



# AUTOSIMSPORT

Volume 4 Number 2

*Slidin the Sport into the Sim*



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WE GET INSIDE THE FUTURE  
LOGITECH  
WE TEST THE DRIVING FORCE GT  
PLUS: INSIDE A1GP



CTDP06, ISI's Lo, Colin McRae ...  
All In Our 142 Page Springtacular!

ALISON HINE  
BEHIND THE SCENES AT PAPYRUS

PIT STOP BOSS  
WORLD EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW

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*iRacing is promising to create a sim-racing world that will mirror the real-world of motor-sports—featuring licenses and series, the experience is starting to take shape—along with the simulator that goes beta in less than two weeks ...*



# AUTOSIMSPORT HeadOpEd

## LxMartini



Get This Wallpaper—and other beauts specially designed by GPLegacy—at our website's 'download' section!

### I'm Excited ...

Having just read our exclusive *iRacing* interview, I must confess to a sense of mounting excitement ... not because Kaemmer is about to give me a new simulator after so many years (not being the world's biggest NASCAR fan, it's been since the release of *GPL* since I have anticipated one of his sims)—that much is obvious—but because what *iRacing* are going to do with the sim-racing universe really is—for the lack of a better word—cool.

The idea of 'sanctioned' series and championships in sim-racing is, of course, nothing new—except that, with *iRacing*, what he have is a large company doing it for what they hope will be a large group of people. Which means that what we finally have is a standard by which to judge ourselves—and one another—in cars and tracks that will be, we can absolutely be sure of this, free of any sort of meddling.

Yes indeed, I am excited ... the only question is ...

### Are You In The Right Crowd?

*iRacing*, in this issue, have announced when they will go Beta. Their Beta, it turns out, is virtually an extension of their Alpha (plus)—that is, those testing the Alpha will get to invite those who will test the Beta(!)

So if you don't get an invite soon, you can be sure of two things; either you don't know the right people, or you do, and they hate you.

And no, in case you're wondering, I have *not* received an invite, and yes, in case you're interested, I'm taking it personally—for the love of God, will someone please invite me, am I not worthy of some form of love?

### We Love You

So it's time you showed us some love as well; this month we have started our official 'Donation Overdrive' (because RSC have long-since stolen the concept of a 'Drive!') with some nice incentives for those who give us a piece of their stimulus cash. Yes,

we want to be part of your stimulation programme, so go on ... it's been half-a-century that we've been here!

### Privacy Is Freedom—Rant Alarm On Full Red!

I don't want to say anything terribly insensitive about Rupert Murdoch, on the off-chance that he decides to buy this magazine but ... well, it's got to be said ... if the *News Of The World* is sued into bankruptcy, it will be a great day for the remnants of what we like to call—albeit with a bit of a smile nowadays—civilization.

The *News* (yes, irony) is the world's biggest selling English newspaper (no, that's not irony, more like tragedy), and its focus is to follow people around and pry into their private lives for the titillation of their right-wing owners and readers.

Last month, as we all know, FIA-boss Max Mosley was caught by the rag in a rather interesting sexual escapade that involved (and not necessarily in this order) five ladies, a couple of paddles, a cane, five long hours (not bad for a seventy year old man!), and some cutesy prison uniforms. Naturally the world has been terribly scandalized, with Jackie Stewart (who else) leading the chorus of those who want Mosley (publicly flogged—oh, no wait, that's already happened!) booted out of the FIA. Even Bahrain (you know, the country that is alleged to torture female guest workers) decided to ban Mosley from their shores ...

Now I don't want to labour the point here, but, a man's private life is his own, and for anyone—including Sir Jackie Stewart—to decide that they can be the moral arbiters of sexual (and other) mores in the twenty first century is just downright disturbing. Yes, by all means, get rid of Mosley for not having given Mercedes a lifetime ban from motor-racing, but please ... when a man loses his job because his sexual life—his *private* life—is deemed offensive to strangers is when we have lost any semblance of freedom. It's not our business what Mr. Mosley—or anyone else—does in their private lives so long as it involves consenting adults. The thought police—and the moral police—have no place in our civilization. Our privacy is the cornerstone—and the very foundation—of our freedom.

THEY'RE WATCHING  
FOR DETAILS  
CONTACT GREG HAGLUND  
OR JOHN GREGGARIO

***Gentlemen Start Your Engines!***



***GoGamer***  
**.com**





**VirtualR.net 2.0**  
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AUTOSIMSPORT is proud to unveil our partnership with VirtualR.net, the leading sim-racing news site on the Web.

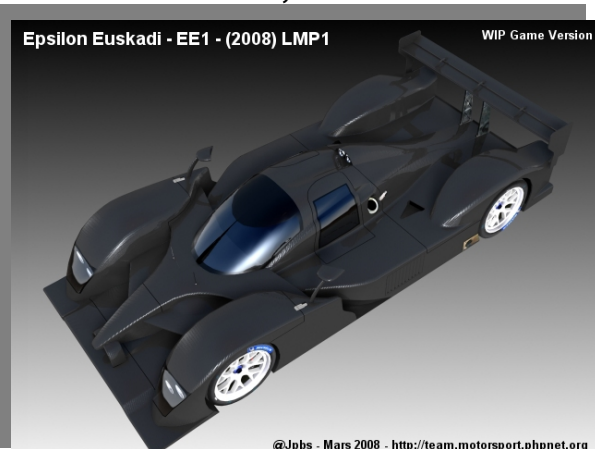
VirtualR.net is *the* place for your sim-racing news, with constant, minute-by-minute updates on all the latest news for all your favourite sims.

And if you're too lazy to check for yourself, but want to be up-to-date with the latest in the sim-racing world, you can simply subscribe to their RSS feed ... All the news you ever wanted, at the click of a mouse ... VirtualR.net ...

#### Prototype Mod by JPBS—Epsilon Euskadi

PBS is still very busy working on the new version of his prototype mod for *GTR2*. After showing off a spectacular batch of new Lolas and the Creation some weeks ago, he recently unveiled another new car.

The Epsilon Euskadi EE1 is a Spanish LMP1 powered by a Judd Engine. The car made its race debut at the 1000km Catalunya last weekend and finished the six hour race despite racing for the very first time. The EE1 is one of four closed-top LMP1s to compete in the Le Mans Series and at Le Mans this year.



#### Le Mas du Clos 2006—Released

Piaoo Thesky Philcout has created Le Mas du Clos, a private French track located near Aubusson. The tricky 3.1 kilometer track is known as the French Brands Hatch, a complex track which is tricky but rewarding to drive. The track has been created from scratch with Bob's Track Builder for *rFactor*, while TheSky has converted it to *GTR2*, *RACE07* and *GTL*.



#### CSGT Holiday Preview Mod 1.1—Released

CSGT has released a new version of their Holiday Preview mod which gives everybody the chance to try four different historic Porsche sports cars. The mod serves as a demo for the upcoming World Sportscar 1970, and shows only a bit of what the full mod will contain.

The new version comes with new physics for all cars, new damage modeling as well as various new fixes and improvements. The new version also has revised car upgrades, allowing manual transmission and H-shifter timings for experienced drivers.



## Nismo Skyline R34 Z Tune 1.0—Released

Sinbin (read carefully, with two Ns!) has released the Nismo Skyline R34 Z-Tune mod for *rFactor*. It contains the Nissan Nismo Skyline R34 Z-Tune Mod AWD/RWD in both road and racing colors. The car is based on ISI's Nissan Skyline, but has been changed to resemble the Nismo model.



## 2007 ALMS Mod—Ferrari 430 Preview

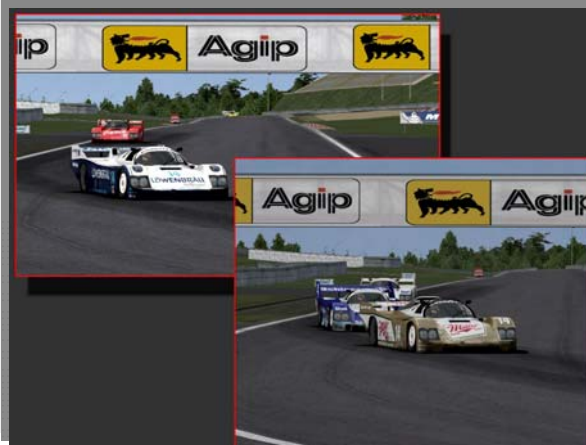
After showing off their excellent Radical SR9 and Dome S102 prototype models, the 2007 ALMS Mod for *GTR2* team has now shown some renders of the Ferrari F430.

The GT2 Ferrari has clinched the class title in 2007; shown are the Risi and Petersen Motorsports cars. More on the Ferrari's biggest challenger, the Porsche 997 GT3-RSR, will follow soon.



## C-Era—Kremer Porsche CK5 Preview

WizardOfOz has posted some new previews of the newest update to C-Era, *GTR2*'s Prototype C racing mod. The new version will include plenty of new Porsches, including the Kremer Porsche CK5, a customized version of the legendary 962.



## FIA GT3 2007 Mod—New Renders

BurnOut modding has been making progress with their FIA GT3 2007 mod for *GTR2*. As promised, the team is working on the Corvette Z06 as one of the missing cars.

But there is more to see as MMT will pitch in their Lamborghini Gallardo GT3, Ferrari F430 GT3, and Dodge Viper GT3 models, originally created for the British GT mod. This makes four brand new car models.



## More On The Nordschleife 2.2a

After the rather rushed release of version 2.2 of the *rFactor* Nordschleife, it was announced that all work would stop on the track for good.

Com8, a member of the original team, has decided to keep on working on a '2.2a' version. The 'a' stands for 'alternative'. He's joined by 6e66o and Team NLC, creators of the VLN 2005 mod.

Below is the first preview of the alternative version which should easily surpass the original 2.2 version in terms of quality.





**HistoriX Released Date**

The historic GT & Touring Car mod is certainly one of the most awaited mods for *rFactor*. Based on Simbin's *GTL*, the HistoriX team has been creating an impressive field of over 100 historic racing cars.

Rantam, the team's leader, has now revealed that the 1.0 version of the mod will be released in Q2 2008. Currently, the team is testing all sorts of things as well as adding low-resolution skins for people with slower PCs. They also hinted at using an all new system for night racing never before used in *rFactor*.

Version 1.0 is only the start of things for HistoriX, though, as later versions—with more scratch-made models—are already in the works.



## Porsche 935—Preview

Usually I don't cover news about Simbin's *GT Legends* but some things justify an exception. Team21 is working on the Porsche 935 for the historic racing simulation, one of the most spectacular Porsches ever raced by the Weissach make.

The car sports the classical Martini livery that has been carried by so many famous Porsches before. And who knows, maybe this news item will have more meaning later on as the BMW 321 E21 for *rFactor* started its life as *GTL* add-on car too. Hopefully the same will happen to the 935 ...



## SimBin's GTR Evolution

Simbin's initial *GTR Evolution* announcement answered a few questions, and left plenty of them open. Will the game have the official FIA license? The shown Corvette C6.R sports a fantasy livery so anything seems possible.

Will the game use the new Lizzard engine? And what tracks besides the Nordschleife will be part of the game?

I can't answer those questions, but there are a few answers at least. Viva Media's Carlo Voelker has confirmed a few details in a recent statement. Viva Media

is the game's North American publisher, making Voelker the man to know.

"Featured will be GT series cars like the Corvette C6R and Aston Martin DBR9; plus Production Car Class racers like the Dodge ViperSRT/10 and the Audi R8."

We've already seen the Corvette, the mentioning of the Aston Martin confirms another new GT1 car. My guess is that the new GT cars will be based on the 2005 FIA GT season—the basis for the (so far) scrapped XBOX GTR game. The production-car class had been hinted in the statement, and this adds a little touch of *Gran Turismo* to *GTR*. After all, powerful road cars should be quite fun on the Nürburgring Nordschleife.

The last bit of info revealed is that the game is supposed to be released in Q3 2008, giving us plenty of time to speculate about the upcoming contents. Without knowing much, it's safe to say that Simbin will try and mix proven stuff with new content. The new GT cars should satisfy old-school *GTR* players while the tuned WTCC and the production cars seem to be an outreach to the *Gran Turismo*/*Forza* crowd.

## Historic Rally Cars For GTR2—Lancia Delta S4

It's been a while since we last heard from scca1981 and his endeavour of converting the Historic Rally Cars from *rFactor* to *GTR2*. He's been making progress though, as another car has made its way into the mod, the legendary Lancia Delta S4.



## BITS & BOBS



### Cyber Racing World Championship

David Blane & [Forzacentral.com](http://forzacentral.com)

Cyber Racing World Championship have been working flat out to bring you all the action of their 2007 season in a fresh, unique format unlike any *Forza* video you've seen before. Each round is a television-style broadcast, complete with commentary, graphics overlays, and some of the best wheel to wheel racing action you're ever going to see!

If you're interested, you can watch all the broadcasts at our official 2007 Cyber Racing World Championship mini site:

Race #1—Sebring Short

<http://www.forzacentraltv.com/races.php?race=1>

Race #2—Mugello

<http://www.forzacentraltv.com/races.php?race=2>

### GPL-World Cup

Runar Bjornstad

A third GPL World Cup is now underway to celebrate the sim's tenth anniversary, and this time it features several continents! 128 drivers plus substitutes are in 32 teams from 21 countries/regions and, already halfway through the first of the four rounds, favourites France, England and Spain have comfortably gone through, while Australia and GPLWC legend Sweden got early scares.

Season lasts the whole year and races are shown on GPLTV. <http://2008gplwc.rscsites.org>



racinglinedevelopments.com

#### CART 1998—Exclusive Preview

Thy guys over at Racing Line Developments have hooked me up with some exclusive preview shots of their upcoming CART Championship 1998 mod for *rFactor*.

The team is still working hard to complete the planned demo to give us a first taste of what to expect. Judging by those screenshots, though, this will definately be one of the prettiest *rFactor* mods out there.





## F1 1979 For GTR2—Beta Demo Released

Just 24 hours after announcing it, RMI has released the beta demo of their upcoming F1 1979 conversion to *GTR2*. The 128MB beta demo features four different cars in various builds. Please keep in mind that this is a beta which does not reflect the final product. If you spot any bugs or errors, leave RMI feedback to help them improve the final version.

Cars included in the demo:

Ferrari: T4 and T3

Renault: RS01 and RS11 (and a RS12 build )

Williams: FW06 and FW07

Alfa Romeo: A179

32H [Click here to get the demo](#)





## F1 2008 For GTR2—Version 1.1 Released

PO911 has released an updated 1.1 version for the Formula One 2008 for GTR2 mod. According to the readme file, the version contains the following changes:

- \* Backfires and motec are working
- \* New Steeringwheels for BMW, Honda, Red Bull, Toro Rosso, Williams, Toyota
- \* Add Kameras on motor
- \* Add Massa's Helmet
- \* Add Drivers arms on wheels
- \* Add Disk brakes
- \* Add Brakes calipers

Please me sure to uninstall the 1.0 version before installing the new version.



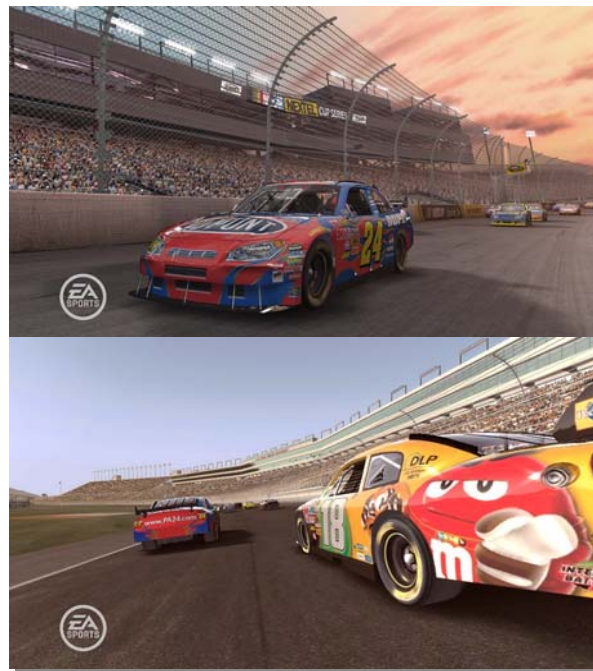
## Capcom Secures MotoGP License Through 2012

Capcom has acquired the exclusive license to release MotoGP games for all major platforms from 2008 through 2012. Capcom's MotoGP games will be released for all major gaming platforms including the XBOX360, the Playstation3, Nintendo Wii, and of course the PC. This is the first time that Dorna Sports, organisers of the MotoGP, have granted an exclusive license for all gaming platforms to a single publisher. The MotoGP championship is the world's premiere bike racing championship, featuring well known drivers such as Valentino Rossi and Casey Stoner, as well as almost all major motorbike manufacturers racing on eighteen different tracks.

## NASCAR 09—Preview

EA Sports has released some more screenshots of their upcoming NASCAR 09 console game. The game simulates the 2008 NASCAR Sprint Cup Season as EA holds the exclusive license for NASCAR video games.

While the graphics for sure look slick, the car's still don't sport any manufacturer decals. When I saw the first screenshots, I thought this was because of the beta status. But now I'm getting a sneaky feeling that this won't change for the final version, which is rather disappointing. The 2008 Sprint Cup season has been all about manufacturers so far as a Dodge surprisingly won the Daytona 500, Toyota scored their first ever Sprint Cup win, and Chevy struggled heavily until posting their first win. All this seem to be lost in NASCAR 09 as it's all spec' cars on the screens—so far anyway!



## Ferrari Challenge—Preview

Hungarian Simworld has posted a batch of new Ferrari Challenge screenshots. The multi-platform Ferrari game will be released for the Nintendo Wii and the Playstation 3, the latter version featuring, no doubt, the better graphics.

With input from GP2 racer Bruno Senna, the game will most probably have okay-physics, but I would not expect a full-blown simulation. The game has the official Ferrari license, and will contain all Ferrari 430 Challenge cars as well as some bonus rides. After getting pushed back several times, the game is expected to be released this summer, probably June or July.



## Gjon Camaj Confirms rFactor2 Development

For several months there has been plenty of discussion about a possible successor to ISI's rFactor. Plenty of feature wish-lists were posted, the possible release date was discussed, and all that without official confirmation that Gjon Carmaj and his crew are even working on it.

This changes now as Gjon has posted the following statement in the RaceSimCentral forums:

"We are working on a successor to rFactor. I have a *dir* called rF2, although I really don't like the name. We are working on a number of different aspects at the same time. It is still very early, so it's impossible to say what will definitely be in or what else we take on. An even more difficult prediction is when it will be made available."

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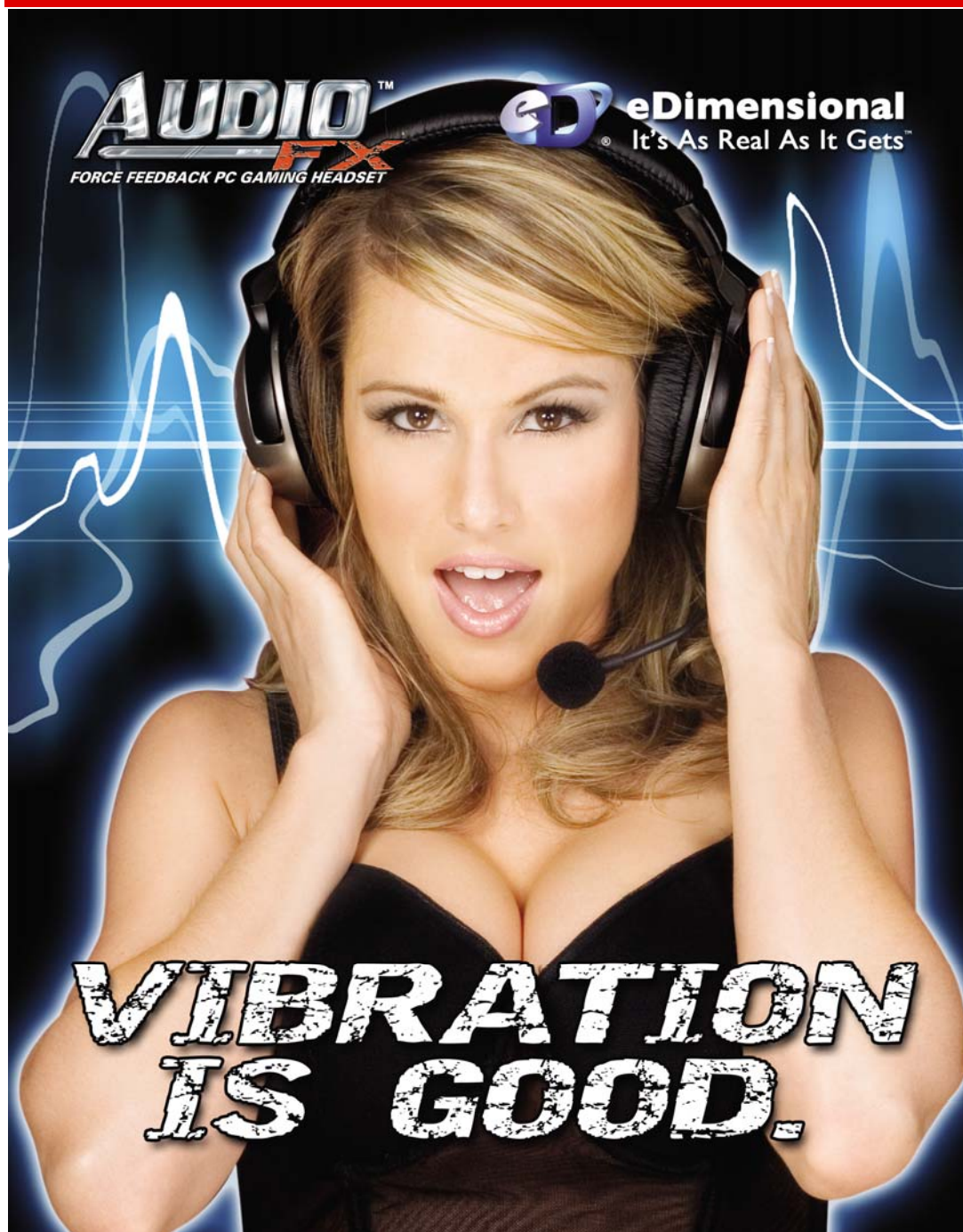
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# FROMADGE!

Slidin the Sport into the Sim



## COMMENT

*Spadge Fromley*

### Greco and Marques Banned For 'Irregularities'

Sim-racing superstar David Greco was disqualified from a recent event for having a cheating team-mate by the name of Bruno Marques. Or, at least, that's one side of this story which, if you're interested, you can read all about over at RaceSimZilla.

Those too lazy to do so, here're the edited highlights (we can't offer you slow-mo yet): The organisers were running a little magic application that randomly pointed a finger at anyone who is doing better than the guys they want to win. When questioned about this, the organisers just made some stuff up to justify it, later denied it, then denied having denied it in the first place, while denying they ever denied any denial—past, present or future. In their defence, they then offered the cheats a chance to prove their innocence, provided they were both prepared to race unspecified cars at an unspecified track, so long as they were both willing to physically turn up to use control-machinery for the appeal, at their own expense, on the moon—wearing adult diapers. Or something.

While the rest of the community is running around in a flap, thinking about raising money for a legal case against the organisers, I thought we here at AUTOSIMSPORT could do our bit to raise some funds for a much more worthwhile cause. What could that be, you ask? We're looking for donations to cover the legal costs, and the pretty hefty bribe involved in getting David Greco to change his name to Rubens Barrichello.

### RaceSimZilla Desperately Seeking IT Specialist

As their last one clearly sucked.

On 15th February, RaceSimZilla's forums disappeared from the internets. Alex Martini was nowhere near wherever the data-centre was on that—or any other—day, yesterday, or in the future. He was not carrying around an empty bucket, either. Or an axe.

There was, however, much guessing going on as everyone tried to imagine what could possibly cause the self-styled world's largest race-sim forum to suddenly fall over, and not be able to get back up.

First, the site was going to be back up in a few hours. Then, it was a couple of days. This turned into some time. Then an advert popped up on the RSZ home page that they were looking for someone who knows one end of a server from the other, who doesn't have a cash requirement and will gladly put themselves up for a jolly good beheading next time everything goes pear-shaped. Or rather, I assumed that's what happened to their last guy. I can't imagine for a second they just didn't have one to start with. Or can I?

Oh, and they're having another donation drive—perhaps, this time, to pay for the services of a new IT Specialist ...

### GTR EVILution From HELL!

Sinbin have released a new game, or mod, or expansion pack for RACE07—I just don't know any more—or rather, they've released a press release that they're going to release whatever it is that they're going to release

sometime this year. Does anyone still play that thing? I mean apart from console-frenzied fratboys?

And does anyone at Simbin know how to write a simple press release that doesn't contain more errors and vague omissions than a memo from the latest trials at Gitmo?

Anyway—erm—yeah, so it will feature a bunch of cars and stuff from some real-world racing series that have "EXTREME!!!!!" in their titles, so the target audience is clear. Oh, and it has some exclusive (extreme?) production cars, too. It also has tracks. Probably. No, wait. Definitely. It says so on the website. Notably, it has the Nordschleife: everyone's favourite track. Because those other seventy-two versions you have on your harddrive are just not enough. Apparently, it's a 'must have sim'. Right. Steaming hot!

### BATRacer Still Rocks

Some of us from AUTOSIMSPORT, and some other people from R.A.C.E.R., are waiting to run in a 2008 season F1 game in BATRacer. We're looking for a bunch of people to join us, as the grid is still quite a way off being full. Anyone interested in playing a fun web game for a few minutes per day should get themselves over to the AUTOSIMSPORT forums and make themselves heard. First come first serve.d. Join us.

*Disclaimer: Oh come on, you didn't take any of this (except the BATracer bit) seriously, did you?*



# AUTOSIMSPORT

## Letter Of The Month

Dear Sirs,

The Wikipedia People's Committee for Publishing Houses, Printing Plants, and Book Trade is delighted to inform you that your independent publication, AUTOSIMSPORT Magazine, has been classified as unfit for registration at this time. Your publication is incompatible with the Wikipedian ideology, and has been deemed subversive to the peoples' glorious Web 2.0 revolution. Your application for registration and the registration of your application have been registered with the Wikipedia Central Registration Committee. This matter is considered closed pending review of the Central Editors Committee which is accepting donations.

Viva The Glorious Revolution—Anon.

Dear Sir,

I would like to make mention of the great work done by AUTOSIMSPORT in the last issue with their coverage of *iRacing's* up and coming service/sim. The world would be a stark place without AUTOSIMSPORT's in-depth coverage of the community, hats off!

Rob Farkenbridge, Gloucester.

Dear Sir,

In response to Francis McKnight's letter in the last issue of AUTOSIMSPORT I would just like to say: "How can you be such a misery?" Sim-racing is in its best state in years, what with *LFS*, *RACE*, *GTR2*, *GT Legends*, *ARCA*, *Carretera Turismo* (?), and the many mods of *rFactor* to be enjoyed. Not to mention *netKar Pro*, *RBR*, *NR2003* and *GPL*—sim-racers are spoilt for choice!

This, if anything, is the problem. There are so few sim-racers out there, and they are all spread so thinly over the many options available that finding a good pick-up race has become an impossibility. As such, unless you have the time to dedicate to a league, you're pretty much relegated to lonely hotlapping or AI. And has anyone even noticed how much AI has become an afterthought in sims?

Yours—Repton Faulkner, Oxford.

# FORCE-FEEDBACK

Dear Friends!

Please inform the obscenely hot girl in the eDimensional advert on page 14 of Volume 4 Issue 1 that I need to see her. Let her know that we could have a perfect life together and it would be so lovely ... Please let her know, I can't stop thinking about her!

Yours lovingly—Spider Nugent, Manchester.

Dear AUTOSIMSPORT Staff,

Who the hell is Spadge Fromley, and where does he get off with his sanctimonious bullshit? Much like the rest of you idiots, he seems to think we should care about his opinion. Do you jerks not realise that we just want to read a staid list of facts and not have to be subjected to the critical opinion of some self important halfwit turd?

Yours neverdownloadingthisagainly—Johnny Acherman, Detroit.

Dear Sir,

I would like to say that the AUTOSIMSHOP is awesome. Where else can I get authentitcally labelled AUTOSIMSPORT merchandise? Now everyone in the world can know that I am a great fan of the world's best sim-racing rag!

I love this magazine, I wish it came out every day.

Magnus Gottmore, Skane.

**LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS AN  
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# Nuts & Bolts

T1

JONDENTON



*AUTOSIMSPORT were invited to dig under the surface to discover the depth of iRacing's subscription-based service—Steve Potter, Head of Communications, and Scott McKee, VP of Marketing, light the path to the future ...*

The best way to look at what *iRacing.com* will deliver (in all likelihood) sometime this year is to break the whole thing down into two equal and concomitant components: The simulator, and the service.

Eight hundred or so fortunate sim-racers are (in the next few weeks) about to discover whether Dave Kaemmer and the ex-Papy crew can still work their magic (assisted by an injection of talent and cash courtesy of John Henry) by taking care of the first component of *iRacing's* strategy (the most advanced simulator ever created for a commercial release).

The second component—the service—is what they hope will help convince sim-racers to commit to extended subscriptions to sim-racing's first MMORS—Massively Multiplayer Online Racing Simulator. Will it work? As ever, it's all in the details ... and AUTOSIMSPORT has them all ...



# T1 Nuts & Bolts

*continued*



Creating a space for private leagues is a high priority for us. We're working on the details, but you can expect that they will run on our servers with our cars and tracks.



# T<sub>1</sub> Nuts & Bolts

*continued*



In terms of individual races, it varies according to the length of the track and the number of pit spaces, but we can support full fields of thirty, forty, fifty, or more cars at a time.



# T<sub>1</sub> Nuts & Bolts

*continued*



There will be four seasons every year, independent of the number of subscribers to the service, and we will conduct both road-racing and oval-track championships at each of the different license levels and with different cars for each level.





When we're ready, we'll ask the testers to serve as a kind of nucleus to our new community, inviting others to join, probably through multiple waves of invitations.



Like everything else in iRacing, we've modeled the form and function of the sanctioning body on its counterparts in the physical world, while adapting some of the aspects of FIRST to the particular requirements of internet racing.



## THE INTERVIEW

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Your mid-March news release describing the *iRacing* service answered a lot of questions that people in the sim-racing community had been asking. But it also raised another batch ...

**iRacing.com:** Yeah, we basically expected that. We knew it would be impossible to answer everyone's questions in a single press release. Our service, the sport of internet racing, and the way in which we hope to grow it, represent a pretty dramatic jump from what people have seen before, and with all that's involved, it takes some explaining. That said, as experienced sim-racers start to understand what we're all about, the reaction is generally very positive.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** You've been in Alpha-testing for a while. When can we expect the Beta-testing to commence?

**iRacing.com:** We expect to begin Beta-testing around the first of May. We've had a little over 300 testers in the Alpha phase, with a mix of experienced sim-racers, and people who race in the physical world. We're adding somewhere around 800 new testers for the Beta, and we've let the existing Alpha testers do the bulk of the recruiting. We figured that they would do the best job of finding the right people, and we think they have.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** There is talk of a 'limited rollout'. What does this mean, and how will it be done—randomly, word of mouth, by the Beta-team ...?

**iRacing.com:** We've said all along that we plan to have a progressive launch. As much as we'd like to just open the doors to everyone on Day One, we don't want to risk the quality of the experience for our customers by growing too quickly.

The plan is to follow a similar procedure to the one we just went through in the recruitment of our Beta testers. When we're ready, we'll ask the testers to serve as a kind of nucleus to our new community, inviting others to join, probably through multiple waves of invitations—kind of like the way Gmail started.

Mixed in with that, we'll also send out some invitations of our own, starting with the people who have registered for updates on our public website.

The idea is to put as much control in the hands of the community as possible. We'll just manage the rate of growth to be certain of the quality of the experience. Once we're satisfied that our infrastructure is reliable and ready for the next step, we'll open up the service to everybody.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** An intriguing aspect to your March news release was the description of FIRST as a sanctioning body for the *iRacing* service. FIRST seems, at an initial glance at least, to be a 'matchmaking' service *ala* TEN or HAWAII (going back a decade and more!)

**iRacing.com:** Oh, it's much, much more than just a matchmaker. Yes, we do match competitors according to their skill level, but that's just one aspect of the sanctioning body.

Like everything else in *iRacing*, we've modeled the form and function of the sanctioning body on its counterparts in the physical world, while adapting some of the aspects of FIRST to the particular requirements of internet racing. FIRST has responsibility for all of the competition aspects of the service, including developing licensing requirements and issuing licenses, writing and enforcing the Sporting Code, organizing various

championships, scheduling and conducting races, recording and publishing race results and championship standings, and so on.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Could you explain how these processes work? That is, how does FIRST grade drivers, and how does it intend to match drivers of equal(ish) skill with one another? You refer to the iRating in the release. In as much detail as possible, could you explain how the iRating works?

**iRacing.com:** The important thing to understand is that the goal of FIRST—really the guiding principle behind *iRacing*—is to make internet racing as close to 'arrive and drive; as possible. The behind-the-scenes process is incredibly complex, but FIRST, enabled by our technology, handles all of that, so our members can focus on building their skills and competing—the reasons many of us go racing in the first place.

If by 'grading' drivers you're referring to license levels, it's actually a driver's safety rating (which factors in both the frequency and seriousness of incidents) that influences his or her advancement through the FIRST Competition License Program. And a driver's license level determines his or her eligibility to compete in a given series.

The iRating, on the other hand, is more of a performance metric. It's used to group competitors of similar skill level for individual races and for season-long championship competition. The iRating is a predictive index; based on past performances, it predicts how a driver will perform in future races. It's similar to the ELO rating in chess or a golfer's handicap. The calculations are complex—beyond the scope of what we can discuss here—but the results are simple: Members get to race with people of similar skill level, and have a fair chance to win every time they pull out of the pits.

An example might help. Let's say that we had a race scheduled for 9PM EDT at Infineon Raceway in Sonoma,

and we have sixty-seven drivers registered. The system will use several factors, including Internet latency, minimum and maximum number of cars permitted on the track, mutual friendships and—most important—iRating, in deciding how to parse the entire entry and assign each entrant to an iteration of the race that will maximize the chances for close competition.

When the race is over, the system compares how each driver did against every other driver in their iteration of the race. For each pairing—and there are quite a few in a race with a large field—the system looks at whether the driver with the higher iRating won or lost, and how much their ratings differed. Based on every possible pairing, the driver's iRating is revised, either up or down, and the system will then use the new iRating to place the driver in an appropriate field for his or her next race.

iRatings are also used early in each twelve-week season to assign drivers to divisions for each series in which they compete. By competing against drivers with similar iRatings for a divisional title, no matter how big the membership gets, everyone has a meaningful shot to do well in a full-season championship—and, of course, we'll crown an overall champion as well as the ten Divisional Champions.

I know this sounds complicated, and, honestly, it is; there are a lot of calculations that go on behind the scenes. But the important things to know are that we take care of the complicated part, and the result, based on our experience in the Alpha, is really good racing.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Could you explain the Sporting Code: That is, how it was written, defined, and so forth?

**iRacing.com:** The Sporting Code was written based on an extensive study of similar documents in other forms of motor-sport. The purpose is to provide all participants with a clear set of rules that can be fairly and consistently applied. And while the format and contents are based on a survey of physical-world racing organizations, our

Sporting Code takes into account the unique needs of a community that race in the virtual world.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** We understand that if s/he wishes, a member can buy all the (available) content on the day they sign up for the service, and that they can test any car on any track. But the March news release notes that, "{...} as in other forms of motorsport, drivers must demonstrate their ability before being given the chance to get on the track with other racers". Could you explain how this process works? In other words, assume that I have now purchased a subscription and am standing at the 'virtual doors' to the service—what will my route be that will see me gain a license for competition? Also, could you confirm for us what cars and tracks will be used in actual competition for rookies on the iRacing service?

**iRacing.com:** We have four-week Rookie Series for both road-racing and ovals. All of our members can take part in one or both of the rookie series for no cost beyond the basic monthly subscription; all cars and tracks are included. For the road-racing ladder, it's the 'iRacing Solstice Challenge', which features identical SCCA Showroom Stock B Pontiac Solstice Z0K Club Sport cars, at Lime Rock Park, and Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca. The oval rookie series is the 'iRacing Legends Cup', with races at South Boston and Lanier, both of which are short ovals.

Once a rookie has achieved a minimum safety rating—which will require some disciplined driving—they can immediately move up to the Advanced Rookie level, which involves faster versions of the rookie cars with some ability to modify the setup. On the oval side, the 'iRacing Advanced Legends Cup' adds Oxford Plains and the quarter-mile oval at Lowe's Motor Speedway. For road racing, the 'iRacing Advanced Solstice Challenge' adds a second configuration at Lime Rock Park and two configurations of Summit Point.

After Advanced Rookie come Class D, Class C, and so on, all of which are full, twelve-week seasons.

## Rookie Series

### Road-Racing Ladder: 'iRacing Solstice Challenge'

Length: Four-week Schedule

Car: SCCA Showroom Stock B Pontiac Solstice Z0K Club Sport Car (factory spec')

Tracks: Lime Rock Park; Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca

### Oval-Racing Ladder: 'iRacing Legends Cup'

Length: Four-week Schedule

Car: Legends Ford '34 Coupe (factory spec')

Tracks: South Boston; Lanier (short ovals)

## Advanced Rookie Series

### Road-Racing Ladder: 'iRacing Advanced Solstice Challenge'

Length: Four-week Schedule

Car: SCCA Showroom Stock B Pontiac Solstice Z0K Club Sport Car (with limited setup options)

Tracks: Lime Rock Park (2 Configurations); Summit Point (2 configurations)

### Oval-Racing Ladder: 'iRacing Advanced Legends Cup'

Length: Four-week Schedule

Car: Legends Ford '34 Coupe (with limited setup options)

Tracks: South Boston; Lanier (short ovals); Oxford Plains; Lowe's Motor Speedway (quarter-mile oval)



## SCCA Showroom Stock B Pontiac Solstice Z0K Club Sport Car

### Drivetrain

Configuration: Front Engine/RWD

Engine: Inline-4

Displacement: 2384 cc

Horsepower: 177BHP @ 6600 rpm

Torque: 166 lb-ft @ 4800 rpm

Max RPM: Unavailable

Transmission: 5-Speed Manual

### Dimensions

Weight: Unavailable

Height: Unavailable

Length: 157.2 in

Width: 71.3 in

Wheelbase: 95.1 in

Track (f/r): f: 60.7/r: 61.5 in

Advancement to each successive level involves a minimum participation requirement, usually four races or four Time Trial sessions, and a minimum safety rating. Graduation to D and higher happens at the end of each twelve-week season. But at each step along the way, if a driver reaches a certain higher safety-rating threshold, s/he has the opportunity to 'race up', running in the next-higher level series prior to actually getting that level of license. For an Advanced Rookie, that would mean running in Class D, which right now includes the 'Skip Barber Race Series', and the 'iRacing Late Model Tour'.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Could you reconcile what seems to be a conflicting situation that was brought up by your press release, as follows: 'The system automatically keeps track of a driver's safety record through every lap of every official session. At the end of a 12-week season, assuming that the driver has achieved a minimum standard for safe driving, he or she will graduate to the next higher level of license, gaining access to additional race series with higher-performing cars, a broader array of tracks and better-skilled competitors' ... and (as the release went on to say), 'Henry {John Henry, iRacing.com's chairman} was quick to point out that for an experienced sim-racer, progression beyond rookie status could happen with as little as a few days of clean driving'?

Does this mean that every sim-racer must complete a twelve-week season in order to be 'graded' (and therefore permitted to attain the next level in the licensing process), or does this mean that, after a single race (for instance), where the sim-racer dominates the competition, he will be free to move up one step?

**iRacing.com:** 'Progression beyond rookie status in a matter of days' refers to a driver moving up to Advanced Rookie as soon as their safety rating and minimum participation requirements are met, and to the ability for Advanced Rookies to 'race up' in Class D if they reach a second, higher safety-rating threshold.

Spending several weeks acclimating to the sim, and building your skills before moving up will, we expect, be the typical scenario. John, on the other hand, was describing a 'best case' scenario for a very experienced sim-racer who is motivated to move up as quickly as possible. Someone who is skillful and achieves a superior safety rating can make the progression to 'Advanced Rookie' status very quickly.

I know it sounds really complicated, and in some ways it is, but the point is that we wanted to provide an avenue of quicker progression for veterans who are able to demonstrate the necessary skill and discipline to drive safely.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** What is the progression of licenses beyond the two rookie categories? From the fact that the next level is 'D', should we assume there are three more—'C' through 'A'—above that?

**iRacing.com:** Yep, that's correct. And each level adds faster, more challenging cars and a broader range of tracks where races are contested. But 'A' won't necessarily be the highest level of license that FIRST will grant. Think about the Superlicenses that the FIA issues for certain series. And that's really all I can say about it at this time.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** You describe 'safety' as paramount in the granting of a license to the sim-racer: How do you define 'safety'? For instance, Gilles Villeneuve, during the practice sessions for his first race in Formula One, spun his McLaren over two dozen times (in order to find the limit) and yet in the race he was faultless—the point being, is 'safety' being able to run with other competitors without punting them off, or is 'safety' the ability to keep all four wheels on the gray stuff for a number of lonely laps (since it seems as if the press release describes a situation where the sim-racer's ability will be assessed while s/he runs laps on his/her own)?

**iRacing.com:** We recognize the need for unstructured testing time, just as it exists in every branch of motorsport, so we don't log incidents in testing. You have the opportunity to push your limits without fear of impacting your safety rating. We do, however, log incidents in practice, qualifying, races, and time trials. Each of these 'official' sessions is given a different weight in the calculation of a driver's safety rating, though, reflecting the need for greater discipline when you're on track with other competitors—the exception being official practice sessions, which currently are given a weight of zero, allowing members the opportunity to get used to running in traffic without risk to their competition license.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** FIRST is a sanctioning body that is 'run by professionals', according to the news release. Could you explain who the faces are in the background who will be 'watching' the racing, and how the whole process works? In other words, is this a remote 'eye' that logs when I put two wheels off the road and deems it unsafe (even in the event that I did so to avoid a collision), or is there an actual person(s) that are involved with the running of the body? If so, who are they, and will their numbers be drawn (eventually) from volunteers from the community?

**iRacing.com:** Actually, the answer is both. As a sanctioning body, FIRST combines human expertise with automated technology to make officiating consistent, fair and scalable, regardless of the size of the membership. Most races will be monitored by the automated system, which records incidents—without assessing fault or blame—for 'light contact with another driver', 'wheels off the racing surface', 'loss of control', 'contact with other objects', and finally, 'heavy contact with another driver'. Each type of incident carries a progressively heavier negative weight in determining a driver's safety rating.

The race control system also monitors infractions such as jumping the start, passing under the yellow, cutting the course, and so forth, and automatically assesses appropriate penalties, such as a stop-and-go in the pits.

In addition to the automated system, the FIRST Sporting Code includes sections on Protests, Penalties and Appeals, establishing processes by which participants can report incidents for investigation and, if necessary, official action. Lastly, FIRST officials will randomly monitor races in person.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** So, should a driver cause a wreck, or some such, is there a penalty situation in-built as well?

**iRacing.com:** The decrease in safety rating is one penalty in itself, automatically applied, and depending on the type of infraction, the automated race control may assess a time penalty or a stop-and-go. But whether prompted by its own monitoring of competition or through competitor-filed protests, FIRST also has the authority to impose further penalties where appropriate.

This part of the Sporting Code is aimed more at blatant, intentional wrecking, habitual reckless driving, or abusive language over voice or text chat than it is for minor racing incidents, so we don't expect this will be very common. We believe that the people who join the *iRacing* community will be pretty serious about their racing, and will be motivated to follow the rules so as not to damage their chances for a race win or season championship.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** On the off chance that someone is unable to gain a license, what would be his recourse—is there a 'driving school' where s/he can learn more?

**iRacing.com:** We will have an internet version of the Skip Barber Racing School, which will mirror the syllabus of their famous three-day course. We think this will be a good way for people who are new to internet racing to get started. We won't have the school when we open, but we will make it available as soon as we can, along



with other formal teaching tools. In the meantime, there are other informal things that friends can do to improve their driving, including lead/follow and 'riding' with other, more experienced drivers, or having them 'ride' along with you. And, of course, our voice chat feature means that there's plenty of opportunity for real-time coaching.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** It seems that finally we are about to have a product that will lean heavily on the accumulation of statistics for the sim-racer. Could you confirm the array of stats that will be collected for each driver, and how this is accessed and stored? In this connection, also, will we be able to have a system where drivers are rated for wins/podiums, and so forth within the FIRST sanctioning system? Will every track/car combination also have a complete 'leader board' in terms of lap records, and so forth?

**iRacing.com:** Every driver's full racing record will be recorded, and s/he will have ready access to it. And we'll keep individual track stats. Basically, we'll have the same type of stats that you'd expect to find in the series media guide for any serious physical-world racing series. But we also expect to add to that data package over time.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** *"[...] the establishment of geographically-based clubs will introduce a team component to the mix. [...] 'We've structured the clubs to provide another element of competition and to help build the community aspect of the iRacing experience,' said Henry. 'By providing members lots of different ways to contribute to their club's success, everyone can get involved, regardless of their skill level or particular area of interest.'"* Could you explain what is meant by 'geographically-based clubs' in as much detail as you can?

**iRacing.com:** At the time that we open to the public, every member of the service will be assigned to one of ten geographic clubs. Completely separate from all of the other forms of competition, we'll have inter-club

championships. For each week of a twelve-week iRacing season, the results from the top half of each division in each series for each license level (except Rookie or Advanced Rookie) will determine that club's 'score' for the week. At the conclusion of each season, the club points will be tallied, and the Champions will be crowned. As the service grows, we'll add (or rather subdivide) the clubs accordingly.

This gives every subscriber an added competitive venue, and a chance to participate in a team sport as well as an individual one. Also, there are ways that club members can contribute beyond just achieving good results in individual races themselves, such as coaching other drivers or helping with setups.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Turning to the technical side of iRacing, which I might say is very ambitious, the March news release states that, *"According to Kaemmer, the iRacing.com service will seamlessly combine all necessary infrastructure—operating its own servers, providing guaranteed bandwidth, integrating voice chat and other important features into the software."*

There is a lot of chatter about this on the forums, as you're no doubt aware. By operating your own servers, it means the user is completely reliant on iRacing (or FIRST) for his racing 'time'. Given the fact that many sim-racers decide on which league to run based strictly on their schedule (Thursday nights, Saturday afternoons, and so forth) and, since there are already so many leagues for other simulators, how will FIRST provide the flexibility necessary to accommodate the differing time-schedules of its clients? In addition, with regards to bandwidth, will guys in Australia, for instance, have access to their own servers? Also, at the onset of the service, where are the initial servers to be located, and how many will be available? Finally, can you give us a glimpse into the future by answering the million-dollar question—how many racers will be able to run simultaneously?

**iRacing.com:** Having our own servers is one of the key factors in being able to achieve our goal of providing reliable service to our subscribers, but there's no sacrifice in opportunities to race. We'll host enough race sessions to satisfy our customers, regardless of their time zone. Our system allows members to race essentially whenever it's convenient for them, and they can race as often as they like in a given race week. If they choose to run more than one race in a particular series in a given week, the points they score in each session are averaged to produce a race week point total, which counts toward the series championship.

Regarding server locations, currently, all of our servers are in the U.S., and we have testers racing in North America, South America, the UK, and Europe without issues. As demand increases, we'll establish additional servers, both in the U.S. and in other locations.

As far as the 'million-dollar question' goes, the iRacing service is fully scalable, so we can support as many members as wish to join—with a bit of ramp-up time. In terms of individual races, it varies according to the length of the track and the number of pit spaces, but we can support full fields of thirty, forty, fifty, or more cars at a time. And with the possibility of multiple iterations of each specific race, we could be supporting thousands of racers at any given time.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Will users on different continents be forced to compete in series run by their local servers—or can a person in the UK run in an Australian series, or a U.S. series, and so forth?

**iRacing.com:** The system automatically assigns a driver to the appropriate iteration of a race based on their iRating and other factors. There is no need to run in a local race or to go looking for regional series.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Once a sim-racer has a basic license, will there be 'open' servers where people who are unable to commit to a full twelve-week schedule can just log on and run some races with equally uncommitted racers?

**iRacing.com:** Some racers will chose to enter only selected races during the season; no one needs to commit to running all of the races. Also, open practice sessions are starting on servers every few minutes, so a small group of racers who want to run informal races among themselves could all sign up for the same session. As part of our investigation into ways to support leagues, we're also discussing 'non-points' races and various other solutions, but those won't be in place at the start.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Will the number of seasons (or championships) offered be determined by the volume of subscribers? How does the scheduling process work? Will the sim-racer be given a 'choice' as to which championships s/he is able to enter according to his or her iRating? Can s/he enter a championship that is already running? Can s/he change from one equally iRated championship to another if one of his or her race buddies are in another season? Will the championships grow as the product grows? Will we see 'road racing' only championships (as well as oval-only ones)?

**iRacing.com:** We will have oval-track and road-racing championships from the start. And while many drivers will choose either a road-racing or oval-track career, they can compete for both oval and road-racing championships simultaneously. At some point, we expect to have some series that combine both oval-track and road-racing, just as is the case in the physical world.

There will be four seasons every year, independent of the number of subscribers to the service, and we will conduct both road-racing and oval-track championships at each of the different license levels and with different cars for each level. Drivers can enter a championship at any point of the season. And because a driver's season championship point total is determined by the best eight of his or her weekly average point totals, a driver could enter as late as the fifth week and still be able to

compete for that championship. (But they better not have a bad week in those eight that remain!)

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** *"In addition to its immediate governance of official competition, Henry also noted that FIRST would help iRacing become a popular platform for private league racing in the future."* An intriguing statement this! Could you explain whether this means that, at some time in the future, leagues (such as we understand them now) will be given 'licenses' to run their own 'service' within the auspices of FIRST? Or how will that work?

**iRacing.com:** Creating a space for private leagues is a high priority for us. We're working on the details, but you can expect that they will run on our servers with our cars and tracks. Whether the rules and stats will be administered by FIRST or the league is an open question. In fact, both scenarios are possible. Would we require all members of the league to be subscribers of iRacing.com? Probably, but the fact is, we haven't gotten that far yet. Either way, we do plan to make space in the iRacing community for private leagues.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** In terms of the official FIRST seasons, can we expect some sort of prizes for the drivers at the end of season, perhaps enabling the winners to fund their virtual careers by allowing them to 'buy' new cars and/or tracks to develop their careers further? That is, if some guy from South Africa (at eight-to-one to the U.S. dollar P {this week anyway!}) wins a championship, would s/he be given credit to buy the next level car in order to move upwards in his career?

**iRacing.com:** We plan to appropriately recognize championship winners, and this will include prizes, some from series sponsors and some directly from iRacing. We expect prizes will include credit to be used for additional content, but the details haven't been finalized.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Will FIRST be actively involved in promoting the sport outside its current niche, and if so, how is that expected to occur?

**iRacing.com:** We already are involved in expanding internet racing beyond its current boundaries. Through our participation at the Performance Racing Industry shows the past three years, and in the Sports Car Club of America with our sponsorships of teams and now the entire national racing series, we expect to attract drivers, crew members, officials and fans into our branch of the sport. And we expect that this same phenomenon will occur across the face of motor-sport, as drivers and others discover that internet racing provides a tool to learn and a place to have fun and build new friendships with other racers.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Finally, will we see some sort of 'jewel' championship in which only the very, very best compete in the most elite of cars, in order to garner interest in the sport of simulated racing?

**iRacing.com:** Yes. Stay tuned...







## MAZDA RACEWAY LAGUNA SECA

The earliest development of the local area occurred in 1867 with the founding of the nearby Laguna Seca Ranch, which has operated continuously for 140 years with grazing and equestrian uses.

The track was built in 1957 at a cost of \$1.5 million raised from local businesses and individuals on part of the US Army's Fort Ord (a maneuver area and field artillery target range) after the nearby Pebble Beach Road Races were abandoned for being too dangerous. In 1974, the property was deeded over to the Monterey County Parks Department and continues to be part of the park system to this day.

The first race, held on November 9, 1957, was won by Pete Lovely (who still races vintage cars to this day) driving a Ferrari. In the intervening years, the track has hosted USRRRC, Can Am, Trans-Am, Formula 5000, IMSA GT, Champ Car, American Le Mans Series, Grand American, Monterey Historic Automobile Races, and AMA (American Motorcyclist Association) and MotoGP motorcycle races. (35H [Source: Wikipedia](#))



## PHOTO CREDITS AND DETAILS

- Page 20, and 21, and 24: Formula Mazdas at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca
- Page 22, and 23: Late Models at Lakeland
- Page 27: "iRacing.com Pontiac Solstice GXP Z0K Club Sport driver Don Knowles leads diverse field of cars to the start of the T2-class race at Heartland Park Topeka. Solstice drivers swept the first two rows on the grid." (34H [See full story here.](#))
- This Page: Laguna Seca ALMS 2007, courtesy Mike Tyler

# WIN!

## AN AUTOSIMSPORT CAP!

### First Correct Answer In Our Mail Cache Wins Big!



**The Question ...**

***Who (According To His Own Autobiography) Is  
The First Man To Ever Spray A Bottle Of Champagne  
Upon Winning A Formula One Grand Prix?***

**Send Your Answer To: [Comp@AutoSimSport.net](mailto:Comp@AutoSimSport.net)**

**(If no correct answers, we will supply hints at our forum)**



# AUTOSIMSHOP

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AUTOSIMSPORT

T3

# Logitech's Driving Force GT Wheel Review

*Bob Simmerman gears up for Gran Turismo 5 along with Logitech's new purpose-built beauty...*

BOBSIMMERMAN





# T3 Logitech's Driving Force GT Wheel Review

*continued*



Logitech's next-gen Driving Force Pro wheel is a refined version of their DFP which enjoyed a cult-like status amongst PS2 racers, and PC sim-racers alike. The Driving Force GT comes with some improvements, but it's the innovations that first catch the eye—back lighting (above), along with a 'hooter' button and an on-the-fly brake balance adjustment knob make this easily the best console-based wheel on the market.

If it's *Gran Turismo* time—the PS3 is about to get its *GT* update—its DFP update time as well. Yes, folks, just like the Driving Force Pro (which went on to enjoy a cult-like status in the PC world as well) was released for *GT4* on the PS2, Logitech are unleashing their DFGT for the PS3 and *GT5*. And we've got our grubby hands all over this one!

The Logitech Driving Force GT wheel comes with some pedigree; not only is Logitech currently living life as the sim-racer's wheel of (affordable) choice with their G25, but they've now partnered up with Polyphony Digital (developers of the PlayStation 3's soon-to-come epic *Gran Turismo 5*) to create what promises to be the console's answer to the G25. And along with that, they've added some rather nifty never-before-seen innovations that make me wonder: Is this the best console wheel on the market?

Normally, I don't do this sort of thing. That is, I usually wait until the night before deadline to 'get 'er done', so to speak another man's line. But I just couldn't help myself—within ten minutes of unboxing the newest console wheel from Logitech, the Driving Force GT, I was piloting Juan Pablo Montoya's McLaren around Bahrain with assured control that would make that Colombian no doubt froth at the mouth (and not a fry in site either!).

Those who read my review of *F1 Championship Edition* for the PS3 will recall that I could barely keep the cars on the track using any other wheel; with the GT, my friends, not only was I keeping everything on the gray stuff, I was having a whale of a time doing so as well. That sim just got better in the time it took to change my brake balance from one turn to another Schumacher-style!

*Gran Turismo HD Demo* was next, and not a moment too soon, as this wheel is dubbed 'The Official Wheel of Gran Turismo'. Indeed, exactly like that sleeper we all love, Logitech's Driving Force Pro wheel, this wheel (the GT) has been designed with the latest *Gran Turismo* in mind, and this is immediately apparent as you power it

up and notice the well done 'GT' logo softly lit in the middle of the wheel. That logo, by the way, also functions as a 'hooter'; and that's just the first of the many innovations that Logitech have included in this wheel.

Every control button and axis is here, too, and the wheel is designed such that it looks like a wheel with controls—as opposed to a controller that looks like a wheel.

Innovation number two—and for the serious sim-racer, a little more important than the gimmicky 'hooter'—is the very prevalent 'red knob' on the wheel. This knob, gents, is a twenty-four position real-time adjustment dial that can be used to control, among other things, the traction control, brake balance, or ABS settings of your car on-the-fly. Brilliant, and why no-one has thought of this before is the first thing you'll be thinking; from here on in, changing the brake balance going into Saint Devote (rearward, please) to the downhill slide into Mirabeau (forward, please) has become as simple as dialing the knob on your wheel, precisely as God (and Formula One) intended.

Did I say brilliant? I should also add immersive as all hell. And functional, too! And useful!

I should also add that it's a darned pretty wheel; a lot of effort has gone into making the appearance of the wheel fit in with the appearance of the PlayStation 3—that is, sexy, sleek, and—yes—a lot of cool black (black is this year's black). But looks are one thing, how does it do on the track?

## Test-Drive

I have already mentioned the great time I had off-the-bat with *F1 Championship Edition*, but that sim lacks any sort of Force-Feedback, so *Gran Turismo*—in my case, the *HD Demo*, sans cockpits—would be the logical choice for a thorough look-see at this latest wheel from Logitech.



**Logitech has found something of a sweet spot at the moment; with their Force-Feedback on song, they're able to add innovations to their wheels with some style—the on-the-fly knob is yet another bang-on-the-money refinement that is sure to please both the hardcore sim-racer and the gaming racer.**

All of the control buttons you might expect are there—that is, for those of you who have never heard of a PS3—every control on the 'controller' is there on the wheel, conveniently located, and attractively placed. This wheel looks as if it would be right at home in a modern day Formula One car.

At this point, I need to pause to add some qualifications: Logitech were kind enough to provide AUTOSIMSPORT with an early version (so early, in fact, that it came to me in a plain white box without any logos) of the wheel, which—as nice as it is to be one of the first to review this baby—means that it came only with a mere two pages of documentation: How to hook it up, and an extremely brief list of features on the press page.

I am sure the consumer version will have the required documentation, along with a 'how to mode change' explanation, if such a thing makes it to the final product, but for now it is enough to keep in mind that the Force-Feedback with this thing is stellar. Whether it supports any 'rumble' forces is beyond me—frankly, I could care less, because I'm planning on sim-racing, not shooting people with the attached hooter (though, come to think of it ...)

Remit of this reviews sorted, let's move on to what the sim-racer needs to know. Shifting takes place using either the sequential shifter attached to the unit, or the ubiquitous Formula One-style recessed paddles on the back of the wheel stalks. Similar in design to the DFP paddle shifters, they have, however, a better, more responsive feel to them, and the 'clickiness' of the DFP has now been entirely removed. The sequential shifter, moreover, is solid in design, and feels quite satisfying when you shove it up and down (as it, erm, should!) The sequential shifter is straight DFP-like fare, and works as advertised without accidental double shifts or 'failure to change gear' events.

Where the wheel really shines, however, is the in the Force-Feedback department. Now, the press release claims that the GT sports a 'new Force-Feedback system, promising ultra-realistic simulation of understeer, oversteer and traction loss'.

Thing is, comparing this to Logitech's brilliant G25, I can't really 'feel' the difference—or, rather, the 'newness'. What I can feel is this: The Force-Feedback is not ham-fisted or overdone, and provides intuitive feedback to what the wheels are doing at the contact patch. For example, when driving *GTHD* and 'goosing' the accelerator, you feel the 'shuddering' of the rear tyres as they struggle for grip through the wheel; once they catch that grip, the ultra smooth Force-Feedback mechanism takes over, and you are rewarded with a creamy smooth ride.



# T3 Logitech's Driving Force GT Wheel Review

*continued*



Compared to the DFP, I found the overall fit, finish, and driving feel to be easily comparable, but with noticeable smoother movement, and less of a 'geary' feel to the wheel rotation. In short—a nice improvement, in both feel, and construction.



The wheel is also compatible with the PS2, and is claimed to work with most PS3 and PS2 games. Other key features include a 900 degree rotation range, full Force-Feedback effects, and an eleven inch molded rubber wheel with an illuminated horn button, and two types of grip—one type offering a smooth finish, the other, near that hand area, of a pebbled-finish nature in order to provide for secure gripping.

If you are into endurance racing, you may need to wipe down the wheel a bit as the finish and material seem to be prone to slippage due to sweat. In addition, while the wheel is the same diameter as the DFP and G25, the thickness feels just a tad less than that of the G25, and noticeably less than the thicker DFP. I know a few sim-racers who will be happy to hear this. It is also unclear, at this time, how to alter the degrees of rotation with the PS3: Again, I defer to no documentation with this early release product, but to be honest, I didn't really care—the damn thing just worked, and if it had 900 or 900,000 degrees setup, it didn't really matter as using it to drive was just fine.

Getting the Driving Force GT up and running on the PS3 was a simple matter of plugging the pedals to the wheel, the power supply to the outlet and wheel, then,

finally, plugging to one of the USB ports. An auto-calibration routine kicks in, and Bob's your uncle (and your reviewer, thanks!)

Obviously, there is no auto-selection in *F1CE* for the wheel (since the wheel hasn't actually hit the stores as I write this), but choosing the EX alternative worked fine. As expected, however, *GTHD* just worked. Of course, you can change the mapping of the controller buttons just as you could in previous *Gran Turismo* games.

No doubt, the physics in my version of *GTHD* are far removed from the ones that will be shipped in a few weeks; nevertheless, using a wheel to control this—the PS3's flagship sim (and game, lest anyone think that sim-racing is a dying genre)—made the sim far more appealing to that hardcore side of my personality. This is nothing you don't already know, but, take my word for it—a terrible wheel is, by far, worse than a good controller in console-land.

That said, it is also safe to say that the latest from Logitech, and the first hardcore wheel for the PS3 (not counting the functional G25, mind you), is going to please more than the gaming crowd. It is great to see this sort of thing once again available for the a Sony console system, and is perhaps not only a way to capitalize on a huge franchise, but a definite effort to attract, and sustain, more than the casual crowd.

I can't wait to give it a try with the final, shipped, next generation *Gran Turismo*. The wheel is everything the cult-favorite DFP was, but with obvious tweaks and tunes for a much smoother control experience. It would have been nice to try it out on the *GT5 Prologue* demo, which has been out for about seventy-five years now, but, alas, it was not to be, so I must reserve final judgment for a follow up piece—the wheel was, after all, built as the official wheel of *Gran Turismo*, in similar fashion as the DFP was built for *Gran Turismo 4*.



Now, I am the type who can't leave well enough alone, so I dared to connect the wheel to one of my beloved PCs. Windows XP took it in stride, automatically installed drivers for the DFP—and why not, the controls are, essentially, identical, and must be for any sort of consistency on the PSx platforms—and off I went to the world of *rFactor* and the fabulous 'Fabcar' mod. I loaded the 360 degrees DFP default, mapped a few axis and buttons, and took off in my GPLegacy Fabcar for a simple drive around the short Monza layout.

The wheel felt great, and the control and feedback were precise, and easily of the quality we have come to expect from a decent steering peripheral, and, in

particular, Logitech. But keep in mind, like the DFP, the Driving Force GT is not 'officially' able to work on the PC (at least, not supported by Logitech). In other words, it worked fine on XP, but it's designed for the PS3, and because the USB goes into your PC is not my recommendation that this is what you should do with the GT. Okay?



If there is one area that the wheel system is 'weak', though—and by weak I mean 'not stellar'—it would be the pedals. Not that there's anything 'wrong' with them, *per se*, but—G25 owners will find that the potentiometer life-extending dust control system is missing from the pedals, as is a third pedal commonly referred to as a clutch.

Having said that, the throw is good, and the brake pedal takes noticeably more effort to push. I didn't experience a single instance of any spiking, so, really, no complaints other than the G25 comparison.

It really is difficult to find fault with the GT, and not just because I like everything! From start to finish, the wheel sports the typical Logitech quality of construction—that is, damn fine—and also features a stunning design and clever button layout that reminds us that this is, in fact, a true-to-life and feature-filled wheel for control ... not a controller pretending to be a wheel.



(Far Left): TV Stand Setup;—since we're in console-land, hooking up to your HDTV—if you don't have a sim-racing rig (why not?)—is crucial! (Left): The wheel is eleven inches, but thinner than the G25. (Above): The white box of pleasure.

The dreaded steering column slop—that plagues the Microsoft Wireless wheel we reviewed on these pages not so long ago—is not within a light year of this wheel that is solid as a rock in all areas. It's tight, fellas. And in a similar price point as Microsoft's wheel (now retailing at US\$99—or, erm, 2€ or so), there simply is no comparison.

It's difficult to believe Logitech have brought this one in at US\$149.99.

No complaints on this side of the mountain, folks, and thanks again to Logitech for keeping in mind that a lot of us full-time race-simmers like a good console drive now and then. And who knows, this might just herald a new DFP-like revolution in the PC world. And that knob ... that knob is great!

Logitech—with its Driving Force GT Wheel—has just blasted into the lead of flagship driving controls for the next generation console systems.



Manufacturer: [LOGITECH](#)

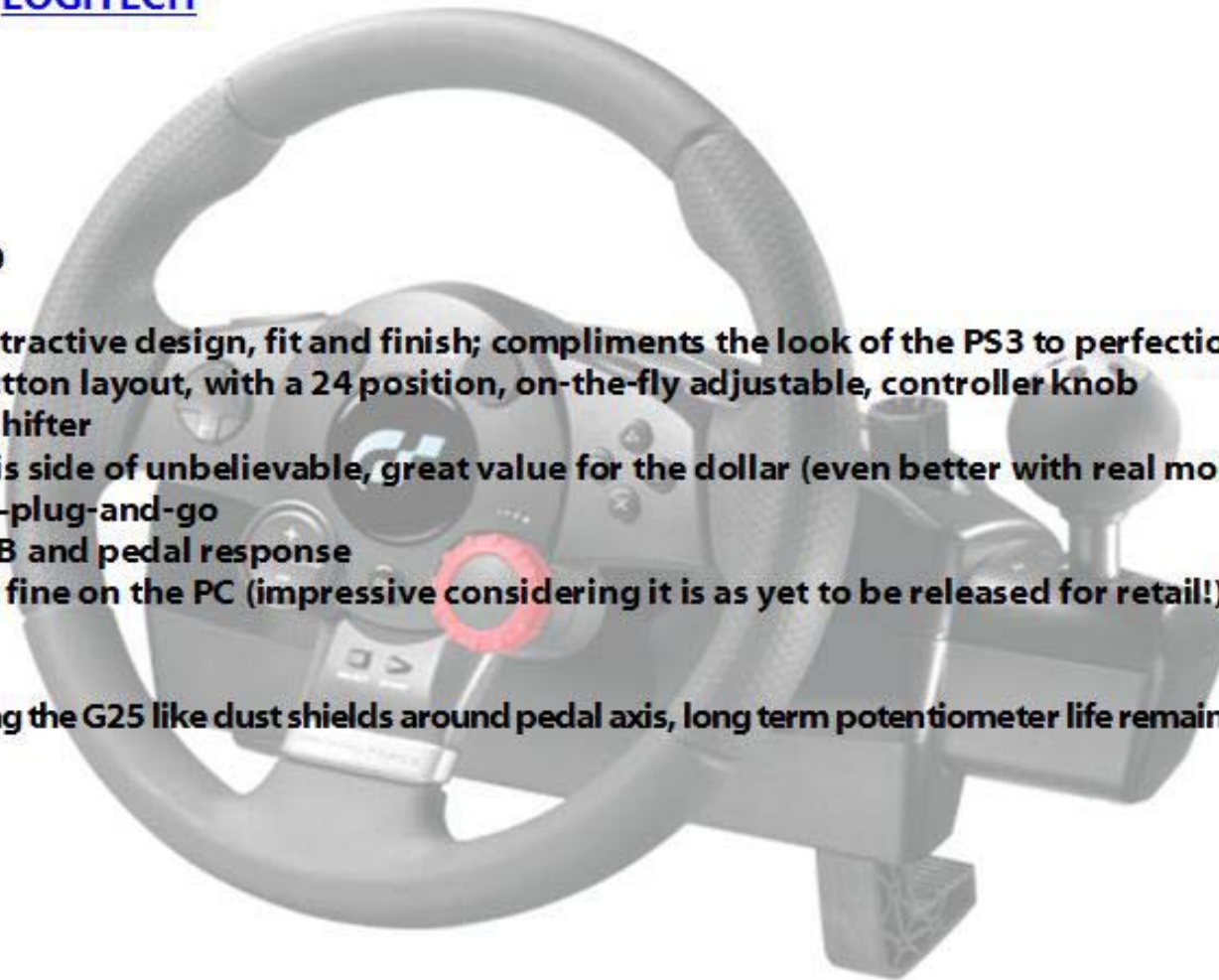
Price: US\$149.00

## Pros

- Sleek and attractive design, fit and finish; compliments the look of the PS3 to perfection
- Excellent button layout, with a 24 position, on-the-fly adjustable, controller knob
- Sequential shifter
- Price just this side of unbelievable, great value for the dollar (even better with real money!)
- Easy setup—plug-and-go
- Excellent FFB and pedal response
- Worked just fine on the PC (impressive considering it is as yet to be released for retail!)

## Cons

- Pedals missing the G25 like dust shields around pedal axis, long term potentiometer life remains to be determined



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# 10 Years of GPL

## Alison Hine

*AUTOSIMSPORT continues its 'Ten Years of GPL' celebrations along with the 'face' of GPL—'Alissonic'—AKA beta-tester (and human being) extraordinaire Alison Hine ... with her grace, kindness, and dedication, Alison defined those early years of GPL, giving the sim a 'presence' and a standard that inspired the early pioneers of simulated-racing ... from her crucial insistence that GPL be released with a netcode to her impeccable public persona, Alison Hine represents all that we now look back on as the Golden Years of sim-racing ...*

ALISONHINE



## Looking Back For Some Gratuitous Nostalgia

*Before Grand Prix Legends was released, Alison Hine—beta tester at Papyrus—was already warming us up with tales of what we could expect from what all of us knew—almost intuitively—was going to be a massive step forward in sim-racing's brief history. Her Eagle Woman website was my first port of call throughout the summer of 1998.*

*Alison was kind enough to allow AUTOSIMSPORT to reproduce one of her best preview articles as a warm-up to our big interview ...*

## Playthings Of The Gods

**July 5, 1998**—I'm hard on the brakes for Tarzan, going down through the gears, tires chirping on the edge of adhesion as they skitter over the bumps in the braking zone. Through the long slow right-hander, I use the throttle to bring the tail around, then get on it hard for the short run to the kink, lifting to settle the car as I flick left, then hard on the brakes again and down to first for the slow right-hander. Up to redline in first and then braking again for Hunze Rug, a slow hairpin to the left, where I use the power to keep the car up on the edge of adhesion, squeezing in more at the exit to carry the car out to the verge.

Now I'm in the roller-coaster back section of Zandvoort, storming through the sandy dunes. Out of the corner of my eye I can see the flags waving in the breeze, crowds standing behind flimsy wire fencing. The possibility of a mistake doesn't bear thinking about...

Up over the hill, going up through the gears, I lift at the crest to keep the rear wheels from spinning under the massive power as the car goes light, then I'm hard on the power again, breathing just enough to make the turn in for the fast left-hand sweeper, then hard right through an off camber sweeper with surprising grip, the momentum carrying me right out to the edge.

Suddenly I'm braking as I crest a little rise, down to second and easing the car in as the track falls away, then on the power, looking for the limit as the car loads up through the banking at Scheivlak and the increasing download as the track rises again. Flick left, up to the redline in third for a moment, then a quick lift for a fast left-right sequence called Earste Hondenvlack that has to be just right if I don't want a mouthful of sand for dinner. Here it's critical to get the car down to the apex for the right-hander, for the grip seems better there, and this time I get it just right.

Now I'm accelerating away toward the Tunnel turn, a fast kink where I must lift and turn in before I can see the apex. A mistake here will end against the butt end of a stone bridge abutment; anything less than perfection will ruin the lap.

Now a fast, hard right, almost flat in third, then a dab of the brakes, a hard left, and then down to second and a smooth turn-in to the right for an apex I can't yet see. Over

the hump at Pulleveld, the car goes light and then settles down, digging in as the track rises. I feed in the power, looking for the moment when the car can take the torque, the car skittering sideways a little over the bumps, tires chirping as they load and unload over each little surface irregularity, the momentum taking me out to the very edge, and then I'm gone, up through the gears past the pits to almost 180 mph.

Later, my crew will signal me the news: 1:29.88, my best lap ever with the new tire formula.

As I back off for a cooling down lap, my heart is racing, my palms are damp, and I have a touch of butterflies in my stomach.

Talk about an adrenaline rush!

Zandvoort does it to me every time.

If you've seen the demo (available at The APEX ), you have some idea of how sophisticated GPL's sensational new physics engine is. But what you haven't experienced yet is how uncannily realistic the cars' behavior is once the setup is right, and how extraordinarily sensitive they are to even very small setup changes.

And what you haven't experienced is how gorgeous, how delightful, how absolutely joyous the handling of these cars can be when they've been tuned by the hand of a master. As Dave Kaemmer has refined the physics model and honed it to perfection, several sim setup wizards on the beta team have begun to turn out setups that make these cars handle so sweet, they'll make your mouth water.

But as terrific as the setup development process is, it's the experience on the track that really counts. And Grand Prix Legends comes through like no other sim ever before. The other night, I raced my brother Nate through the Belgian countryside, both of us driving fantastic 1967 Eagles. Nate and I have been racing each other for years, and somehow we never get enough. That night, sitting in our home offices over 100 miles apart, we battled it out like we had long ago, nose to tail, passing and repassing, fighting for every inch.

But this time, instead of driving dirt track karts, we were flinging 400 hp Eagles through the impossibly quick Masta kink, soaring over the little "yump" in the middle of Malmady, accelerating hard past trees, houses, stone walls, spectators, flicking up little clouds of dust as we touched the dirt at the verges through La Carriere, skittering sideways through the agonizingly slow La Source hairpin, using great long sideways slides to scrub off speed through Stavelot and Burnenville, scrabbling for every particle of adhesion we could find.

It was so real that for a few moments I forgot I was driving a racing simulation.

It was thrilling, satisfying, delightful; gut-level, insanely wonderful. It was one of the best racing experiences of my life.



Make no mistake. Grand Prix cars in 1967, like the Grand Prix cars of today, were incredibly difficult to drive. GPL is realistic in this way too. Do not expect to jump in your Lotus or Brabham and start breaking lap records after a lap or two or twenty.

As a beta tester, I've been driving these cars an average of an hour a day for five months, and I'm still a long way from getting the best out of them. If you're an experienced sim racer, you'll still need to spend a lot of hours before you can take one of these cars to the limit consistently. If you've never driven a good racing sim before, be prepared for many more hours of seat time. The best sim racers all have spent hundreds of hours honing their skills, and you'll need to do the same to match them.

The realism has its reward: the immense satisfaction that comes when you've achieved a degree of mastery that allows you to command a monstrously powerful, electrifying race car with precision and authority.

But the challenge doesn't stop there. With seven chassis and eleven fabulous circuits to learn, this sim will keep the dedicated sim racer busy for a long, long time.

If it were just a great physics engine, wrapped by mediocre graphics and suffering from middling design, GPL would still be a groundbreaking simulation. But in almost every way, GPL is a stunning accomplishment. Gorgeous, stylish menus are beautifully designed to give you ready access to all necessary functions in a most logical and elegant fashion. The replay mechanism is brilliantly conceived and executed, and a joy to use, far surpassing the replay function in any other racing sim to date.

And the graphics. Ohhh, the graphics! In my first preview, I said the graphics did not quite measure up to those of F1RS. Well, since then, Papyrus has made me a liar, bless them. Though weather effects and certain other niceties are not found here, in total effect, GPL's graphics simply bury the competition. Beautiful, deliciously detailed circuits run through picturesque countryside settings, with trees, buildings, fences, walls, spectators, signs and billboards, low-flying clouds, haybales, waving flags, and assorted other objects scattered around. Frame flow on a P-233 with a Rendition 2100 card is silky-smooth, and the colors are gorgeous.

The cars are intricately drawn, with slender suspension bits moving, working up and down as you thunder over the bumpy parts of the circuits, driver's arms sawing away at the wheel, reaching over to flick the gearlever into the next gear. Drop the clutch from a standstill in first and you lay great black streaks of rubber, smoke pouring from the tires. Go off into the dirt and clouds of dust follow you. Roll the car and a shower of sparks trails behind your roll bar as you skate along the asphalt upside down. Abuse the engine too much and it will suddenly explode in a gout of flame, and you'll roll to a stop trailing a plume of black smoke.

The complete visual experience is simply stunning.

It's difficult to overstate the excellence of this wonderful sim. Although there are a few things in terms of gameplay options that I would have done differently, in every other way I believe that GPL is a product almost any racing sim designer would dream of developing. It's innovative, beautiful, superbly executed, and, at the bottom line, delivers a supremely real and compelling experience.

We can't all have a Lotus 49 or a Brabham BT 24 in the garage, but GPL is almost as good as having one - and in some ways better. Sometime this summer, you'll be able to drive your own Grand Prix car as hard as you like, without worrying about where you'll get the parts to fix it when it breaks, or whether you'll survive the next crash.

Better yet, you'll be able to race with your buddies—possibly even if your buddies live hundreds or thousands of miles away.

In 1967, as now, only a very few people of transcendent ability were able to drive the best cars that could be wrought from the technology of the day. While the rest of us could only enjoy them vicariously, immortal talents like Clark, Hulme, Gurney, Bandini and the others experienced intense and marvelous sensations, and the incredible satisfaction of driving these wonderful machines to the extreme limit.

We are indeed a fortunate bunch of mortals, for soon we will have within our grasp the playthings of the gods.



## THE INTERVIEW



**I loved talking with Dave Kaemmer. He's a brilliant mathematician and programmer, but he's also quite charismatic, with a very appealing personality. And he loves racing. We had some great discussions, and I look back on these as priceless.**

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Can you tell us how you landed up getting involved with GPL?

**ALISON HINE:** I'm embarrassed to say that it came out of some rather negative comments I made on my web site about a [Microsoft racing game](#) which led to an uproar on the rec.autos.simulator newsgroup. The controversy earned me a fair amount of notoriety in the sim-racing community.

For some reason, this prompted Mike Lescault, who worked for Papyrus, to contact me and ask if I'd like to try the new sim they were working on. In retrospect, maybe his invitation was a pre-emptive strike!

I ended up going down to Papyrus, which was only about an hour from where I lived, and talking with Mike and GPL's director, Matt Sentell, and also with some of the engineers. Apparently, whatever I said was interesting enough that Papyrus invited me to join the beta team.

The GPL beta team was quite a small group, and I felt very privileged to be part of it.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Many people have you down as the person who pushed Papyrus to focus on their online code—is there any truth to this legend, and, if so, can you recall how the online component of GPL evolved?

**ALISON HINE:** Months before I ever saw it, I'd read that GPL was designed from the ground up for multiplayer.

I'd raced via modem with my brother Nate in *IndyCar2*, and enjoyed it a great deal. The internet had begun to emerge as a major force since *ICR2* was developed. A number of racing games had reasonable internet-based multiplayer functionality by then, so I assumed that 'multiplayer' meant GPL would work via the internet.

I was quite disappointed when I actually got my first beta copy of GPL and found that it didn't work on the internet at all!

I talked to Matt Sentell about this. His response was quite emphatic. "GPL doesn't work on the Internet," he said. "There are too many problems." He made it clear that for GPL, 'multiplayer' meant LAN-only.

I was appalled. And very frustrated. After some digging, I came to the conclusion that Dave Kaemmer wasn't really interested in figuring out how to cope with the difficulties that the internet presented at the time. Most people were on analog modems, which meant severe latency issues, and I think Dave felt that his prodigious talents were better applied to optimizing GPL's revolutionary physics engine.

In retrospect I think he was probably right; had Dave shifted his focus away from GPL's physics, the sim might not have been the stunning advance it turned out to be.

Fortunately, another key engineer on the project, Randy Cassidy, was interested in getting GPL to work over the internet. He and I began a cycle of testing and development that slowly hammered out the worst of the problems GPL had in dealing with the internet.

My brother Nate was also on the beta team. We'd get a new copy of a new beta CD in the mail, install it, and try to race with each other via the internet. I'd identify a problem, think about what might be causing it, and propose a solution to Randy. We'd talk on the phone, exchange emails, and sometimes I'd go down to Papyrus.

Randy would come up with a solution and put it in the next beta. Nate and I would get the new CD, try it out, and the whole cycle would begin again.



**Most sim-racing fans know that Dave raced in Skip Barber races. But what they may not know is that after *GPL* was released and he was working on the new NASCAR sim based on the *GPL* code, Dave set the lap record for the new-generation Skip Barber cars at Lime Rock. This record stood for years.**

We got it to the point where it was playable by the time *GPL* went gold, but it wasn't great. Fortunately, Randy kept on developing the multiplayer code after the release, and the result was a number of patches which further refined *GPL*'s multiplayer capabilities and stamped out more bugs.

To be fair, Dave also got involved with the multiplayer code after the release and made some very important contributions to the patches. I think Randy's progress, and perhaps the *GPL* community's positive response to *GPL*'s internet multiplayer capability, changed Dave's opinion.

By treating the display of remote cars as a spring and damper problem, Dave was able to make refinements to *GPL*'s predictive code which really improved the behavior of remote cars in high latency situations.

Being involved with the process of developing *GPL*'s online multiplayer implementation and seeing the results was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Speaking to Steve Smith, he was telling me that there was a certain amount of friction between the beta testers and Kaemmer in particular over a series of things such as physics, and the way a driver had to start his career in one of the trainers—do you recall this, and do you have any anecdotes on that time?

**ALISON HINE:** Well, first of all, remember that *GPL* was pushed out the door by the publisher long before anyone at Papyrus felt it was ready. There was supposed to be an entire ladder system, with different graphics for the trainers and the ability to race with AI also driving

trainers, championships in the trainers, and so forth. This was to help people develop their skills before they moved up to the very challenging F1 cars.

All that went out the window when the release was forced by the publisher. I'm sure they had good reasons (presumably financial) but it did hurt the end product.

My recollection was that the biggest bone of contention was the question of a slider to adjust the speed of the AI. Dave is a purist, and he felt that as a groundbreaking simulation of unprecedented realism, *GPL* should not incorporate such a game-like element. If I recall correctly, *GPL* did have a rather crude form of adaptive AI, and he thought that was enough.

I don't know of anyone else within Papyrus or on the beta team who shared this view, although there must have been some. But the prevailing opinion was that users should be able to adjust the speed of the AI drivers to give themselves a manageable challenge. This seemed especially important because driving the F1 cars was so difficult—and because the ladder system had not been implemented.

Ultimately, though, Dave made the decision to omit the AI slider, and I think this may have caused some hard feelings, especially among those who felt that Matt Sentell, as lead designer, should have final say.

Sadly, subsequent events proved that *GPL*'s design as released was too challenging for many people, and sales were far below expectations.

Who's to say, though, who was right? If the ladder system had been implemented as designed, perhaps the absence of an AI slider would have been far less significant.

I'd still have liked to see it in there, though!

As a side-note: Steve Smith—when I asked him—pointed out that, “There was a work-around to *GPL*'s adaptive-AI problem. You could edit a text file at each track to make the AI there faster or slower. And, unlike a slider, which would have had to be adjusted for each track, this solution was ‘sticky’. However, it was for geeks only. The general public wouldn't have had the patience, much less the knowledge.”

Information about how to do this was (and still is) on my web site, [here](#): Sections 7.4 through 7.6 discuss in detail the management of the adaptive AI system. However, as Steve points out, not enough people found this soon enough—especially reviewers who wrote for game magazines and web sites!

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Do you have any special memories of your time beta-testing *GPL*? What were your thoughts then about what you were involved in, and how far do you think sim-racing has developed in the intervening decade?

**ALISON HINE:** I loved going down to Papyrus and racing with the developers in their weekly LAN races. This was really exciting; both from the point of view of racing with a large group of people in a racing sim—something very few people had ever done at the time—and also from interacting with the developers and talking about the current state of the sim. It was an absolutely fantastic experience.

I loved talking with Dave Kaemmer. He's a brilliant mathematician and programmer, but he's also quite charismatic, with a very appealing personality. And he loves racing. We had some great discussions, and I look back on these as priceless.

**I recently reinstalled GPL after three years away from it. I was struck by how simple and very elegant its user interface is. Compared to the newer sims, there isn't as much there, but everything that is there is essential. And nearly everything that is essential is there. Nobody has yet matched this combination of elegance and power in a racing sim user interface.**

Other people who made a big impression on me include the ferociously dedicated Randy Cassidy, who essentially taught himself networking while developing *GPL*'s multiplayer code, and Grant Reeve, who produced *GPL*'s D3D and OpenGL drivers in his spare time, enabling people to continue racing *GPL* to this day.

Grant was very fast in *GPL*, as was Dave; they'd drive the Honda to handicap themselves in the weekly LAN races, to give the rest of us a chance.

Most sim-racing fans know that Dave raced in Skip Barber races. But what they may not know is that after *GPL* was released, and he was working on the new NASCAR sim based on the *GPL* code, Dave set the lap record for the new-generation Skip Barber cars at Lime Rock. This record stood for years.

This was in a series, remember, that is full of young professional race driver aspirants and which has produced stars such as Danny Sullivan, Michael and Marco Andretti, Helio Castro-Neves, Kenny Brack, Tony Kanaan, and Alex Gurney. Dave said he was able to be so quick in the Skippy car because his skills improved through all the testing he was doing on the new NASCAR sim.

Grant came over from New Zealand to work on *GPL*. He had a rather fearsome turbocharged MR2 that he had modified for autocrossing, and of which he was very proud. He's still autocrossing, now driving a Corvette, and he's rarely beaten.

I also talked with other engineers, a number of the testers, and several of the artists who built the tracks and cars. Names which stand out, in addition to those

I've already mentioned, include Rich Yasi, Shawn Nash, Scott Sutsman, Scott Sanford, Shawn Wise, Eric Busch, and of course Matt Sentell. I don't know who built the Nürburgring—which was created from real-world blueprints sent to Papyrus by the track's administration—but whoever it was should be given an award for their monumental dedication.

During my visits and discussions with the team, I got a sense of the level of commitment among the people working on *GPL*, and the grueling hours they put in. There was so much dedication there.

Being involved, even in a peripheral way, was a wonderful experience, and I enjoyed every minute of it.

How far has-sim racing developed in the last decade? Since the demise of Papyrus, I've focused on ISI-based sims, so I can't really comment on others like *Live For Speed* and *NetKar*.

I think there are many things that have improved. *rFactor* and *GTR2* are very, very good sims. Their physics models are more comprehensive and, in many ways, more sophisticated than *GPL*'s, and you have a lot more setup options. Both model aerodynamic downforce and drag from the underbody and from wings; *GPL* only modeled drag—although some brilliant modders have added downforce. But both ISI sims are much easier for modders to work with, especially *rFactor*.

The graphics engines in *rFactor* and *GTR2* are superior to *GPL*'s; they are capable of more realistic shadows, lighting, and other effects, and support more sophisticated car and track models. But

modders have kept *GPL* in the game; car and track add-ons you can download for this ten-year-old sim are astonishing.

The multiplayer code in *rFactor* and *GTR2* is better than *GPL*'s in some ways, but not as good in others. Both sims do a good job of dealing with latency—probably better than *GPL* did—but there are other issues. If someone disconnects, it takes forever to discover that. And you can't reconnect, unlike in the *GPL* derivative, *NASCAR 2003*.

Unlike in *GPL*, you can exchange setups while connected to a server in the newer sims, which is great. But neither *rFactor*'s nor *GTR2*'s exchange mechanism is ideal. And you can't exchange custom skins or even helmets in-game.

The newer sims' multiplayer user interfaces seem to be more cumbersome, more awkward to use. The options which control the way the server will run the race and the choices the clients will have when they join are scattered over several different menu pages which I have to remember to hunt for every time I host. And often the selections I enter are not retained the next time I run the game.

Minor points, but annoying because a mistake means restarting the server and making everyone rejoin.

Embedded server lists are great, but they need to work better. All too often when I try to host some friends, my own sever doesn't appear on my friends' server list until they refresh (in *rFactor*) or exit and re-enter multiplayer (in *GTR2*) many times.



**When I discussed the low-rider setups with Dave, he said that he'd realized—too late—that the load sensitivity of *GPL*'s tyres was not high enough. When the suspension bottomed and sent the vertical loads on the tyres sky-high, their grip didn't fall off nearly as much as a real tyre's would.**

Even when they *can* see me, they often struggle to connect. *GTR2* in particular doesn't deal well when someone tries to join with a skin—just a skin, mind you—that isn't on the server. This is exasperating and, in my opinion, completely unnecessary.

And the code implemented to try to prevent cheating by checking the clients' files against the server's isn't quite there yet. You can get blown out of a server and have no idea why. Different mod version? Different track version? You're using a car skin the server hasn't got? You committed the crime of correcting a spelling error in the track's information files? Not a clue; you're just out.

There needs to be much more granularity and precision in terms of inconsistencies the server will and won't allow, and better information for the rejected user about why they're being rejected. Where possible, the server should simply over-ride differing information on the client rather than blocking the join.

Also, the in-game server lists should show the version of the track and mod being hosted, not just the version on the client's machine. Even better would be a popup that warns you about potential version conflicts or other problems before you try to join.

Because of all these issues, my attempts at getting together to race online with a few friends often results in an hour or more of hassle trying to connect before we can even start racing.

My feeling is that since modding is such a major asset for these sims, the implementation should be able to deal well with contingencies which arise when all

would-be participants in a race aren't on exactly the same page.

To make online racing more appealing, the developers should make sure that hosting or joining a race is a simple, one-click process that works every time—and if it doesn't, the reasons and suggestions for a fix should be made very clear to both the host and the client.

I also miss functionality that I consider basic. Who's in what race? What are the practice and qualifying times and positions? Who's leading, and how many laps are left? Where is so-and-so right now? Why can't I send them an instant message or open a private chat with them?

I'd like to see more sophisticated community support capabilities, both in the lobby and at the track. *GPL* didn't have IRC chat built in, but it had a feature which allowed external applications like VROC and IGOR to integrate well with it, and incorporate such functionality in a fairly seamless way.

To help support the development of a sense of community, there needs to be more of this kind of thing, not less.

I recently reinstalled *GPL* after three years away from it. I was struck by how simple and very elegant its user interface is. Compared to the newer sims, there isn't as much there, but everything that is there is essential. And nearly everything that is essential is there. Nobody has yet matched this combination of elegance and power in a racing sim user interface.

Part of the problem is that everybody seems to think they have to create a game-style user interface

for a racing sim. Yet add-on Windows-style interfaces outside the sim have proven to be markedly superior to the best game-style interfaces. *GEM+* is a good example.

Why do sim developers hassle us with a snarky-looking but dysfunctional game interface? The omission from *GTR2* and *rFactor* of such an elemental feature as the use of the left arrow key or the mouse cursor to permit editing within a text entry field is one of many irritating examples.

I've long believed that a serious racing sim should have a Windows-style UI and only go into graphics mode when you actually get into the car. I stated this to Dave Kaemmer rather emphatically during our discussions after *GPL* was released. We'll see if *iRacing*'s new sim has this design. I hope so!

Replay management is another realm in which the ISI-based sims fall short. Yes, the replays are pretty good quality, and the files are much smaller than *GPL*'s, but you have to decide before you get to the track whether you want the replay to be saved, and you can't name it until you leave.

Worse, while you're at the track, navigating the replay is quite awkward compared to doing this in *GPL*. A simple slider like *GPL*'s which allows the user to scroll to any part of the replay would be a vast improvement over holding down a key combination to endlessly rewind.

Even better, I'd like to just click on a lap in the timing sheets and have the replay zip to the beginning of that lap.

**The fragmentation of the online racing community is something which saddens me very much. I loved being able to go to VROC and find a bunch of people racing, almost any time of the day or night. You could always find people who wanted to race and a server to race on, or you could just sit and chat for a while.**

Timing and scoring is yet another area in which the newer sims have retrogressed from *GPL*. Yes, we now have in-car sector times, which is great, but we can't review any times from previous sessions. When *GTR2* and *rFactor* advance to a new session, all the timing and scoring information from the previous session is lost. *GPL* kept all this information, and let you leaf through timing and scoring sheets as long as you were at the track, and even let you save the results if you wished.

Likewise, whenever someone disconnects from a server, all their data vanishes, so at the end of the race if half the field has DNF'd, it looks like you've been racing with yourself. Not so in *GPL*.

And we can't review other information from earlier sessions while we're at the track, either, not even our personal lap records.

This is basic stuff, relatively simple to implement, yet somehow it's been overlooked in these newer sims.

One final beef: *rFactor* and *GTR2* give sector times, but they don't incorporate the most useful driver development feature available from modern real-world data acquisition equipment. This is something variously called performance monitoring or real time splits or something similar. (Note that this is not the 'real time splits' implemented in *rFactor*, which is merely the gap to the car ahead during a race.)

Performance monitoring shows you, in real-time, the difference between your current lap and your previous best lap. If you're a tenth ahead of your previous best as

you exit Turn 1, it'll show something like '-0.1'. If you mess up Turn 2, it'll change in real time to '+0.2', which tells you that you lost three tenths in the previous corner.

I've used this in real-life race cars, and it was the single most useful learning tool I have ever used.

Implementation in a sim would be trivial; why isn't it there?

Despite these gripes, as I've said, I feel that the ISI-based sims are very good sims. A lot of very hard work went into them, and we are very fortunate to have them available.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Looking back at it, your '[Eagle Woman's](#)' site was probably the most important after-sales part of *GPL* (I recall also you running the beta team that was assembled after the release of *GPL* to cure the impossibly low setups people were running); you spent a lot of time on that site—in fact, looking at it now, I think it still remains the most amazing site relating to sim-racing ever created (there's even an interview with Juan Pablo Montoya in his Champ Car days!)—did you predict there would be so much passion for *GPL* by others as you demonstrated with your site?

**ALISON HINE:** Thanks for your compliments about my site!

I couldn't have predicted how *GPL* would be received. I hoped that people would be as enthusiastic about it as I was.

I built my site to share the knowledge I'd gained during the beta period. I hoped that the information there would help people enjoy *GPL* to the fullest, and that this would help them develop a passion like mine.

I did push for Papyrus to raise the minimum ride height, because people were taking advantage of a weakness in the physics model.

When I discussed the low-rider setups with Dave, he said that he'd realized—too late—that the load sensitivity of *GPL*'s tyres was not high enough. When the suspension bottomed and sent the vertical loads on the tyres sky-high, their grip didn't fall off nearly as much as a real tyre's would.

Because of this, cars set up really low weren't being punished by loss of grip in the way real cars would be if set up that way.

Also, because there hadn't been time to complete the cars' damage model, the suspension of *GPL*'s cars didn't break from the overloads the way a real car's would.

Anyway, Dave agreed that a solution was needed. There wasn't time to rework *GPL*'s tyre model—this was after it had been released, and development was now focused on the new NASCAR sim—so the simple expedient of raising the minimum ride height was introduced.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Do the beta testers still remain in touch? Do you speak to any of them?

**ALISON HINE:** Steve Smith and I are good friends; we email daily, and we race online together with my nephew, Amos Hine, who is a champion shifter Kart racer.

I also have contact with some of the other beta testers from time to time. Randy Magruder came to visit me a few years ago.



**Occasionally I come across GPL fans in the real-world car community who remember me and my web site, which is gratifying. One fellow even let me drive his race car!**

Occasionally I come across *GPL* fans in the real-world car community who remember me and my web site, which is gratifying. One fellow even let me drive his race car!

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** What were your first impressions when you first tested *GPL*?

**ALISON HINE:** I was thrilled with the cars, the physics, the tracks. The tracks that were implemented, anyway. Monaco was a jumble of blocks with no textures, many of them missing sides; much of the track surface was transparent. The Nürburgring was just a ribbon in the sky, and you could fall off of it!

But the nearly completed tracks were great, and the cars' physics were so far beyond those of anything else I'd tried that it defied belief. I wrote about my excitement on my web site, [here](#), and [here](#).

By contrast, as I mentioned above, once I got home and tried to race with my brother Nate I was terribly disappointed by the multiplayer code.

But things improved. I can still remember Nate and I racing together at Spa for the first time. The experience was breathtaking.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** *VROC*, I think, was a perfect accompaniment to *GPL* in that it helped create a sense of community—indeed, I recall the early days when sightings of Alisonnic ('she's at the Glen on such-and-such

a server') were legend on the old *VROC*—do you think a similar sense of community will ever be seen again in sim-racing (many friendships were made in those days!), or was *GPL*, and *VROC*, and that whole crowd just a one-off moment of magic never to be replicated? And if so, for what reasons? Smallness of the community? Or...

**ALISON HINE:** Wow! I didn't know that sighting stuff was happening. I'm flattered!

The fragmentation of the online racing community is something which saddens me very much. I loved being able to go to *VROC* and find a bunch of people racing, almost any time of the day or night. You could always find people who wanted to race and a server to race on, or you could just sit and chat for a while.

You can still do that, but the *GPL* community has shrunk, and I don't feel quite the same camaraderie in either *rFactor* or *GTR2*.

Another thing that saddens me is the infighting over intellectual property rights. People release tracks and mods into the public domain; someone else ports it to another sim or bases another mod or track on it without getting permission or without crediting the original author.

The original author—who often based their work on someone else's—gets upset; flame wars begin. In all the uproar the original purpose—to contribute to the community—gets obscured.

I'm not taking anybody's side; I'm not saying any one person is right or wrong. I'm just unhappy to see this happening. I don't recall anything like this in the early days after *GPL*. Something has changed, and not for the better.

The RaceSimCentral forums seem to have supplanted rec.autos.simulators as the place to go for information about racing sims. This is probably a good thing, because all the posts are archived on the server, so you don't have to keep them on your own computer.

This and the various sim-specific sites, like *rFactor* Central, NoGrip, *GTR4u*, the *GPL* Preservation Society and many others, are fantastic resources.

However, it is a small community, and now there are several very good sims. When *GPL* came out, there was only one. Inevitably we all gravitated to it, so the community was close-knit.

Just as inevitably, now that there are several good sims, the community has become fragmented. Unless another ground-breaking sim comes along and draws everyone to it, it's hard to see the community becoming as close again as it was in the early days of *GPL*.

It's true that a lot of friends were made in those days. There was so much passion! We felt—we knew—that we were part of something very special.



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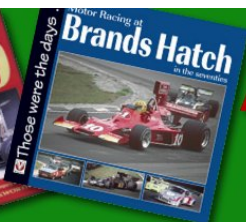
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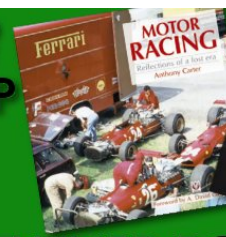
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AUTOSIMSPORT

# Virtual Roadster

## Hipster On The Road(ster)

*Lou Magyar takes a ride in the Virtual Roadster Cockpit, and finds himself unable to give it up: In the big-boys' world of sim-racing rigs, Ted Heys's brilliant design, combined with solid construction, makes the Roadster a serious force to be reckoned with ...*

THE  
VIRTUAL  
ROADSTER  
RACING SIMULATOR COCKPIT

LOUMAGYAR





Ted Heys, from [Virtual Roadster](#), in all innocence (and with good intentions too!), sent me one of his recently constructed cockpits to take for a test spin ... and I have yet to leave the seat. In fact, I've now given up my (beloved) folding chair and taken over the family room with the Virtual Roadster cockpit—much to my wife's dismay. The Virtual Roadster—or simply the Roadster, as Ted calls it—is top-notch, and I'm about to tell you why I love this cockpit.

With literally dozens of commercial competitors out there (not to mention the DIY ones), the sim-racing cockpit market is a dog-eat-dog world. More so as prices keep lowering, and sim-racers—one and all—begin to see the advantages of having a purpose-built cockpit for their racing needs.



Each manufacturer in this market tries to innovate what they feel are the most important qualities of 'racing rigs' at prices that they know must remain affordable. In the Roadster, the innovations are plenty—and well-appreciated—and the price is certainly accessible.

Ted has made his cockpit from high-quality forty-five millimeter diameter steel tubing, and six millimeter thick aluminum plates. The wheel and pedal decks can be adjusted to suit your preferred driving position with turnbuckles that make adjustments simple. The seat itself is a high-quality racing seat that is both comfortable and entirely adjustable. The entire cockpit, indeed, is solidly constructed, and even my 300 pound frame fits in it nice and snug. The Roadster's simple elegance speaks volumes as to the thoughtfulness and thoroughness of

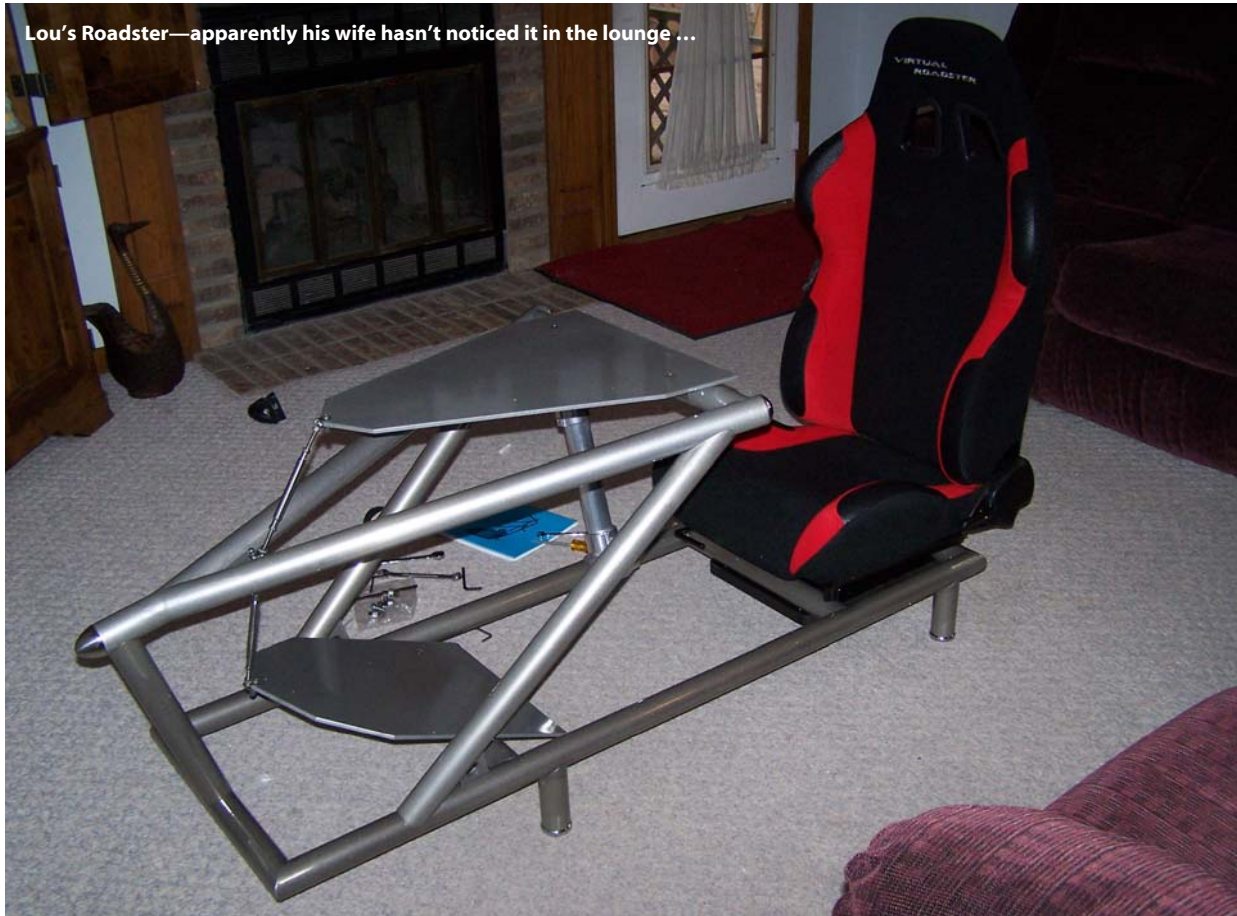
its design (those interested in Ted's build-philosophy can take a look at the preview of this unit in a Vol3 Issue 6).

## **The Arrival**

The Roadster arrived in two large boxes. One contained the racing seat, and the other had all of the tubing. I opened up the box only to discover that the savage DHL drivers must have tossed about the Roadster box just to see what damage they could inflict on my poor baby. The foam packaging material was pretty much destroyed. I was pleased to discover, however, that no damage was done to any of the components. Not a nick or scratch was to be found ... so although the packaging was unusable, it did its job and protected the contents of the box under extreme duress. (As you know, I'm a box-engineering geek, and to see a packaging do its work is always a thrill—that's why packaging is an art.) Cleaning up the small bits of foam, however, was tantamount to herding cats, but I got it done eventually; Ted and I have discussed the packaging, and he is looking at alternatives. His goal is to have the material survive the trip—and later trips as well—so that Roadster owners can ship their rig if the need arises. Who wouldn't want the ability to ship their race rig to a LAN party?

My second task (after cleaning up all the static-filled bits of packing foam clinging to the components) was to take a peek at the manual. Funny that I should say it was my second task ... First was to open the box and take out all the components, second was to inspect them for damage, third was to clean up ... anyway... what I chose to do *next* was to read the manual. The Roadster comes with a nicely bound black and white guide that gives the user general assembly instructions as well as some pointers for adding hardware and sundries; it seems, despite this, full of useful information. After reading through the assembly instructions and familiarizing myself with the components, I got busy.





## The Building

Assembly is fairly simple, as the rig is basically five pieces—not including the seat and its rails. Thread the non-slip feet into the bottom of the welded steel frame and you are off and running! The manual suggests working on a table or similar elevated surface, but I didn't find it difficult to assemble on the floor. With the feet on, and the base upright, the

next step was to attach the vertical tubes. There are two side-fender tubes, and a bow tube. All three of them have only one specific direction they can be mounted: Determining which fender-tube goes where, or how the bow tube should be applied, is not difficult, as the differences are obvious, and Ted has included an indicator on the bow tube in the form of a dot.

The tubes mount to the top side of the base tube-frame with bolts that fasten inside the base frame-tube. Align the side tube with the bolt that protrudes through the base-frame, give it a few twists to get started, then loosely attach it (for now). The other two tubes are attached the same way ... just get them mostly tight so that you can get the hood sub-assembly in place without fighting parts that are misaligned due to incorrect tightening.

The manual details the steps to do this quite well. After the three tubes are mounted to the base, the hood sub-assembly—the top of the cockpit—mounts to the top of the tubes. This part may be better accomplished with an assistant, as holding the solid hood sub-assembly in a position where you can start the bolts is nearly impossible to do without extra hands. And while I did manage to get the task done, I think that perhaps mounting the tubes to the hood sub-assembly first, and *then* to the base, might be easier. Yes, the components would be a bit heavier and more bulky to move, but I think you could set the unit on the floor over the base, or use a piece of cardboard to help hold it in place. When I was trying to get the hood sub-assembly lined up, at one point I dropped it (it fell off the top of the not-so-tight tubes) and I was concerned that I may have damaged the shiny finish on the frame. The paint, however, proved to be quite durable and resistant to slight bashings, as was already proven from the shipping damage mentioned before.

With the hood sub-assembly loosely attached to the posts, the next step was tightening the bolts all the way. One last snugging-down to get everything in the proper place, a final tightening, and it's all done. The manual provides a specific tightening order—'like wheel lugs on a car'—for the bolts. The included hex wrench does the job nicely. With the six bolts tightened, the last thing needed—before mounting the seat—was to insert the caps. The hood sub-assembly tubes are capped with solid polished stainless steel cones to finish the look, and

when the cones are inserted, not a single bolt is visible in the frame. Very nice indeed. Even the screws that attach the aluminum deck to the hinges are counter-bored. The whole package is sleek and elegant. Your wife won't mock you to get the 'toy' out of the family room, because this is one attractive piece of hardware when it's fully assembled. (At least, that's what I like to think!)

With the tubes assembled, the next thing to do was attach the seat. The racing seat provided is sharp looking. It is covered with black and red felt, and is embroidered at the headrest with 'Virtual Roadster' in white. Not only does the seat look good, but it is fully adjustable as well. The sliders provide eight inches of travel for the seat, and the back reclines to whatever angle is comfortable for each racer. The other adjustments that you can make to the seat require hardware modification. The manual includes instructions on how to add some permanent tilt or elevation to the seat bottom. Adding a spacer under the slider rails can either tilt or elevate the seat to your liking, but it won't be user-adjustable on the fly.

Before attaching the seat, the slider rails need to be mounted. Looking at the back of the frame, just below the seat, is mounted a piece of painted wood. This wood has a '3/8-16 T-nut' in it, and is designed for attaching a ClarkSynthesis force transducer, or your favorite 'thumper'. The manual has a few suggestions on which audio feedback devices can work. Being the engineer that I am, I adapted the ButtKicker Gamer to the seat. More on this later ... I just wanted to let you know that the option is there, below the seat.

So off I went mounting the slider rails. These are mounted to the base-frame, and the seat is mounted to them. There are two rails, one with a lever and latching mechanism, the other without. The former goes on the right. It's fairly obvious which way to mount the rail with the handle on it, but the other one had me off-track for a bit. The manual explains how to mount them ... but in my

haste, I missed the lovely illustration showing me how, and read the text without looking at the pictures (yes, sometimes those pictures are better than the text!). I put the bolts in the outermost hole, and went on my merry way. Okay, so on the handle side, no problem. Maybe I make things over-complicated because I think too much about it, but I mounted the non-latching rail backwards due to trying to be symmetrical ... I was able to *almost* mount the seat before I realized that the travel on the left side slider wasn't going to let me get the job done.

Off came the seat and remount the left slider. The left is a mirror of the right. Each one has a particular mounting orientation ... to an engineer, this is just absurd! Other than that small glitch, the instructions in the manual are quite clear, and detail how to get the seat mounted. It takes a couple of iterations, because like the tubes, you can't tighten the bolts as you go ... only once they are all started. After sliding the seat back to front a couple of times, it is fully tightened and secure and you, sir, are ready to mount your wheel and pedals!

## The Preparation

The Roadster comes with a small tool kit ... okay ... it comes with three tools. A thirteen millimeter box-end wrench, a six millimeter, and a four millimeter hex wrench. I found myself running to the garage to grab a ten millimeter box-end wrench to help with adjusting the turnbuckles and to hard mount the wheel and pedals. Including this extra tool in the kit would be helpful to the average user.

The rest of the manual covers things that you can do with the Roadster. The ability to mount the base-frame to a shaker platform (where the whole rig moves) is available by removing the feet, and mounting audio feedback devices to the base is also possible. It also tells you how to get in and out of the seat, how to adjust the seat and level the base, and how to adjust the pedal

angle for proper body mechanics. There's even a troubleshooting guide, although for the life of me, I can't see how anyone might have trouble worthy of a troubleshooting guide.

I tried several different wheels over the course of my testing, and while all of them work, I preferred the Logitech G25 for mounting with this rig for reasons of usability. The Fanatec Porsche Wheel that I reviewed last issue works, but its satellite shifter (designed to abut a table or desk edge, and use that edge for support) tends to wiggle during shifts, as the six millimeter aluminum plate doesn't supply a thick enough surface for the wheel-mounted shifter. It's not bad, but not rock solid. Then again, the Fanatec shifter isn't terribly rock solid on a desktop either—not like the G25 shifter with its own mounting clamps—as I reported in last month's review.

I drilled hard-mount holes in the wheel deck plate for both the G25 and the Fanatec. The reason why I hard-mounted them is because I want them to remain firmly attached. Both the G25 and the Fanatec Porsche Wheel have mounting methods that don't seem to agree with the Roadster's wheel deck. One issue is that, in my case, the wheel deck is actually a bit short. I spoke with Ted about my mounting woes, and he told me that a few of the decks were missing some length from the aluminum plate. He assures me that this manufacturing oversight has been corrected. The promo material shows the Roadster with a red Logitech Momo mounted. This wheel works great right out of the box, with no hard-mounting needed whatsoever. The clamps on the Momo fit nicely over the cross bar, and the wheel is secure. Because of the clamping method of the G25 and Fanatec, however, these wheels didn't enjoy that luxury. If you read my Fanatec review, you will remember that I could not mount it to the dining room table because of its mounting clamps ... this is case with the Roadster as well.



*"Whether you're trying to learn new tracks, get yourself focused, or just having fun, the Virtual Roadster is the most realistic feel you can find at an affordable price. From the realistic seat and position, the easy adjustment for someone of any age and size, this is definitely the best you can get for a reasonable price."*

*—Nathan Swartzbaugh, Driver, American Le Mans Series*

There simply isn't enough room between the edge of the plate and the cross tube to clamp the wheel to the deck. The four hard-mount holes and included template solve that issue quite simply. The G25, by the way, suffered a similar fate—the clamps don't have enough purchase to give a good secure feel, so hard-mounting is the best solution.

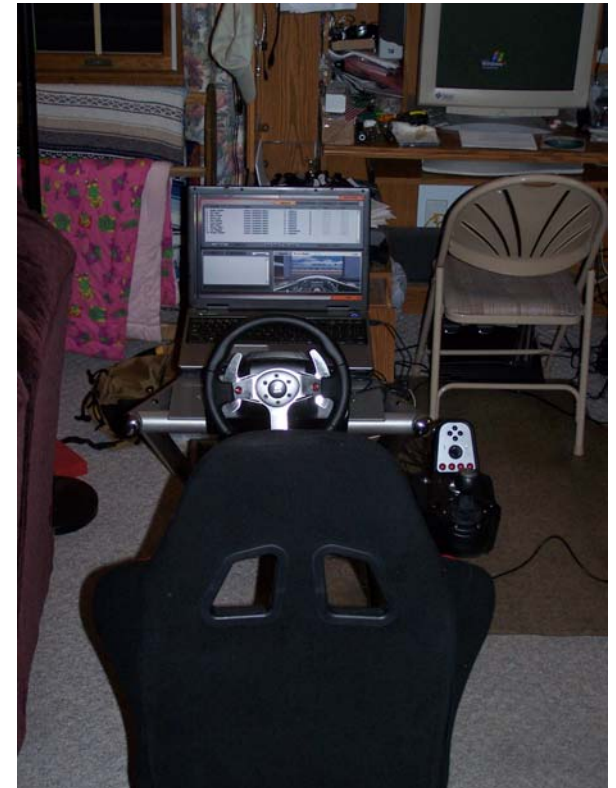
Conveniently, both the G25 and the Fanatec use six millimeter bolts to hard-mount, so different hardware isn't required for each. The Roadster is not limited to PC wheels, so I tried our PS2 Logitech wheel on it. For console gaming, I can not imagine any wheel that will not mount, as most have some means or other to clamp to any surface. The PS2 wheel had to rely on its clamps, as Logitech didn't put hard-mount points in it.

With the wheel mounted, I moved on to the pedals. The Roadster comes with an ample supply of Velcro, but after looking at the bottom of the G25 pedals, I decided to hard-mount them as well. The G25 pedals have six hard-mount points in them, but I only used four. The Fanatec pedals don't have hard-mount capabilities, nor do the old Momo pedals, but each one has sufficient surface area for Velcro to get a good foothold (and the crowd groans out loud ...). Ted tells me that he used Velcro on his G25 pedals with success. In fact, he was so successful that he found it difficult to remove the pedals from the Velcro

attachment. That's good news, because not everyone will have a drill handy, and putting a mounting hole in the wrong place could get ugly.

Wow ... the wheel and pedals mounted on this rig look sharp ... but something is missing! Ted has an optional shifter mounting unit to finish out the look. The G25 shifter has hard-mount points too (Logitech did their homework, boys and girls), but they aren't needed for the shifter. What you get with the shifter unit is a clamp to attach the base frame, a piece of tube, and a clamp and surface upon which the shifter mounts. The best way to get things where you want them is to loosely fit everything ... and then sit in the chair. Move and adjust the parts so they are where you like them—and where you feel comfortable. The mounting head is such that it can be mounted at any convenient angle and distance from the wheel, yet still remain horizontal. Once I was happy with the location, I tightened all the bolts and the shifter clamps and haven't looked back since.

I mentioned that I adapted my ButtKicker Gamer to the Roadster. The Gamer mounts on the pipe of a chair, so I had to come up with something to get the job done. What I did was find a bolt of the right thread size (3/16"-16) and length—about three-and-a-half inches, a large washer, and a three inch long piece of three-quarter inch black pipe (the kind used for gas lines in your house) and bolted the pipe to the seat base. The ButtKicker Gamer then clamped to the pipe, and I was off and shaking.





## The Ride

So now that it's all together and the wheel and its components are mounted, how does it feel? The Roadster, kids, is a luxurious ride. The sliders on the seat provide enough adjustment so that anyone—from four-foot-eight to six-foot-six—can be accommodated with total comfort. The seat padding is also well-heeled. One drawback I did find was the width of the seat at the hips. Sitting for extended periods, I experienced pressure-point discomfort. Ted told me that there is a wide seat available from his

supplier, and he is going to make that an option for the Roadster. That's great news, because not all sim-racers are little guys ... in fact, I have a feeling that many of us race simulators because we don't have the frames for racing (another groan please...) but still have the Jones for it.

Getting in and out of the Roadster is much easier for me than was, say, the Playseats Evolution I reviewed a few issues ago {*Volume 3, Issue 6—Ed*}. For one thing, the wheel deck is so solid that not only will it hold the eighty pound, twenty-two inch CRT I have sitting atop it, but I can use the



deck to help me stand up and get out! With the Evolution, it was more of a challenge to get situated—almost like gnarfling the Garthunk at times. The sim rigs that made their way to the USGP LAN Party my wife and I have hosted in the past weren't as easy to access either. Although not as difficult as the Evolution, they were not as easy as the Roadster. I enjoy the ease with which entry and exit is achieved. The first weekend I had the Virtual Roadster, some friends and I watched the A1GP race from Mexico together on a web stream. Since we were going to race some *rFactor* afterwards, I just sat in the seat. I must say that after two hours in the seat, I was still ready to race.

Overall, the Virtual Roadster is a well-designed simulator cockpit. It is clean enough looking that your apartment or family room will not be disgraced by its presence. Oh sure, my wife has grumbled that it should make its way to the basement, but it hasn't been an issue as much as my added seat time (on top of that, I don't think my wife really want to move the Roadster—and me—down to the basement in one go!).

The Roadster has had the effect that my sim-seat time has doubled, and sim-racing has taken on a whole new 'feel'. The unit that Ted sent me retails for \$795. With the shifter kit, it's another \$99. Price as tested was \$894 retail.

In the dog-eat-dog world of simulator cockpits, this versatile rig will please even the biggest dogs. I enjoyed and appreciated its simple yet elegant design along with its drive-ability. Ted has clued me in on some upcoming peripherals he is developing for the Roadster. More on those in future issues ... suffice it to say that Ted has some great things coming to make the Virtual Roadster an indispensable part of your sim-racing setup. As it stands now, this is certainly my current rig-of-choice. High-end comfort for a mid-range price—it doesn't get much better than the Virtual Roadster.



**Manufacturer Stats:**     [VirtualRoadster.com](http://VirtualRoadster.com)

## **STANDARD FEATURES**

- Comfortably accommodates drivers from 4'-8" to 6'-6" and at least 350 lbs.
- Compatible with all systems, PC, XBOX, PS, Nintendo
- Accepts all major styles of steering wheels and pedals
- European construction of welded steel and aluminum plates
- Highly adjustable, steel framed, race-grade seat with plush felt fabric
- Automotive-quality, metallic-flake powder coat paint
- Top coat of high-gloss, baked-on lacquer
- Custom stainless steel aerodynamic Nose Cone and End Caps
- Ships economically in a flat box

## **SPECIFICATIONS**

### **Design**

- American design and engineered
- Awarded U.S. Patent # D446,263

### **Construction**

- CNC laser-cut tubes and plates
- TIG welded by hand
- European craftsmanship and quality

### **Material**

- Almost 30 feet (9 m) of high strength, roll cage diameter steel tubing
- 45 x 1.5mm, yield strength of 65,000 psi
- 1/4" (6 mm) thick aluminum alloy plates

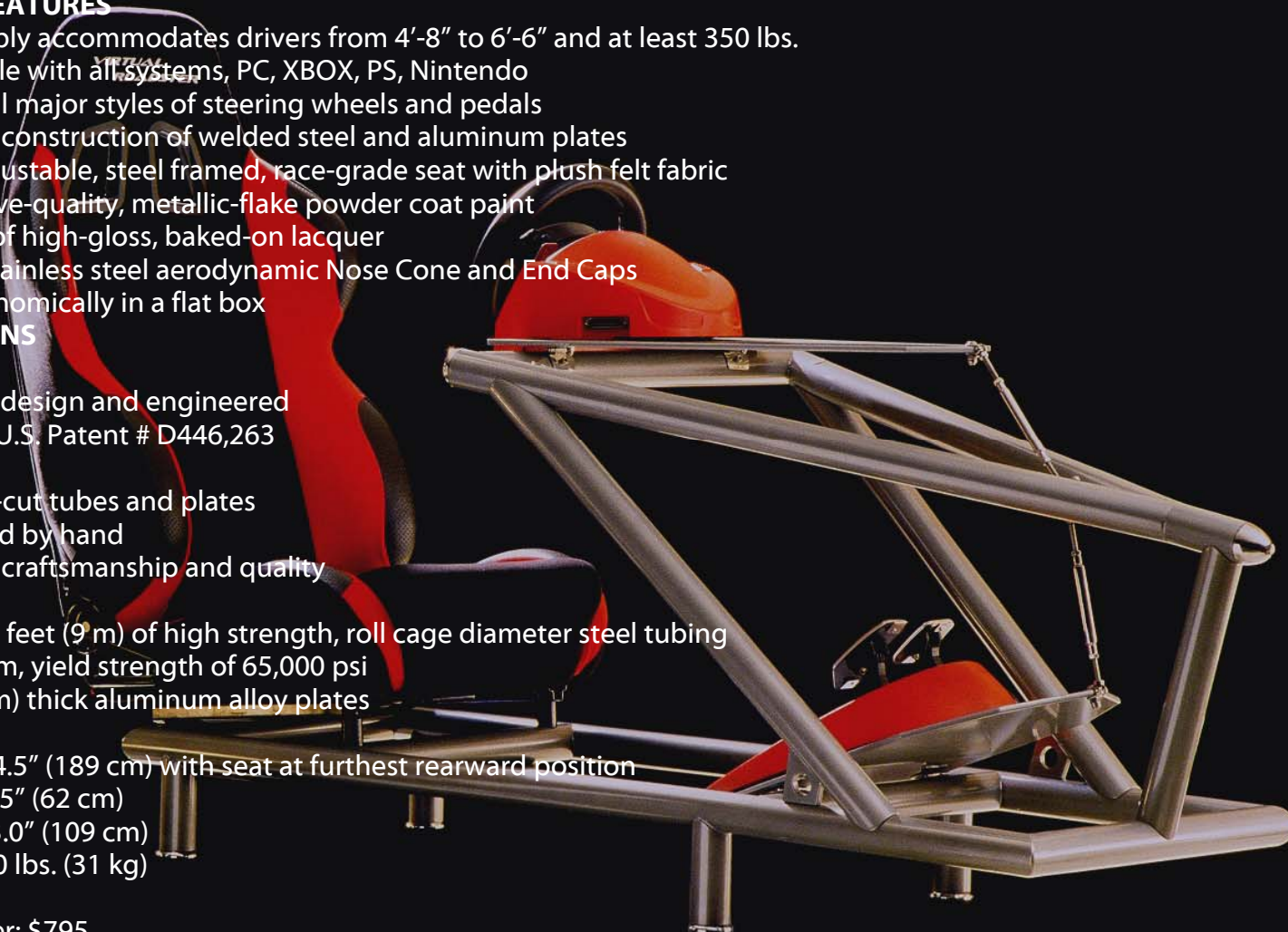
### **Dimensions**

- Length: 74.5" (189 cm) with seat at furthest rearward position
- Width: 24.5" (62 cm)
- Height: 43.0" (109 cm)
- Weight: 70 lbs. (31 kg)

### **PRICE POINT**

Virtual Roadster: \$795

Shifter: \$99



## Great Scot!

# For Colin

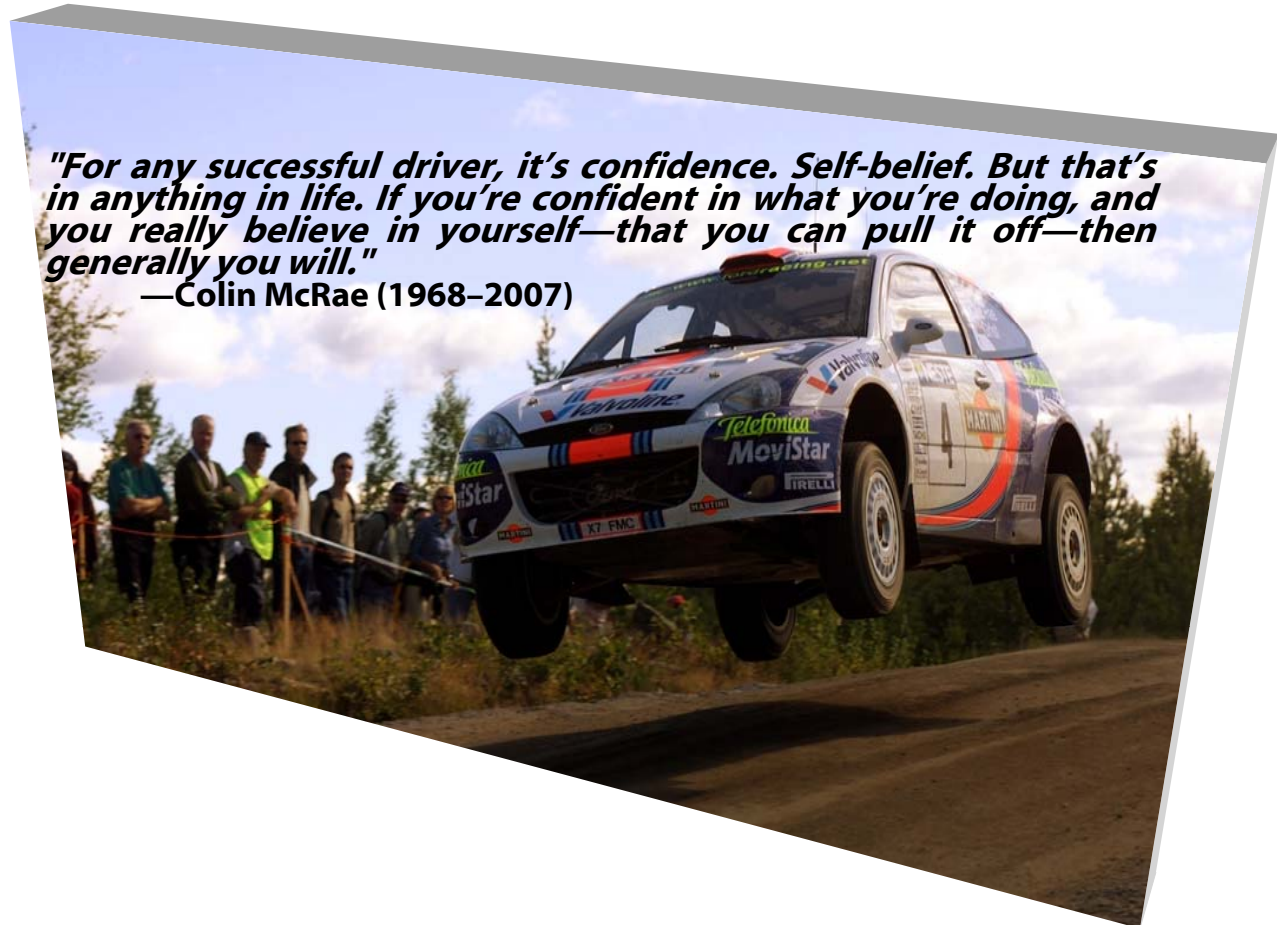
*Luisa Ghibaudo takes a moving look at the legend that was ...*

## LUISAGHIBAUDO

Please Visit Colin's [Website](#)  
All Pics Courtesy Of  
[RALLYRACING.IT](#)—go see  
more fabulous pics at their  
fantastic website  
Luisa Ghibaudo has also  
developed a video in  
memory of Colin McRae—  
[watch it here](#) ...

*"For any successful driver, it's confidence. Self-belief. But that's in anything in life. If you're confident in what you're doing, and you really believe in yourself—that you can pull it off—then generally you will."*

—Colin McRae (1968–2007)





# Great Scot! For Colin

*continued*



## **Monte Carlo 2003.**

Cold, misty, and miserable.

I hear a sound, loud, coming closer.

In a moment, I see a rally car fire past me at an unbelievable speed. My heart is thudding, and soon, with the car—and the noise—fading, all that is left is my own pounding heart, as loud as the engine that has now vanished into the distance.

I turn to my brother. Grinning, he says simply, *“That is Colin McRae.”*

This was my first rally; I had never heard of Colin McRae. Back home, that evening, the first thing I did was power up the PC for some research: Who was this man, Colin McRae?

Colin McRae begins his career in 1986 in a Talbot Sunbeam. In the Scottish Championship, the young McRae soon makes a name for himself, not only because of his results, and his staggering pace, but because of his style—McRae is an exciting driver to watch, and soon enough he is being compared to other similar drivers of the sport’s past, men like Ari Vatanen, a driver who had always been one of McRae’s heroes.

With the Talbot experience behind him, McRae moves up to a Vauxhall Nova, and then a Ford Sierra four-by-four. In 1987 he debuts in the WRC at the Rally Sweden in his Vauxhall: Two years later, he enters the same rally in his Ford Sierra and finishes a credible fifteenth. That same year, he enters his third rally, Rally New Zealand, and places his Ford Sierra Cosworth an astonishing fifth. His reputation secured, it is still another two years before he gets his big break in the Prodrive Subaru team that sees him compete in the British Championship which he goes on to win—like his father Jimmy had done a decade earlier—both in his debut year, and the following season, 1992.

In 1993, back at the rally that secured his international reputation, McRae wins his first WRC rally in New Zealand in

his Subaru; this is followed by two more wins in 1994 before, in 1995, the ultimate triumph: World Rally Champion.

In 1996, he adds to his trophy room with three more wins, but fails to win the championship, finishing runner-up to Tommi Mäkinen. The following season sees him at his prime, as he takes five wins ... and yet fails to win the championship, once more finishing runner-up to Tommi Mäkinen, this time by one single point.

For the 1999 season, McRae moves back to the Ford team, but his Focus proves off the pace; despite two wins (Rally of Portugal, and the Safari Rally) he finishes the season in a disappointing sixth position. But the Focus gets back on the pace for the new millennium, propelling McRae to another seven victories in the following three seasons, and placing him as the most ‘winningest’ driver in WRC history (later to be surpassed, first by Carlos Sainz, and then by Sebastien Loeb).

With his last championship coming in 1995, though, 2003 sees McRae move on to Citroën, but it proves a fruitless year for the Scot, and, winless, this was to be McRae’s final full season in the WRC. He was back, though, for the Rally of Great Britain in 2005 in a Škoda Fabia, scoring two points, before, in 2006, he ‘supersubs’ for the injured Sebastian Loeb for the Rally of Turkey. That would prove to be his final race in the WRC.

He left behind, though, a stunning career that saw him start 146 Rallies, winning twenty-five of them: Even more impressive is this testament to his all-out pace—McRae won 477 stages, and managed 626 points.

Every time I encountered his name, that raw emotion—that moment when I saw McRae flashing past me so close, when, for an instant, my heart literally skipped a beat—would flash through my mind unedited.

The years passed, and my passion for the sport grew stronger, all from that moment when I first saw McRae. My admiration for this man, too, just kept growing, as did my passion for this man’s country: Scotland.

## **Italy, May 2004**

My brother gets married.

And I decide that finding a way to get Colin to somehow send him his best wishes would be the best present I could ever give. I begin to research, phoning Subaru, Ford ... and Citroën in Versailles, I speak a mix of Italian—English—French—but in every language, the answer is the same: They are unable to pass on personal information about McRae to ‘strangers’. I send them mail, then, thinking perhaps a return address would alleviate my ‘strangeness’—the reply is the same: “We are unable to furnish you with details of your request.”

I call the Tourism Office of Lanark, in Scotland, but they have the same response: “McRae the driver? We don’t have his personal details on record ... sorry ...”

But McRae and I, we share a common trait: We don’t quit, and I keep working the phone: Finally, I get a response from Tina Thorner, his navigator from the Dakar Rally; a kind and sensitive person, she manages to sort out an autograph on a photograph that I send her. The photo is of my brother Paolo standing beside Colin McRae.

On the photo, when I receive it, was written: “To Paolo, all the best. Colin McRae”. I am in seventh heaven!

## **Scotland, July 2005**

I’m off to Scotland!

The trip has been carefully planned: Arrival in Glasgow, then off to Lanark ... *to meet Colin McRae.*

After numerous emails exchanged with McRae’s manager, I’m told that Colin is indeed in Lanark, and my meeting with him has been cleared ... When I read those words, my heart—yet again—skips a beat ... can it be true? Am I really about to meet this legend? Am I really about to touch his hand, look him in the eye ... am I really to have the chance to say to him, “Well done, Champion!”



It's all too good to be true; and, indeed, so it proves. The day before we're scheduled to meet, I receive an email informing me that McRae won't be in Lanark on the days on which I had been scheduled to arrive: He will be in Brussels, instead, and London.

I can't begin to describe the feeling ... it was as if my whole world had suddenly fallen away ... it was a lost dream, can you understand?

Quickly, though, I pulled myself together: It wasn't that bad, I reasoned, only a suspension of my dream. I had made contact; now it was merely a matter of organizing another time. I would return to Scotland, or perhaps we would meet in another place, another context. ...

## 15 September 2007

I wake up and check my SMS messages: "Colin is dead".

Still half asleep, I couldn't quite understand—Colin? Who is Colin? The only Colin ... and there it was again, that same feeling ... that same heart, those same legs going light as I typed, almost automatically ... "How?"

I couldn't move: Just sat there staring, willing that SMS message to arrive ... and there it was, the reply I could not bear to read: "McRae, dead in a helicopter smash".

I sat at my PC, connected to the net and navigated to McRae's website: It was all black. ... All of it was true.

McRae had gone down in his helicopter.

I began piecing together the bits as the day turned to night turned to day ... at thirty-nine years of age, McRae was gone. He had been flying his helicopter near his home in Lanark, along with three other people, one of whom was his five year old boy Johnny ... by the next



**Luisa moved heaven and earth to get this photograph signed by Colin to present to her brother (standing beside the legend) on the occasion of his marriage**

day, the police in Strathclyde had confirmed the victims, and so had McRae's manager Jean-Eric Freudiger. There was no mistake ...

The net was bursting, now, with historical analysis of McRae: A great champion, but much more than that was the general consensus; a great *man*, an icon. His tremendously successful *Colin McRae Rally* series of video games had seen him enjoy an international reputation, and his love of extreme sports—including running the Dakar—had seen him rise far beyond just his tag as a champion rally driver.

Much loved in his own country where he had chosen to return once he'd hung-up his helmet, he was considered one of Scotland's success stories; the country would repay him now with an official day of mourning for this patriotic Scot who would prepare for races by listening to bagpipe-music, and was not shy to celebrate his wins and successes with a drop or two of single Highland malt.

But it was not only his countrymen who felt the loss deeply, the world's newspapers agreed, his fellow rally drivers, too, had taken his death hard, and they would be arranging a special tribute when next they met, at Catalunya, in early October. ...

Colin McRae. Dead. I just ... it just would not sink in. Not him ... in the prime of his life, with his young family, with all his achievements, his wins, his success ... not him, surely ... this was *McRae*, the driver

who had left a graveyard of broken cars behind him throughout his career—this was *McCrash*, who'd never even hurt himself in a rally car ... it just wasn't possible ... not like this surely ...

But gradually, as the days wore on, the inevitability could not be avoided; I would never meet him, hold his hand, never look into his eyes ...

But you know, I will still go back ... to Lanark. One day soon, I will go back—and take with me a red rose that will read, "Grazie, Colin!"

# AUTOSIMSPORT



# Great Scot! For Colin

*continued*





















# Great Scot! For Colin

*continued*







# Pit Stop Boss

*Build it ... Test it ... Race it ... Get Bloody Addicted!*

## PREVIEW



IVANASKEW





Junior McMillan, a displaced New Yorker in London, has been in the games programming industry for around twenty years, having cut his teeth with what he describes as “boxed games for the Amiga, PC, PS2, and so on”. With credits on games such as *BodyBlows* on the Amiga/ST/PC, *Alien Resurrection* on the PS2, and “a bit of work” on Pete Moloneux’s *Powermonger*, as well as conversion work on the world’s most successful management-sim, *Championship Manager* (2), Junior has recently found the temptation of internet-based games too much to resist.

It helps, of course, that he cut his teeth with *SundayLeague.com* and *SeniorLeagueHockey.com*, both of which he coded.

He, and his “business partner Terry”, are now hard at work (the project began back in 2006) on their forthcoming internet-only project, *Pit Stop Boss*, a real-time motor-racing management simulator that—from what AUTOSIMSPORT has been able to glean from the beta-demo—will offer something between the pure fun of *BATRacer* and the depth of the (ever-popular) *Grand Prix Manager* series.

*Pit Stop Boss* is, Junior told me, “Currently a browser-based game ... there is still the possibility to use the data to do interesting things through a PC or XBOX,” he says, having, he admits, already tried to go the Sony route for a full 3D version earlier in the year: As for the XBOX, he adds, “I’m looking into in my spare time.”

Inspiration for creating a motor-racing sim—based primarily on European-based racing series (not only Formula One will be featured, but ‘lesser’ series in which the wannabe F1 manager will need to cut his teeth)—came, he says, because, “I wanted to try and recapture some of the excitement that I felt when watching Formula One on TV with live timing in a game. I also wanted to try out some new web development techniques that would give a player the experience of being on the pitwall dictating strategy in real-time.”

Real-time?

“With *PSB*,” explains Junior, “drivers can do as you say ... however, real-time will be an option—you don’t *have* to be at your screen in real-time, as you have driver orders and conditionals, but yes, managers have the option of being at the race/screen in real-time.”

The ultimate ideal, though, for Junior, is to have real-time managers—and managers using pre-conditionals—enjoy the same chance of success, though perhaps not quite the same level of entertainment!

Being a web-based game, then, will it follow the successful model employed by *BATRacer*, I ask.

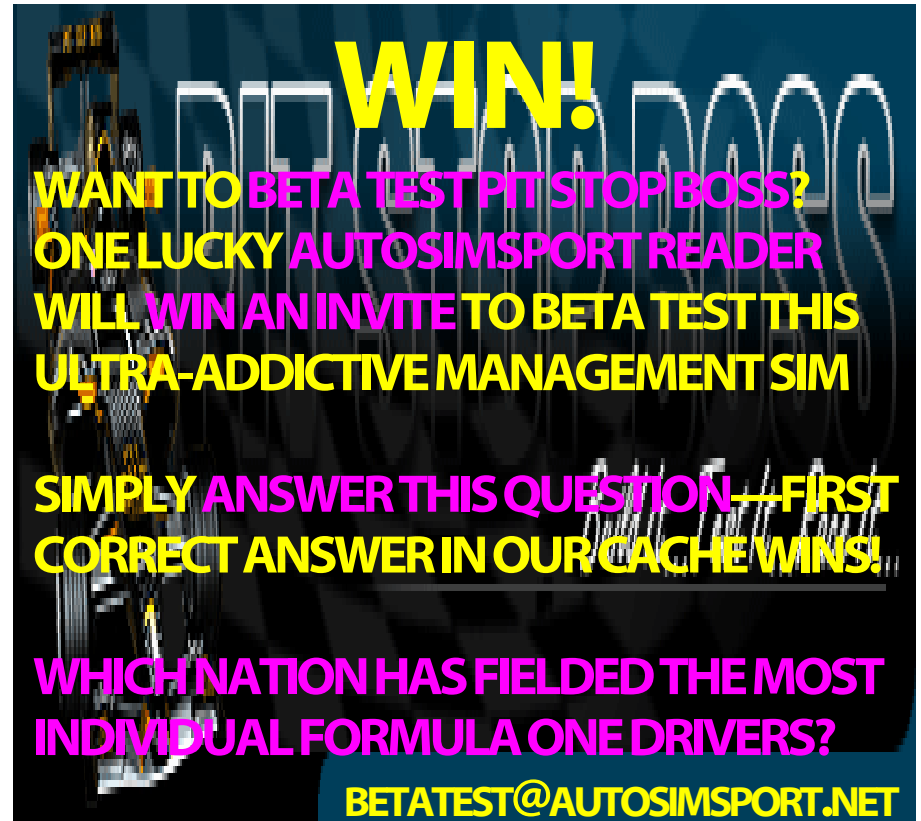
“The business model is crucial for the game,” Junior replies, “and we’re going to make it affordable for everyone to play ... so there will be a variety of options (some

that don’t involve paying, either): We’ve not fixed the pricings completely, but there will be some membership type options too...”

The game will feature a medley of cars, such as Champ Cars, IndyCars, IRL, GP2, Formula One, Formula Renault, and others.

On a cold April morning in New York, I was lucky enough to meet up with Junior online, and he was kind enough to give AUTOSIMSPORT readers a virtual tour of his new project, which is scheduled for launch sometime this year. Indeed, the first thing Junior told me was that I was the first beta-tester—a status which I quite enjoyed, although, I should add, this won’t last long since *Pit Stop Boss* is in beta as of Friday, April eleventh.

So, sit back and enjoy AUTOSIMSPORT’s virtual tour of *Pit Stop Boss*!



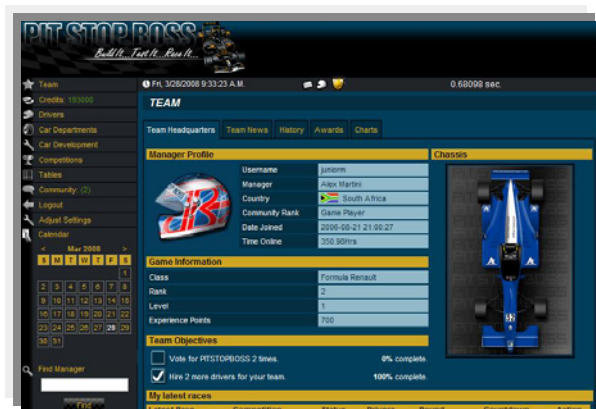
**WIN!**

**WANT TO BETA TEST PIT STOP BOSS?**  
**ONE LUCKY AUTOSIMSPORT READER**  
**WILL WIN AN INVITE TO BETA TEST THIS**  
**ULTRA-ADDICTIVE MANAGEMENT SIM**

**SIMPLY ANSWER THIS QUESTION—FIRST**  
**CORRECT ANSWER IN OUR CACHE WINS!**

**WHICH NATION HAS FIELDDED THE MOST**  
**INDIVIDUAL FORMULA ONE DRIVERS?**

**BETATEST@AUTOSIMSPORT.NET**



## The Team Page

The usual 'Team Screen' where the player can change the team's name, set the skin, and so forth to his own preference. Also, notice the 'Credits': Junior has not decided precisely what the amount will be when you first start, but there is an indication that, depending on your subscription-fee, your credits in-game will vary accordingly. Which means a lot, in this game, as you're about to see ... notice, also, the 'Team Objectives' section: Clearing this section allows the player to move up a level which will offer him more options.



## The Driver Page

The 'Driver Page' is where the game comes to life with some intriguing options. There will be a real-time 'transfer market' featured with the game that will see players bid on a driver—and wait to see whether their bid has been successful: Or, depending on their

credit situation, they can also buy the contract immediately. Bids will stay in the system for several days before going to the highest bidder, with managers bidding on the contracts for the *same* driver pool. Drivers will, of course, be replenished to a set number to be defined as the beta goes along, and once a driver has been hired, he vanishes from the pool. Even more interestingly, the driver's parameters will improve (or decline) with age and experience and results, making his worth something to consider since the driver can be sold at a later stage to other managers. Even David Coulthard, Junior tells me, will perhaps improve before he retires in the game (though readily admitting it won't happen in real-life). Drivers also have hidden abilities that may be exploited once the player discovers what they are. I chose Alan Van Der Merwe, and Ukyo Katayama, as the two drivers—hiring them also fulfills one of the 'Team Objectives' for this level. Progressing up levels is all part of the game, and opens up other parts of the sim.



## The Chief Technical Officer

The 'Chief Technical Officer', like the drivers, must be bid on: Bid carefully, because the CTO is crucial to your management career since he controls the areas in which you can upgrade your car, and the time in which those upgrades take place. He also affects the pace at which your driver develops, and the feedback at the races themselves. As such, he is a key component in your team, so think long, and act wisely. Once your CTO is installed in his position, you can immediately begin work on upgrades to your car. Upgrades are not instantaneous either; their progress is updated once a day, and their development depends on the talent of the CTO. Here, my fledgling team makes an immediate—and therefore successful—bid on Ross Brawn ... costing about twenty percent of my overall credits.

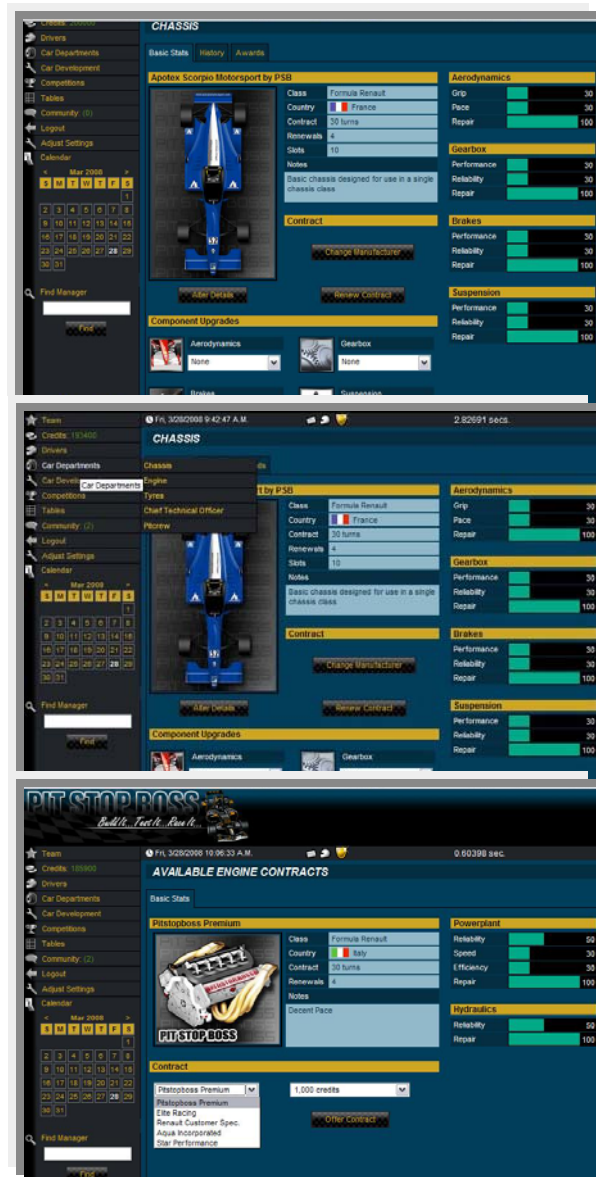




## Car Development, Upgrades List, Improvement And Repair

With the CTO installed, it is now time to develop the car before the season's start. In the 'Car Development Screen', it is possible to begin development work on numerous parts of the car. **(Bottom Left)** shows the possible improvements we have chosen to conduct. **(Centre Left)** shows the time it will take for the improvements to be completed: Junior suggests that the time unit per 'turn' is somewhere between a day and a week. **(Top Left)** shows what can be done in the Factory, taking into consideration your current level—here we decide to improve our tyres.



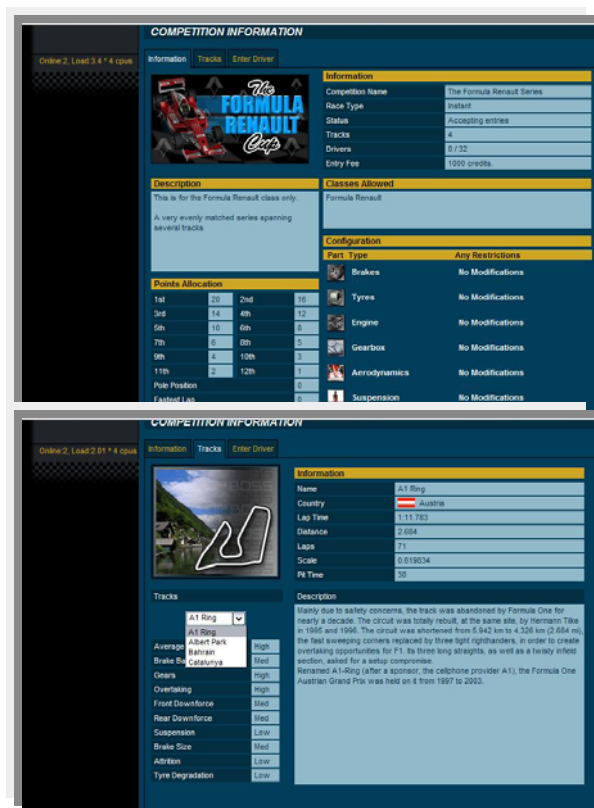


## The Car Department, Options, Engine Change

Here is the current chassis for the chosen championship: We're running a Formula Renault chassis for the season—notice that, as your improvements in the factory are completed, they can be installed in the car, and they will affect the overall stats of your chassis represented as a set of numbers on the right (**Top Left**). A level 2 aero improvement, for instance, will see both grip and pace rise by a number of two—from '30' to '32'. Also, it is possible to alter your 'Manufacturers': That is, chassis, engine, tyre (**Bottom Left**), and so on. It is possible, furthermore, to choose your pitcrew from this menu—choose wisely, too, because a good crew will be able not only to service your driver faster, but will be able to act as crucial interlocutors between driver and engineers during the race weekend. All of these options are crucial—get them right before heading to the meat and bones of this management sim ... gentlemen and ladies, it's time to join a series to compete for the championship!



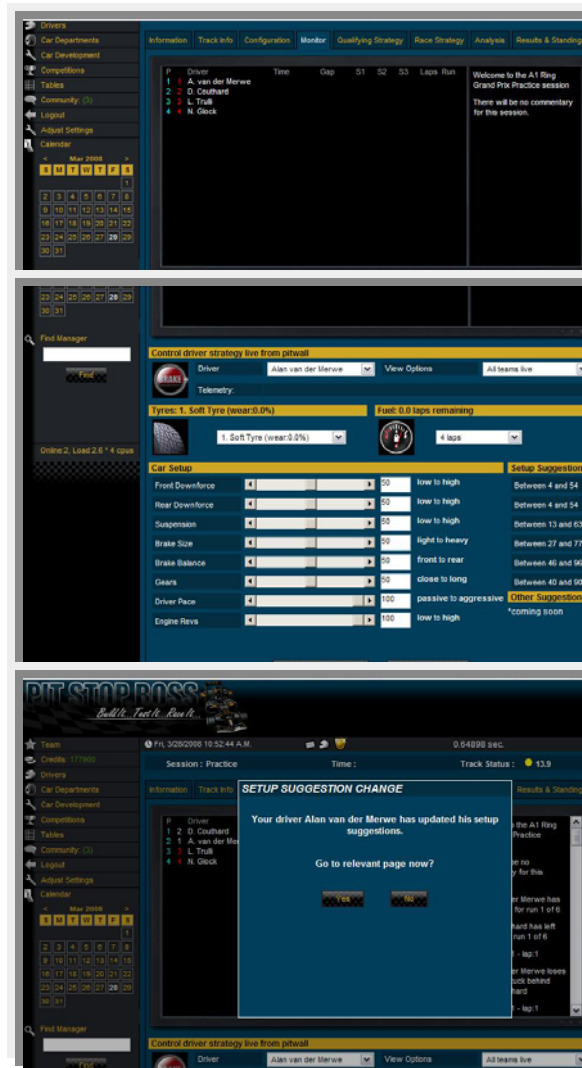




## Competition Info Page, Competition Tracks Page

Since we own a Formula Renault, it would make sense for us to join the 'Formula Renault Cup'. Here one can see all the parameters needed to join this series including the permitted modifications to the cars, the points, the number or races in the series, and so forth (**Above Top**). We can also take a look at the tracks that will feature in the series: This is not just a gimmick—as with everything else in the sim, knowing which tracks you will be competing on is crucial, not only for setup options, but for understanding what can be expected during the race. The data that is used to simulate the races are those taken directly from the FIA and other sources, and will accurately reflect the track's characteristics—all of which means, do your research, or you will start with a handicap against those who already know what to expect. In terms of tyre wear, setup options (including which specific parts of the

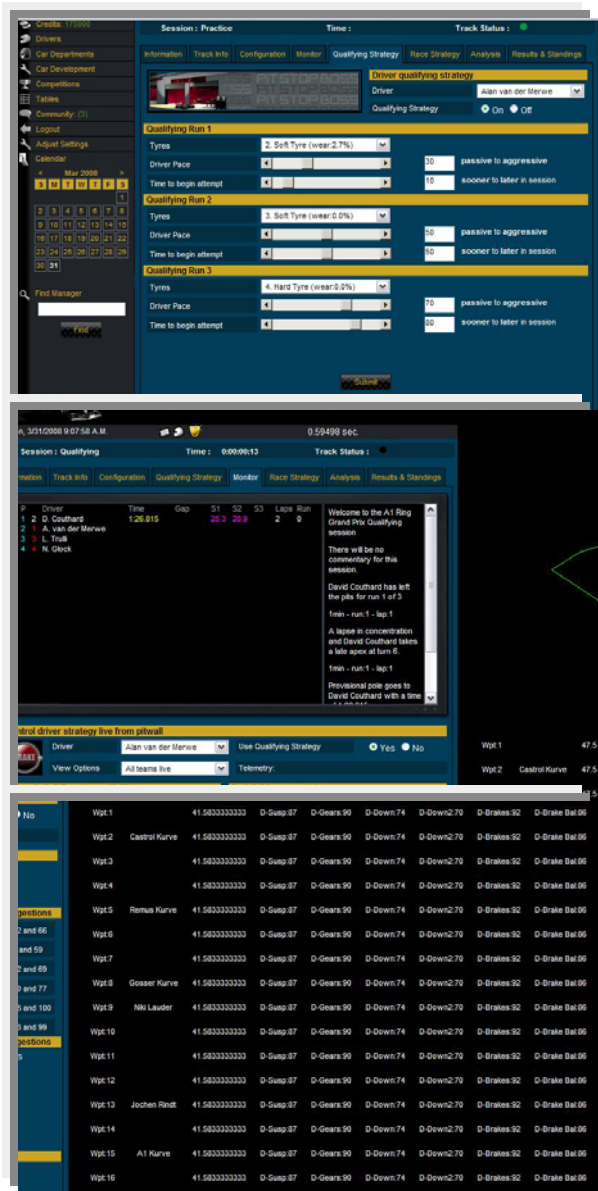
track to focus on—that is, give up some straight-line speed for the inner twisty bit, or vice-versa?), and other parameters such as the ability to overtake ... all of it is modeled on real-world data. ... With that done, it is time to enter the championship.



## The Race Screen, Monitor, Setup Options

**Top Left** we are in the practice session, and each driver has a certain amounts of laps he is allowed to run, depending on the series. **Centre Left** shows the 'Setup Option Screen'; as your driver goes out to practice, and depending on his (and your pit crew, and CTO's) communication and other abilities, the 'numbers' will be narrowed in a way that is familiar to *BATRacer* users. Those, however, who know a track's unique layout well, may be at an advantage since they can take their knowledge and import it into the game.

The beta-demo that was tested gave us unlimited runs: In the game itself, however, this will be cut down severely, meaning that long runs will only be possible during 'track days'—testing, which will also be an integral part of the game itself, and offers a whole new approach to this kind of management sim.

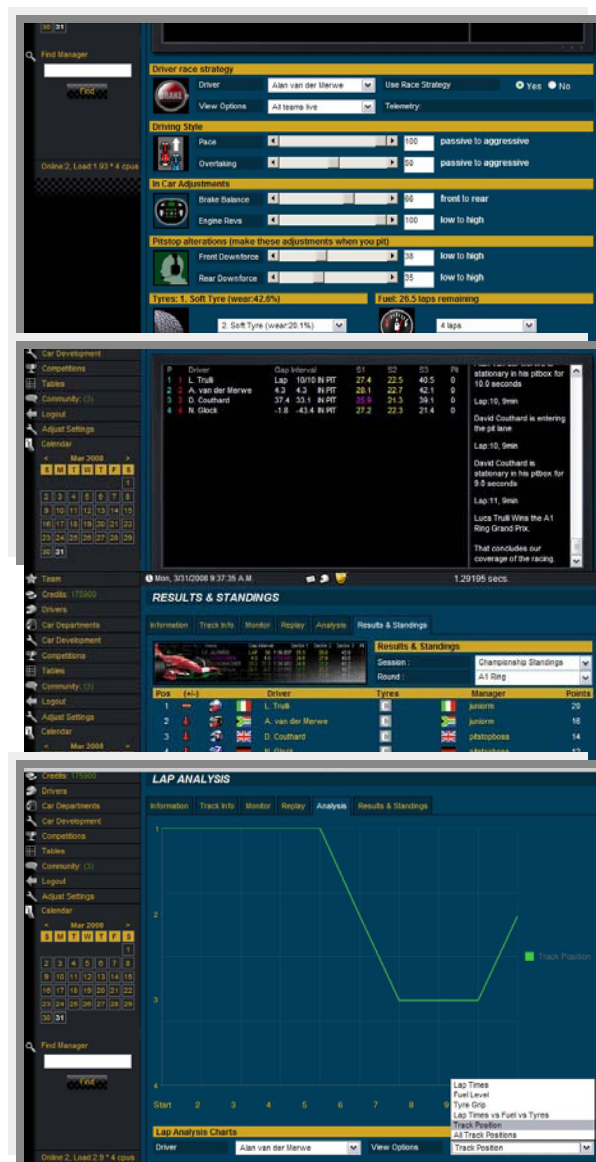


Qualifying Page

Time to qualify. As you have probably noticed, the management element in this sim is deep, and it's about to get deeper. Firstly, the tyre choices are crucial. For instance, certain tyre compounds will work better on certain tracks—hard compounds in Australia, as an example—while, on certain tracks, and at certain times of a session (when the track is green), a scrubbed pair of tyres in qualifying will give better performance than a fresh set of tyres. In addition, tracks will also handle degradation differently, so one needs to be careful with what one does with a set amount of tyres during the race weekend. Make sure to watch your tyre degradation during the practice sessions carefully. As we enter the qualifying session, it is important to keep in mind that—as in real-life—the track will also ‘come to life’ the further along the session progresses and the rubber builds up. **Top Left** shows what can be done by the user who doesn't wish to attend the ‘live’ session. One can see that there is a live ‘report’ that scrolls down the right hand side, keeping you updated on proceedings, as well as a timing monitor that can be set to display Sector Times, and so forth. Finally, **Bottom Left** (which won't appear in the game) is a ‘debug’ screen that Junior has kindly provided to AUTOSIMSPORT in order to demonstrate how the program is spitting out numbers based on real parameters such as downforce, gearing, suspension settings, and a myriad of other calculations—as stated previously, this is not a game of chance, it is a simulator ...







## Race Page

Similar to the qualifying options, the user can decide to attend the race live—or give instructions for a host of options that the team will enact on his behalf. In addition, pit-stop strategies can change downforce options, as well as setting the rev-range, while the driver can be instructed to push or be conservative. There will also be weather, safety car periods, and other options in the final release. A 2D map of the circuit is still being considered, with a final decision being based on the feedback of the beta testers ... in the meantime, managers will make do with the lap chart familiar to those who use 'F1 Live' or other live timing sites. Also available will be a detailed analysis chart (**Bottom Left**) that will enable the pit-boss to analyse a host of intricate details such as tyre grip, tyre wear, and so forth during practice and qualifying sessions.



## End Of Season, Start Of Addiction!

Once the championship has ended, the manager can progress to the next level in the game, depending on his results. **Top Left** demonstrates the team's history—races disputed, wins at which tracks, along with a whole host of numbers sure to keep any simulator fan coming back for more. **Left Centre**, meanwhile, shows your driver's history—the better he performs, the more he is worth on the market ... Finally, **Bottom Left** shows the 'Awards' page, where your team presents its trophies to the fans ... This is just one of the inbuilt 'badges' that one gets as one progresses through the game.

Factor in hundreds of other managers, all working within one economic infrastructure, competing for the best drivers, CTOs, and pitcrews, and making decisions on when to spend money on key improvements to which options of the car, all in the pursuit of victory against thousands of other pit bosses, and what you have is all the fun of *BATracer* combined with the depth of 1996's *Grand Prix Manager 2* ... addictive!

# Light Up Your **Life** **Redux!**

*Lou Magyar on how CXC Simulations has just added to their Shift Light Indicator range ... with a touch of realism sure to please everyone ... and not just G25 owners ...*

LOUMAGYAR







Flashback to the G25 SLI review ... Have you ever wished that your steering wheel could have those cool LEDs that the real-racers have to indicate when they're about to reach the end of their engine's capabilities to maintain physical integrity? Have you ever wondered, in the midst of a heated battle, just what was that last gear you shifted into? Ever caught yourself thinking, 'You know, it'd be great to have a gearshift indicator on my wheel?'

Well, wonder no more, because CXC Simulations' G25 SLI (Shift Light Indicator) was (and remains) the answer to your wishes ...

Right, so flashback complete, we come to the present—and the new stand-alone version of the G25 SLI, dubbed, simply, the 'SLI'.



**The SLI is now compatible for all wheels, and can be placed practically anywhere you desire. Retails at \$124.99**

Chris Considine, from CXC Simulations—makers of full-motion simulators for professional racing teams—sent me their new stand-alone unit to play with as a follow-up to the G25 SLI version I reviewed a few issues ago. Just like the G25 SLI, this compact, lightweight device delivers a

graphical F1-like LED RPM indicator accompanied by an eight-segment LED gear position indicator.

However, unlike the G25 SLI, this baby will attach more-or-less wherever you want—and is not designed solely for G25 mounting (sandwiched between the

steering column and the wheel). What this means is that, unlike the G25 SLI, this baby won't rotate with your wheel if you don't want it to ... I have attached mine to the top of the wheel housing on my G25, and it sits there visible through the top of the wheel. Unlike the G25 SLI, this stand-alone unit doesn't turn with the wheel. When you turn the wheel, you can't see the indicators ... not that you should be shifting, or on the redline, when you are in the middle of a turn anyway ...

The stand-alone SLI retails for about US\$125, is made of 3K high-gloss carbon fiber twill, and weighs just eighty-seven grams. It is compatible with all top computer racing simulation software. Currently, the driver disk has drivers for *rFactor*, *Live For Speed*, *GTR*, *GTR2*, *GTL*, *NR2003*, and *ARCA '08*.

Like before, the mostly plain brown box presents an elegantly simplistic utilitarian design, and it is nearly one hundred percent recyclable. A simple mylar and cardboard center piece holds the SLI in place during shipping, while the rest of the contents rest below. Aside from the SLI unit, there is a small sealed baggie that holds the provided zip ties, and zip anchors, a driver CD, and a five-foot USB extension cable.

Mounting the SLI to any wheel is a matter of applying double-sided tape to the bottom of the unit, and applying the unit to the wheel at the location of your choice. The SLI unit can be mounted anywhere you choose, meaning that, if you want to mount it to your monitor, you can do so... only you must supply the mounting tape. If you have different wheels, you could use Velcro to make the unit a bit more portable.

The SLI has a great GUI. With it, you can set how you would like neutral displayed—several options are available—and test to make sure all the LEDs work correctly. You can even invert your digital gearshift indicator—just in case you are in the habit of driving ass-over-teakettle. With the GUI, you can set sliders to

indicate at what point in the RPM range to start displaying the RPM indicators for each successive LED. The sliders are set to use percentages of RPM range, so you don't need to distinguish from one car class to another. Just set up the range for each new LED to your preference and away you go. There is also a stall warning indicator available if you want it. You can save multiple player profiles, just in case you prefer a different range for different simulator titles.

After installation, there's little else to do with the exception of enjoying your new toy! The SLI provides real-time RPM graphical indication and digital gear position. If you have been running *rFactor* with the HUD on so you can see RPM and gear position, the SLI clears up that screen clutter with style.

The SLI has a carbon fiber face plate and a hood enclosure. The simplicity of its form, fit, and function, when combined with its aesthetically pleasing, elegant design, is quite appealing. On the whole, like its counterpart made for the G25, I can see no reason to ding the SLI at all, and both units add a touch of realism—along with a performance benefit—and have become popular add-ons for the sim-racing community.



*Every one of CXC's products is handmade in the US. The SLI electronics are supplied by Cannon Simulation Technologies, the rest is CXC design. CXC pride themselves on innovative thinking and exhaustive testing. Chris founded CXC Simulations after years of being a racing brat ... he came from a racing background. His father was a driver in the '50s and '60s racing sports cars with a lot of the greats of that era. He passed the bug onto Chris when he was very young. Chris did the standard karts to formula car thing when he was a kid and worked at the Bondurant School of Performance Driving for a while. Eventually, Chris realized that he didn't have enough money to take racing where he wanted to, so decided to switch to the tech industry. One thing led to another and he decided to combine his talents and start building racing simulators. They started as simple one-off frames with simple consumer level controls. Along the way the company grew and they eventually evolved into full on racing-sims with motion systems, proprietary hardware and custom frames. They have been used as race driver training tools, marketing center-pieces and really cool toys for big boys. CXC Simulations have a new production-oriented system that will be launching soon that will be the culmination of all the things they know about sim-racing. More on that at another time ...*





# PREVIEW

LOUMAGYAR

## CTDP Returns

*CTDP's 2005 rFactor Formula One mod is generally recognized as the most authentic F1 simulator available on any platform ... so it's with much anticipation that the community awaits the release of their follow-up, CTDP 2006 ...*

CTDP is hard at work on their next Formula One mod, and their 2006 Formula One season is certain to be a crowd pleaser.

CTDP have outdone themselves with this one. Watching replays, it's difficult to tell if you are looking at a real car or a simulation.

Updated physics, a revised Bahrain, and all new cars for the 2006 season are sure to make the latest CTDP efforts a smash hit, following in the footsteps of their 2005 Formula One hit which remains at number two spot all-time over at rFactor Central.

Andy Neidhardt tells me that it is still some time off, but from what I've seen, it's going to be well worth the wait!

Andy and the guys were kind enough to throw us a couple of renders ... this one is going to be special!

VirtualR.net

# PREVIEW CTDP Returns

*continued*







## **ARCA Review**

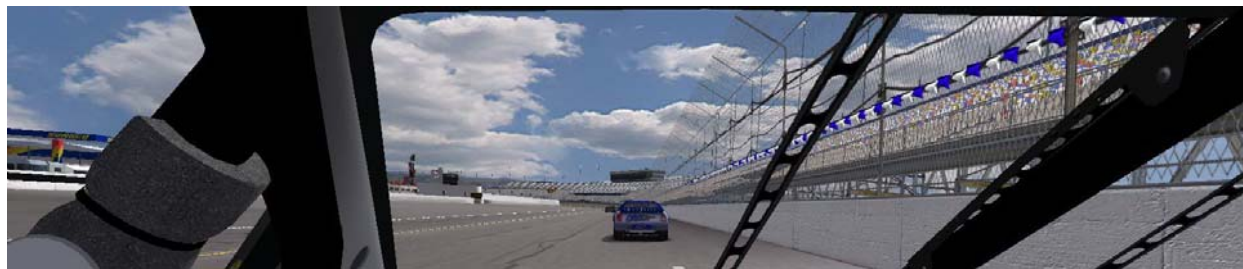
# Multiple Personality

*Bob Simmerman reviews ARCA Sim Racing and comes to the conclusion that the simulator is suffering from conflicting personalities; a masterclass in realism joins some eye-catching omissions in what is the ride of the year from The Sim Factory ...*

**BOBSIMMERMAN**







*ARCA Sim Racing*, the oval racing love-child produced by The Sim Factory, and released to much anticipation and excitement on March first, 2008, is the first fully-licensed stock car type simulator since EA's disappointing *NASCAR Sim Racing*.

*ARCA Sim Racing* had the entire community on the edge of their seats for the better part of two years, and, when it finally did release, it was initially plagued by the developers' decision to make it a boxed DVD purchasable only online; delays from the time of purchase to the time of delivery meant frustration for many—although, if the more verbalized brouhaha is ignored, the actual number of affected buyers was a minority. Personally, I received my copy about nine days after placing the order.

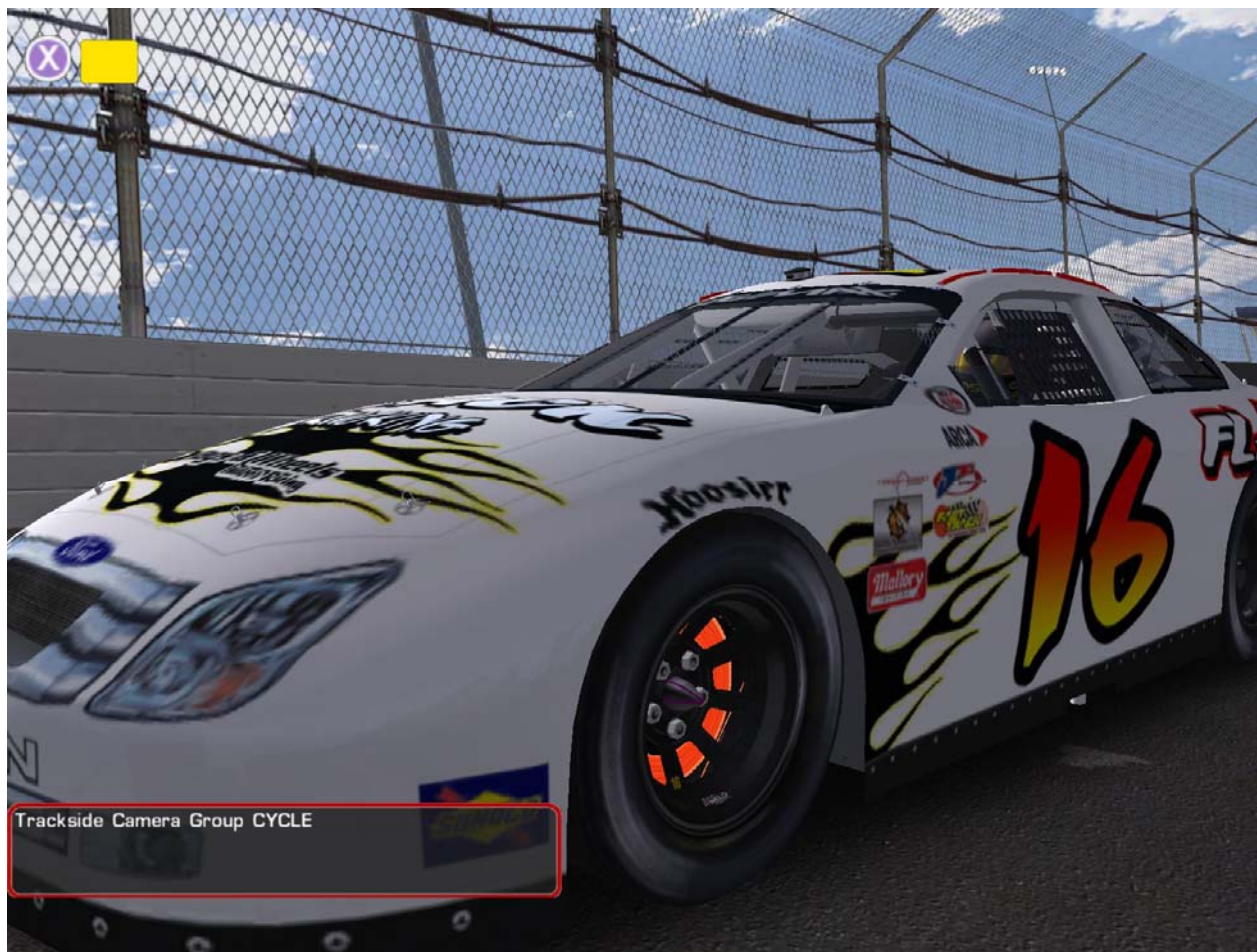
I was, naturally, as excited as anyone else, and while it is true that I had seen several previous versions of the final release in the normal course of magazine duties, I was nevertheless aware that The Sim Factory was polishing and shining the sim right up to the time of disk mastering. I should also add that work has not been completed on *ASR*, since there are plans to release the entire track schedule for the 2008 ARCA season.

For the time being, however, only ten tracks are included with the initial release. (There has also been talk around the campfire of, perhaps, allowing third party content into the simulator, albeit with the Sim Factory's final approval—the sim, despite being built on *rFactor*, is not moddable in its present state.)

Right, so with those rumors taken care of, it would be best to begin this review by dismissing the mistaken belief by many that this is but an *rFactor* mod with a price tag. *ARCA Sim Racing* is a full-blown commercial product that has seen the developers in close contact with Image Space (ISI) during the entire course of development. In other words, the base code of *rFactor* has been heavily tweaked and tuned to provide what some are already claiming as the best stock car simulator to date ...

Along with ISI support, however, The Sim Factory gained critical access to the Hoosier Tire Company for that Holy Grail of simdom—real-tyre data. Incorporated into a dynamic track surface/grip system, all of the pieces are in place for something we dare not speak but are most likely hoping for—a 'replacement' for our beloved *NASCAR 2003*, which, we might admit, is getting a bit long in the tooth.

So, access to the source code plus access to real-world tyre data plus access to real-world series' drivers and teams equals the potential for another *GTR2*. But access, of course, is not success ... so how did the pieces, finally, come together? Will *ASR* be able to stand up to *NASCAR 2003*? Was the bar set so high that we can't even see it, much less jump over it? Is the MOTOR code from ISI the proper place for such a simulator? Is it not getting 'a bit long in the tooth' itself?



You'll find a lot here to remind you that this is a sim built right on top of *rFactor* ... including the replay system, and the Interface that, while having been worked on extensively, is still 'rFactorish' in its design ... But under the hood is where *ARCA Sim Racing* comes to the fore, sporting laser-scanned models, beautifully rendered tracks, and a physics model that has been purpose-built using input from real-world engineers and drivers as well as tyre details from the ARCA series' tyre provider, Hoosier ... In other words, it's as much a mod as GTR2 was a mod ...

## Installation & Initial Impressions

For the purposes of this review, I installed the simulator on an XP-based system, and a Vista based system. The XP system was powered by 2 GB of DDR2, an AMD FX-60 CPU and an ATI X1950 Pro video card. For those of you who have seen my videos on YouTube (Hi Mom! Hi Grandma!), you already know that I have named this particular system, 'The Dragon' on account of it not quite having spit flames, but having almost caught fire!

The Vista rig is sort of an oddity—built upon the extremely bizarre ASUS L1N64-SLIWS motherboard, this Dual FX-74 powerhouse is nothing if not ambitious. Basically, ASUS put two 680 based motherboard logic systems on one motherboard, and did some other things to make the whole thing act like one computer. With enough money and liquid cooling solutions for the video cards, you can, in theory, jam about four in the case. Two, of course, is more realistic, and only two PCI-e slots are running the full 16x, but if you are a tweaker, this is definitely a motherboard that would interest you. While it is unlikely much, if any, of my software is taking full advantage of this ageing mid-range powerhouse, it does give one a certain bit of comfort having those two CPUs in there, doing God only knows what. ASUS was even so kind as to name their creation, and what a name it is—this particular rig is dubbed, 'The QuadFather' ... and I kid you not.

But the QuadFather requires a lot of damn juice to remain happy. Fair enough, bigger must be better, 800 Watts it is. One NVIDIA 8800 GTX OC card from BFG Tech is what I figured to be plenty, and with 4 GB of DDR2, there is so much that plenty won't be used. In terms of outright 3dMark06 (freeware version) scores, the QuadFather weighs in at around 12,000, with The Dragon quite a bit behind at around 4,700. In other words, for this review, I had the fortunate opportunity to have a look at a simulator on two vastly different rigs, not only in



terms of benchmark power, but in terms of price and complexity as well. Further, with two distinct operating systems, this would either be a complete review, or a month worth of phone calls to Microsoft. In reality, I wanted to see what, if any, items in the simulator might change, perhaps acting differently, such as the AI, for example. Obviously, the graphical settings and car numbers are quite possibly going to be different 'per rig', but I wondered what the AI would be like on a faster computer.

The simulator installed perfectly on both systems, not a single problem in sight other than Vista's extremely annoying BINK BONK of ... 'are you positively convinced that this is really, really, really what you want to do right now at this stage of your life—I mean, are you really, really, really sure you want to install this?'

With an actual disk in hand, installation was a snap with nary a Steamship or StarForceCommander in sight. I have to give up some point's right there, and I think we all know how rough I am on products that come attached with strings. All was not without trouble, however, as the combination of Vista along with Logitech's G15 keyboard, and G25 wheel proved to be the cause of many issues (such as stuttering video, stuttering game play, and terrible save speeds in games that previously saved in moments, not minutes). In the end, pulling the keyboard was all it took to normalize matters ... With Vista, a sacrifice must always be made.

And yes, it really is called The QuadFather.

Those familiar with *rFactor* will instantly be at home when reaching the interface after, well, not much of an introduction. No head-banging screechers or flipping cars here, you go gently from licensing screen to main User Interface. Fine with me, I get tired of all the craziness sometimes, and those intro' videos really get me down. Especially when they stutter like crazy on a Vista install. So there you are, installed, start, pick a menu selection.



***ARCA Sim Racing* is gorgeous—from the sound of the V8 to the models to the in-cockpit view, it would be a hard man indeed who would fault it in the graphics department. Beware, however, because beauty always comes with a price, and you'll need a high-performance spec' PC to run it in all its glory ...**

Now, don't mistake this for *rFactor*, or a mod of such, simply due to the similarities in the UI.

Graphically, the interface and sub menus are all extremely attractive, and redesigned in such a way as to vividly reflect the licensed, stock car nature of this product. You can tell a lot of effort was spent here, and, the more you look at it, I suppose you could say the less it looks like *rFactor*. Then again, I sure hope some things

are similar as I need stuff like 'Options', 'Testing' ... you get the picture...

I won't bore you with the details, but before I knew it, I had my wheel set up, my car selected, the track loading, and my body arched forward in great anticipation of what had finally made it out the door of The Sim Factory's simulator mines. I chose Nashville first, as it is one of my favorite tracks, and I am very comfortable there.

I also chose this track because, having driven so many laps there in earlier builds, it would not be a difficult matter to compare the feel of that 'snapshot' to the feel of the final, release product.

In other words, if it got all 'arcaded up', I will be able to tell in about the time it takes to drive out of the pits. And there would be points at risk, don't think there wouldn't be! No sir, '185%' score is not a Bob Simmerman guarantee! I may have been born at night, but I wasn't born last night, and if this thing took a turn at the Gaming Division, I assure you, kind readers, you will be the first to know.

I think I sat in the garage at Nashville for about ten minutes, listening to the sounds of my engine, at idle, all 800 plus horsepower of it. You just can't mistake, or fail to appreciate, the throaty rumble of a high powered small block V-8 at idle. I then used the camera keys to check out some of the other cars as they made their way around the Tennessee track, sometimes riding in the car, sometimes riding along in one of the many car cameras. And yes, it is similar to the *rFactor* swingman camera—but if it ain't broke, why fix it? Though, I should add, many have never been big fans of ISI replay systems to begin with so, if you're one of those ...

A nifty feature in the replays is the 'End' key cameras. Tap that baby, and you now control a nifty stationary camera that is mouse-movable by default, and extremely movable if you take the time to assign camera functions and positions to keys or buttons, using the in game controller mapping menu. Tap it again, and move to the next camera. Another neat thing, get to an AI car and use the 'Page Up' key to initiate the TV Camera, then, just as he is about to go by, switch to the 'End' key camera. As he approaches, then goes by you again, immediately tap the 'End' key again to position yourself for the next perfect view shot. While not perfect, the camera system is quite complex, and for those who really need a good

look at things, the camera system in *ARCA Sim Racing* is worth the effort to learn and utilize. All the more ability to view the gorgeous tracks and car models.

Having seen and enjoyed plenty, I began to slowly make my way out of the garage stall, the default starting point in *ARCA Sim Racing* when you hit the track ...

## **On That Track**

Well, not so damn fast. The first thing you should do is hit some sort of external camera view and figure out how to actually *get* to the track surface! As you make your way to the track, you begin to get an idea of how meticulously detailed the tracks really are. The garage area, while not the level of detail as the actual racing area, is nevertheless full of things you would find at a real race track. Gas pump islands, for example. But don't go on too much of a sightseeing tour as driving the wrong way in the garage areas will land you in trouble, the 'Wrong Way' sort. Take your time, find the exits—there are often more than one—and do it like the big boys do. For many, this may be a trivial bit, but it does lend a bit of extra reality to what is quickly shaping up to be a positive feeling ...

After only a few laps, it was apparent that the excellent physics/tyre/track system had not only been as good as those earlier views, it had obviously been tweaked just enough to further enhance the realistic feel of this simulator. I didn't do a lot of fiddling around with my G25 for this, just made sure that Force-Feedback was enabled in the correct direction, mapped a few keys and axes, then hit the road. The Sim Factory has put that Hoosier tyre data—as well as unprecedented real-life ARCA engineering access—to good use. You feel it baby, you feel all 3,500lbs of this car, and it drives just like you might expect.

That is, if you jam it in the corners like some sort of dirt car, plan on making some epic visits to the wall—while, if you manage to keep it off anything that doesn't

move, *you'll* be moving at about the pace of a glacier. Give it the respect it deserves, however—coax that monster into the corners with the right amount of finesse—and you will be rewarded not only with your car intact and competitive laptime, but by a wondrous feel to boot. The satisfaction brought about by the feel of *ASR* is excellent; you feel it in the visuals, and you feel it in the wheel, as well.

While we're on the subject of tactile experiences, I should add that, according to the real-world ARCA guys, the feel they get in their cockpit is different to the one offered us through our Force-Feedback wheels. On the other hand, since we are not feeling the car in the 'seat of the pants', some sort of visceral connection to what the car is doing is obviously needed, and *ASR* uses both sound and an excellent Force-Feedback to achieve this very thing with aplomb. Let's call it extremely well done, convincing, immersive, and, well, damn fun, and leave it at that.

Another aspect much appreciated by this sim-fan is the inclusion of great default setups for the tracks. From the gearing to the suspension component settings, the default setup is an excellent demonstration of neutral balance in a car, and although you won't set world records with this one, I can't think of a better place to start. Hats off to The Sim Factory for taking the time to provide excellent default setups, which is something of a rarity in simulators nowadays.

Of course, being sim-racers, I doubt any of us will be using the default ones for too long, so let's take a peak in the garage. Every setup option you have ever seen in any stock car sim or mod is there and, for the most part, works as advertised. Remove too much wedge, and you will spin out easily. Add too much, you paint the wall with the side of your car. Time spent in the garage is well worth the effort, and you certainly will not want for options.



ARCA Sim Racing ships with ten tracks, not the full compliment of tracks visited by the ARCA/ReMAX series. Rumor has it that ASR will patch the sim with add-on tracks sometime in the future, and the option of third party add-on tracks has not been ruled out either ...



To make a long story short—the Guinness is almost empty—this thing drives like a dream, and you will spend a lot of rewarding time in the garage tweaking realistic stock car settings. Folks, you just can't beat real tyre data, or access to real racing teams, and it shows in vivid InfiniChrom here. An absolute pleasure to *simply drive*. This means, more likely than not, a most suitable thing to race.

Grip levels are also a dynamically changing thing, similar to what we have seen before with SimBin's 'LiveTrack', but, obviously, to avoid copyright infringements, different, and, further, are a non-visual phenomenon. But make no mistake—the track surface

grip levels *are* dynamic, and with the help of Hoosier Tire, The Sim Factory has made an effort to further enhance the realism, and difficulty, of stock car racing.

## Offlinery

Here is where many of us will begin to see the first cracks in the shining Armor of Salvation that ARCA Sim Racing may, fairly or unfairly, represent to some of us. You would think that a fully-licensed sim would make some attempt to capitalize on that license, and give the purchaser of the game who may never go 'online' in their life a reason for the purchase. Sure, online has grown in our niche world over the years, but I have always

believed the offliners make up the majority here, and not by a small margin. Put it this way—with full ARCA licensing, I would hope to have an offline season, just racing the AI, to see how I stack up against the 'real' drivers of the series. Too many sims to list have included this mode of play, but I must say, with regret nearby, that this is the one area ARCA Sim Racing is going to let a lot of folks down.

I have spent a great deal of time in the last few weeks just observing the AI, with me on the track, with me off the track, using The Dragon, and using The QuadFather. I [made some videos](#) on YouTube to show my findings. On some tracks, the AI really does not seem all that bad, nor, in reality, do they act that badly. But at other tracks, you are definitely going to see the 'brake slamming' effect. That is, when the AI cross the Start/Finish line after a yellow has been thrown, they *slam* on the brakes, and you, more often than not, drastically alter the front end of your car, and the rear end of some AI car. It is frustrating as hell, and almost an abomination in the face of *Grand Prix 4* and *Grand Prix Legends*, both of which feature offline AI on par with many humans. Ten years on ... *Houston, we have a problem.*

If you are not careful, immediately after leaving your garage stall, it is not uncommon to get slammed by an AI driver as well. Sure, if you pull out in front of them, just like a human, you might get hit, but it is the utterly ridiculous ram jobs that ruin it. The AI cars simply try to drive *through* you, damage be damned. While the on-track AI varies by track, the off-track AI seemed pretty consistent—that is, idiotic and a waste of time. Frustrating. If this is the kind of stuff the AI is going to do, then I would suggest either (A) leave it out, or, (B) make it better. I am talking of the garage area, here, and, by leaving it out, they could just start you in the pit lane when even a single AI is present.



If my 'video filmings' and experience showed me anything, it was that the AI in *ARCA Sim Racing* is, in almost every regard, below the level of that found in *GTR2*, another commercial simulator built upon ISI code. It isn't horrible, it isn't the worst AI I have ever seen, but it is the sort of AI that is damn close to making this a 'multiplayer only' simulator. And, given some recent posts by the developers themselves on their own official support forums, the AI seems to have been nothing more than an annoyance to the developers. Which is ironic, since it's now become a major cause of annoyance to me—and anyone else who wishes to race them.

The different systems (The QuadFather and The Dragon) did seem to yield some differences in AI behavior, but since both rigs ran the sim really fast, it was difficult to pin things down to one computer versus another, speed wise. I let the AI run a fifty lapper at Kansas, by themselves, and I don't think one yellow was thrown. They passed each other and drove side-by-side with precision: It almost looked like a real event. They may have been lined up a bit too much, for too long, but things went pretty well. Toss in a human in the mix, though, and it's like Spartacus in the lion pit—fast computer, slower computer, didn't change a thing, the AI is to human opponents as Britney Spears is to sanity. Not pretty. As I mentioned, some tracks were better than others, and you could learn, somewhat, their tendencies on-track, but for the most part, the AI will be a handful to all but the most tolerant of one and zero buffoonery.

Bummer, but there you have it. You can go so far with practicing with them and what not, but at the end of the day, *ASR* falls short in the AI department. Way short.

## Onlinery

We were bound to hit the sweet spot sooner or later, and for *ARCA Sim Racing*, online racing is the place to be. Not only does this sim boast customized code from that

'other sim', it also boasts that 'other sim's' multiplayer component, and with that being said, not much more needs to be said.

Robust and stable, online racing with *ASR* is a dream come true, and, for many, a definite replacement for the aging *NASCAR 2003*, not only in terms of 'something different for a change', but in terms of 'damn fine to drive.' The Sim Factory managed to deliver the goods with the online experience, and you won't find a single magnetic wall in sight. You may find a wall-rider, but that is why you should be in a league, to avoid that sort of thing. Also featuring 'SimStatsLive'—basically a rebranded 'RaceCast'—the multiplayer component of *ASR* hits home on all levels, and I absolutely recommend it to anyone even remotely interested in online stock car racing.

Be careful out there though—with fully-modeled aerodynamic effects, if you draft up to someone too quickly, you *will* get to experience the excellent online collision model just fine. Not that we want that sort of thing, but bump-drafting at a restrictor plate track, online, is pretty much a sure thing. Personally, I have been on a server with approximately fifteen humans and ten or so AI, and not a hitch in sight. Of course, even the best multiplayer code is limited by the connection, but if you have a good 'un, the online portion of *ASR* is the best-in-class.

## Closing Bits

*ARCA Sim Racing* has, without question, met the benchmark set years ago by Papyrus, and for many, the bar for stock car racing simulators has just been reset. But there are a few disappointments, as well as some strange omissions.

First and foremost, the AI is really in need of some repair, and I hope that a future patch can address, at the very least, the worst of their behavior. Another thing I



fully expected to see was some sort of 'dirt and grime buildup on the windshield' effect. I don't know if this is planned for a future release, or, perhaps, deemed simply not worthy of inclusion, but this immersion-enhancing effect (which is now pretty standard in most sims) is noticeably absent. There had also been some discussion of a telemetry module, but that did not make the release version either. That in itself would have caused a big hit in the final score were it not for the fact that a browse of the forums will reveal some information as to how well the *rFactor* telemetry plug-in is working in *ASR*. Still, that is a work-around, and surely a simulator that takes itself seriously should have come with a telemetry module in the DVD. There are no pit crews either, which is fairly disappointing. Certainly the code is more than capable, if *NASCAR Sim Racing* taught us anything, to incorporate a full-blown pit crew.

Am I being picky? Probably, but *ASR* does suffer from what I can only term multiple personalities. At times, *ASR* seems to go for the jugular in terms of realism—full-blown licensing, for example, dynamic tracks, precise physics, magnificent tyre model, beautifully laser-scanned models, inch-perfect tracks—and then it makes concessions for no apparent reason at all.

Like anything else these days, *ASR* excels at most things, and leaves some things strangely unattended to. Added to what I can only describe as some harsh developer comments on the forums—some that astonished me as to their brutality to paying customers (did I say multiple personalities? The difference to the feel of the developers' comments pre- and post-release is quite noticeable)—and *ASR* is a strange beast.

On balance, however, I have no doubt of one thing—*ARCA Sim Racing* is one hell of a good simulator that is now the simulator upon which all others shall, from this moment forth, be judged.

The screenshot shows the ARCA Sim Racing interface. At the top, it says "ARCA SIM RACING AS REAL AS IT GETS". Below this is a "RACE MONITOR" section showing a 3D view of two cars on a track. To the right is a "RACE CHAT" section. Below the race monitor is a "PRACTICE 1" section with a table of race data. To the right of the table is a "CONDITIONS" section with ambient and track temperatures. At the bottom right are "SETTINGS" and "RACE" buttons. The bottom of the screen shows the copyright "©COPYRIGHT 2006-2007 SIM FACTORY LLC".

POS	CAR#	DRIVER	LAPS	TIME	SPEED	GAP
1	29	Bob Simmerman	5	0:55.517	162.11	00:00.000
2	4	T Malsam	4	0:56.678	158.79	+00:01.162
3	34	D Basham	5	0:56.694	158.75	+00:01.178
4	96	R Roop Jr	3	0:56.879	158.23	+00:01.362
5	11	B Silas	2	0:56.889	158.20	+00:01.372
6	6	D Bean	4	0:56.897	158.18	+00:01.380
7	05	R Timmons	5	0:56.993	157.91	+00:01.476
8	13	CC Thomas	5	0:56.999	157.90	+00:01.483
9	016	J Buckwheat	4	0:57.015	157.85	+00:01.498
10	37	M Theriault	5	0:57.019	157.84	+00:01.502
11	28	M Annett	5	0:57.026	157.82	+00:01.509
12	3	J Clements	4	0:57.053	157.75	+00:01.536
13	56	M Thomas	5	0:57.055	157.74	+00:01.539
14	35	C Barnes Jr	3	0:57.094	157.64	+00:01.577
15	59	J South	5	0:57.144	157.50	+00:01.627
16	47	P McGilton	3	0:57.152	157.48	+00:01.635

Conditions: Ambient Temperature: 79 F, Current Conditions: Sunny, Track Temperature: 86 F, Projected Forecast: Sunny

The User Interface has been substantially re-worked from its ISI-based home: However, much of the persistent problems that plague *rFactor*—such as a difficult replay system—remain. Also plaguing *ARCA Sim Racing* is its AI which is poor enough to make *ASR* virtually an online sim only. Online, however, is where this baby truly shines; with the *rFactor* netcode component fully present and paid for, you will not find a better online simulator anywhere, at any price ... sheer joy!

# The Rise Of George Busch

*Rasfigjohn—who calls a Caribbean island home—casts his eyes on ARCA Sim Racing seeking the answer to one simple question ... is it fun? ...*

RASFIGJOHN



SECOND LOOK



# ARCA Review The Rise Of George Busch *continued*



{ ARCA, in Guadeloupe, doesn't have much of a following: But it is the name of the island's biggest funeral parlor! }

I'll be honest with you: Up until January of this year, I was not in the slightest concerned by all the frenzy in the community surrounding the imminent release of *ARCA Sim Racing*. I never read any of the AlphaReleaseCandidatePreBetaPreviews by Bob Simmerman in these pages, and felt about forum posts that droned on endlessly about, "Oh my God, Dale Jr. is beta-testing the game!" the same sense of astonished boredom as I do when watching my wife watch 'Desperate Housewives'. Truth of the matter is, I didn't even know who the hell that Jr. guy was, much less giving a damn whether he was beta-testing a game or not.

And no, I'm not kidding. See, I'm a black kid who was

brought up, and lives, in a tiny French Caribbean island barely larger than Daytona's parking ... not, I'm sure you'll agree, the ideal demographic for NASCAR. Indeed, the NASCAR clichés down here are probably even worse than they are in Europe. My grandmother, for instance, (who used to practice voodoo on our kitchen table using nothing more than what was left from our KFC bucket) used to relate to me some truly awful stories about how NASCAR mothers, dressed in KKK denim suits, survived on a diet of black, screaming children. And yes, apparently they ate the black babies with knives and forks ... go figure ...

Of course I'm kidding ... up to a point. The redneck cliché, naturally, is a hard one to ignore for a black fella,

especially a French one ... but, I'm a sim-racer, and, like any self-respecting sim-racer, I owned the King of NASCAR sims, *N2003* ... but really, that was just for the show ... and the GTP mod.

But the thing is ... by the end of a really hot January, I began to be intrigued by all the commotion in the community: I started to think, 'look, can it be possible that so many millions love this oval racing thing simply because they haven't quite figured out how to turn right yet?' There must be *something* here ... because this sport is huge ... I was like a kid wondering why his elder brother had so much fun in his locked room with his girlfriend. And so, curious, I decided to have a sneak peak, and try an oval race in *N2003*.

Can I use the word 'revelation'? Yes indeed ... some kind of religious revelation came down on me—like when my grandmother did her thing with that KFC breast (don't ask). I was hooked. Now three months after that first race, you can chalk me up as having passed NASCAR 101, and I can even say that Jr. looks damn comfortable with them there Wranglers ... Yes sir, two months spent sim-racing without ever finding much need to turn right has left me hungry for that, "Oh my God, Jr. is *racing* online!" sim.

If you are like me—or rather, if you are like *I was*, before my religious conversion—you probably don't have a clue as to how important—how monumental—was the release of *ASR* for the stock car sim-racing community. It's way more than yet another sim—this is hope, made as DVD—this is heaven, encoded and buyable. This is capturing George Bush, in a bottle, *circa* 2001! That infra-community (oval racing fans) within the larger sim-racing community has had to face much drama (and, alas, even EA Sports) in the past few years, and there are people who will openly cry when they hear the words, 'It's in the game'; others, meanwhile, will openly admit to having nightmares of Dave Kaemmer

# ARCA Review The Rise Of George Busch *continued*

and John Henry deleting their *N2003* folders in the dead of night ... The stock car community was like the lost people of Israel looking for the promised land and, needless to say, our little story also features a King David ... adored and abhorred almost equally by the people.

With *N2003* showing its age, EA Sports (which had inherited the NASCAR license from the departing Papyrus) not stepping up to the plate, and the medley of mods for ISI's *rFactor* not able to displace *N2003* as The King, the news that The Sim Factory had captured the official ARCA license, and was working on a sim using arguably the most successful engine ever produced (overall, I should add, physics, *and* online), expectation was suitably elevated: Add to that the rumors (Dale Jr.), and what you have, with the release of *ASR*, is the biggest sim-racing title since *N2003* itself—it's really that big, when you consider the oval-racing sim-racing crowd may well be the biggest of all.

All these points can probably explain the relative fiasco I've witnessed at RSC's 'TSF Official Forum' during the first week of March. TSF has probably been a victim of its own success, and as the release was scheduled for March first, during that week they had to endure endless posts such as, 'Where is my DVD?', and, 'I checked my mail box five times today and still no DVD!', and, 'Hey Zippy, can you tell me where my DVD is?'

I have to acknowledge Mr. Bill 'Zippy78' Zimmerman at TSF for being both patient and informative—to the best of his abilities, anyway! When you see what happened to the recent release of *GT5P* by Sony, you can understand that, even for huge companies, a release is always fraught with difficulties. And they don't often have the balls to face the customer's wrath.

I still think that TSF should have provided a downloadable version, but the mysteries of PC-gaming creation are too deep for me to argue about here so ... it comes in a box, and that's all there is to it.



***ARCA Sim Racing* is essentially an online-only sim, as their developers have acknowledged ... which means even those who have never had the guts to get online will need to do so if they're to test their mettle against the best ...**

I live in a heavenly island paradoxically forgotten by God when He decided to build postal service depots around the world, so I was anxious about getting my DVD—or not. I was, I admit, among the whiners at RSC, but I received my DVD in my mail box on March thirteenth, which is not bad when you consider it's sort of like Jack from 'LOST' getting mail from his father: Amusingly enough, I actually received the sim *before* some guys in the US of A.

So, now that we're up to date, let's get to the chicken and bones. The install process was flawless and fast. If

you're used to *rFactor*, you'll feel right at home ... which is both good *and* bad. An effort was made to change the User Interface, but it still makes you feel like its *rFactor*. Tweaked, yes, but, like *Turismo Carretera*, you're not going to be too surprised here. I find this disappointing. When I get a new sim, I want to discover a totally new UI—I mean by this, I paid fifty bucks for *ASR*, and I don't want to be reminded that it is built on a platform that I've owned for three years already. Admittedly, however, there are advantages to this: Setting up the sim to your taste, for instance, will be fast and straightforward.



Indeed, even if this is your first taste of 'rFactoriness', if you're smart enough to have a PC and switch it on whenever you need it, you'll be able to set *ASR* up and running without much problem.

Once in the cockpit, the HUD is exactly the same as the stock *rFactor* HUD, but you'll forget this fast when the car engine starts up. I was struck by the beautiful, deep, raw sound of the engine. I had goose bumps—and it reminded me instantly of when I first heard the sounds made by 'ducfreak' for Thome's 'E90' mod for *GTR2*. 'Wow,' was the only word out of my mouth (yes, it's a universal word, and it does mean the same in English, French, and the language I usually speak to myself in—rasfigjohnish). Just pressing the throttle evoked a joyous feeling; I knew immediately I was in for a treat. Yes, sound really is that important.

This obviously brings us to the most overrated word in sim-racing: Physics. So I won't try to make you think that I know anything about physics. For me, physics is simple; in the morning, I wake up to paradise (we don't have weather here)—and in the evening, I sit down and watch the sun fry into the ocean. As for mechanical physics, I have little experience of real-racing, and when I try to remember what that was like, the only word that seems to come readily to mind is ... fun. Fun being the most underrated word in our community. People go on about realism, moddability, tweakability, eyecandyneability, G25plugability, TH2Gability, and all these words and plugins and addons and whatnots, and that's fine by me ... but honestly, I don't care. What I want is *fun*.

So, I won't be discussing physics with you today—there are better qualified persons on the internet to do that job (and from what I read, *ARCA*'s credentials are quite impressive). I learnt English in French schools, and these schools are not famous for teaching foreign languages well: Which is to say, I don't have the sophisticated words at hand to make you understand

how I felt driving the *ARCA* cars. Except for one phrase, that is, which neatly encapsulates (that's French!) my overall sense of the sim after I'd drawn out of the pits and reached fourth gear: 'Incredible fun!' Add that sentiment to the perverse smile that had found its way to my face and wouldn't let go, and I hope you get the picture ...

I'd be remiss, however, not to throw in a thought about the Force-Feedback here: The FFB is excellent (seems as if it just gets better on the *ISI* engine with each passing sim), but it's even better with the Real FFB plugin. I was amazed to read that the guys at TSF had advised users not to use FFB. I can't see the point in paying \$300 for a wheel and not using what I thought was its very soul—the Force-Feedback. If you think like this, just try thirty laps at Salem (I call it the 'bumpy witch') with full FFB. Let me tell you, this is much better than any device advertised by Chuck Norris on the teleshopping shows. You will probably have to stop any sim-racing activity for a few days, though.

The sim is enjoyable without FFB, and I alternate between the two, depending on my mood... and my cramps.

Moving swiftly on (to Turn One), I can also say that the graphics are quite superb. Perhaps, though, a little too superb: You may find yourself suffering a bit of a mental meltdown trying to get decent frame-rates with a two years old PC, especially if you're determined to get a full field of cars without watching them vanish into the distance.

And that is somewhat of a disappointment to me: For instance, if you don't have the HUD turned on (I said I like fun, I didn't say I wasn't a hardcore sim-racer), and you're involved in one of those typical oval-battles with cars left, right, centre, sideways, and what not, well ... the only way you can really tell what position you're in is to count the cars ahead of you. So, if you see nine cars, you're running tenth (yes, they taught us how to

count). But as you overtake the car in front, you realize there are *still* nine cars ahead! And that's because you forgot that, in your quest for a steady thirty frames per second, you set the number of visible vehicles to sixteen with rearview mirrors on ...

This is less important on road courses, of course, but in oval racing, seeing cars popping on and off in the distance is really quite disturbing. I should add that this is something I never experienced with *N2003* ... but then again, I started racing ovals with that (2003) Papy sim with a computer bought in 2007... I guess we can't compare ... since the graphics, here, out of the box, are more complex and dynamic than *N2003* (though not quite as 'warm'), as they should be considering we're talking about five years in gaming development ...

Now, I have to admit something I'm a little bit ashamed of: I'm an offline-racer. Seriously, I'm allergic to real people and online lobbies with all the drama going around there ... I didn't even know the meaning of 'GLA' or 'GL' until this sim came into my life.

You can imagine, then, my distress as, waiting for my brown envelope to arrive, I began browsing the TSF forums only to read posts about the Artificial Intelligence in the sim—or rather, their stupidity! To make matters worse, I then encountered one post by one of the developers who insisted that, if it had been up to him, there would have been no AI in this sim at all.

Now I don't know about all of this: What's the point of an official license if you're not going to have AI? I mean, if it's just an online sim, why not just buy the license for one team, and model that car down to its last inch and be done with it? An official license, surely, means attention should be taken in creating the feel of an *ARCA* weekend: And that, whether the developers like it or not, means AI that tries—as closely as possible—to mimic their real-world counterparts as closely as possible.



With its tag of ultimate realism, *ASR* sees the driver parked not in the pits but back in the garages when he first enters the cockpit. Care should be taken when finding your way to the track, because getting lost in the garages and driving the wrong way is no excuse, and you will be penalized ...

Depressed, I looked for sources of solace over and over on all forums known to mankind—and beyond, like the AUTOSIMSPORT forum where some guy (who shall remain nameless) kept on saying the AI was just great

(adding he had drunk three Guinnesses before he made that statement).

Once the brown envelope arrived, though, the truth was difficult to hide: The AI is not great. And it's even less

great if you increase their number, for what you will get is their little intelligence just sucking all your computer resources dry, leaving you stuttering with rage, and your CPU stuttering under the collective weight of dumb elephants with stickers and contingencies stuck on them.

Was the *N2003* AI great? Even after all the tweaked *PAPY.ini* files? I'm frankly not sure. Whoever tells you he completed an entire offline championship with *N2003* is probably on drugs. (Don't mail me if you did, I don't read mails from people on drugs except for the guys at AUTOSIMSPORT anyway). Honestly, I've seen the worst and the best things from the AI, and there is the root of the problem: Their inconsistency. In a defined condition, they will never react this or that way—it seems as if they can have alternate from the most stupid behavior to the most intelligent without any rhythm or reason (then again, I suppose they are white guys). If they were just rubbish all the time, one could probably work a way to race them, but as it is .... We have, however, promises from the developers at TSF that the AI will be patched sooner or later ... so I guess we'll just need to wait and see on this score. At the moment, though, the AI is weak, and if you're an offline racer only, I'd beware ...

Having said that, the AI is adequate in preparing you for what the developers claim is the (dog) meat and (chicken) bones of this sim: The online experience. *ASR*, folks, is an online sim. And don't you forget it.

If you're anything like me (a black Frenchman on a Caribbean island, yup, I'm sure there are thousands of 'mes' reading this very review!), your entire body has probably gone into an irrepressible shiver at the very mention of the word 'online'. I know, I know, I've been there.

After a couple of bad experiences on my own with the rude robots guys, however, I decided it was time for me to lose my online virginity ... I woke up one morning (sun was shining), ran for five miles around the house (yes, I now measure distances only in miles and inches), took a



shower, put my most virile (and cheap) perfume on, had a decent stereotyped American breakfast (chicken!), jumped into my Wranglers (did I tell you how I'm comfortable with them?), and made my way to my G25, all the while repeating the mantra: 'You're a man, you can do it!'

After an hour sitting on the chair, with the PC mouse in my wet right hand staring at this awful 'Race Online' button, I finally took a deep breath, dried my hands on the Wranglers, and clicked. But not so fast ... First thing I had to do was change my name into something appropriately redneck, like ... oh, I don't know, how about ...George Busch! The last thing I wanted was anyone spotting me wandering around such gloomy places as online lobbies. Moreover, I thought it best that 'rasfigjohn' was not posted on the official wrecker page for *ASR*, forcing me to ban myself and live out the rest of my days on the desert island inhabited by Tetris players.

On March fourteenth, then, the day after he got his DVD, George Busch entered the *ASR* lobby and ... guess what? The next day, 'rasfigjohn' was the one who entered the lobby. Man, I had so much fun on that first day, you would not believe it! I had dozens of races with great people who were more than happy to give this rookie advice, and send him setups: At Pocono, Texas, Talladega ... I had threewides, insides, outsides, I drafted ... I've been bumpdrafted, I bumpdrafted ... over and over and over again. I got rear-ended so hard so many times that, had I the good sense to have saved the replay, I would have posted it on YouTube!

Most of the pickup races I have entered so far have been just great: Clean racing, friendly people (who rarely refer of the size of their penis, but sometimes they do ... it's not that easy, though, to hide with these Wranglers!). And with the 'SimStats Live Site' really live, you can keep a track of all your races which, in my case, will be a permanent reminder of just how hard I suck—Wranglers or not!

Just one thing before you jump into the online world, though: Make sure you get another spotter other than the fool who comes with the sim ...this guy will make you have trouble for sure. I got rid of him quick, and latest news says he's been spotted in an unemployment line in Chicago. Good riddance. The good news, however, is that the spotter plugin for *rFactor* can be used in *ASR*, so install that, get a decent NASCAR spotter pack, and come racin'—'cause I got a big rear-end that be waitin' for your butt!

Which leaves me with precious little to add other than having to thank the good ol' boys who coded *ARCA Sim Racing*: This stock car racing thing, I discovered, is a whole new planet, a subtle kind of racing environment where setup and patience play a key role. People in this community are generally nice and passionate, both in real or the sim world, and are about as far from the clichés I had in mind as possible (Wranglers aside). Many thanks to all of the guys who took time away from their track time to help me out, and for offering me such an interesting sneak peak at a whole new culture.

I must also confess that, in researching this article, I have spent some time running virtually every stock car sim I could lay my hands on: from *N1999* to *N2003*, from *NSR* to *NASCAR Thunder*, from *NASCAR HEAT* to *NASCAR '08*. I won't compare those sims, because they are different from one another in many ways. However, I can state that, before March thirteenth, my favorite ones were *HEAT*, and *N2003*. Since I got my envelope, and stuck *ASR* in the DVD, I can tell you in all honesty, nothing has replaced it, and that DVD hasn't left the slot since then.

No, it's not the greatest sim ever produced, and frankly, I don't care if it's realistic or not (why would I spend hours in front of my PC if it was for getting a dose of reality in the first place?), all I can say is that I've had a lot of fun, met some great people, and that the sim

seems to have been made with genuine passion by people who seem to care enough about their customers to run an official forum where they actually read—and reply—to posts. And this is priceless.

I've come to realize that, in all the abundance of mods and tracks available, all I really needed to be a happy man was a sim with one great car and a few high quality tracks. Sometimes, more is not the merrier. And that, all said and told, is precisely what *ARCA Sim Racing* is: One helluva good time ...

Hope to see you on the track! I'll be the guy wearing his Wranglers!



## Pros & Cons Of ARCA Sim Racing

### Pros

- DX9 gfx from the gmotor2 engine
- Brilliant physics, tyre, and dynamic track models, and official seal of approval from real-world drivers and teams allied to Hoosier Tire info
- Intense Force-Feedback, and realFFBplugability
- Still great without Force-Feedback (the professionals say running it *sans* FFB is the closest thing to real)
- Multiplayer best-in-class
- Ear-blasting, gut-wrenching sounds
- Full ARCA track, car, driver, and livery licenses
- Gorgeous graphics all around with laser-scanned car models
- Great replay camera views, fully mappable

### Cons

- Poor AI
- Replay system that we're all tired of
- Only ten tracks in shipped release
- High-end specs means finding the ideal solution for your PC is going to require a bit of work





# Swing Lo Sweet Chariot

*Laurent Evenisse was once dubbed 'the man who saved rFactor' in these pages—so what happened to the Frenchman since that interview back in October 2005? Well, go figure, the man who saved rFactor is now working for them ...*

IVANASKEW

Back in Volume 1 Number 10 of AUTOSIMSPORT, Laurent Evenisse (better known as modder extraordinaire 'Lo'), Digital Arts teacher at Pau's College of Art and Design, explained why many felt then (and still do today) that his F3 mod saved *rFactor* from itself, offering, as it did, a trim, well-designed car that slotted neatly between the slow trainers, and the ultra-quick Formula One-like cars that were released with the sim.

Lo, of course, also made history by being the first man to release a mod for *rFactor*. But the real reason why we wanted to catch up with him was that the grapevine suggested that the wicked Brabham BT52 (released by someone called 'SantarF' over at rFactorCentral) was none other than our man Lo at work in a Santa disguise ...



# Side-by-Side Swing Lo Sweet Chariot

*continued*

## Brabham BT52 In Words

In 1983, with the death of Gilles Villeneuve still fresh in the mind of fans and the Formula One regulatory bodies, the era of ground effects came to an abrupt end. This meant that the clock was essentially reset some five years earlier, with all cars having to come to the grid with flat underbodies from front to rear axles.

Brabham—who had been slowly coming to terms with their BMW turbo units for the previous two seasons—had finally managed a win (BMW's maiden Formula One win) in 1982's Canadian Grand Prix with Nelson Piquet, but that was the highlight of what was a dismal season, and one to forget for Bernie Ecclestone's team. Or, at least, almost to forget, since the 1982 season did see South African designer Gordon Murray invent (or perhaps re-invent would be a better term) the strategic pitstop for the first time.

For 1983, though, all the elements were in place for Brabham to chase the title: Nelson Piquet was in his prime, the BMW turbo was in its prime, and Gordon Murray was in his element, designing a sleek, dart-shaped car along with an absolutely gigantic rear-wing (possible since the BMW turbo was reputed to be kicking out somewhere in the region of 700BHP in race trim, and 1,000BHP in qualifying trim!). The fuel stop strategy tested the previous year (successfully) also allowed Murray to narrow the car with a smaller fuel tank.

The car would go on to propel Piquet to the world championship, thereby giving Brabham its final hurrah as a manufacturer (Bernie held on until 1988, before selling the team which then, mid-way through the 1992 season and under the ownership of the Japanese Middlebridge Group (who famously, it is alleged, fed Exed the entire car to the Phoenix Grand Prix in 1990!), went into administration and vanished for all time), BMW its first championship, and become the first turbo-powered car to win a Formula One championship. The BT52's place in Formula One history is thus assured, and Piquet maintains, to this day, that it was one of the 'easiest' cars he has ever driven. Which, when you think about it, is quite a statement considering he had about 1,000BHP pushing him around Monaco!

The mod is available, of course, at rFactor Central, and if you haven't yet given it a spin, you're missing out on one of the highlights in rFactor's history.

## Brabham BT52 In Numbers

### Engine

Configuration: BMW M12/13 Straight 4

Displacement: 1,499 liter / 91.5 cu in

Bore/Stroke: 89.2 mm (3.5 in) / 60.0 mm (2.4 in)

Compression: 6.7:1

Valvetrain: 4 valves/cylinder, DOHC

Fuel Feed: Bosch/Kugelfischer Fuel injection

Aspiration: KKK Turbo

### Drivetrain

Chassis/Body: Carbon Fibre Monocoque, Rear Subframe

Suspension (fr/r): Double Wishbones, Push-Rod Operated Coil Springs Over Dampers

Steering: Rack-And-Pinion

Brakes: Carbon Discs

Gearbox: Brabham/Hewland 5 Speed Manual

Drive: Rear Wheel Drive

### Dimensions

Weight: 540 kilo / 1190.5 lbs

Wheelbase/Track (fr/r): 2845 mm (112 in) / 1753 mm (69 in) / 1651 mm (65 in)

### Performance

Power: 600 BHP / 448 KW @ 9500 rpm

Torque: 450 Nm / 332 ft lbs @ 8500 rpm

BHP/Litre: 400 BHP/Litre

Power To weight: 1.11 BHP/KG

(Facts taken from UltimateCarPage.com—This Photo By Alexkoda and rFactorCentral)

armalat parmala  
parmala

parmala  
FIA  
BMW

Chassis/Body: Carbon Fibre Monocoque, Rear Subframe

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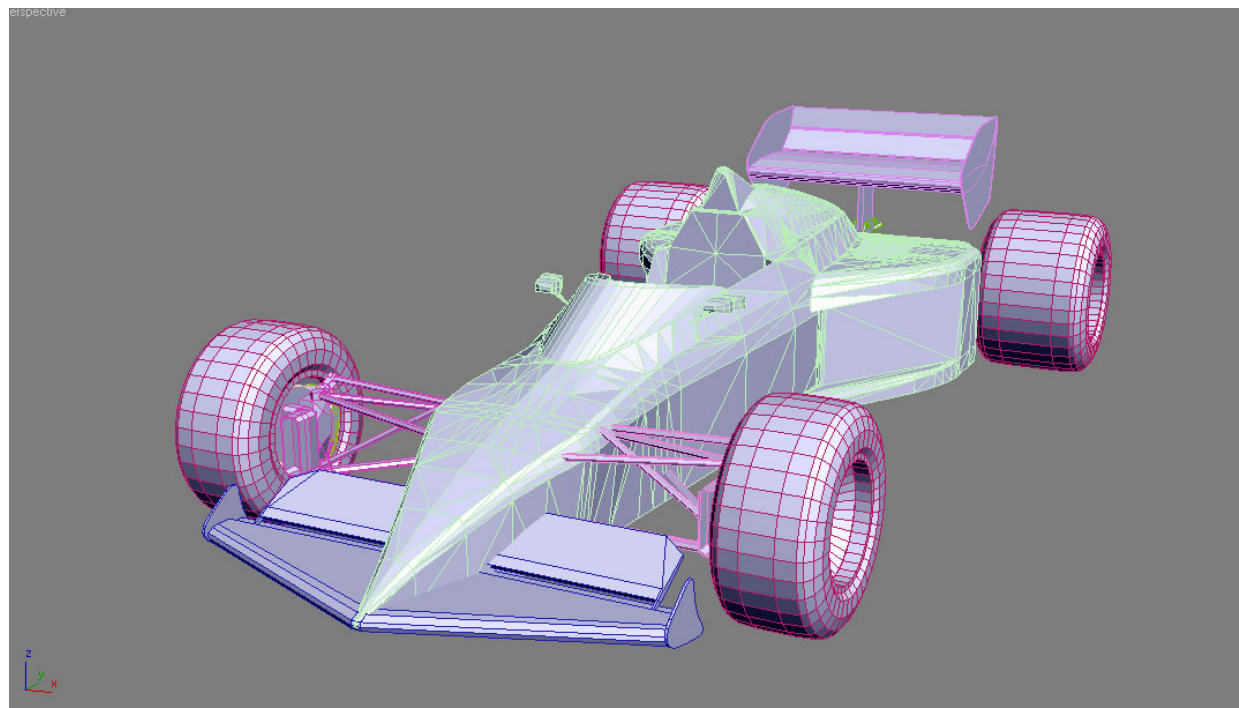


## THE INTERVIEW



**AUTOSIMSPORT:** You are one of the most productive modders in the *rFactor* community—not to mention the fact that you're also one of the community's most consistent (as in consistently good!) modders—could you remind us of some of your best mods, and what you consider to be your best?

**Lo:** Well, my favourite mods ... The BT52, because the quality level is good (I think), and there is nothing (about it) that I can say, 'If I had time, I would rebuild this'. Of course it is far from perfect, but there is no obvious weak point—except from the missing sounds, of course! Then there is the Miniville mod, because it was a very enjoyable artistic work, and I think it looks very good in a very different way. I like to push things in unexpected directions, and you can build very unique products this way. Finally, of course, there is the Panoz. It was a lot of work, a lot of different vehicles. I think the Panoz GT2 is one of the most underrated cars, and I am happy with the cockpit, while the sounds are pretty good, and the handling is a bunch of fun. Maybe this one is my own favourite car.



**AUTOSIMSPORT:** After the success of your F3 mod, you were approached by ISI for a more 'formal' role—could you explain what happened, and what your role now is, and what you're doing at ISI in as much detail as you can?

**Lo:** What happened is very simple, Gjon {Camaj} asked me if I was okay to let them include the F3 mod in an upcoming *rFactor* update as a new open wheel car, the 'rF3'. Of course I was! This release had some success, and Gjon threw me 3D/2D work on the Panoz mod. I was very happy to work on official *rFactor* content, and it began to change my life because I started thinking about making this a real job. I told Gjon that, if there was an opportunity for him to hire someone, I would love to work at ISI. And it happened, and it was kind of dream came true. Now I am still building cars

(modeling/mapping/skinning), but also human characters as well (drivers, pit crews, and so forth), and other things as well.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Casting an eye on the modding community that has risen around *rFactor*, what are your feelings, and do you feel modders are now getting to grips with the MOTOR engine and pushing it to its full potential?

**Lo:** Some of them are really doing an awesome job. The recent 'MMG F1' mod looks stunning, it is superb and runs flawlessly, a good example of how far you can push *rFactor's* graphical engine. Same thing with Virtua\_LM tracks. More generally, I think we have very nice external views for a lot of mods, but cockpits may be the weak spot, because it is by far the hardest and the less fun part of the work.



Lo was ISI's go-to man for the Panoz addon, having built the models, as well as doing the sound ...

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** The Brabham BT52 mod—which is on my top-ten mod list of all time—that was released under the name of ‘SantarF’ (we know it’s you) ... can you give us the background behind its creation?

**Lo:** I started it a long time ago, before the F3 I think. This car has always been very special to me, since it is my first Formula One, the first car I clearly remember from my young years. And I felt immediately in love with this car, this unique and brilliant design was so obvious ... So, when I learned how to bring a vehicle into *rFactor*, I thought the BT52 would be cool, I even wanted to extend it to a full 1983 F1 mod. But that was incredibly optimistic; in fact, I was far from getting an idea about how much work such a mod would have needed! I started the BT52, but never finished it (I also started the Ferrari and McLaren), and it soon became my ‘lab car’ on which I tested all I was learning. Recently, I was cleaning

some folders, and I found this work in progress. I thought it was a shame to leave this unfinished, and I tried to give it a decent update and close the case. It didn’t take very long to get the graphics done, and Michael Borda gave me precious help for the physics—I already had all the engine/suspension/chassis specs—and he did his little magic to give it life.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Any chance of more cars coming from this unique era?

**Lo:** Not in a close future.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** What are you working on presently?

**Lo:** An incredible amount of things I unfortunately cannot talk about!

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Could you discuss the highs and lows of the *rFactor* engine for modding in as much detail as you can?

**Lo:** From a modder’s point of view, I think the high is the

platform itself. You have a very high-end 3D and physics engine to play with which makes it easy to get objects in-game. The tools work very well, and when you have setup your workspace properly, you can really see quickly how your current project is looking. It is also a very open environment, and you can edit a lot of things quickly with a simple text editor, and you can edit almost everything. I have done some mods for First Person Shooters (*Quake 3*, and *Unreal Tournament*), and it was really a pain to edit things, really far from what we have here. On top of the platform, though, is also a great community: you can find help and how-to for everything you need, and the resources are amazing.

I don’t see a lot of lows; you may have some issues with your first attempts, but it comes more from 3DSMax complexity than the *rFactor* engine itself. Setting things up for a good workflow can be difficult when you are a beginner, especially with materials ...

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** As an insider, if someone had to ask you for opinion, would you say the best mods are still ahead of us—or have we seen the best already?

**Lo:** We are still waiting for a mod that gathers the best graphics, best physics, and best sounds. As for the graphics, the limitation is in the hardware—the *rFactor* engine can handle much more detailed tracks and cars {than we’re seeing at the moment}. I’d say that we currently have doubled all specifications for cars since *rFactor* was released—I’m talking about poly-count and texture sizes here. So, I think that we can see that every month brings an improvement over the month previous. On the subject of physics, we already have very good things, but who knows, we still can have pleasant surprises. Big projects are still in progress, and I hope some of them will be published—NAGT being one example. It is very hard to predict how good a mod will be; some of them seem to gather all the needed ingredients to have great success, but you can’t find a single server running it ...





The 'Noddy' mod, which eventually became the Miniville mod for rFactor, was Lo's first entry into modding—it started life, however, as an N2003 mod before the Summer of Discontent in 2005 put pay to the project ...

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** If someone had to ask you for one choice, which mod would be, in your opinion, the absolute best ever produced for rFactor?

**Lo:** 'GP79' is far from perfect (cockpits could be really improved), but it may be the most enjoyable mod. Physics are very addictive, and there is a good balance

between immediate fun and {the all important} learning curve. I have to say that I like it when everything is not given in the first minute, when you have to practice and learn. Now I'd like a new version with graphics at the same quality level as the 'MMG F1 2007' mod, it would be by far the best possible rFactor racing experience.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** Could you tell us a little about the difference in working with the Panoz—for which, I assume, you had basically all the plans since this was an officially licensed ISI product—and the Brabham, for which you must have had a hard time finding reference information?

**Lo:** There was a great difference indeed. For the Panoz mod, we had full support from Panoz, feedback from the LNT team, and beta-testing with the real car's drivers (Tom Milner). I had really good sources for the graphics and sounds (I did the sounds too for this mod)—honestly, that was a perfect workflow.

For the BT52, it was the exact opposite! The only available source is the web, and there was a lot of difference from one site to another. I tried to gather all I could, then keep what I could confirm {via numerous sources}. That was not too hard for the chassis, but the engine power and specs seem to be over-estimated on some places. This is the problem when you work on 'legendary' content, some people may be confused between legend and history. It's up to you to sort it out. I also used a lot the drivers' reports—that was pretty useful to get the main behavior of the car, to get an understanding on how it handled. I also had some great documents with {designer} Gordon Murray's feelings about the car, what direction he gave to the project, how he planned setups and strategy, and so forth.

**AUTOSIMSPORT:** While you were building the Brabham, did you find that the ISI engine was lacking in any way in terms of what you could model for the car's physics. I know Renato had problems modding the ground effects cars of 1979 with the rFactor engine ...

**Lo:** Fortunately, the BT52 is very primitive on the aero side. No ground effect, just simple wings on front and rear, it is a typical 'mechanical grip' car. So, no, Michael didn't mention any issues.

# An Insider's Look

*Sergio M. Bustamante explains how GPLegacy saved the Mexican round of A1GP, got involved in a riot, and then watched the race in their very own VIP suite track-side along with seventy-five invited guests. Oh, and did we forget to mention A1Legacy's simulator?*

**SERGIOBUSTAMANTE**

Photos: Bogart Escamilla,  
Enrique Mora, Clara McLean  
Courtesy of GPLegacy







GPLegacy guests from Mexico and France got the VIP treatment to learn everything about the A1GP cars. Kevin, Team Mexico's Engineer, is bottom left.

The World Cup of Motorsports visited the historic Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez for the second time, and GPLegacy was there to give AUTOSIMSPORT an insider's view not only of the race, but of a series that is going through unprecedented growth this season.

México, of course, is definitely keen to remain on the race schedule for years to come, this directly influenced by A1GP's ambitious plans for growth and sustainability. Ferrari's involvement—supplying the series' spec' 700BHP engines—sees them committed

through to the end of the 2009 season, and along with developing countries finding a home for their nascent motor-sport talents, A1GP's future has never been stronger.

A1GP has been a dream come true for GPLegacy too, and for this year's Mexican round, promotion was a big challenge, not least because it saw—or rather didn't see—the sponsorship from Telmex as in years past. The reason behind Telmex's withdrawal is a situation that only people on the inside are able to reveal, but the popular rumor suggests that there was a breakdown in expectation between Team México and Escuderia Telmex when it came down to which drivers would be fielded in the Team México car. That is common enough, of course, in motor-sports, where certain entities—in return for their sponsorship—want to promote 'their' drivers. Team México, on the other hand, wanted to give young guns a chance in the series, and the conflict went sadly unresolved.

We hold Telmex in very high regard, and the brand has certainly promoted motor-sports to unforeseen levels in our country. That said, their (alleged) insistence on who got the drive would have seen Team México not fielding such exciting talents such as Picho Toledano, Esteban Gutierrez, Fernando Labardini, Alejandro Sanchez, and David Garza, and even drives for more experienced drivers—like Michel Jourdain Jr, David Martinez, and Jorge Goeters—would have been nixed.

Now don't get me wrong, some of the best talents in México are certainly supported by Telmex. They are led by one of the most renowned drivers in this country, the now legendary Jimmy Morales. Jimmy is a great guy, and has certainly been crucial for the development of Escuderia Telmex, which has become involved in many categories (stock cars, open-wheelers, touring cars, and so forth), something that hasn't been seen in México since the glorious days of Guillermo Oliveras, who contributed to Adrian Fernández with a similar programme that ultimately involved brands like Quaker State, Firestone, Tecate, and

Herdez, and propelled Fernández to superstardom. Fact is, as we all know, in today's racing climate, success is dependent strictly on the money that a driver can bring into a team, and an organisation that can back a driver to the hilt financially is an organisation that cares about its motor-racing heritage.



The 2007 grandstand, and (lower photo) the 2008 event!



GPLegacy's fifteen non-stop days of promotion for the race travelled all over the city, and offered people the opportunity to drive the A1 car at the Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez.

Indeed, some of the best drivers in México—Chava Duran, who, after a struggle in the British Formula 3 Championship, is now thriving in the World Series by Renault, and Juan Pablo Garcia, who also drove for Team México at the end of last season before Telmex pulled

him in so he could drive in the World Series by Renault once again—are well supported by Telmex, and for that, all of us Mexican motor-sport fans should be grateful for their involvement. But, equally, you can see the challenge of finding solutions to inner-conflicts of interests within motor-sports management and funding.

To demonstrate how, sometimes, the requirements of sponsors affects the competitiveness of a team, one need only look at the case of Checo Perez, who has proved his mettle in the Formula BMW Championship, but, in A1GP, was clearly out of his depth. Then you also have in Escuderia Telmex's Toño Perez, and Rogelio Lopez, both great drivers, but whose talents are better suited toward stock cars than A1GP or open wheel racing.

Since most of our readers aren't actually from México, this might seem a but incidental to the A1GP race: However, it is a small taste of what goes on behind the curtains of a major event, and what happens at probably all sporting events around the globe. That is, everyone wants their cut, and sometimes, their cut involves cutting someone else out of the loop. At which point, it all goes pear-shaped, and we land up with the situation that surrounded this year's Mexican round of A1GP.

## Chaos

With Team México already reeling from the Telmex situation, Ocesa—the largest events promoter in México, and ostensibly in charge of promoting and selling tickets for the race—pulled out of the event on the eve of the race itself, leaving behind what I can only describe as total pandemonium. The whys and wherefores of their pulling out are, of course, complex, and probably left for another time, but the consequences were—looking at it from a distance—quite amusing. What we had was the A1GP circus coming to town to attend a race for which there was to be absolutely no promotion—or, indeed, tickets! Chaos, as they say, ensued. For instance, what



would the A1GP series' sponsors make of empty grandstands come race day? And the global TV audience, what would they make of that?

And here, indeed, is where the adventure started for GPLegacy, along with the other groups who were hastily put in place to find some sort of solution to what I can only describe as a disaster that would have sent tidal waves of repercussions throughout Mexican motor-sports.

Sixteen days of 'local' promotion—literally from store-by-store, to commercial centers, parks, and some other—interesting places—throughout México City was the only solution as to how to build interest to this international event ... and that is what we did.

The promotion was a team effort, of course, that involved GPLegacy, México City's government, a new company involved with ticket sales (E-Ticket), and a full group of motor-sport hardcore fans alongside the Moller Agency, Brokers, Carlos Aldana, Carlos Herrera, Truck Vision, and Luigi Mira Entertainment.

Without enough resources, we embarked on a promotional campaign that involved taking A1Legacy's simulators in the official A1 Team México bus all over the city in order to offer a taste of what the championship is about, and promoting ticket sales right there on location.

The promotional tour started February twenty-sixth, with the routes being co-ordinated in full by GPLegacy. The simulators were loaded onto the bus March first, and from there, a non-stop rally to make people visit the Hermanos Rodriguez track for this magnificent race began.

National pride and so forth seems to have paid off in the end; that, along with the active support of the Cd. De México government (and some districts in particular), made a major difference in the promotion because, once the city itself was able to promote the event, things really took off.

## Football And Motor-sports Are Not Antagonists

There is a very strange and constricted view by a lot of people in México that seems to take their sporting passions to an altogether sick level. I'm talking about football and motorsports that are completely different and yet united by one thing: Passion. Countries like Brazil and Italy know this, countries like Germany and France know this, countries like the UK and the Netherlands know this, and all of them are top entities in both sports. Here in México, however, it's like some form of mass hysteria has taken over, and being passionate about both sports is seen as some sort of an anomaly, with the result that México is doomed to show little support to all sporting talents, and, sadly, to stay at the bottom of the charts in both sports. Passion is a driving force, so let's make it a driving force toward intelligence, not toward mind pathology.

I say this because we co-ordinated events with México's most important football stadium (Estadio Azteca, scene of a famous World Cup Final of its own in 1970) during some high-profile football matches. The idea, obviously, was to reach between 20,000 and 50,000 spectators at the same venue. We have to emphasize that México is a nation that lives for football, and much of the sponsorship money from private enterprise will vanish into the pockets of these so-called stars (so-called because, if they were worth a fraction of their salaries, México's national team would have actually won something by now!).

In any event, whilst promoting the A1GP at the stadium, the idea—to actually make the stadium an important part of bonding for A1GP drivers—was tabled, and approved. It was agreed that the stadium would be closed to fans in order for the drivers and media to play a friendly against former Mexican national team players and local celebrities. I must confess that the scene was an odd one; this is the fourth largest stadium in the world, and it was utterly empty but for the guys playing on the pitch, many of whom—the drivers in particular—showed themselves to be quite handy (so to speak) with a football.

Players like Ricardo Pelaez, Luis Alvez—better known as 'Zague'—and Negrete, who scored a famous goal in the 1986 World Cup, lined up against the A1GP team. The footballers beat out the drivers 4-2.

Curious about who the best football players in A1GP are?

Well, Jonathan Summerton showed amazing skills and scored the first goal. Khalil Beschir from Team Lebanon scored the second goal, and, indeed, the Mexican squad was down by two goals at that stage. Adrian Zaugg and Adam Carroll showed a lot of skill with ball-handling, too, though passing it proved a little difficult for them!

The four goals from the Mexican squad included an intervention by Patricio 'Pato' Cabezut, actor and anchor in México, who scored twice, then followed by a goal by Ricardo Pelaez and, quote from the A1GP website: "Manuel Negrete dazzled the assembled media by scoring the fourth and final goal of the match".





On the grid with Team Mexico and GPLegacy

## The Race

With what had happened in the background, the Saturday of the race weekend dawned with a surprise—there were more people swarming into the race track than we'd seen for the Champ Car race back in November. Saturday is always a good thermometer for Sunday, and we certainly thought all grandstands would

be below a twenty percent capacity. One look at the crowd on Saturday, though, and we knew that the Sunday was going to be nicely packed with eager spectators.

How wrong we were. Sadly, the sheer amount of people—and interest—in the event was to cause some really ugly scenes: With the lack of resources, what would

transpire on the Sunday was shameful to say the least—so shameful, in fact, that you will probably read about it only here, in AUTOSIMSPORT.

Over 17,000 people were left outside the track. Needless to say, 17,000 extremely pissed-off people is basically a riot waiting to happen, and the 'special' police force—called 'Granaderos' which is Mexican for narrow-minded, illiterate idiots—was called in. Fortunately, there were no gas grenades, but it got awfully close to scenes none of us want to see repeated.



Why did this happen? For one, the pit area, including the parking spots, was well over its limit. It took over twenty-five minutes to get from the tunnel that goes under the main straight to the paddock area—we're talking about less than a hundred yards—so jam-packed full of people was the track. With such a scrum, the police at the gates panicked, and took what they probably saw as an executive decision: They shut the gates, and declared that, "No one goes in, no one goes out. If someone goes out, it doesn't matter who, he doesn't get back in". I've been attending motor-sports events around the world since 1979, and I must confess to never having seen scenes like this at a major motor-sports event.



What this all meant was—despite the interest in A1GP in México, and despite all the hard work to attract interest in the event—the global audience were treated to near-empty grandstands, while the people who wanted to fill them were stuck outside the gates, having a good time with the local ‘special’ police forces.

## GPLegacy's VIP Suite

As for GPLegacy, I'm almost embarrassed to confess that we were seated in comfort entertaining VIP guests in a private area by the finish line, right in front of the Pangaea lounge, and as close to the track as you'd ever care to be. This proved to be the perfect finish to what was one of the biggest enterprises for a small sim-racing community, and we'd like to dedicate this event to AUTOSIMSPORT, rFactor Central, ISI, DesafioVirtual league, Vracar, GhostSpeed, and everyone in the sim-racing community who gives this sport its passion. Believe me when I say this, sim-racing is just starting to break through—but it *is* doing so, thanks to the collective work of this vibrant, and never-say-never community.

Once the race was ready to start, it was—finally—the moment to relax for all of us who had worked like mules in the background, and to enjoy the A1GP races in the sure knowledge

that we had done all we could, and, to quote that nice looking lady, ‘che sarà, sarà’.

GPLegacy sponsored over seventy-five VIP guests with beers, sodas, and all sorts. After the race, we went to one of the best seafood restaurants in one of the zones where we had promoted the race throughout the fifteen days before the race.

For the next issue of AUTOSIMSPORT, we hope to bring the highlights of what has been a phenomenal season in A1GP, and don't forget to watch the Brands Hatch season closer for the season finale. Once again, the Championship is not yet decided. This time the fight for the world title is between Switzerland and New Zealand, followed closely, but without title chances, by France and Great Britain.



*The GPLegacy suite celebrating after the race ... yes, a good time was had by all ... pity about what was happening outside the gates, though ...*







Sergio & Friend ...





# *Simulador* **TURISMO** **CARRETERA**



**Out Now!**

## The Almost Sim

Mercedes World  
Review

*Jeff A Reid explains just why 2003's Mercedes Benz World Racing was so close to being a genre-defining moment ... let down, alas, by its physics ...*

JEFFA.REID

Don't forget to visit Jeff's Homepage for a lot more goodness!

Mechanics 301' has been postponed for this issue due to Prof. Ing Ari Stone's world tour promoting his autobiography: He will return with our next issue: If you would like to have your setup or tuning questions considered by Prof. Ing/ Ari Stone for reply, please send them along to [Jon/Denton@AUTOSIMSPORT.net](mailto:Jon/Denton@AUTOSIMSPORT.net).

THE MAGIC FORMULA!  
Side force as a function of slip angle

$$F_y = D \sin(C \tan^{-1}(B \Phi))$$

$$\Phi = 1/CE)^a + (E/B) \tan^7(\delta^a)$$

$$C = .10$$

$$D = a_0 F_z^2 + a_1 F_z^2 + a_2 F_z$$

$$BCD = a_3 \sin(a_4 \tan^{-1}(a_5 F_z))$$

$$E = a_6 F_z^2 + a_7 F_z + a_8$$

ALL ARE FUNCTIONS  
OF VERTICAL LOAD!

The driving stability is affected by driver wheel slip, which can be controlled by the driver wheel torque. In a vehicle powered by an engine, the torque can be controlled by a motor management system. The sliding mode algorithm is the mechanism behind the design of the traction control system. The longitudinal slip is controlled by the position of the throttle valve. The vehicle model has 7° of freedom & 2-state engine model. A non-linear tyre model for combined slip is used for tyre force computation.



# The Almost Sim Mercedes World Review

*continued*

POSITION  
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LAP TIME  
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FRONT  
**5.+2:27.37**

LAP  
**1 / 1**

*Mercedes Benz World Racing*, released in 2003, is an interesting racing sim with a few unique features. There are seven main locations: Alps, Australia, City, Japan, Mexico, Nevada, Test Center, plus the Hockenheim Ring (the only real-world track in the sim). All seven main locations are huge, fully rendered 3D terrains, and a player can drive a car off-track and go exploring throughout each of the seven locations.

This *can* be done in a race, but there's a free-ride mode that was specifically coded for just such off-piste exploration. There's also a screenshot mode (V key) that allows a player to move the virtual camera anywhere within, or above, one of these massive 3D areas, and optionally drop (R key) the car from the virtual camera position to relocate the car. In addition to these colossal landscapes, there are airborne objects, balloons, gliders, planes, and even a flying saucer (in Nevada).

There are also 117 tracks and 130 cars. The tracks use various layout combinations of the roads in the main areas. The Test Center includes a set of dirt tracks in addition to a set of road race tracks. The number of cars is huge, a lot of these are near duplicates, but there is a good range of performance, from a low powered van to the CLK GTR, and included are some old cars as well as the current (as of 2003) vehicles.

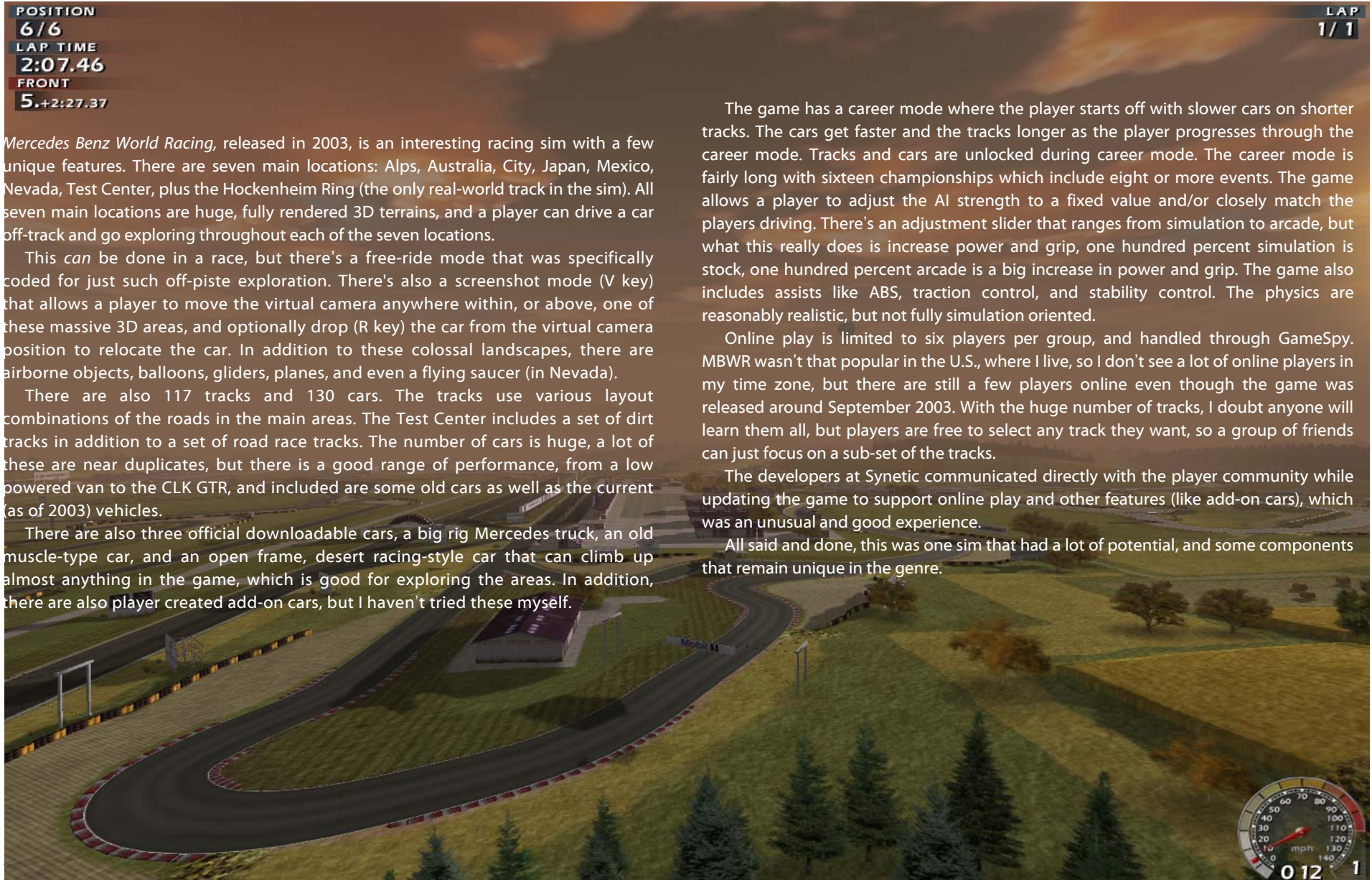
There are also three official downloadable cars, a big rig Mercedes truck, an old muscle-type car, and an open frame, desert racing-style car that can climb up almost anything in the game, which is good for exploring the areas. In addition, there are also player created add-on cars, but I haven't tried these myself.

The game has a career mode where the player starts off with slower cars on shorter tracks. The cars get faster and the tracks longer as the player progresses through the career mode. Tracks and cars are unlocked during career mode. The career mode is fairly long with sixteen championships which include eight or more events. The game allows a player to adjust the AI strength to a fixed value and/or closely match the players driving. There's an adjustment slider that ranges from simulation to arcade, but what this really does is increase power and grip, one hundred percent simulation is stock, one hundred percent arcade is a big increase in power and grip. The game also includes assists like ABS, traction control, and stability control. The physics are reasonably realistic, but not fully simulation oriented.

Online play is limited to six players per group, and handled through GameSpy. MBWR wasn't that popular in the U.S., where I live, so I don't see a lot of online players in my time zone, but there are still a few players online even though the game was released around September 2003. With the huge number of tracks, I doubt anyone will learn them all, but players are free to select any track they want, so a group of friends can just focus on a sub-set of the tracks.

The developers at Syntec communicated directly with the player community while updating the game to support online play and other features (like add-on cars), which was an unusual and good experience.

All said and done, this was one sim that had a lot of potential, and some components that remain unique in the genre.







The majesty of these tracks has never been attempted—much less matched—by any sim since ... let down by a poor physics model, this really was an opportunity gone begging



**EXC**  
SIMULATIONS

3K high-gloss carbon fiber twill  
LED Bar RPM Indicator  
7 Segment Gear Indicator  
Stall/Pit Speed Limiter Warnings  
Advanced Control Software  
Multiple Profile Settings  
Wide Range of Racing Game Support

**SLI**  
SHIFT LIGHT INDICATOR

Stand-Alone Shift Light Indicator



**G25 SLI**  
SHIFT LIGHT INDICATOR

Wheel-Mounted Shift Light Indicator for the Logitech™ G25 Steering Wheel

# *THE VIRTUAL ROADSTER*

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# The Quest For a **Porsche**

*Eliot Earle dissects the best Porsche Carrera Cup mods for rFactor ... do any meet the standards of their real-world counterparts?*





PORSCHE

## The Cars

The Porsche Carrera Cup, with all its local counterparts internationally, including the Mobil1 Supercup Formula One support series, races Type 997 Porsche 911s. The cars are all powered by identical 400BHP engines, and are limited to the same weight (1,140KG, or 1,120KG). Tyres and brakes are also fixed for all cars across the series. It is, though, worth noting that PCC cars differ slightly to Mobil1 Supercup, with the latter having bespoke and exclusive Porsche brakes, as well as being slightly lighter because of this (Porsche Ceramic Composite Brakes weigh twenty kilograms less than the type used in the non-Mobil1 series). Since the start of the 2006 season, ABS has also been dropped from all series.

## The rFactor Perspective

Ever since the mod-group GSMF released their 'PCC 2005' to a mixed welcome from the racing community, the search has been on to find a 911 mod for *rFactor* that not only *races* well, but that engenders the common consensus of it being a fairly accurate representation of what a race-specification 911 is (really) like to drive.

Back in the day, several groups released their own reworking of GSMF's 'PCC 2005' with varying degrees of permission. There was one in particular (by a few French guys) that I particularly enjoyed, but this mod, sadly, was shut down after a failure in diplomacy between the two groups. (It seems as though you could change anything you liked within the GSMF mod *except* the vehicle physics if you wanted permission from GSMF to use their release. The discussion of whether a modder—who, let's be clear, alters the physics of someone else's product—should ethically be permitted to disallow the same process on their product is best left for another time and place.)

Well, that was then and this is now—and those French guys, under the banner of EnduRacers, have released their own 'PCC-FRA 2007' mod to compete with GSMF's 'PCC 2007' release. No-one's talking about a grudge match, of course, but the history of the two groups is rather difficult to ignore—especially in a rag like AUTOSIMSPORT!

So how do these two PCC mods compare to each other? And, more importantly, to real-life?

## German Sim Mod Foundation

GSMF's PCC release includes all the cars from the German, Asian, Australian Carrera Cup, and Mobil1 Supercup series, all derived, what is more, from the technologically-identical 2006 and 2007 seasons. That's some sixty-five or so teams to choose from, if you lump them all in together.

There is no question that the amount of work gone into making this mod has paid off handsomely: From the inside and out, this model is ... handsome ... and also beautiful (depending whether you imagine cars to be male, female or—something else!).

Most mortals will need to use the lower resolution skins though, as the high polygon count, coupled with large textures installed by default, could result in a low frame-rates unless you have a lot of memory on your graphics card. Also, some may prefer to turn off the 360 degree cockpit in the 'Upgrades' section of the vehicle menu.

All this beauty comes with a price tag, and not just in terms of the 900-plus MB hard-disk hoofprint; on my non-NASA specification computer, I find that when I'm racing this mod online, even against only a handful of opponents, I have to turn every graphic setting in *rFactor* down to low to maintain a steady sixty frames-per-second. That said, there is an option during the install process to install low resolution skins.

As with the graphics, the engine sounds are superb. There really isn't much more to be said other than that. Just quite superb.

Setup options are very limited in all PCC/PMSC classes, and to be honest, the base setup you are given is not race-worthy; good for about three laps of your average track, then the tyres are shot due to running at extremely high temperatures. The optimal temperatures are 100C front and 105C rear, but the base setup will push you over 110C on all four corners pretty quickly. I don't know if we are expected to just drive slower to preserve them, and whether we are given a qualifier setup to race on, but I find that after fifteen-to-twenty minutes of driving, the break balance needs moving forwards a notch or two to keep the back behind you.



Avoid all bumps and curbs like the plague, too, as the suspension in these cars is psychotic. One expert commented that he doesn't understand why there aren't more deaths in the series if the figures used are accurate to real-life.

GSMF must by now be no strangers to criticism of their car physics/dynamics. With everything that was said about their 'PCC 2005' release, they must have known that this new one would be heavily scrutinized as soon as it came out.

## EnduRacers

EnduRacers have included the French PCC championships from the same 2006 and 2007 seasons (with twenty-four teams to choose from), into their release.

At a smaller, but still considerably large 500MB install, this car still manages to look great. When I tested it, nothing really stuck out as being any less well-polished than the GSMF version of the same car. So, it is both handsome and beautiful.

The first let-down with this version of the PCC cars, however, is that—coming to it straight from GSMF's PCC—the engine sounds are drab and dull by comparison. Muted, even. Now, forgive me for never having sat in a GT3 specification Porsche whilst it was being driven in anger, but my first thoughts on the sounds that this car emits were—'it sounds like someone doing their vacuum-cleaning in the next room'. Maybe that's what they really sound like from the inside, but I doubt it.

Having only had fairly limited time in the French PCC cars, I can't really comment all that much on the setup you are given to race with, but like in the other classes available in GSMF's mod, setup options are limited here too. Optimal tyre temperature is ninety Celsius all round.

If you rely on auto-blip on downshifts, then this mod is not for you. It will kill you on every corner. The car also feels a lot heavier than the extra ten kilograms it weighs in comparison to the GSMF cars, and churns out slower laps. The handling of the car seems to encourage a much more timid approach to the track, in stark contrast to the wanton abandon with which you can throw the GSMF version around for about two laps before the tyres turn to putty.

Apparently, there are Force-Feedback setup hoops you are required to jump through to stop the car from wandering when you are trying to drive it in a straight line. But really, there is only so far I will go before giving the whole thing up as a bad job.

To my mind, every release needs to 'just work' with the stock ISI FFB, and if there are add-ons to make something feel better, then that is a *bonus*; a great bonus, and more power to any group who puts in the hard work. Having to tweak your existing settings in-game, and also in the Windows control panel just to make the car drive *straight* is, on the other hand, *not* a bonus—more like sheer lunacy. It is not as if this is the only car I will ever want to drive.

Accusations have been made that this car is not entirely built from scratch, where the 3D model is concerned, but, rather, lifted from another sim and converted for *rFactor*. I have no real opinion on this, and I make no accusation myself; it does warrant comment though.

## And The Winner Is ...

If you are, like I am, searching for a great PCC mod then have much fear! For the search is far from over.

It seems as though it is impossible to release a PCC for *rFactor* without courting controversy, be it over the physics model or the 3D model. And it is baffling how two groups can both release the same car which seems to be related to each other like Adam was to Eve. Bearing

in mind these are real-world cars that have strictly scrutinised setup parameters, it is perhaps an indication of the modding community that two mod groups could release the self-same car that are completely unlike in virtually every department. Indeed, it would appear, to my untrained eye, that neither group can even agree on the *weight* of the car, never mind the optimal tyre temperature!

I race the GSMF PCCs quite regularly, and have come to hate the practice sessions. Trying to alter the limited setup options to make the tyres last more than a lap at pace is frustrating. And yet the races are always great. Go figure. Maybe that's more to do with the people I race them with than the actual cars though.

It is entirely possible that a single hour of practice isn't enough to learn a new car, as would seem to be the case with the EnduRacers' offering. But to be honest, the car didn't make me *want* to spend any more time learning it. Setup time was spent trying to beat the car into driving in a straight line on the straights. One short race later, and I was ready to uninstall the mod and remove it from the dedicated server.

Both mods look good, one sounds good, neither handles particularly convincingly, and neither one makes me want to stand up, hand on heart, and say 'This is what racing a 911 must feel like'.

The wait continues.

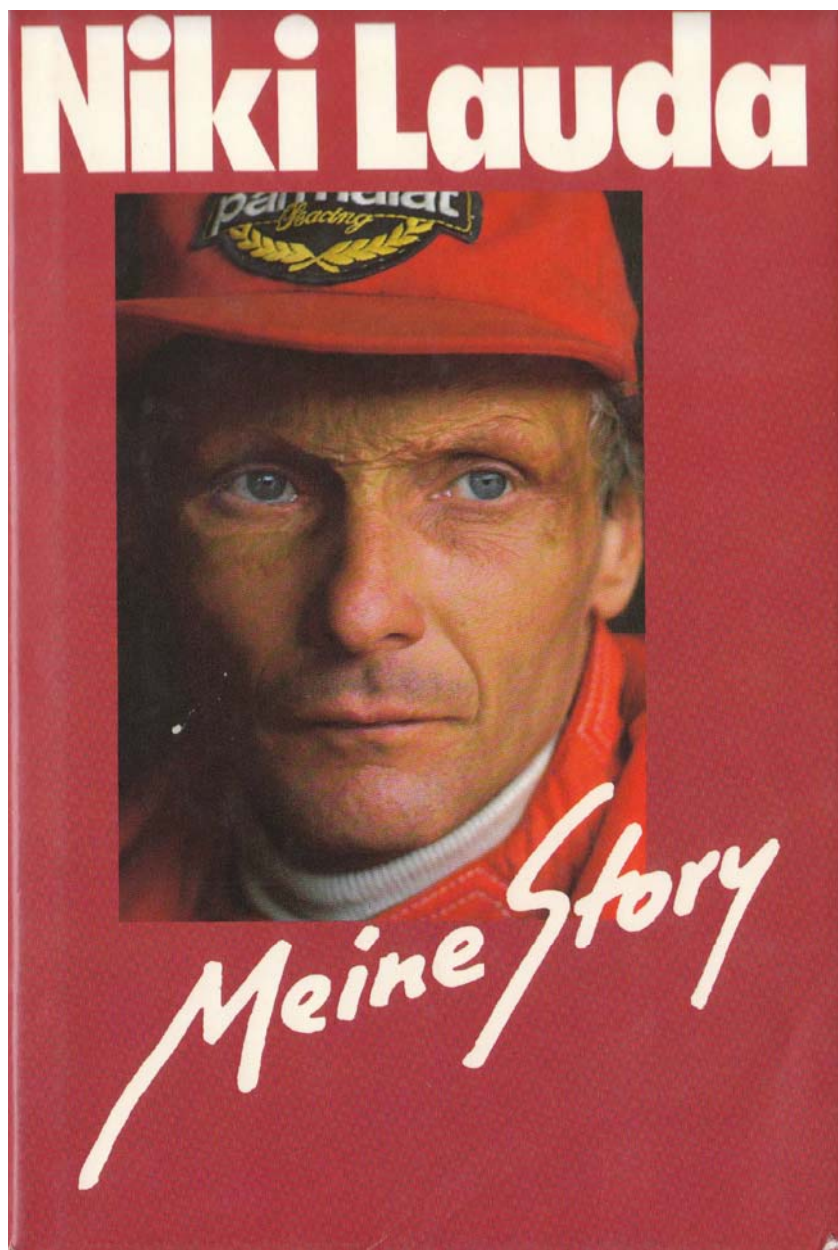


# High Expectations

*Lx Martini remembers the 1984 season that was pretty much a carbon-copy of the 2007 season and wonders—how come no F1 journalist noticed the uncanny resemblance?*







"My relationship with Ron Dennis, however, is going from bad to worse. Somehow, he swings the whole team round Prost. We have the same material, of course, and our cars are prepared with the same tender loving care: it's not that I am put at any disadvantage in material terms, simply that I am upset by the unpleasant atmosphere. A lot of people find it odd that none other than Lauda the Computer should all of a sudden start complaining about lack of human warmth. But I believe I need that warmth and consideration just as much as the next person. I too suffer in a chilly atmosphere."

I kept hoping, last year, that one of the English speaking journalists with whom I had grown up—that is, grown up reading—would have the honesty, or even the integrity, or perhaps simply just the knowledge to take a look at the Alonso/Lewis/McLaren situation through an historical perspective, and come to what (at least for me) was the logical conclusion: That Alonso was yet another victim to Ron Dennis's unflagging ability to alienate the best drivers in the world. Indeed, watching last season's goings-on reminded me so much of 1984 that I sometimes felt as if I had traveled back in time; all the key ingredients from 1984 were there, including another two-time world champion who would find himself given the cold shoulder at *chez* McLaren.

Sadly, I was to be disappointed: Even that old stalwart Nigel Roebuck seemed to be blissfully unaware of the 1984 season, and was content—like the rest, Henry, Windsor, *et al*—to echo the tired old cliché that—repeated often enough—became (as if often the case when the media repeat something often enough) a convenient substitute for the truth.

So what really happened to Alonso last year? The British press—along with, it should be noted, the English speaking press worldwide (in particular the U.S. pundits on SPEED TV)—maintained that it was Alonso's inability to accept Lewis's status as the greatest driver the world has ever seen that caused the friction at McLaren. That Lewis's speed—his brilliance—his sheer majesty forced the 'Latin' into (typical for the non-British races, of course) an enormous sulk ...

For some reason, I was unimpressed with this stereotypical explanation for Alonso's behavior. No, to me, a two-time world champion is not one who buckles under the pressure exerted by a rookie; and I don't care how good the media made Hamilton out to be (not that good, as I will explain further along), Alonso was fresh from beating the most successful Formula One driver in history, seven-time world champion Michael Schumacher in a clean, season-long, epic fight ... and somehow the fact that he had come up against a quick rookie was hardly a reason for Alonso's ... breakdown ... no, there had to be something else ...

But this kind of thinking seemingly carried no legitimacy in the editorial departments of the world's leading magazines and newspapers when it came to the story of Alonso at McLaren: No, despite all the evidence to the contrary, the British press was so carried away by its own delusions that they even landed up spreading the (outrageous) rumor that Alonso had tried to blackmail Dennis and Team McLaren: "Give me preferential treatment," it was alleged Alonso said to Dennis, "or I will reveal all I know about the Spygate scandal to the FIA."

This is not the time to analyze the ethics of such a thing—not the blackmail, you understand, but the fact that Alonso had the ammunition to blackmail Dennis (as it turns out, McLaren were as guilty as hell) to begin with. No, what is on interest is how

the English speaking media—fed on a diet of rubbish about Alonso all season long—seemed all too happy to actually *believe* such an asinine story such as this.

In any event, when I read this story on numerous websites and newspapers, my rage was up (as anyone who reads this column knows by now, when I get 'the rage', all hell is likely to break loose!): It was time to act! For too long had I sat and waited for something—*someone*—to have the guts to call this situation for what it was. *Autosport* (the world's authority on motor racing, it is claimed by many who should know better—this, the magazine that has Lewis Hamilton as the ninth greatest Formula One wet race driver in history {better than Peterson, it should be added}, an amazing conclusion considering he has raced in three wet races in his entire career, ending one in the wall in China, one in the wall at the Ring, and winning the third) was to be the target of my righteous indignation!

After all, I reasoned, in the last decade alone, Ron Dennis has managed to alienate three of the best talents of this—or any other—generation, Kimi Räikkönen, who left McLaren for Ferrari. Juan Pablo Montoya, who got so fed up with life at McLaren that he left the sport entirely and is now apparently overjoyed at running 187<sup>th</sup> in every NASCAR race. And, of course, there was Alonso himself ... who felt so let down at McLaren that he's reputedly delighted to be running in mid-pack as long as it comes with a no-Ron Dennis guarantee. Surely, I kept saying to myself, there must be *one* journalist at *Autosport* who can put two and two together and come up with Ron Dennis versus Niki Lauda.

Even if you ignore what happened to Montoya, it is impossible to dismiss what happened in 1984 when another two-time world champion came face-to-face with Dennis and another of his lightning-quick young gun protégés ...

So, I sent *Autosport* an email, in the hope that they would perhaps be reminded of what I was talking about—after all, the last time this happened to McLaren was only twenty years ago. To add weight to my argument, I sent them a few passages, too, and asked them if they recalled who had written them.

Here're the quotes I sent them: "Back to Monaco, sixth race of the season. Prost heads the world championship. I am second, six points behind. He has pole position, I am eighth on the grid (and in Monaco especially, that really hurts). It rains during warm-up and I am one second faster than the field: I'll never forget the look of consternation on Ron Dennis's face. That was when it became clear to me that he was on Prost's side and I began to sense a strange sort of hostility towards myself that, at the time, I couldn't explain ..."

And further: "My relationship with Ron Dennis, however, is going from bad to worse. Somehow, he swings the whole team round Prost. We have the same material, of



course, and our cars are prepared with the same tender loving care: it's not that I am put at any disadvantage in material terms, simply that I am upset by the unpleasant atmosphere. A lot of people find it odd that none other than Lauda the Computer should all of a sudden start complaining about lack of human warmth. But I believe I need that warmth and consideration just as much as the next person. I too suffer in a chilly atmosphere."

This was written by three-time world champion Niki Lauda, in his autobiography 'Meine Story', published by Motorbooks International in 1986. It remains one of the most honest and well-written bios on the sport by any driver in its history, and is essential reading ... especially, one would imagine, for Alonso ...

My email to *Autosport* ended by asking: Is it possible that none of you recall the 1984 season? How can it be that a magazine such as yours cannot see that we are re-living that very year like a staged drama with Alonso playing the role of Lauda, and Lewis the role of Prost?

Of course, the remake in 2007 had one difference: The difference was that Alonso was not Niki Lauda. That is, Lauda is as cold as they come (he once asked an exasperated journalist, who had been bugging him about going back to the scene of his {Lauda's} 1976 fire-ball smash at the Ring—a smash that disfigured him for life—why he {Lauda} would want to see that place again, and what did the journalist expect him to say? 'Welcome to The Grill Room?'), he is The Computer (a model, so to speak, that was copied by Prost throughout the rest of his career), the most analytical driver of his—or any subsequent—generation. Alonso—while admittedly not suffering from (sadly stereotypical, but true) 'Latin-fever'—is not what you would call a cold, calculating machine. Fundamentally, Alonso is a racer, happiest when, cockled in a team and secure, he can just apply himself to his craft without worrying about the politics in the backroom. So he had no chance, really, when Ron Dennis swayed the team behind his latest Golden Child, Lewis Hamilton.

Lauda makes the point, in his book, that Prost spent much of that 1984 season watching him—studying him (something that Prost himself admitted to later in his career)—with the result that Prost would become known not as The Computer, but The Professor. And there, of course, is the lesson; because throughout that season, Prost went out of his way to make sure he did not alienate Lauda—he learnt from Lauda, and he kept Lauda close. Hamilton, sadly, did not show the same kind of intelligence: In alienating the two-time world champion, he failed to learn from the master ... and his results are now starting to show what a mistake that was.

Let's look at Hamilton's (brief) career and see if we can extrapolate the numbers (something the Formula One media seem keen not to indulge in, for some reason). We can all agree, I think, that the proverbial sword (that split Alonso and Lewis) fell at the

Hungarian Grand Prix of 2007, when Alonso parked his car in his pit-stall in order to block Lewis from completing his final quick lap due to what he (Alonso) felt was Lewis's refusal to stand by the alleged agreement between the two. At that moment, Alonso and Lewis were basically no longer functioning as team-mates. So, let's look at Lewis's results up to that race: 3, 2, 2, 2, 2, 1, 1, 3, 3, 9, and 1 (Hungary).

At which point, by all accounts, Alonso cut Lewis off. Results after that win at Hungary, then? 5, 2, 4, 1, Ret, 7 (end of season), 1, 5, and 13. Broken down, we can say the following: in the races when Hamilton could count on two-time world champion Alonso, he scored two wins, and eight podiums. After, he has scored an equal amount of wins, but, crucially, only one solitary podium. Indeed, in Hamilton's last ten races, he has managed to see the podium only once, and scored two wins (one the fortuitous win in the rain at Fuji, and the other when both Ferraris failed to finish in Australia in 2008).

Numbers do not lie: Though, of course, should Hamilton go on a rampage and win the next few races, and claim the championship, I will be proven to be a complete idiot (okay, so that's already a given, but you take my point); personally, I'm ready to take a bet that this won't be the case. In my opinion, Ron Dennis and McLaren did a huge disservice to young Hamilton by making him believe he could take Alonso on in his first season; the logical and correct way, for me, to have handled that situation was to have Hamilton spend his rookie season learning from Alonso, and playing second-fiddle to the Spaniard. He would have thus watched—and gained a unique understanding—of how to win a world championship. As it is, Hamilton's rookie season taught him only one lesson: How to *lose* a world championship.

There is, in modern Formula One, only one other driver against whom we can compare Hamilton's career: Jacques Villeneuve, who came into Formula One with a championship-winning team, Williams, back in 1996. Like Hamilton, he too finished his rookie season in second place. Like Hamilton, he too won four races in his rookie season. Unlike Hamilton, he chose to watch and learn from Damon Hill, and his results the next season (when he went on to claim the world championship, defeating Michael Schumacher) demonstrates the difference between these two drivers, since Villeneuve just got stronger ... culminating in seven wins in his second season. Will Hamilton win seven races this year? I have my doubts. As for the championship ...

Whatever happens, though, I think I can state something here that is not too earth-shattering—Lewis's hype is just that. In terms of results, he has done no better than Jacques Villeneuve in his rookie season, and is one championship, and six wins behind the Canadian in his second season—and all apologies to Jacques, who seemed a pleasant enough chap, he was no multiple-time world champion, and he certainly was not the greatest all-time.

# GPLegacy's 2008 Program Off To A Flyer

*Sergio Bustamante takes us on his usual insider-ride into the world of sim-racing promotion ...*

SERGIOBUSTAMANTE





GPLegacy–Bridgestone Third Anniversary, Champ Car Mexico

What is left to say about the final Champ Car race (now merged with IRL) in Mexico late in 2007? The race was a fitting (read boring) farewell to an ailing championship, and even Mexico's heroes David Martinez and Mario Dominguez failed to inspire too much interest in the fading series ...

Sebastian Bourdais once again showed that he was in a league of his own in the series, winning his fourth and final championship right before moving to real competition in the Formula One world where we're sure he's going to do an outstanding job. His skills, however, were simply too much for the standard of drivers that could afford to buy a seat in the Champ Car Series.

In terms of sim-racing, however, things were far more interesting: This was the first event where *rFactor* was showcased at the Champ Car Truck, along with—much to GPLegacy's delight—GPLegacy's third produced race-frame over at the Bridgestone stand, and while the simulator in the Champ Car Truck passed nearly without any fanfare, ESPN broadcasters, along with magazines, newspapers, and news websites were simply all over the Bridgestone stand due to the professional nature of the sim-racing competitions happening there; this was by far the most crowded place throughout the weekend.

This event was, for us, a big turning point. The restructuring that started as the result of some stressful situations that always accompany the onset of any new company paid-off handsomely at this event where the vision of people committed to GPLegacy in Mexico came together in a shared sense of purpose. We had reached the goal of releasing a professional race-frame, not based on a fantasy chassis, but actually built by one of the top houses of motor-sports in Latin America in direct manufacturing with GPLegacy's standards, and it felt good to have one of our goals (and hard work) met to such exacting standards. This was pleasing as we'd been having a lot of stressful events of late, and this successful event marked the end to some long faces, and saw new blood join the most experienced event managers of GPLegacy.

The GPLegacy spotters were blessed with the experience of Gonzalo Hurtado, who started with us at first SIAM event in 2005, and the charm of Charly Suarez-Peredo, who is now also fulfilling his dream in motor-sports by being sponsored in an endurance karting team; they were joined by newcomers (but equally excellent spotters) Rafael Brizuela, Diego Colin, and Elliette.

GEOs with an amazing track record with many brand activation events under their belts, like Mike and Vero Terrazas, made sure that the stand was crowded with satisfied people throughout the event with satisfied people.

Coordinators for this event were threefold, with Fernando Garcia-Torres from Bridgestone on the top rung and deeply involved with the event's

logistics, working directly with GPLegacy Mexico's partners in complete harmony, and without any stress or tension.

Mexico's Rising Star Alejandro Sanchez, multiple Kart champion, is already looking for his first opportunity in open wheelers, and it's a pleasure for GPLegacy to take part in both his training and professional plans since 2007.



We think this is an interesting ... ehm, well, orange, white, plastic kind of ... mmm space shuttle arcade rig?

#### **Games For Windows Fest 2007**

Games For Windows Fest 2007, held at the Centro Banamex, featured prominent roles for both Logitech and *rFactor*. Website GameSpot, along with Microsoft executives, mingled with leaders from the gaming industry at this magnificent event which was also an ideal moment for Logitech and GPLegacy to gather strength for the year to come. Bridgestone and HardwareMX were also invited to the event by Logitech, and this alone makes it clear that sim-racing continues its state of growth.

At the event, we also announced and promoted the development of Fernando Cortina's *rFactor* League in Mexico, as well as Desafio Virtual.net, which continues with the same exacting standards, and amazing sense of

# GPLegacy GPLegacy's 2008 Program Off To A Flyer *continued*

dedication by the entire staff (including Oli, Ferito Deutsch, Marcelo Manfredi, Raul Valenzuela, Tim Watt, and the rest of the DesafioVirtual.net crew).

While testing the newest games for Windows, like World in Conflict's evolution, Crysis, Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare, among others, GameSpot took the opportunity to get closer to sim-racing, and particularly to rFactor. The hotlap competition winners got Logitech Gear-shifters, rFactor Licenses sponsored by GPLegacy, and GameSpot special issues along with their exclusive hats, which also furthered our goal to further promote ISI's developments in GameSpot.com.



GPLegacy's Antartida 3 Raceframe



At the end of the day, the staff worked so well, that we were able to enjoy a few races between GPLegacy and Bridgestone's Staff.



# GPLegacy GPLegacy's 2008 Program Off To A Flyer *continued*



Eyes on the future. GPLegacy, already in the know about Champ Car's death in its current shape and form, were focused on the future with their alongside A1GP. Beside the Antartida RaceFrames, Playseat's exclusive A1GP race-frame was exhibited for all attendants to demonstrate the nuances of the 'World Cup of Motorsports'. A1 Team Mexico were promoting A1GP's race to be held in March 2008 at this same racetrack, and GPLegacy got a headstart to make sure this event will reach as many motor-sport fans as possible.



For this event, the participation level between men and women reached a new mark, with fifty-seven male and a stunning forty-three percent female participants (yes, we count). Above, the woman who caused a minor sensation by not only turning a few heads—but turning all heads when she posted the third fastest fastest overall lap of the weekend.

## VIVA ELEKTRA!

### **Vive Elektra—Twenty-five Days Of Non-Stop Sim-Racing At The Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez ...**

The Viva Elektra event held from December 2007 to January 2008 was a first for Mexico City. Viva Elektra, for those who don't know, is one of the biggest stores in Mexico, started by visionary leader Salinas Pliego. His company enjoys a fascinating history (albeit brief), breaking into the monopolies that dominate Mexican business life (think Telmex for communication services, Televisa for TV channels, and the list that goes on, sucking up private enterprise to a rather alarming level) as it did with sheer determination; it now enjoys a status as one of the largest retail stores ever seen in Latin America, while Pliego himself is seen as a hero of sorts (in certain quarters, anyway) by granting credit opportunities to everyone in Mexico—rich and, more specifically, poor—meaning that everything you can buy is available to you at 'very small monthly payments'. (In the end, you might be paying over 200 to 300 percent of the value, but it's the only way that some families are able to afford the goodies). This store is aimed to the most underprivileged families in Mexico, and one of the major contributing factors is the availability of mid- and higher-class goodies at payments as ridiculously low as two dollars per month. Now this company has also taken it a step further.

But what makes Viva Elektra pertinent to this column is the fact that they have decided to begin selling Chinese-made cars in Mexico City. And yes, they're cheap, and you can buy them with very small monthly payments. The cars actually look surprisingly nice (considering their price tag), and they have a solid range, all the way from tiny economy models (that resemble some of the oldest diecast 1/64 to 1/83 models from the company 'Tomica') to some stunning mid-range cars with Toyota engines.

The event was therefore planned to promote the new cars, and they set up shop at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez, in the pit area, with a massive 18,000 square metres of exhibition space.

The event was started December seventeenth, and ended in January sixth, 2008, which gave them the Christmas shoppers' cash as well. Indeed, a unique sight to see in this event was the 'Festival of Lights' which included a lap on the racetrack which was beautifully ornamented with all kinds of Christmas lights, and definitely proved to be a sight to see.

Inside, things were crazy. The pit area served as a giant fast food emporium, serving typical as well as non-conventional food, and all kinds

in-between: The only thing they had in common was their price—expensive! However, people were happy enough to dwell in the long halls. There were Microsoft XBOX areas, Sony with their home theatres, some of them which are not even on the market yet featuring massive screens over 105 inches wide' and worth (according to their people) over 110,000 USD. And yes, you could of course pay in 'small installments', if you so desired—your monthly payment would only be around \$3,000

The cars, however, from China, did not cause the anticipated buzz; personally, I believe this was because they were sandwiched in the paddock around other visitors' cars, and once you arrived at the stand where these cars were exhibited, the large crowds pretty much made sure that their booth would go unnoticed, especially in light of the fact that the other stands around were for sound systems. The modest 'Faw' cars from China, alas, were lost in the milieu,

When it came to sim-racing, however, things were pretty much standard: Bridgestone's booth was tied up with a crowd for the full length of the event, as always. All ISI tracks that were showcased fulfilled a special purpose related to the tyres; for example, Lienz Hillclimb was welcomed with a logistic that allowed people to feel the difference between gravel, dirt, grass, and road surfaces. Most of the people there had not been inside a car, much less going over 80MPH, so it was a fascinating show for all. At other times, they were able to test the oval track with the Sauber F1, then the Toban short course with the Hammer, Howston, rF3, etc ... As a special treat, we set the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez with its new features thanks to the amazing work made by carrera.4 and GPLegacy and D3Legacy.

People at the event also learnt about the wonderful DesafioVirtual league ([www.desafiovirtual.net](http://www.desafiovirtual.net), [www.desafiovirtual.com](http://www.desafiovirtual.com)) and many were impressed enough to want to buy their rFactor licenses from rFactor.net, while rFactor Mexico was launched ([www.rfactor.com.mx](http://www.rfactor.com.mx)) at the event as well.

This pretty much became the longest event we've participated in, and it was enough to bring a weird 'leaving home' feeling once it was over. After all, it was 2007 when we started, it was now 2008, and time to move on to what will be our best year yet ...



# GPLegacy GPLEgacy's 2008 Program Off To A Flyer *continued*



Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez's Paddock Area was turned into an 18,000 metre 'store' making it the biggest store in Mexico City for the Christmas rush.



The Elektra store with some of its icons for Christmas season. Harlequins, and hey, they walked all round the place with their Bridgestone noise-bangers, courtesy of GPLEgacy!



The compadres! GPLEgacy staff, from left to right: Diego Colin, Rafa Brizuela, and Sergio Bustamante.



The Bridgestone stand and GPLEgacy working hard with the usual crush of willing spectators and sim-racers, while, on the right, the lonely Michelin stand—wonder what the difference is!

## **The Dent**

# **Vodka Diaries**

*Jon Denton searches for purpose ...*

**JONDENTON**





It was the best of times, it was the worst of times ... a winter that had no end—at all. Ever. I mean, don't get me wrong, I love a good bit of snow as much as the next man, but in April? Do me a favour. If I don't end up bathing in balmy sunshine soon, I may well have to go postal.

This should, of course, make it ideal sim-racing weather since it's a known fact that many of our breed like to spend more time on the virtual race track during these cold winter months: Little did we suspect, though, that the entire year would become one endless winter.

But those who assume I've been in a fiesta of non-stop sim-racing as a result will be surprised to hear that I've been doing virtually no sim-racing at all. And no, vodka—for once—had nothing to do with it. You see, I sit down, go do a few laps in whatever, and end up bored of being alive after thirty minutes.

You see, there is just no *point* to it.

I know, it's a swathing statement, mainly because there is largely no point to any computer based entertainment anyway, except for the entertainment part, I suppose ... but recently, I have come to the realisation that most online racing has—ultimately—no aim. It's almost like a sim-racing mid-aged crisis of sorts ... and I find myself coming out of Saint Devote with one thought on my mind ... what's the point of this? What I am trying to say is—sim-racing, currently, seems to have no ultimate goal. It's like an endless teenage angst movie, with lot's of chatter and pointless commotion ...

Sure, if you race offline against the computer robots you can score points and win titles, but for what? What does that get you? The chance to do it all over again? Don't get me wrong, I certainly don't want sims to go 'console' and give me new cars for winning races, and I don't want to be given a pretend gold star for anything ... but I *do* want to feel more ... *involved*.

Computer simulation is a tough beast in this respect. Most simulators have little point to them; sure, in *Rail Simulator* you can have the non-stop excitement of visiting train stations, and in flight sims you can land places—and then take off again. *Ship Simulator* even gives you the chance to, erm, dock. And space simulators give you the epic chance to see space—in all its infinite blackness.

But racing sims are different; instead of just straight vehicle simulators in a confusingly non-interactive game world, racing sims give us a *competitive* element to enjoy. See, we're not just driving, we're *racing*.

So does there come a time when it just gets old? Or is it me who is just getting old?

In *Elite*, one used to smash up pirate ships to get their cargo, and every time you did that, you added to an invisible tally that slowly increased your rating within the game-world. In *Oblivion*, one does lots of things, all of them affecting the way NPCs interact

with you, and your general fame—or infamy—in the game. In *Gran Turismo*, you have to stop a Mazda Demio on a white line to pass a license test in order to be able to enter certain races. All of these things add to the atmosphere of a given game (though the Demio example is, admittedly, a poor one). But what we're talking about here is a goal; a point of reference toward which you work. Something, in short, to *conquer*—even if the mountain in question is something as mundane as buying a new part for your simulated ride. So what is it about driving sims that makes the atmosphere so hard to create?

Well, maybe it is the 'Fast and Furious' style of nonsense that seems to be what the likes of EA think people who play racing games want ... Or perhaps it's the hopelessly rubbish examples of 'storyline driven progression' that Codemasters have offered us over the years ... Or maybe it's nothing to do with that at all.

I think that the reality of creating good atmosphere in racing sims is actually fairly simple, and that the real issue is that development houses simply put no time or resources toward creating it.

*GPL* used to please me with the way that the trackside 'tannoy' announcer was audible from the pits, but no one has ever extended on this. With greater ambient sounds, birdsong, wind blowing (maybe even in the right direction!), crowd noise on race days, something—anything to alter the 3D virtual environment from a soulless grey strip surrounded by boxy buildings into a vibrant, absorbing cathedral of speed—a simulator would instantly grab my attention. But this is incidental, though, because it's not really what I feel is missing; what is missing, I think, is some sort of progression path.

In sims, we often choose to drive things we would never, in real life, have a chance to drive—much less push to the limit. Problem with that, though—as plenty of forum posts decrying how hard the recently released F11988 mod for *rFactor* demonstrates—is that we don't have to work out way up to these cars; we simply jump in, smash into walls for ten minutes, and then post about how 'hard' it is. Well, yes, it *is* hard, that's why, you know, a superlicense costs somewhere in the region of half-a-million dollars a year for someone like Ferrari's Kimi Räikkönen. In real life, there would be no way that anyone owning an '88 vintage F1 car would let anyone near the cockpit unless they had a considerable racing CV under their belt. And in their prime, these cars were driven only by those who the FIA would deem qualified enough to run them—in the case of current World Champion Kimi, he actually needed a special dispensation from the FIA when he entered Formula One because his car racing career at that stage had been so short.

Sim-racers have always railed against the idea of license tests and being forced to push through a ladder to get to the cars they really want to drive, but is it really such a bad idea? All it really does is ensure that the driver has enough experience and ability

to handle the quicker cars when they get there, not to mention a greater understanding of how to go about racing and how to set their car up ... Win-win, surely?

More than that, racing is a competitive sport, but the competition doesn't have to start and end at the race track. If you're involved in a sim where you are not automatically entitled to drive the fastest and best car whenever you want—but, instead, you have to actually work, and win, and *compete*, in order to get to the next level—what you have is an environment that promotes the ambitious side of our personalities; it involves us in the game-world, it makes us *desire* something for which we must race—and win—to achieve. This adds a real-world element into sim-racing ...

But more to the point, does this progression not actually serve a point? In *Gran Turismo*, one competes in seemingly unending money-making races to be able to afford the cars that really make the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. Anyone who has reached that stage in *GT* will be all too aware that they drove 10,000km in one car so

that they could have the opportunity to drive a faster one for ten kilometres. The wheeled box that put in the 10,000km is like an old friend, a glove that you wear on race weekends; you know it inside out, and you cherish it as it sits in your virtual garage, maybe even taking advantage of some of the game's more odd features by taking a photo of it, or chipping it in for a car wash and oil change. Bless her, she's your baby, and the snap oversteer inducing bitch-slap GT car that you won on the back of her talents is like a Siamese cat that lives with you, but it just plain hates you.

So what is the point of this column, I hear you roar. Well, that life is better with goals. People need targets to work toward in most aspects of their daily life to make performing said tasks bearable, and while this should not always be the purpose of the entertainment media, the reality is that it is goals that make people stick with titles for years. In *GPL*, people made a mission out of dropping below 1 minute 30s at Monza. What will people remember about *RACE07* in ten years' time?



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# Feeling The Love ...

*Magnus Tellbom takes a loving, lingering look at the most loved people in sim-racing ... wreckers! ...*

MAGNUSTELLBOM







I once read that the one who invents a device that allows one to reach through the computer screen in order to kick the crap out of any given person in front of another screen somewhere in the world would become wealthy and beloved like no other. And while I consider myself a patient sort, I must confess that sometimes the frustration of not being able to reach through cyberspace Matrix-like to deliver a good kicking to some snotty-nosed punk leaves me little alternative but to rage in this column ... and I'm willing to bet the moment I explain the subject(s) of my ire, you too will be possessed, immediately, with that self-same anger.

I am, of course, talking about what (not who!) the community politely calls 'wreckers' (and I call many other things that are probably not fit to print—in this or any publication known to Man!).

Sadly, like a pestilence, they seem to be breeding, and can be found everywhere, these puss-filled cists ... They sneak into leagues, rat their way into serious races, and appear at almost every level of simulated-racing. Most frequent, though, are their presence in the free domain. Start up the *LFS* demo, and you will find them—their impotent rage waiting under the bridge on the long straight. Fire up the *BMW M3 Challenge*, and you will find them at the end of the last straight before the chicane, or on the start/finish straight.

Their sole purpose in life? Simply to ruin everyone else's fun. Which makes them not only the most irritating maggots in the world—but, without question, also mentally unstable. Think, for a moment, how disturbed one would need to be not only to deliberately inspire the hate of all those around you—but to actually *enjoy* the hatred, to be (perhaps even) sexually stirred by the hatred that one engenders by acting in a way that is at once both anti-social, and psychotic.

Yes, they are 'just' wreckers, but these people, I am sure, exhibit the same qualities that can be found in those kids that, one fine day, don a long overcoat and go out shooting their school mates in a mass-killing ... we are talking about mentally unstable individuals, and perhaps the fact that we are separated from them by cyberspace is, in fact, a blessing in disguise.

Still, let's be professional about this and ask—why would someone deliberately set about to ruin the pleasure of a dozen, sometimes two dozen other people—and take pleasure in so doing? And even more disturbingly, take pleasure in the hate that they inspire? An almost masochistic pleasure, then, of being aroused by not only hurting others—but by being hated by others.

One reason that springs to mind is that they are so childish that they actually think it's fun to ruin the experience for everyone else, much like those sad persons who fight on the grandstands at football matches, calling themselves 'fans'.

Or, perhaps, they are so poor at sim-racing that their inadequacy has provoked in them some strange, infantile reaction that empowers them to act in way that will allow no-one else to demonstrate to them just how utterly useless they are.

Or, finally, there is the possibility that their potty training went utterly wrong (if even finished properly) and that they are, as I noted earlier, anti-social psychotics warming up their intense hatred for society in cyberspace before graduating into some form of real-world tragedy.

Perhaps, though, we are dealing from a severe combination of the above three issues, which would mean that wreckers are no good, infantile, violent, untalented, self-soiling creatures ...

## **What Can Be Done?**

Wreckers can even be found everywhere, as I said, even on the highly-rated CTRA servers in *LFS*. Even though they sometimes get reported, most just shrug, call them names (and get kicked off CTRA for it), and move on. Don't get me wrong, it's not CTRA's fault they have a wrecker problem in some servers, it's just the nature of things. When left alone and unsupervised, the wreckers crawl out of the woodwork and show their ugly faces.

What can be done about this problem has already been done—by the community, and by some developers. Private leagues, for instance, and racing organizations such as CTRA and Race2Play are ideal community-based solutions to the problem. (While we're on the subject, compared to Race2Play, CTRA is not much of a place for the serious racer nowadays. At least not in the tin-tops {haven't tested the open-wheel servers}. Where CTRA has a post-race report system, Race2Play has, at least, one live steward. Where CTRA has a somewhat forgiving first turn policy {or so it seems}, Race2Play has the first lap punt rule, resulting in a drive through. Guess where I do my racing these days? Yep. And this has nothing to do with the ever-present pissing contest of sims. It's just a matter of where I get the best overall experience. If Race2Play starts to organize *LFS* races, I'll be a part of them faster than you can say, 'My sim is better than yours'.)

The fact is that wreckers exist—and will continue to exist—and will only expand in number, like maggots, the more popular sim-racing becomes. And since they exist—like mass-murderers, and such—I actually feel much sympathy for who have chosen to remain offline and devote their time to racing the AI.

Sadly, the AI, more times than not, seem to be lacking any intelligence, artificial or otherwise. Worse still, of course, is the fact that many sims—*iRacing* included—will not even have AI.

## Racing AI

But wait a second—before we dismiss AI completely, let's take a more careful look at this whole thing from an angle that most have never considered. I say this because I've done a substantial amount of racing both on and offline, and what struck me—just a few weeks ago—was that I don't really race the same way offline as I do on.

What I mean is this: In any online race I participate in, I am extremely careful not to hit anyone—if I have the option, I'd rather take a trip to the sand trap (or hit the guard rails) than hit another car on-track. I mean, the first rule of online racing is, 'Do not hit your opponents'. In any online race, you plan a pass, and you don't strike unless you are sure you can make it stick. And this is just as it should be.

But hand on heart ... do you treat the AI with the same courtesy? I think not, because I certainly don't. Or, rather, didn't. Until it struck me ... and to prove my theory, I decided to treat the AI as I would a human opponent.

So, with damage multiplier set at one-hundred percent, I set off to try and beat the AI. Guess what? They are not that easy to pass if you can't bully your way through. Give them an honest run, and they *will* surprise you. Okay, so the AI will bump into you from time to time, but you know what? You do the same to them when you're drafting down the front straight and miss the brake marker by twenty meters. Okay, so they ram you

when you change lanes to block, but to tell the truth, don't you do the same to them? It's all in the game, and if you look at real-racing, you will see just the same type of rubbing, scrubbing, and nudging as you see in your offline races against the AI—and sometimes even worse. So, in the end, the fault is not only in the AI, but in how we treat the AI.

## The End Of Wreckers

I have a theory that if the AI programmers added a function where AI drivers could report an abusive offline driver to some public webpage, the reports would come in at a rough rate of one per second, resulting in more than half a million reports per week. I also think that such a tool would be the ultimate screener for whom to allow into an online race series or not.

Now, a report tool of any kind is not worth a damn thing if you can't connect it with one single specific user. And until that day comes when every single internet user has his or her own unique and static IP every time they connect, the only way to do secure the racing environment from the wreckers is with a user license. And that is why I think *LFS* is the bright shining star in this area. Your game name is unique all over the *LFS* system, and it's directly connected to your unique license.

The *LFS* way is, in my opinion, the best system for keeping track of users. You can choose any screen name you like, but the name on the license will be there, showing just how well you did. That very name is also the thing that sooner or later will show up at the 'Wreckers' Barricade' if you misbehave. I only wish that you had to create a license before you even try the demo, thus making it possible to forever ban wreckers from the demo servers as well. I am sure that if *rFactor* had the same sort of system, many more of the servers would be unlocked and made public like it is in *LFS*.

Ultimately, then, the problem of wreckers is one that can be tackled in two ways: By the community, in passworded races, and racing organizations such as Race2Play. But this, of course, comes at a cost—and the cost is not only that of membership, but the end of online pickup races which is, when all is said and done, a solution of sorts, but certainly not ideal.

Leaving the ultimate solution firmly in the hands of the developers. *LFS* has succeeded because of their licensing system—*rFactor* has failed for that very same reason. *iRacing* will succeed because they have chosen to go the *LFS* route coupled, it would seem, with a Race2Play system of stewards and such like making their service—at least on paper—the very first that will be able to immediately, and effectively, deal with wreckers in a way that should make all of us celebrate at least this much: Wreckers will be barred from racing, on all servers, for all time.

That, in itself, is a big-step forward for simulated-racing. See you all next issue!



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## RC Motor-sports Team Update—FSR F1 Pro 2008

By Richard Courtenay Smith (RCM Founder, Owner, SSCA Manager, Driver)

numbers are 38 and 39 respectively. The other team is RC Motorsports Mexico, driven by Mexicans Rod and Luis Soria. Their FSR Pro 2008 numbers are 40 and 41



The team had a *major* announcement on Wednesday March 26th, 2008 with the release of the team's 4 RCM FSR Pro 2008 cars. The two teams are RC Motorsports America, driven by American Courtenay Smith and Sweden Fredrik "Firefox" Arbegard. Their FSR Pro 2008

respectively. The team video has the launch of the 2008 FSR RCM Pro cars, showcasing ALL 4 F1 cars, with each driver being shown and their new F1 helmets. Also the video shows our three sponsors for FSR, which we want to deeply thank. They are Wagner Race Products

(<http://www.wagnerraceproducts.com>), Natural Point (<http://www.naturalpoint.com/trackir>) and (<https://trackir.naturalpoint.com/rcmracing>), and AutoSimSport (<http://www.autosimsport.net/>). Thanks for your continued support guys, we definitely appreciate all you have done for us, especially with FSR for 2008, and letting us showcase your logos on our 4 cars. The cars look superb thanks to your logos and input. Thanks so much guys!!

To check out and view the RCM FSR Pro 2008 Team Launch Video, click [HERE](#), or [here](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x4urpr_rc-motorsports-fsr-cars-2008_auto).

With the first Round of FSR Pro at Australia on Saturday March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2008, the team had to start practicing fast! RCM entered with very high hopes, and for the most part did well. Fredrik Arbegard in #39 RC Motorsports America qualified 19<sup>th</sup> out of 24, and Rod Soria in #40 RC Motorsports Mexico qualified 21<sup>st</sup> out of 24. Unfortunately Courtenay Smith in #38 RC Motorsports America failed to hit his stride that he had during practice, and so during FSR qualifying, he lost 2 seconds, only managing a 1.28.4 as his best in qualifying. He finished 31<sup>st</sup> and missed making the race by 1.5 seconds. Luis Soria in #41 RC Motorsports Mexico didn't fair any better as he qualified 32<sup>nd</sup> with a 1.29.2. So two of four made the show.

### The Race

Onto the race now. When the race finally started, Fredrik managed to avoid trouble and took 10th place early on in the race. Rod had problems in Turn 1 but he managed to escape too. Fredrik and Rod fought hard but sadly it wasn't going to be. Rod spun out and retired after the first pit stop. Fredrik collided with Michael Theis but managed to continue. Fredrik was then in 7<sup>th</sup> spot when he was receiving a massive attack from Johannes Kunkel, but managed to hold him off and take 6th place, due to a retirement up ahead on the last lap!





Congrats Fredrik Arbegard on your first FSR race ever and finishing while holding off Johannes during the last 7 laps. The last 7 laps were very intense as Fredrik was holding off Johannes the whole time and battling for 7<sup>th</sup> position, and on the last lap, someone ahead had a problem and retired, so Fredrik came home 6<sup>th</sup> on the last lap. The FSR PSRTV broadcast was on Fredrik for the last 7 laps, and you can check it out at PSRTV directory at [http://www.psrtv.com/FSR/2008/PRO/PRO\\_R1\\_Melbourne\\_R.wmv](http://www.psrtv.com/FSR/2008/PRO/PRO_R1_Melbourne_R.wmv) to download the race broadcast replay. Very intense stuff guys!! Check out the picture of Fredrik Arbegard holding off Johannes Kunkel from the PSRTV broadcast!!

Next up is Round 2 of FSR PRO at Malaysia! See you there!

Saturday April 12th, 2008 was the date for FSR Round 2 at Sepang, Malaysia. RC Motorsports had added an additional team for its two 3<sup>rd</sup> test/reserve drivers from RC Motorsports America and RC Motorsports Mexico. The 3<sup>rd</sup> driver from RC Motorsports America is American Kevin Brents and from RC Motorsports Mexico is American Daniel Smektala. Both are in RCM in SSICA, one in GT1 and other LMP1. They are both hard workers, and test well, and give great setup feedback while building nice setups too. So making a team for them in FSR, so they can race, was only natural. The new RC Motorsports FSR Pro team is called RC Motorsports International. So with a new team, and the addition of a new driver, Santiago Niza from Spain, who drives in RC Motorsports for FSR Pro, the team was very excited about Round 2 at Sepang, Malaysia.

Entering qualifying, #71 Kevin Brents of RC Motorsports International did an amazing lap of a 1.32.6 to get P3 in Qualy 1. But sadly that was it for RCM. Fredrik "Firefox" Arbegard did a 1.34.0 and finished 26<sup>th</sup>, missing the Top 24 by .030 secs! Courtenay did a nice 1.34.1 lap but it wasn't good enough and he finished 30<sup>th</sup> in

qualifying, missing by .2 tenths. Rod Soria of RC Motorsports Mexico did a lack luster 1.34.6 and finished 33<sup>th</sup>. So both RCM drivers that qualified for Australia, didn't make Malaysia. That shows you how tough the competition is in FSR! RCM newcomer Santiago Niza did a 1.34.7 and finished 34<sup>th</sup>. Luis Soria was off the pace again, with a 1.36.5 and finished 46<sup>th</sup>. Daniel Smektala had rFactor problems and wasn't able to show for qualifying. So of the 7 RCM FSR Pro drivers, only 1 made the show for Round 2. The disappointed drivers went home but were able to stay and watch the race, and what a race it was!!!

As qualifying for the top 10 fastest drivers began, Kevin Brents suffered a disco, and even though he qualified 3<sup>rd</sup> in the first qualifying session, he was dropped to the back for the starting grid. Starting back there Kevin had to be careful at the start, but at least he could choose his tires compound and fuel strategy. So as the lights went out, Kevin Brents of RC Motorsports International stood look at 23 drivers in front of him. He made a nice start, and was P19 at end of Lap 1. Before the race, RC Motorsports Owner/Founder/SSICA Manager/Driver told Kevin "I want to see you in top 10 by lap 10 of 42!" Kevin said "hehe, I will try bud, but no promises". Well that statement went well out the window as BY LAP 5, KEVIN BRENTS WAS IN 10<sup>th</sup> place!! The announcers were in amazement on PSRTV, and were eagerly cheering Kevin on! Kevin was able to pass positions 9, 8, 7, 6, and 5 on track before pitting at lap 16 for his first of two pit stops. He pitted and fell to 14<sup>th</sup>, then made his way back up to 9<sup>th</sup> easily. Then with race strategies coming into play, Kevin made his move and was up to 5<sup>th</sup> spot by his second and final pit stop. Kevin really stretched the fuel out of his RCM F1 car and was burning low 34s on low fuel before his last stop. Kevin dove in the pits with 10 laps to go, and made a quick stop, only getting tires and fuel for the final stint of 10

laps to the checkered. His stop was good, and he came out 11<sup>th</sup>. He made 2 spots on track real quick, and then was P9. A spin of another competitor up ahead and Kevin was now P8. He was 5 seconds behind Mark Aalberts and was catching him. As Kevin was catching Mark, Jesper in 5<sup>th</sup> spot was slowing up, and so was Chris Hannigan in 6<sup>th</sup> position. Kevin Brents said on the radio "yea I was just saving my tires for Mark, and then I saw Chris slowing up, and I was like, WELL LETS GO!!" With only a handful of laps left in the race, Kevin was gaining on P7, P6, and P5. With 3 laps to go, 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> was only separated by 5 seconds. Kevin pushed real hard and was hitting low 34's and with one lap to go, he was 1 second from Mark. Kevin drove the last lap hard, and hit a new best race lap, a 1.33.9. But he finished .8 seconds behind Mark, who was then .8 seconds behind Chris Hannigan in 6<sup>th</sup>. So very close from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>. Jesper was 2 seconds ahead of Chris. So 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> was separated by only 3.4 seconds. WOW!! Jesper and Chris were both on 1 stoppers, and Mark and Kevin were on 2 stoppers. Very close and exciting racing for sure!! To view the PSRTV broadcast replay go [here:](http://www.psrtv.com/FSR/2008/PRO/PRO_R2_Malaysia_R.wmv)

This was a very exciting race from start to finish, watch as Kevin makes his way from dead last on the grid to 5<sup>th</sup> by his first pit stop, and then finished a close 8<sup>th</sup> at the end!! Amazing race by all!!

So with 2 rounds in the books, RC Motorsports is looking to get 4 or 5 of its 7 FSR drivers into the next race at Bahrain for Round 3 on Saturday April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008. The race will be broadcast on PSRTV (ProSimRacing.com) so come check it out!! RC Motorsports will practicing hard during the week, working on setups and qualifying sets, so they can get half or most of their drivers in the race. Watch as we try to accomplish our feat on Sat. April 19<sup>th</sup> at 4 pm EST with qualifying and race at 5 pm EST.










## Formula Racing League

*By Vitor Barreto*

With 2007 behind, the Formula Racing Challenge league enters in 2008 with their third season. The biggest change in the upcoming season is the short format; as opposed to 2007, this year's season will only have one league, the 2008 F1 season. JPC Barbosa (FBMW) and Tiago Moreira (GPC79) were joined by Bruno Marques, the F1 Champion, who in 2008 will not be defending his title, leaving the door open to a new champion.













And with two races already completed, the picture on who may succeed him is a little more clear. In the two first races, held at Melbourne, and at Sepang, there were two different pole men, and two different winners, neither of whom have ever secured a pole position start.

The first race, disputed late March on the 31st, saw a full grid of 24 racers, composed of both experienced drivers and rookie drivers. The first round would go to an experienced, although young driver, Filipe Santos from GhostSpeed Racing Team, who was the 2007 season runner-up. An expected win—followed by a podium of newcomers. In the second race, Xico Rocha. from the new dOOssier F1 team, claimed victory, whole the last step of the podium belonged to Carlos Costa from Vitamina OSR. Three more rookie drivers would make it to the points in Melbourne.

Team Championship				
Current team championship standings:				
P	Team	C	TR	P
1.	<a href="#">GhostSpeed Racing Team</a>		4	24
2.	<a href="#">Vitamina OSR</a>		4	16
3.	<a href="#">Free Spirit Racing Team</a>		4	14
4.	<a href="#">dOOssier F1</a>		4	8
5.	<a href="#">GS Racing</a>		4	7
6.	<a href="#">Nova Formula Racing</a>		4	4
7.	<a href="#">Evolution Racing</a>		2	3
8.	<a href="#">Bercar Motorsports</a>		4	1
.	<a href="#">Racing Sims Spirit</a>		2	1

The trend would continue in Sepang, but this time with different actors, at least on the top of the podium. With João Oliveira succeeding Gabriel Montanes as the pole man, the win, again, would not fall to the pole man. Alexandre Caetano, 3rd placed in 2007, completely dominated the race from point to point, and after a DNF in the first race, places himself again on the run for the cup. In 2nd was Filipe Santos, and with this double podium, he gains a comfortable lead in the driver's championship. Gabriel Montanes, from Uruguay—driving for the GhostSpeed Racing Team—claimed third position.

Outside the podium there are some racers and teams worth a mention: Sérgio Sousa, Guilherme Silva, Carlos Costa, Marco Ascensão, João Oliveira, Joaquim Cabral and the Bercar drivers, all of whom promise to be regular points contenders. In the teams' camp, Free Spirit Racing Team is, at the moment, the biggest surprise with the rookie team now in third place in the team championship. Doossier F1, Nova Formula Racing and Sonic Racing Team all promise to challenge for the wins. All in all, with two of the top three 2007 drivers claiming the wins on the two first rounds, its clear that we already have two candidates for the championship, but the list won't stop there, as the next rounds at Barcelona and at Istanbul promise to bring new faces to the top spots.

Driver Championship				
Current driver championship standings:				
P	Driver	C	PAD	
1.	<a href="#">Filipe Santos</a>		18	
2.	<a href="#">Alexandre Caetano</a>		10	
3.	<a href="#">Sérgio Sousa</a>		9	
4.	<a href="#">Xico Rocha</a>		8	
5.	<a href="#">Carlos Costa</a>		6	
.	<a href="#">Gabriel Montanes</a>		6	
7.	<a href="#">Marco Ascensao</a>		5	
.	<a href="#">Joao Oliveira</a>		5	
9.	<a href="#">Joaquim Cabral</a>		4	
10.	<a href="#">Ricardo Pimentel</a>		3	
11.	<a href="#">Marco Ribeiro</a>		2	
12.	<a href="#">António Sousa</a>		1	