

he last remaining British hope, Tony Rees, blew his chances of a op ten finish in the semi-finals of the 1:5 European Championships. His supporters couldn't believe their eyes as he piled his Laro at full speed into another on the straight. OK the other car was upside down and lying sideways on across the track, but in the warm-up laps - and with the red warning lights on the rostrum flashing to indicate the circuit wasn't clear? His supporters groaned at such an uncharacteristic error, then sighed with relief when his car appeared to be OK and took its place on the starting grid. What the onlookers didn't know was that the manifold had buckled and was to melt some three minutes before the end of the race causing the engine to die. Tony was awarded 22nd place overall.

This was a very sad end to five days of real hard graft from himself and his pit crew, David Law. The temperatures that reached 52C in the shade! That is over 130F. It was hard work to get the car on the pace needed to win a championship at this level. It's very hard to judge what might have happened if the car hadn't have been damaged. Tony had also misjudged the speed with which the car could fly into a corner, the guy in front wasn't so quick! Tony went for an inside gap only to have the door shut on him with the result he touched the other car. He was quite rightly given a 10 second penalty for aggressive driving. Poor judgement perhaps? If so, his French LARO team mate, Phillipe Lachat, was also a victim of the 'Red Mist'. After having made it to the Semi-Finals he 'totalled' his car, also in the warm up, by driving into the wall at the end of the straight. 'C'est la vie!' Tony's achievement at getting through to the semifinals at European level is tremendous. No one can recall any Brit' ever finishing this high up before and the future for Tony with the Laro car looks very promising.

# What happened to the rest of the **British Team?**

Steve Leake quietly worked away, squeezing every ounce of speed from his PB, and succeeded

'the difference between the quick and the very quick was practically nano-seconds'

in working his way up into the quarter finals. There was high drama here too. A decision to implement a 10 second penalty awarded to a Spanish car was timed by spectators to be nearer 5 seconds. The Spanish car went on to gain third place and hence a place in the semi-finals. Interesting stuff! Despite all his perseverance Steve had to be content with finishing 26th overall. Well done Steve.

Ian Oddie appeared to be struggling. There was much speculation about the cause of his problems, was it too many engines to choose from? Was it well intentioned support and advice clouding his thinking? Or maybe the circuit didn't suit his style of driving? Who knows? He started the 5 days as hot British favourite, having done well at all UK National meetings on the build up to the Euro's. Finally Ian had to settle for 43rd position. Interestingly the problem that finally took him out of the racing was one that has plagued him in the UK, his tyres simply didn't last the distance. No doubt Ian will be back

The only other Brit' finishing in the top half of entrants was Geoff Symonds at 45th. There was nothing wrong with his car, his pit crew (father Paul) worked solidly throughout the event to ensure it was set up almost identically to that of his team-mate, Tony Rees, who was clocking lap times almost 2 seconds faster. The problem appeared to be his driving style. More used to the tight bends of the compact British circuits Geoff struggled to adapt to the very long straights and smooth sweeping curves of Igulada. Geoff had a tendency to throw the car into the corners, accelerate out too soon and on the wrong line causing the back end to twitch and

the car to bounce its way down the next straight. Every twitch would result in about 0.1-0.3 seconds being lost and in a race where straight line speeds were so high (rarely below 50mph) the net effect was very costly. Still not a bad performance when the difference between the quick and the very quick was practically nano-seconds.

The rest of the British Team had mixed fortunes, to mention but two:

'Hats Off!' to Keith Plested who quickly realised that although his PB was handling very well he simply couldn't get the necessary power out of his Zenoah engine; he settled down to enjoy the competition and finished 81st.

'Commiserations' to the youngest British competitor, Mike Horne, who had to endure the wrath of the entire team when he incurred a 10 second stop/start penalty for overtaking when the warning lights were flashing and then, if that wasn't bad enough, failing to enter the red penalty box correctly, losing even more time. This error put him out of the competition far too early, for despite obvious nerves he was driving very maturely for a 16 year old, his car was performing well and the combination could have produced a much better result.

OK, so if the British Team were not on the rostrum who was? And what was the secret of their

## The top men

The top three cars were in order; Achim Bald (HARM), Michele Baruzzi (FG) and Marcus Feldmann (SVM). They were in a class of their own with superb driving skills and cars to

And the secret of their success? Easy, all of these manufacturers and drivers had done their homework well in advance. They had prepared engines suited to a hot climate and a big circuit. They had experimented to find tyre combinations that would cope with the punishing pace.

The HARM is a relative newcomer to 1/5 racing. It started life as an upgraded FG and is now a model in its own right. It remains to be seen whether or not the same performance can be obtained from a standard car off the production line. The same could be said for the Baruzzi's Ellergi sponsored FG. Having secured a place in the finals, the car was almost totally rebuilt and to most people's eyes looked brand new! Baruzzi's Ellergi Team weren't taking any risks on component failure - and who could blame them?

Three of the top four cars were sporting 'Horst Single' tuned Solo engines. Horst himself finished fourth. These engines were very impressive and were likened by some to a piece of jewellery. whilst others have expressed doubts on their projected life-span. Life span isn't important at the Euro's as under competition rules two engines are allowed. The success of Horst has triggered renewed efforts by other individual competitors and manufacturers to tune their power trains to a similar high specification.

The majority of the cars chose to use Ellergi tyres; Laro favouring B and C compounds, and FG C and D compounds. The noticeable exception to this was the winning HARM which went out on a very creative mix of Ellergi and PMT tyres! They had found during their build up to the competition that by fusing an 08 PMT (on the outside edge) with a 345 PMT (on the inside edge) to form one single tyre they could improve the handling of the car. The HARM was running on

these 'fusion' tyres on the back and Ellergi C slicks on the front. The front tyres were cut with 50% as many grooves as the usual treaded tyre. This combination allowed the HARM to carry even more speed, turn more effectively and respond more quickly. Very impressive!

made of noise levels and those cars which were excessively loud had to be modified before racing

### The track

No report on these 1998 1:5 Euros at Igualada Spain would be complete without a few comments on the track, race organisation, and place

The track was vast: long, wide, smooth tarmac. Despite its size there was very little need for marshalling. This was just as well as a 200 yard sprint from underneath the rostrum to the far side of the track in over 100°F of heat was guite a challenge for some! The design was such that it was relatively easy to get the car back on the black stuff should it come off. The tarmac was laid about 6 inches higher than the surrounding astra turf with gentle sloping sides at intervals. Damage to the cars was minimal compared to what happens on some British tracks. The supporting facilities were also top-notch. A high rostrum featured an adjacent covered pit area and a large raised viewing area for spectators. Vendors were on site to provide food, drinks and the obligatory ice-lollies!

# **Organisation**

It would be hard to fault the race organisation. Everything ran like clockwork from the timing of races themselves to scrutineering and the posting of the results. This was no mean feat with 134 competitors representing almost every European country, including Croatia. The only minor blip was the timing of that controversial stop/start penalty, but the protest was quickly heard and resolved.

After the drudgery of the British Summer so far who could not enjoy the warmth and sunshine of Spain? Those in hotels fared much better than the ones who chose to camp as the

### **Results summary Overall**

1st Achim Bald (Germany) 2nd Michelle Baruzzi (Italy)

3rd Markus Feldmann (Germany)

4th Horst Single (Germany)

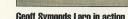
#### **British Placings**

1st Tony Rees (22nd) 2nd Steve Leake (26th)

3rd Ian Oddie (43rd)

4th Geoff Symonds (45th)

On an environmental note there were checks









Philip Lachat and Tony Rees share a joke with Pau

campsite turned out to be an unused clay football pitch, a good 15 minutes stroll away. If Igualada is chosen for the worlds then tracking down a suitable family campsite would not go a

The stories from the 1998 1:5 Euros will no doubt continue for a long while into the future and then pass into folklore. Competitors and supporters alike debate 'what might have been?', alongside 'what actually happened'. Meanwhile the preparation for the 1999 Euros starts now! RRC

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