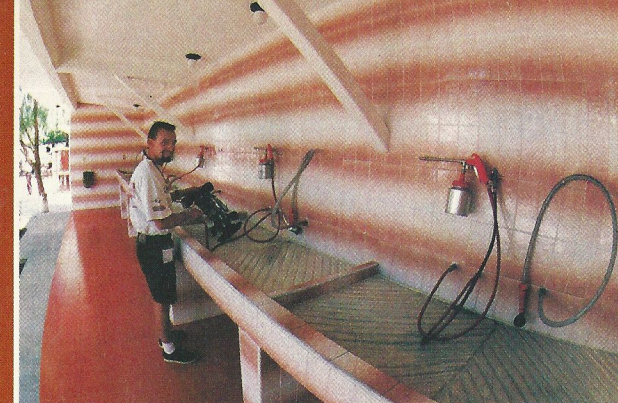
The timing and scoring area, with an unobstructed view of the track.



The track was covered at night with dozens of huge tarps.



Pits area, set-up over the tennis courts to accommodate the 150 racers and mechanics.



Car washing.

The qualifiers were run in a different order Thursday, with all heats (1 through 15) being run in the morning, and once again in the afternoon, but this time in reverse order. This was to give everyone an equal opportunity of qualifying on a 'good' track. This was the final opportunity for racers to place well in the Finals. If they never got in a good run, the only way to make it to the Grand Final would be to "bump up", advancing from Final to Final.

The Finals

At the end of qualifying, the finals were set up. Here's how this works. The top four qualifiers were immediately placed in the Grand Final. The other racers were placed in one of the intermediate finals.

Each racer had been assigned an 'I.D. number' when he signed up for the World Championships. Those racers with odd numbers were placed in the 'A' group, and those with even numbers were placed in the 'B' group. Excluding the top four racers (who had already been placed in the Grand final) for each group, 'A' and 'B', the top seven racers in the 'A' group were placed in lower finals as follows... For the remaining 'A' group racers, the best seven were placed in the semi-final, the next best seven were placed in the 1/4 final, the next seven were placed in the 1/8 final, and so on, down to the last racers being placed in the 1/1024 final. The 'B' group was similarly divided.

During each of the lower finals, the top three racers in each final would move up to the next final, with the other racers being eliminated. For example, the top three racers in each of the 1/16 finals would 'bump up' to the 1/8 finals. Although it's not likely, this meant that a racer could theoretically advance all the way from the lowest final, right to the Grand Final.

Collari's Serpent.



Opening Ceremonies

The opening ceremonies were held Monday afternoon. This was the last day of practice, and the final sessions were delayed by a heavy rainstorm. The track was dried, the remaining practice session run, and the track area cleared for the ceremonies. Each country represented by their own flag, national anthem and their own unique uniform. Although it looked like it might rain again, the clouds held out, and the ceremony was completed as planned.

Qualifying

The racing started for real on Tuesday morning with the first of six qualifying sessions. The racers had been divided into 15 heats, with ten cars in most heats. Tuesday morning, racers in heats 1 through 7 had two rounds of qualifying. After a short lunch break, racers in heats 8 through 15 got in their two rounds. Each qualifier had a three minute warm-up, then the cars were lined up in front of the driver's stand. The cars were started about five seconds apart. The qualifiers were ten minutes long, meaning each racer got to make at least one pit stop. There was some concern about having only a three minute warm-up, as that isn't really enough time to get your car started, warm up the engine, tune the engine, and get your tyres scuffed in. Five minutes was suggested for future races. Be that as it may, the three minute clock did keep things moving along very quickly. Fabio Domanin from Italy was TQ at the end of the day.

The qualifiers were re-seeded for rounds 3 and 4 on Wednesday, with some of the slower racers moved out of heats with mostly faster drivers. Michael Salven got everything together, and put in a flawless 37 lap run to take over TQ. Michael's crew didn't think that run would be beaten, but they were wrong, shortly afterwards he put in an even better run.



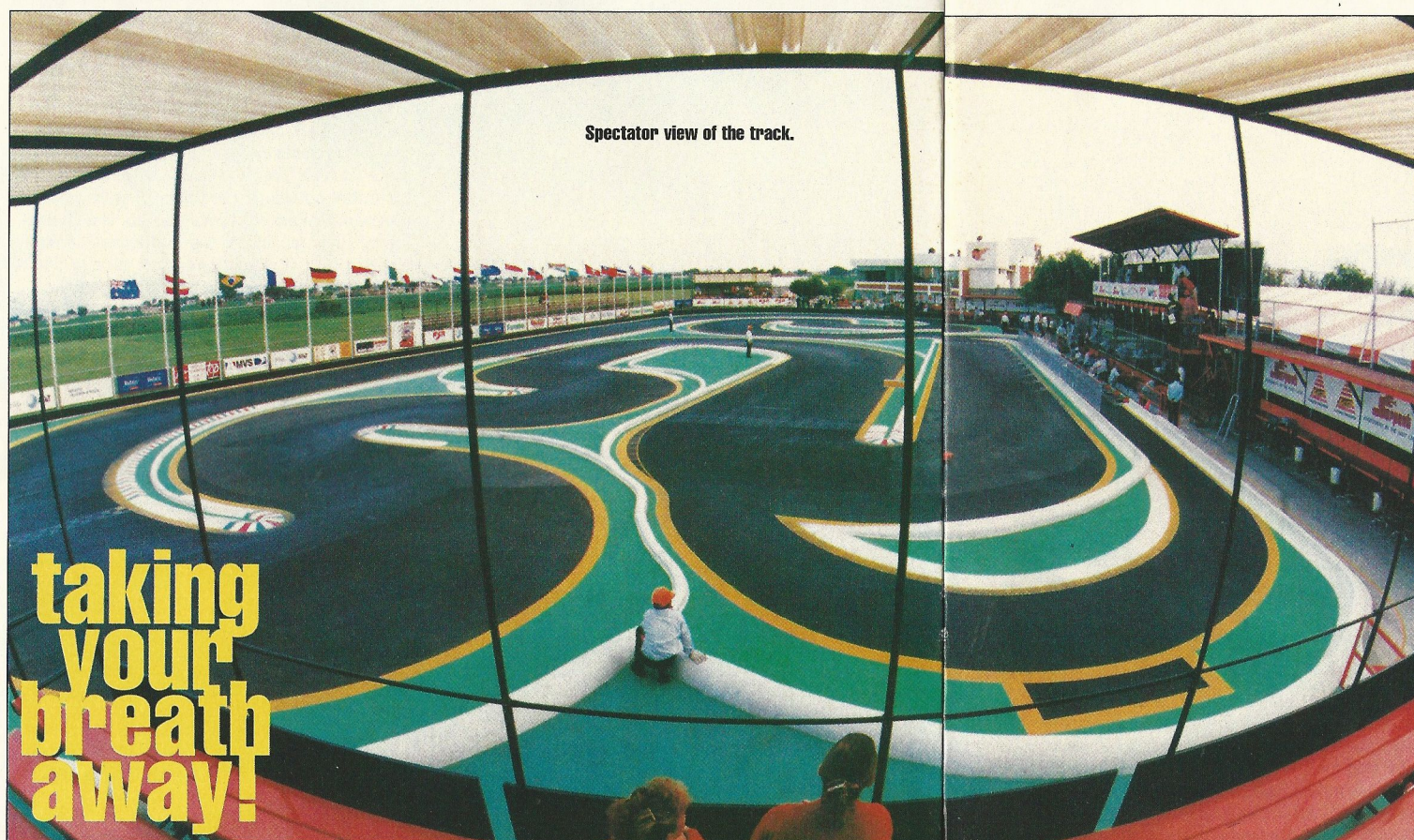
The people who made things happen: Mr Blake, owner of Club RC Pegaso, and Araceli Mancill Garibay, the Administrative Manager.

Practice

Many racers arrived ahead of time and the track was open for "free practice" from Wednesday through Sunday. Registration and technical inspection started on the Sunday. Monday was used for "controlled practice", with the cars organised by the heats in which they would be qualifying in. The opening ceremonies were Monday night, and Qualifying would start first thing Tuesday morning.

Since Toluca is situated at pretty high altitude (8,000 feet), cars and people react differently than they do at ground level. For people not used to it, it's easy to lose your breath just from walking up a flight of stairs. For R/C car engines, it's difficult to develop enough power. The I.F.M.A.R. rules were stretched, allowing the use of 40% nitro fuel (rather than the typical 25%), but even so, many cars at the 1996 Pre-Worlds looked like the drivers were just breaking in engines, not racing. Emilio Lopez, one of the local racers, told me that 55% nitro fuel is typically used at club racers.

The engine manufacturers have used the year since the pre-worlds to develop specialised engines designed to perform well at 8,000 feet elevation. These engines are unlike anything you or I can buy, but this isn't really relevant, as the engines designed for Toluca would never work well at the near sea-level altitude of most tracks. The engines that seemed to work best were the highly modified versions of Novarossi engines, Mega, Rex, and so on. Novarossi had an office set up at the track, and helped racers get their engines running properly. Even so,



Spectator view of the track.

taking
your
breath
away!

many racers had to use some of their six rounds of qualifying to work on tuning their engines, or rebuild them after damaging them from an incorrect set-up. The "best" engines were hard to come by. Many racers were struggling because they didn't have the right combination of parts.

There were two main problems with the engines. First, 'normal' engines designed for use at lower elevations don't work well at the high altitude. They don't develop enough power. Raising the nitro content to 40% helps somewhat, as does increasing the compression ratio.

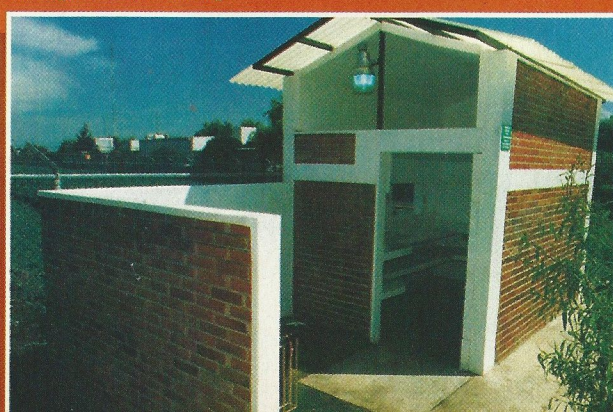
The second problem is that this is a huge track, and the engines are being run very hard for a greater percentage of the time than is usually the case. The long tracks and high speed makes for a very high load on the engines. Adequate lubrication is critical. Dozens of engines were blown up during the early days. Many of the racers I spoke to told me that fuel mixed with mostly castor oil worked best. Several of them told me that some special synthetic additives helped.

Other engine components were matched to the engines. For example, heavier clutch springs

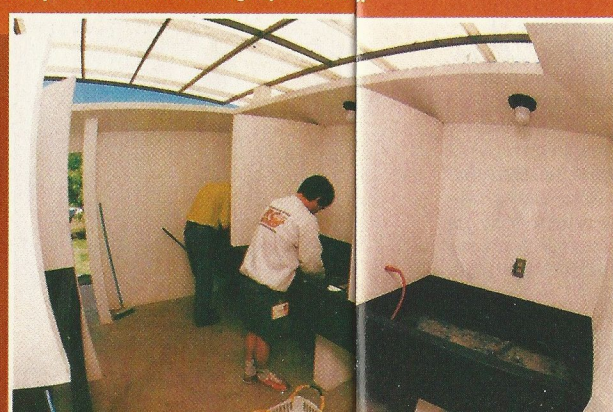
than usual were used (so you could tighten them more, and get the clutch to engage later, with more clutch slippage), and clutch shoes were lightened (also to engage later, and not to engage to hard). Because there is so little power available, if the clutch came in too hard or too soon, it would bog the engine down. Most racers used a higher-compression "button" to get the most power they could.

Some racers had access to "special" stuff, which wasn't available to everyone. At this race this was more obvious than is usually the case, because it was so critical to get enough power.

The engine break-in building.



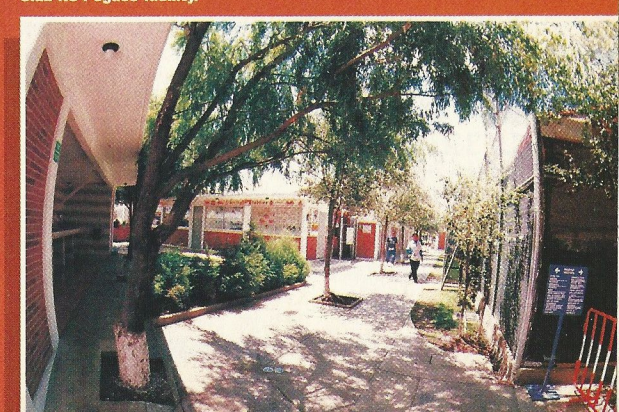
Tyre-truing area, six stalls available for you to use a tyre truing machine, battery and compressed air to clean things up afterwards.



On-site hobby shop.



Club RC Pegaso facility.

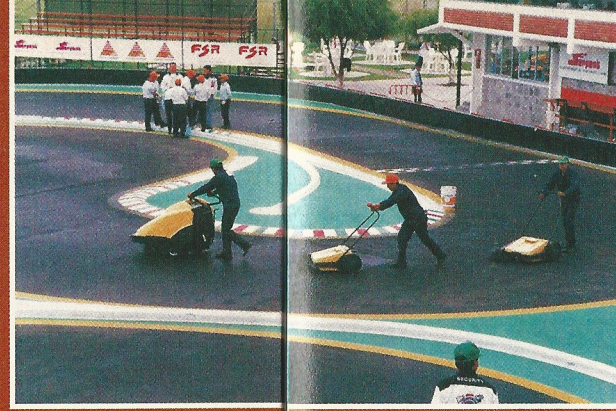




Administration building where results etc. were collated.



"Gasoline Alley" (storage lockers).



Vacuuming of the track took place at the end of the day's racing.



Scrubbing of the track to clean the painted areas.

When the semi-finals were finished, the top two racers from each semi-final would move up to join the other four racers already qualified for the Final. Of all the remaining racers in the two semi-finals, the next two fastest racers would move up to the Final - it didn't matter whether they came from the 'A' semi-final, or the 'B' semi-final.

Friday

Many of the lower finals were run Friday, these included the 1/1024th finals, 1/512th, 1/256th, 1/128th, 1/64th, 1/32nd, 1/16, and finally the 1/8 finals.

1/1024 B FINAL

Pier Antonio Vecchi Marti won the event, with Kai Sheng Shih and Sutekno Salim close behind. They moved up to the 1/512 Final. They were followed by Carlos Bustimza, Mary Bea Gholson, Rich Browne, and Graham Barthow.

1/512 B FINAL

Trevor Reid, Sam Cheng, and Desmond Tan moved up to the next event; Tommy Chang, Pier, Haary Hananouchi, Sutekno, Luis Garcia Blake, Kai, and Jose Carlos Solarzano were eliminated.

1/256 B FINAL

Francis Choo, Bhakti Natapraja, and Hilton Hartanto won, advancing to the 1/128 final.

1/128 B FINAL

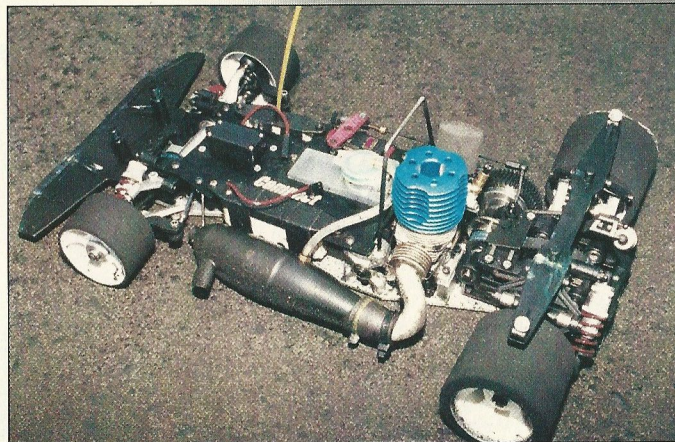
Herve Valliet, Sergio DiAngelo Moraes, and Josa Arnan won, advancing to the next event.

1/64 B FINAL

Daniel Horta won this event, wasting no time to jump out to a two-lap lead. Jose Luis Hidalgo and Akihisa Hashimoto also moved up.

1/32 B FINAL

What a close race this was. Scott Kimbrow was the early leader, but young Danny Horta from Florida worked his way up from 8th position to within 2 seconds at the first pit-stop. But at the pit-entrance he was t-boned by



Picco's Picco.

another car and that could have been the end for him. But luckily it wasn't. He lost 5 seconds but it didn't hurt him. He came back and passed Scott just before refuelling for the second time. He took a commanding lead but again he came close to disaster when another car hit him again. After this incident he lost top-speed, probably the stinger pipe bent. But he was able to hold on to the lead and finished with a strong 68 laps 4.5 seconds in front of Scott Kimbrow. The fight for 3rd place was very close. Skip Starkey came very, very close in the last turn, but Hashimoto kept his nerves and finished third. Fix your pipe Danny!

1/16 B FINAL

What to say about Josh Cyrul. Finally he gets his engine to go. He controls the race from lap 1. He takes a 6 second lead, and then at 5.30 he flames out. In my (humble) opinion this was clearly a misjudgement of the pit-crew. Why not call him in around the 5 minute mark? The plug gone and the lead gone. He restarted the race several laps down, but flamed out again. That's it. He deserved better... Susuki was out of the race after 30 mtrs. He was t-boned right after the start and lost the front suspension. Also Suruth Vataniyapromote had a bad start as he had to start from the pit lane. After Josh went out, young Carlos Mastreta took over the lead. Meantime Danny Horta moved up the field and passed Josh Alton at 8.10 min. to move into 4th. In his chase for 3rd place he crashed his car and lost a dog-bone, a crippled car and that was it. Suruth, Carlos and Sean Cochran on to the 1/8th final.

1/8 B FINAL

This was do or die for Mike Swauger. After all the trouble he has been having all through qualifying, he had to go through the 1/8 final to get to the Main Day on Saturday. And he is too good a driver to be only a spectator. Only question was can he stay out of trouble and would the fuel last.

The first he did, and the second he managed by refuelling every 4 minutes, thus taking 1 extra pit stop compared to the others. With his driving skill losing 7 seconds wasn't a problem. This is how it happened. He took the lead, fol-

lowed by Schouten and Blackstock. At his first pit stop he had already a margin of 5 seconds, so no problem, he would come on the track right behind his two pursuers. But that problem solved itself. Mike Blackstock was in such a hurry leaving the pits that he crashed his car in the pit-lane. Out went Mike. Marcel Schouten was unfortunate to be hit in the pit lane by Carlos Mastreta who was just passing by his pitbox when he wanted to leave. Suspension gone, Marcel gone.

Suruth moved into 3rd place behind Peter Warfinge on second, but when he started making mistakes, he was passed by young Mexican 'promise' Carlos Mastreta. In his strive to come back he made more little mistakes and lost his place in Saturday's quarter finals, of course much to the joy of the Mexican team who had gathered on the straightaway grandstand to cheer for Carlos. Mike Swauger's car was later disqualified as being 268mm wide, the width specification being 267mm. Another car had driven into the back of Mike's car during the race, and damaged some of the rear suspension components.

1/1024 A FINAL

Dennis Samson, Jose Roberto Orlando, and Willem Du Preez moved up to the next Final.

1/512 A FINAL

Chih Hui Liu, willem, and Gonzalo Mora Beltrami moved up.

1/256 A FINAL

Francis Choo, Bhakti Natapraja, and Hilton Hartanto won this race, advancing to the next Final.

1/128 A FINAL

Herve Valliet, Sergio D. Angelo Moraes, and Josa Arnan moved up to the next race.

1/64 A FINAL

Frederik Badenhorst, Steve Tsuruda, and Fred Bowen Smith were the lucky three racers to advance to the 1/32 Final.

1/32 A FINAL

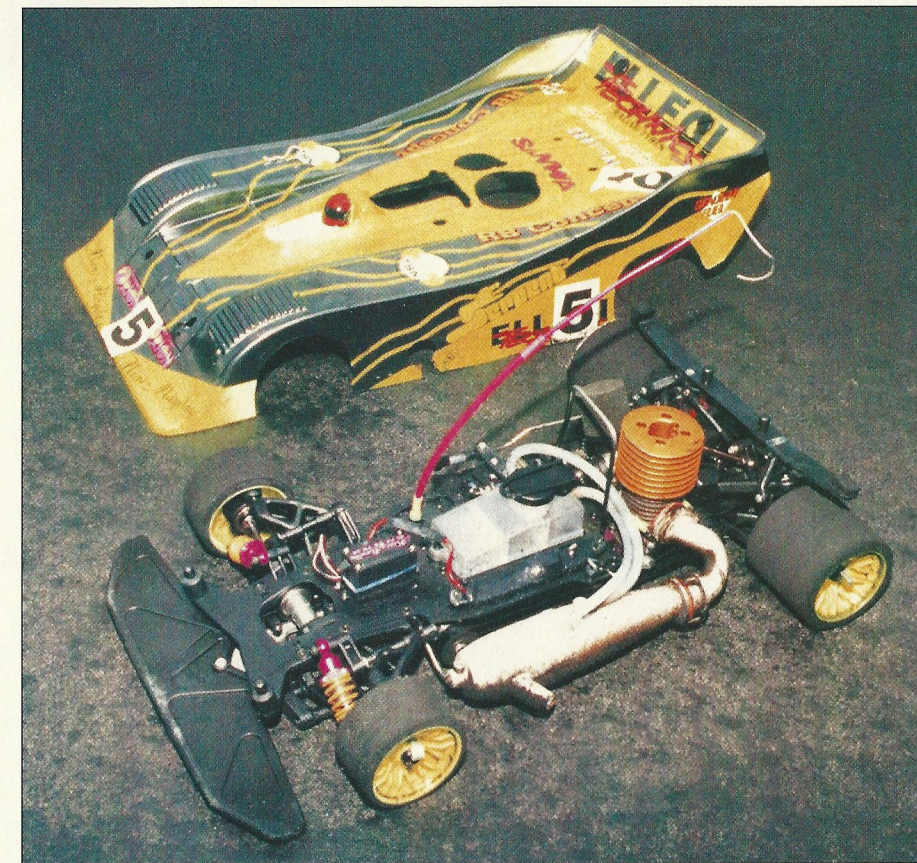
Romano Garbini was in control of this race from start to finish. Fred Badenhorst from South Africa did very well by finishing second after bumping up from the 1/64th final but not until Jurg Nydegger from Switzerland who was lying second, was taken out by a car leaving the pit lane. Robert Farestall from Sweden came in 3rd and also goes on to the 1/16th final. And Fast-Fred Bowen Smith? He had

already drove two finals and came close in this 1/32nd final to bump up one more time but just missed it by one place, but 2 laps down. That's it for Fast Fred, back to the Miami track.

1/16 A FINAL

The pace is definitely going up. Michel Janota from Austria drove a smooth and fast race (69 laps) and was never challenged for the lead. He almost lost it in lap 58 in 'Dead man's corner' but the car landed without damage. Robert Farestal moved up to the second place

Bertin's Serpent.



in the 8th minute, and also never looked back. Vinicius Jose Silva was in third place until three minutes before the end, when Garbani managed to pass him for third. Vinicius couldn't catch him anymore. The 1/16th final was the end of the World Championships for Frederick Badenhorst from South Africa. Nothing to be ashamed of. Having bumped up twice, this 1/16th final finish is the best finish of any South African driver for a long time. What happened to Don Jones, he never even made it to the starting line. Later on he informed me that both servo's stopped working when he was about to start. Bad luck Don.

1/8 A FINAL

What a 'smashing' heat this was. Literally I mean. In the beginning this is what you what call a rough ride. Cars were flying everywhere in the battle for positions. Art Carbonel's car flamed out right after the start and that was it. Nydegger crashed in front of the pits and lost a wheel. Miyashita was the early leader but passed by Schaer in lap 17. Tommy Ramundo also had a bad start and had to come all the way from the back. He came to 4th place but couldn't take third away from Janotta who managed to make it yet another final up. Well done. **RACI**

To be continued!

In next month's second part Mike Myers brings us all the action on the Grand Final and the battle to become 1/8th Scale Gas World Champion.

Additional reporting by Pieter Bervoets.

high fives for Lamberto!

I.F.M.A.R.

1/8TH GAS WORLDS CHAMPIONSHIPS

part 2

In part two of his report from the States, Mike Myers brings us the Grand Final and the battle to be World Champion.

Saturday

Saturday morning started wet, but as the Pegaso Club covers the track during the night, the track was not flooded, but still wet when we arrived.

Discussions were going on about the "what if it rains" scenario, but as I sit and go over yesterday's results, the sun is just peeping through the leaden clouds and on the Public Address system it is announced that the first quarter-final will now start at 10.30, so only half an hour delay.

After all the commotion over the disqualification of Mike Swauger, things have settled down. Very unfortunate for Mike and Ron Paris, but it could have been anybody. It was scrutinizing that found his car had not complied with the rules, they advised the Race Director and based on the IFMAR rules the decision was taken.

Back to today's racing. Lamberto wasn't feeling to good yesterday (Friday), but had woken feeling a lot better and along with the other quarter-finalists was raring to go.

Just who is going to make it to the final? Ralph Burch and Chris Tosolini coming from behind, Aspesi, Roem, Barruzi, Sanada, Asahara, Christiany, Aygon, or outsiders like Kolff and young Mexican hope Carlos Mastreta? Stay tuned.

1/4 B Final

A thriller from begin to end. Kitade had a very good start and managed to pull away from all the usual "starting trouble". Not Tom Asahara, he got tangled up in a crash and had to work his way up from bottom last. Ralph Burch didn't even make it to the starting grid, his engine flamed out and he



The superb Club Pegaso track and blue sky, what more could you need.

had to start from the pit-lane. It didn't help as more engine flameout's caused him to retire on lap 7. Another dream ended.

The fight for first place was fierce. Busschers attacked Kitade and went in front 11 minutes into the race. In lap 47 Kitade passed Busschers again to go first into the last refuelling stop. For some reason Busschers pit-crew decided to come in 1 lap later, too late as it turned out. He flamed out with 30 metres to go and his race was over. It stayed close right up to the end. Tom Asahara connected with Kitade and passed him with a few minutes to go. But the battle for 3rd was tremendous. Young Daniele Ielasi was close behind the leaders, within 2 seconds all the time, but with 2 minutes to go he missed "dead man's corner", flipped the car but luckily he could continue. But his 6 sec. lead over Calandra in 4th was diminished to only a second, and he had junked a tyre in the crash, so you can imagine how difficult it was for him to stay ahead. Frank came within inches, but as both got a little bit wide in the last few corners Frank could not take 3rd away from him.

Zinni was involved in the top-3 early on, made a bad pit-stop and lost touch with the



Great view from the rostrum.

The Grand Final racers.



leading group and could not come back. Burch as I said had to give up because of engine problems. This has chased him all week and changing to the other make of engine has not changed his fortune. Calandra out, just a bit off the pace but overall a good performance from the "Iron Man". Warfinge, Suruth and Mastreta could not follow the pace either and were destined to go out. Well done all, another 2 years until your next chance.

A very strong performance by the Japanese drivers. Osaka, Asahara, Miura and Shiima through to the semi-finals to make it 5 Japanese drivers in total in the last 24.

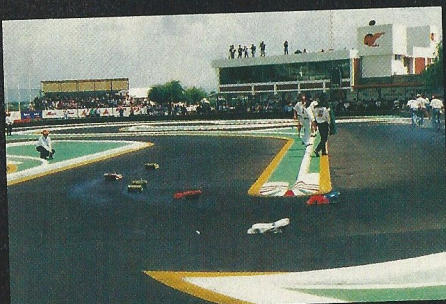
1/4 A Final

The start was a bit messy, at least for Hamaguchi. He dropped back to last and had to scrap to find a way back up. Chris Tosolini's "torture" ended here. After all the engine problems it was now the clutch that caused him to retire. Due to this problem Stewart Grant, second at that time, ran into him, dropping him back several places. Meanwhile Osaka



Great model - Chumpol Phaititsathya's concours winning GT-40.

took the lead, followed by Shimo and Miura, Hamaguchi, Grant, all within 6-7 seconds. Hamaguchi was in pursuit of Miura and came within a second around 15 minutes, but after the pit stop his engine went a bit rich, and he could not connect with him any more, only in the last 2 laps he managed to come to within 2 sec. again. Every mistake would be a fatal one. But they didn't make any mistakes and the order remained as it was after 10 minutes of racing. Just look at the finishing differences, 4.9 / 6.5 / 7.8 and 10.2 sec. after 20 minutes of racing. Osaka, Shimo and Miura through. Bravo Nippon.



The green flag is waved and the Grand Final gets under way.

B Semi-Final

The start was smooth, except for Milko Tenthof, who was put upside down by a car directly behind him. So he had to start last. But as his engine flamed out early on, he was outside the final anyway. The same happened to Fantini. Again as with Burch and Tosolini, changing engine make hasn't brought him any results. It also shows how difficult it is to get the engines tuned right here at 2,450 metres altitude.

Baruzzi and Roem were away well with Lorenzo Piromalli in third and Tom Asahara in fourth and Ielasi in fifth. First Ielasi went past Piromalli followed by Asahara. Meanwhile, Julius had a hard time keeping up with those 3, and after he rolled his car in the hair-pin in front of the pits, he was too far behind to exert any pressure on the trio. Asahara passed Ielasi at midway to go into third, but it was already clear that their pace was just slightly off, as at half way they were 1 lap down on the locomotive Baruzzi-Roem. If they wouldn't do 106 laps they wouldn't progress and so the number 3 and 4 from the A-final would move up.

This is exactly what happened. With only 104 laps in the end it means that Koji Sanada and

Kenji Osaka (A Semi-final) are through to the final. Ielasi stayed third, Piromalli passed Asahara, whose engine was running rich, and was dropping back more and more.

The end of the semi was exciting again. Roem was just behind Baruzzi and decided to go for first place with 30 seconds to go. He made a clean pass and took first place with 0.3 sec. separating the first two. The crowd loved it. All 30 minutes they hadn't been more than 2 seconds apart and such a finish, great stuff.

A Semi-Final

If the finals stay as exciting as they have been until now, we're up for one of the most exciting World Championship finals ever.

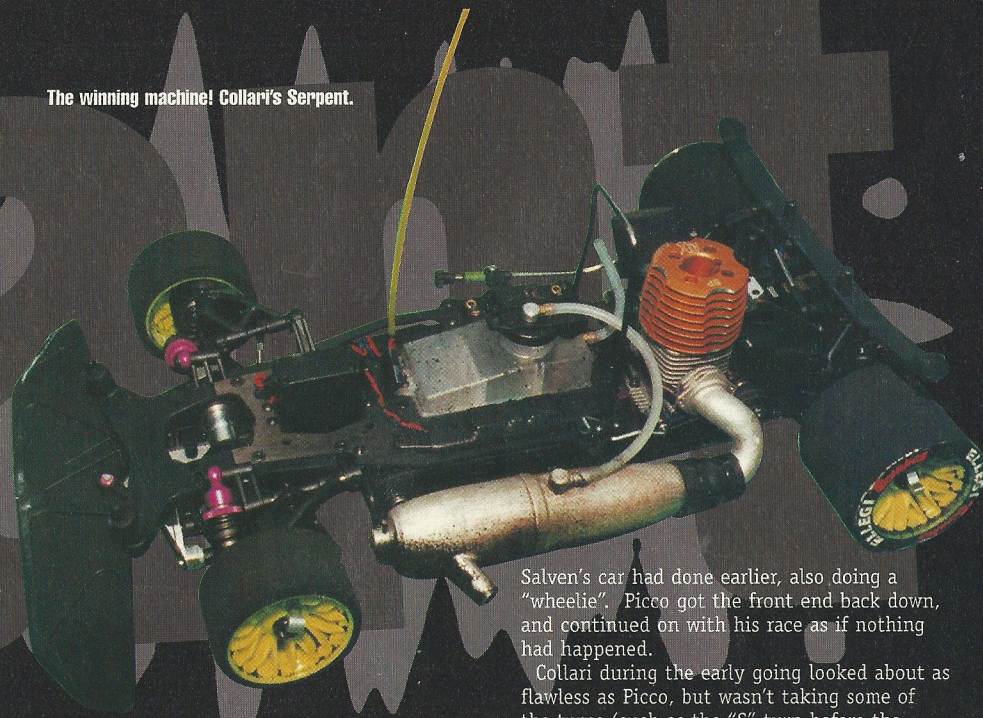
The start was clean and Aspesi took the lead, followed by Colombini and Bertin and a few seconds down Busnardo. Sanada overshot the chicane and dropped back. Osaka spun in the sweeper and also dropped away. In lap 23 Osaka passed Busnardo, but Busnardo wasn't to be denied and caught him back in lap 31. Miura wasn't in the race much and after his engine flamed out in lap 40 it was all over for him.

Colombini started making small errors, a roll in the hairpin, and in his last pit stop, after he passed Aspesi, he went out from the pit-box



Collari receives the chequered flag and the battle is won.

The winning machine! Collari's Serpent.



too fast and ran into the wall, damaging the car. He tried but couldn't hold on to his position anymore. Also Busnardo was having a few difficulties and dropped back.

Sanada and Christiany were fighting back and managed to unlap themselves, as did Osaka. They finished 3 and 4 and moved onto the final. Winner Adrien Bertin had a 1.0 second lead over Alessandro Aspesi, and both go on to the Grand Final.

Grand Final

Everyone at the track gathered around, from spectators to managers, hoping for an exciting race. They were not to be disappointed.

After driver introductions, warm-up, then individual laps, there was a final brief warm-up to get ready. With two minutes to go, Michele Baruzzi in the #8 car got stuck dead upside down on the straight in front of the pits. Fabio Domanin in the #2 car didn't have a chance - he hit it head on at full speed, destroying the front end of Fabio's car. There was no delay for repairs - within a minute, all cars were called to the line, everyone (except Fabio) lined up, and the race was on.

The start was beautiful, the best drivers in the world, no crashes, no mistakes (Although Fabio did get his car repaired and was able to start a few minutes later, in a race that's decided by tenth's of a second, a minute or two is an eternity.). The race was on!

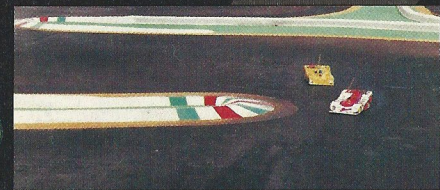
Within seconds there was a three car train pulling away from everyone, Salven, Collari, and Picco. This continued for several laps, when Salven's car did a "wheelie", and went airborne. Michael recovered and took off after Collari and Picco, but he was now a fair way behind them.

The race from then on became a contest between Collari and Picco. They traded places several times in the early going, as each tested the ability of the other. As the race continued, Picco's car was absolutely perfect - I've never seen a better handling car, and Picco took advantage of this to take the turns with inches (and sometimes less!) between his car and the inside berms.

Remember, the driver's stand is over one hundred feet away from the far turns, and Picco, lap after lap, was taking these turns right on the inside edge of the track. At one point, Picco's car went airborne, right where Michael



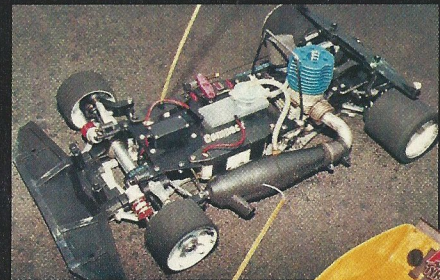
Collari, Salven and Picco during the Grand Final.



Battle for the lead - Picco tries to find a way past Collari.



Busy pits area.



Picco's Picco, superb during the Grand Final, but had to settle for 2nd.

The under cover pit area, where vital work was carried out.





The concours entrants. Tough judging!

(where I was standing, and where many of my pictures were taken from). Every lap, Collari fell a little further behind. For their part, the other cars out on the track were little more than moveable objects that the Picco/Collari express train had to go around. Almost all of the time they promptly moved out of the way when the leaders came up on them, although they didn't seem to move as quickly for Picco as for Collari.

About halfway through the race, Picco faltered in the turn at the end of the straightaway, as his engine started to run low on fuel, but he made it into the pits, losing only a few tenths of a second. He was back out on the track very quickly, but his lead had vanished and he and Collari were back to trading the lead back and forth on the track. Picco was able to take advantage of a superior handling car, and went back to work building up his lead, getting it up to the full length of the straightaway plus an additional 30 to 50 feet. It looked as if he had the race won, and all he had to do was continue on for ten more minutes. That's when disaster struck the Picco team.

Picco was called in for refuelling at 5:15 rather than at 5 minutes. This means he went one lap too many between pit stops, and again was running out of fuel as he rounded the turn at the end of the straightaway. He did make it into the pits, but the engine quit right then. His pit man (brother Eduardo) was able to get the car started very quickly, but in a race of this calibre, you rarely get a second chance. You could see the anguish in his brother's face, as he pounded the pavement with his fists after putting Alberto's car down and watching him chase off after Collari. Collari by now had built up a lead of the full length of the straightaway plus maybe 80 feet. Picco drove his heart out, and did make up over half of it, but ten minutes wasn't enough to catch Collari. As the race ended, Collari was still three seconds ahead, passing the finish line just before the hour-long race ended, with Picco just those few seconds behind.

The finishing order was Lamberto Collari (Serpent, 216 laps), Alberto Picco (Picco, 215 laps) Adrien Bertin (Serpent, 212 laps), Koji Sanada (Mugen, 211 laps), Michael Salven (Serpent, 209 laps), Rody Roem (Serpent, 209 laps), Michele Baruzzi (Serpent, 207 laps),

Kenji Osaka (Mugen, 197 laps), Fabio Domanin (Serpent, 190 laps), and Alessandr Aspesi (Picco, 82 laps).

Collari showed how great a driving talent he really is, taking a car that wasn't working at its best, and still putting in fantastic lap times. His pit work was also clearly the best, gaining him time over his competition.

Wow!!! We had all witnessed possibly the finest race we'll ever get to see! For a full hour, these two drivers, the very best in the world, had kept their cars within ten seconds of each other, matching the other at every turn. Picco had the better car, Collari had the better pit stops, but Collari's team also made fewer mistakes. Both of them had identical driving ability - absolute perfection! Those of us who came to Mexico to see the ultimate R/C car race got what we were after!! Collari came away from the event with an unprecedented fifth World Championship, a feat unlikely to ever be repeated. He certainly is a true WORLD CHAMPION!

Extra

A concours exhibition was held for the best paint job. The Concours Elegance jury had to choose from some 150 paint jobs. The best, and the winner, was Jacky Mouton with a very nice hand-painted body. Also on display was Chumpol Phaititsathya's hand-built fully operational model of an GT-40. The model was built just like the prototype, with functioning interior, engine compartment, etc. Beneath the realistic exterior (and almost completely hidden) was a Serpent 6000. Next to the model was a book with photographs of the full-size



Best Paint Job - won by Jacky Mouton

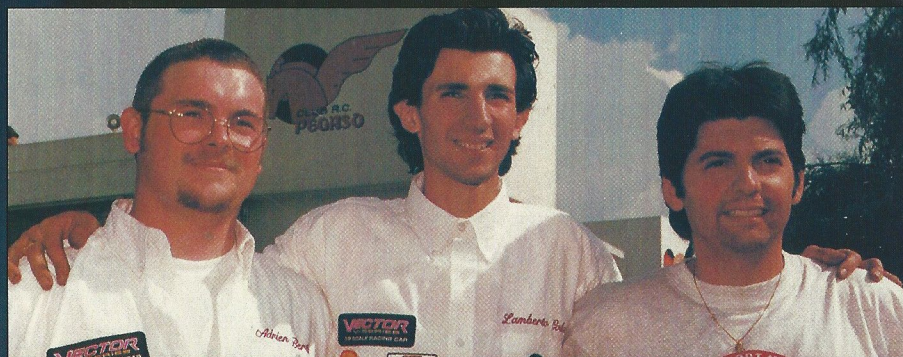
GT-40, and the model appeared realistic down to every detail. There was a radiator, providing water-cooling to the engine. A battery was mounted where the real car had it, and the driver's hand break acted as the "on/off" switch to turn on the car's power. Naturally, all the headlights, tail lights, and brake lights worked as on the real car! The GT-40 and an Australian Peugeot 605 both received special rewards. **RRCI**



Concours winners.



Winners with their machines and trophies.



Top three (left to right): Bertin (3rd), Collari (1st) and Picco (2nd).