

AUTOSIMSPORT

Volume 2 Number 10

Slidin the Sport into the Sim



In this month's issue:

- **World Exclusive:**  **Secure Ferrari License!**
- **Win BIG with Blimey! Games—All Expenses Tour!**
- **WIN! With Natural Point! TrackIR 4:PRO!**
- **NAPmod update exclusively with this ISSUE**
- **70-PAGE GTR2 CAR MANUAL—INDISPENSABLE!**
- **All the latest on nKPRO and World Exclusive News!**



101 Pages To Warm The Winter Cockles—And Sexy Girls Too!

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Wake up, brush your teeth, grab your overnight, and head for the airport. Get on a jet bound for London. Get off the plane and step into a supercar for a sexy dash down the M4 to the posh studios of GTR2 developers BLIMEY!GAMES. Spend the day testing their new (and yet to be named) simulator before spending the night at one of London's top restaurants where BLIMEY!GAMES will treat you to dinner before you head for bed in a luxury hotel for one night.

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All entries must be received no later than December 10th.

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For more details, come visit the [AUTOSIMSPORT](#)' forums where we'll be glad to answer all your questions.

*You and your partner must be twenty-one or older to enter, and own a registered copy of GTR2. You will be traveling sometime in the summer of 2007.

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*** For entries larger than 10Megs, please contact us before sending to organize an FTP-Drop-Box.

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HeadOpEd

BobSimmerman

The Beginning and Stuff

I could tell he was in a major panic. Alex, that is. You see, that poor man has all of a sudden realized that this 'little' magazine of ours is not so little; in fact, it is more like a full size full time job, so I was only more than happy to help out. I rarely get to write the stuff up front, but then again, I am not really good at that sort of thing. Nevertheless, I was breathing a sigh of relief—he didn't want me to review anything—thank God—I finally figured out what is wrong with all of my reviews.

I like everything.

Not to worry as I am working on it. We may have to go back to the days of Pong, white shoes, and side burns to dig up something that would escape my scoring system bonuses and rate out at a paltry 70 or something.

I think we can all understand just how overworked Alex is, trusting me with all this stuff in the front. I will try not to disappoint him, but fear the worst as the release date for the Play Station 3 is right around the corner...and surprise, surprise, surprise—they yanked the UK release units, and the States are only to receive approximately 400,000 units for launch. Sorry, Alex, but that Sony stock is going to get real scary real soon, try and keep it together. Or sell it, which works also. I think he has like a billion shares, and constantly calls me with price fluctuation updates. As if I cared!

Well one thing's for sure—no way in hell I am putting myself in the same rotten and stress filled boat I nearly capsized in getting that damn XBOX 360 with the PlayStation 3—in other words, I will be waiting a bit longer to get my hands on an actual Formula One licensed product. I have no idea if it will be good or not, but you can use that PSP thingy with it for a rearview mirror. I also doubt the pre-release videos are even close to the actual shipping product, but then again, I may be pleasantly surprised ... because, like I said, I like everything!

Now, let's hope Nintendo has something to shove on a Fast Boat from China that can actually be bought not 6-8 months later, but somewhere closer to the 'launch date'. I placed quotation marks around that phrase, 'launch date',

because in my experience, it is simply the day the excuses start. Maybe for the next-next generation consoles, they could call it something like 'We are really gonna try hard this time day', or 'We hired a new PR gal, and are hoping to give her some experience right off the bat day', or, finally, my favorite—Baghdad Bob hollering from the rooftops ... "There is no shortage—the consoles are in stealth mode, please, do not worry, and do not tell anyone!"

I know, I know—what the hell am I on about now? What is this most bizarre stuff up front? Well, with another high dollar console launch date fiasco just around the corner {Sony announcing that the PS3 will be 'revised'—that's delayed in English!}, I suddenly became utterly flabbergasted by the fact that our very own community can create something from nothing—be it mod, track, car set, utility, whatever—with a minimum of drama ... in most cases. So how does this compare to a console release date? How does this compare to the no doubt billions spent developing these things?

I'll tell you—when someone in our community decides to do something, more often than not it gets done. No excuses, no PR spin machines, no billion dollar budget, and my guess is that half the state of Washington isn't on their staff—they simply get it done. Could you imagine...Lo with a billion dollar budget? Or, for that matter, how about ISI with a billion dollars, 25 real drivers from 5 racing genres, and more booth babes than a bad issue of Hustler? While poking a bit of fun at the so called 'Big Boys'—who do from time to time dip into some sort of racing venture—it is eye-opening indeed to realize what 'development and delivery' really means to the common man.

Now, if you'll excuse me—I have changed my mind and have to place a pre order on one-half of a PS3, or a fully loaded Wii with Zelda and fishing. Guess which one!

*(Chuck) Bronson Lake
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News



LATE-BREAKING NEWS

10Tacle Announces Ferrari License

7.11.06 12:20

[10TACLE STUDIOS](#) AG and Ferrari sign licensing agreement

Racing game portfolio expansion part of growth strategy

Darmstadt, November 7rd 2006 – 10TACLE STUDIOS AG and Ferrari have concluded a licensing agreement for the development of video games. This will allow 10TACLE STUDIOS AG to produce games using the Ferrari product palette and brand name. 10TACLE STUDIOS AG plans to work together with the legendary Italian sports car manufacturer closely to development a number of computer and video games.

"The expansion of our racing portfolio is an important part of our strategy for growth. Ferrari is synonymous with automotive excellence in both sports and racing cars. A license to use the Ferrari brand name and cars is the best a computer games developer in this field can acquire. We will do our very best to recreate the passionate experience of driving a Ferrari as realistically as possible", explained 10TACLE STUDIOS AG chairman Michele Pes.

10TACLE STUDIOS have proven repeatedly that they are capable of developing racing games on a level appropriate to Ferrari's leading position in the field. We look forward to working together", said Head of Licensing at Ferrari Katia Bassi.

Blimey! Games Confirm Developer Status

AUTOSIMSPORT World Exclusive

London-based Blimey! Games has confirmed its status as the developer of the recently announced 10Tacle Studios' Ferrari License.

Speaking exclusively to AUTOSIMSPORT, CEO and Creative Director Ian Bell, when asked whether Blimey! Games would be developing the sim, replied: "Yes. And it's going to revolutionize the genre. No hype."

Details remain sketchy at this time, and Bell would not be drawn into the exact nature of what acquiring the license for arguably the world's most sought-after motor-sports brand would mean in terms of cars and tracks. "No, sorry, I can't give any information at this time. But I will update you on this very exciting project as soon as I can. Maybe we can run a developer diary also."

VirtualGT Signs 3-Year Simulation License with Champ Car World Series.

Fans set to try the system at events starting this Spring.

Indianapolis, IN, Nov. 1,2006 - The Champ Car World Series has signed a 3-year license agreement with [Virtual-E Corporation](#) to develop a premium PC-based racing simulation system that will be available for fans to try and buy during major races starting with the Long Beach Grand Prix in April 2007.



COMMENT

The Fudge Factor

Tony Pickard

It is intriguing to see the debates that rage about which sim is the most realistic, and how close to reality sim-racing is in general. If it is all down to science, then surely the product that most accurately replicates real-life suspension, steering, tyres, transmission, and so forth must, logically, be the best product, and the arguments should thus conclusively end with one sim being the overall winner. But by this not being the case, we can infer that something a little less obvious is at play ...

The issue that has been raised many times is the lack of physical forces that are at work in the cyber-life of a sim-racing driver. This is why some real-life racing drivers struggle with racing sims, yet others take to it and can describe it as behaving in a similar way to their race car.

Contrary to popular belief, it is not from our nether regions that we feel the balance of the car, but, rather, primarily with our inner ear. This is what gives us the 'seat of the pants feel'. Some people will find that, if their visual experience doesn't match their inner ear inputs, they will feel nauseous. This is a reason why some people simply can't stomach simulations without motion. How we substitute for the lack of the inner ear input varies, of course, from person-to-person, meaning that, for many experienced sim-racers, jumping between sim and real offers little difficulty, and the perceived experience is much the same. For others, it is way off and nothing like driving a real car.

In my view, without some serious hydraulics, there is still a significant difference between the way we interpret motion physics in sim-racing and real-life racing. However, the general experiences of oversteer, understeer, traction, braking, response to bumps, and so on can all be modeled such that the conveyed experience is very similar between real-life racing and sim-racing. The

way that experience is conveyed will be different, of course, and, naturally, different people will 'feel' it in sim-racing in different ways.

As sims evolve, the way they feed-back what the car is doing has improved immensely and to such an extent that previous sims now feel somehow ... wrong. The same sims that a year or two ago were being touted as being as close to the real thing as possible are now dismissed as being wrong. So how can this be?

Back in the early 1990s, sims leaped forward in leaps and bounds. F1GP was a major milestone at the time, yet a year later, IndyCar Racing proved to be an absolute revelation. It added suspension movement with such relative precision that F1GP felt two dimensional in comparison. Papyrus' NASCAR Racing bought us SVGA graphics and thereby reduced all previous sims—running in 320x200—into bygone history practically overnight.

But of course it was Grand Prix Legends that bought a whole new 'feel' to sim-racing. Somehow the car felt more alive than in any previous sims—and remember that GPL was released in the days before Force-Feedback (a later patch added this feature to GPL). This immersive component was therefore all down to the way the car and scenery were portrayed on the screen, and how the car reacted to inputs.

Of course GPL has its flaws, and the development of other sims has led many of us to feel that GPL is now somehow ... wrong ...

Yet with the current crop of sims, there seems to be a lack of a unified view that any one of them is the most realistic. For there remains a 'fantasy' element in sim-racing: That is, in order to replace the missing forces, we—each of us—find our own ways of replacing them, be it through graphics, sound, or Force-Feedback. We also have our own interpretations of how we expect the car to react in a given situation, be they gleaned from real-life experience, or from watching onboard footage.

The truth, of course, is that the amount of sim-racers who have raced that sim-car, with those tyres, in those conditions, on that track, are infinitely small in number. So, this brings me down to believing that we share a common—and skewed—version of the accuracy of simulation. This, equally, explains why experienced racing drivers would have such different views, too.



I don't believe sim-racing is wildly out, other than it works better for some people than others. The basic reactions are all there. But I also believe it would be far easier for a sim-racer to quickly adapt to a race car than a real-racer to a sim-car.

So when a sim-racer *feels* that rFactor, GTR2, NetKar Pro, or LFS is the most realistic sim, it means the feel of that particular sim feels the closest to their driving experiences and expectations of race car behaviour. To confuse matters further, it may be a particular mod of a sim, or a suspension or tyre model, that transforms the feel to being 'right' for them.

Jumping from one sim to another usually means one sim can seem a bit off compared with the previous. However, typically (after a short period), the brain has become accustomed to the feel. This is over-and-above the difference between simply driving different cars in the same sim (or real-life).

Now science needs to play its part; that is, brakes should wear, tyres should gain grip as they heat and lose grip as they wear out in a manner that simulates real-racing, the optimum setup required for a wet track should differ from that for a dry track in just the same way as in real-life, cars should perform with similar relative variations to their real life counterparts. Yet there is still the black art of how 'feel' is conveyed, and this will remain subjective. Because objectively, the truth of the matter is that all sims are replicating—and using—pretty much the same theories of motion and physics ... a car behaves in a certain way at a certain pitch or angle, that is a given. But how the simulator conveys that back to the sim-racer ... that is the vision of the sim-developer.

I believe sims have reached a level now where this element of 'feel subjectivity' is sufficient to tip the balance between which one we personally prefer. I don't believe any one of the major sims is necessarily superior, in terms of pure physics: And here I am referring to sims, not race-games.

The only problem with this, of course, is the fragmentation of an already niche sport. You can't blame people for running what gives them the best 'feeling of racing'. What we need, however, to return to the Glory Days of sim-racing, is the killer sim—another GPL—that blows us all away and does it for (nearly) all of us.

Finally though, if there is an element of fudge factor and fantasy involved in sim-racing, the one bit of sim-racing that isn't fantasy is the racing online, because the simulated part is the driving—the racing part is very real. With decent connections and netcode to eliminate phantom contact, the racing is just the same as racing real cars on real tracks. As long as the car behaviour is sufficiently close that a driver cannot perform an 'impossible' manoeuvre and get away with it, then the racing remains real ... and that, in the end, is why we're all here as sim-racers..

NEWS

ARCA SimRacing Developers Sim Factory LLC Announce: Kevin Swindell's onboard

Bob Simmerman

In a [recent announcement](#) from the SimFactory LLC, it was announced that Kevin Swindell, ARCA series driver, would have joined the developers for some simulator-related duties. Great news indeed for what is turning into one of the most anticipated racing simulators of 2007. In related news, Sim Factory LLC have also announced they will be using ISI's physics engine to power their upcoming, fully-licensed and purpose-built simulator.

Sim-Racing Legend Alx Danielsson Clinches World Series by Renault Championship

Lx Martini

Readers of AUTOSIMSPORT will be well-aware of the name Alx [Danielsson](#); one of sim-racing's most vocal advocates, the Swedish Sensation has recently been named as a SimBin test-driver, as well as having appeared on these pages twice in the last two years—Alx has also been featured on numerous TV shows where he—as he has done for some time—touts the benefits of sim-racing in relation to his real-job, which is—Sweden's biggest Formula One hope in a very long time.

In his second year in the Formula One feeder-series, WSR, Alx struggled with some awful luck that saw him lose two certain wins—and get involved in two very serious shunts. With the monkey firmly attached to his back, it seemed as if Alx was destined for another could-have-should-have season. Until Donington Park, that is, when Alx's luck finally turned, allowing his talent to push him to the first of a hat-trick of wins that saw him crowned WSR Champion two months later.

With a successful GP2 test under his belt, the rumors surrounding 'what next' for Alx are making the usual rounds, with a GP2 drive along with a Formula One Test

Drive being the most talked about. Whatever happens, though, it's good to see Alx finally achieve the success he deserves. And hell, if Formula One doesn't happen, he can always find a job with us as a sim-pundit!



www.alxtof1.com

Denny Hamlin On SpeedTV's Iconic WindTunnel With Dave Despain

Ivan Askew

Non-U.S. readers are probably not familiar with either SpeedTV or Dave Despain's WindTunnel: So, briefly, the former is the twenty-four hour a day motor-racing channel that enjoy the broadcast rights for Formula One, as well as certain NASCAR events and a host of other U.S.-based series, and the latter is a motor-racing pundit who hosts a phone-in show on Sunday nights on that self-same channel. WindTunnel's October 29th Edition featured NASCAR driver—and sim-racing advocate—Denny Hamlin, along with a twenty minute segment featuring sim-racing footage, analysis and an interview with [RealRacingOnline's](#) Steve Valdez.

All-in-all, it was a great showcase for sim-racing on a high-profile TV show ... that included one rather odd fact: The footage shown (and there was quite a bit of it) was of

NASCAR Racing 2003 (in fact, what looked like out-of-the-box 2003), but Mr. Valdez, when asked how one could enter the world of sim-racing, suggested people head to rFactor.net ... guess it's a cheaper option that N2003 which is now being sold for \$180.00!

What Possessed Massa At Interlagos?

Ivan Askew

Ferrari driver Felipe Massa was a revelation at his home Grand Prix—showing a race-pace that was quite astonishing, it left many wondering what the hell had possessed him to become the first Brazilian to win at home since the Glory Days of Ayrton Senna. Well, we spoke to Luciano Armaroli—Brazilian-based [simulator makers](#)—and were informed that the difference between Massa, and that other Brazilian-Ferrari driver, Barrichello, is that Massa is a sim-racer. In fact, Massa—as is his custom—spent a couple of hours at the Armaroli design-shop testing their simulator at Interlagos to prepare for the race.

Seemed to work, too, as Massa joins Senna, Piquet, Pace, and Fittipaldi as a winner of his home-Grand Prix ... quite a list of names to join!

Grand Prix Classics' F1 1979 Goes Beta

Ivan Askew

The mod that is set to be a watershed moment in rFactor's cyber-life is now in beta 0.7., with 0.8 expected this very week. Rumor has it that GPL stalwarts Steve Smith and Alison Hine are now both involved with the project.

We have uploaded an exclusive look-see at beta 0.7. for our readers at Youtube. Enjoy!

netKar PRO v1.0.2 Review

Jaap Wagenvoort

April 10th, 2006, saw the release of [netKar PRO](#) 1.0.0, which featured both amazing physics along with fantastic graphics. A simulation that really took a massive step in

closing the gap between real-racing and sim-racing. Sadly, though, much of this promise was overshadowed by what can only be described as an infestation. Of horrible little bugs. The most striking of these quashed in v1.0.1, which was released at the end of April.

However, the main voice from the sim-racing community was: "offline fantastic, online horrific". The community, as often, was completely right in saying that. Even though the multiplayer engine was working, it contained loads of bugs causing many (potential) nKPro drivers to move away, or not approach this simulation at all.

After the financial future of netKar PRO was secured with their 'partnership' with BallRacing Development, the nKPro team focused their considerable talents on fixing the biggest problems, most of which were multiplayer-related. To do this, the nKPro team approached the most professional and dedicated nKPro league in the world: GPChampionship.com (GPC). GPC had already organised an international championship with nKPro v1.0.1, and therefore had the required experience and resources to support the nKPro team in their efforts to fix the multiplayer issues.

With this in mind, I was asked to assemble a beta test-team as the netKar PRO guys, under Stefano Casillo's leadership, prepared the first patch files. A few very intense weeks of testing, reporting, fixing and testing followed. The test-team worked literally evening to evening collating reports in documents that were structurally reported back to the development team. New patch versions appeared, and the team went back to testing.

Early on in the patch testing, several issues just kept coming back. One of the worst bugs was the 'syncing' bug. This basically showed itself in drivers not getting a 'go to grid' button, drivers still out of track when the server had already switched to the race, and people

suddenly being 'teleported' back to the pit. However, as is the nature of these things, one day a few weeks back the good news came that the '\$%#@' (censored) was fixed. GPC's test-team immediately examined this patch to discover that, indeed, one of netKar PRO's most insidious bugs had been destroyed. This was cause for minor celebrations amongst both the test-team and the developers because it heralded a major step forward for this simulator that many believe is *the* best sim money can buy.

However, this was not enough for Stefano and co., who continued to work on defeating other prominent bugs (think of the infamous ride height problem, and the weird '0km/h' behaviour). The replay system was fixed as well, and now finally allows one to properly see multiplayer cars in replays.

The focus of the team with 1.0.2 was to fix the multiplayer experience before moving on to adding new (and much anticipated) content to the simulation. With the release of the patch on Tuesday, October 31st, it seems—judging on the number of servers and online drivers currently active around the netKar PRO scene—that the team definitely succeeded in this objective. Of course, there are still some remaining issues which require fixes, but the simulation is now fully-playable online.

The release of nKPro 1.0.2 shows how the community and the netKPro team can successfully work together to improve a car-racing simulation.

A short recap: netKPro 1.0.2 brings much improved multiplayer racing and various other fixes like an improved replay system, improved physics (tyres, drivetrain and aerodynamics), and several smaller fixes (0km/h bug, ride height issue). Finally, it is possible to properly enjoy netKar PRO in online racing. Of course, some issues remain to be improved, but step by step, this simulation is getting better and better.



netKar PRO now enables drivers to experience what its FullMode does with the nerves of online drivers—and this is certainly a massive step forward in online sim-racing, as is the best-in-class tyre model, the atmospheric and immersive and fully reactive cockpits, and the spot-on physics of its winged cars. This should keep us all busy until the next release, and the arrival of new content that has been touted for the netKar PRO. All in all: netKar PRO is alive (again)! And this is great news not only for its fans, but for the sim-racing world in general.

ETCC Short Review!

Magnus Tellbom



Well folks, it's out, and if it's okay to start a mini-review with an apology, I'm sorry—but I cannot be blamed for wanting this mod! After all, I'm from Sweden, and there are only so many mods that feature a Volvo, right?

This mod was initially available for F1C, and it was a blast in that sim. I played it a lot offline. Offline? Yeah—'cause the netcode of F1C was only slightly better than that of Sportscar GT, so online play was more or less out of the question.

But now, ETCC for rFactor has been released, and I'm currently having tons of fun. I went online the other day—yeah, I was driving a Volvo—and managed to get my made-in-Sweden mobile across the finish line third—out of seventeen. That's right, seventeen. If anyone had tried *that* with the F1C netcode, the race would still, to this day, be awaiting the final result.

But is it any good? I mean, a conversion is one thing. Making it good is another. So is it? Well ... despite some (in my opinion) minor issues, like poorly centered steering wheels on some cars, it's the best damn mod for rFactor to this day. And who uses the steering wheel anyway? You got one on your desk, right? Must you have it on screen as well?

But ... I do not have time to write much about more about this mod now. Expect a full review in next month's issue of AUTOSIMSPORT. For now, I'm off to Montreal for a twelve lap race. Do I hear a cheer for the Volvo? Wish me luck!

Viva Francesko!

Bob Simmerman

Francesco, the amazing talent that brought us the career analyzer for GTR, is back in action with his [GTR 2 career](#)

Microsoft Excel - FRANCESKO_CAREER_STAT_GTR2_v5.2.xls

File Edit View Insert Format Tools Data Window Help

D15 =IF(C15<>0,LEFT(C15,LEN(C15)-7)*60+LEFT(RIGHT(C15,6),2)+RIGHT(C15,3)/1000,999+999/1000)

User Guide

The Reference times appear in blue color. You can change those times by entering a new time in the following format: "9:99.999"

The GT (respectively NGT) rank will be calculated once you have achieved at least one measured lap for each track.

The current car selected shows the car that is selected in the HOME menu. When the selection is *, it means that all cars are selected. In this case, the calculated rank takes into account the best lap done for each track whatever the car is. If one particular car is selected, the rank is calculated for the selected car only.

ALL	2004 TRACKS	GT RANK REFERENCE		NGT RANK REFERENCE		GT - BEST LAPS				NGT - BEST LAPS			
		Best time	time in s	Best time	time in s	Best time	time in s	delta in s	delta in %	Best time	time in s	delta in s	delta in %
GTR	4BOSCHERSLEBEN	1:23.084	83.084	1:36.191	96.191		999.999	916.918	1103.6%		999.999	903.808	919.6%
GTR	4BRNO	1:57.445	117.445	2:04.460	124.460		999.999	888.596	78.18%		999.999	875.838	701.5%
GTR	4DONINGTON	1:28.430	88.430	1:32.633	92.633	1:27.569	87.569	-0.861	-1.0%		999.999	907.366	979.5%
GTR	4DUBAI	9:99.999	639.999	9:99.999	639.999		999.999	360.000	56.1%		999.999	360.000	56.1%
GTR	4GPVALENCIA	1:32.977	92.977	1:39.430	99.430	1:33.267	93.267	0.290	0.3%		999.999	900.565	905.7%
GTR	4IMOL	9:99.999	639.999	9:99.999	639.999		999.999	360.000	56.1%		999.999	360.000	56.1%
GTR	4MAGNY	1:36.818	96.818	1:42.306	102.306	1:37.564	97.564	0.750	0.8%		999.999	897.698	877.5%
GTR	4MONZA	1:48.126	108.126	1:53.472	113.472	1:43.623	103.623	-4.503	-4.2%		999.999	888.527	781.3%
GTR	4OSCHERSLEBEN	1:23.084	83.084	1:36.191	96.191		999.999	916.918	1103.6%		999.999	903.808	919.6%
GTR	4SPA	2:12.749	132.749	2:26.859	146.859	2:17.305	137.305	4.556	3.4%		999.999	893.140	880.9%
GTR	4ZHUHAI	9:99.999	639.999	9:99.999	639.999	1:35.299	95.299	-544.700	-85.1%		999.999	360.000	56.1%
TOTAL		45:22.706	2722.706	46:31.839	2791.839	99:34.622	5614.622	2891.916	1.0621477	183:19.989	10999.989	8208.480	294.0%

Current Car Selected

*

GT RANK

Incomplete

NGT RANK

Incomplete

Note: works only for SIMULATION

[analyzer](#). Requiring the simple matter of allowing this Excel-based utility to have a look at your GTR 2 Career.blb file, the analyzer will present the GTR driver with a virtual overload of statistics, including how many kilometers driven in which car at which track, best time and a score of other essential bits and bobs to track your cyber-career. Also tracked are your performances in the 2003 and 2004 track layouts, as well as your overall statistics—that is, the complete rundown—that are found in the Career.blb file. Run, don't walk, to the nearest download for this wonderful utility that far exceeds the statistical presentation of any sim to date, at least on the PC, and it even has a thoughtful and well written section describing the use of the utility. Great job Francesko!

For the Hardcore Junkie—GTR PD Monitor

Bob Simmerman

[NFBS]Nye has come up with quite the gizmo for GTR—dubbed the [GTR PD Monitor](#), this awesome utility enables one to view various aspects of the car in real time on a second monitor, or on a separate computer over a LAN. Displaying values such as tyre temperatures and pressures, oil and water temperatures, not to mention track conditions, and other crucial information, this is a crucial addition for the cyber-sim-racer, and yet another must-have that fits right in with the level of detail and authenticity offered by GTR 2.

Grand Prix 4—at a 79 Near You

Bob Simmerman

Our friend Tony is still hard at work with the 1979 mod for Grand Prix 4, and while it weighs in at a whopping 2.5 GB download, it will be the Full Monty—the complete cars, drivers, tracks, and liveries of that gorgeous Formula One season that was 1979. From the land of Diamonds and Gold, to the friendly confines of Monaco, this one has it all. CSM compliant, this will be a truly must have addition

for those fans of Grand Prix 4—stay tuned for a download near you.

Grand Prix rLegends?

Bob Simmerman

There has been quite a bit of speculation on whether or not a GPL-type experience would ever find its way into rFactor. Speculation that has, for whatever reason, existed before the release of rFactor! Recently, I came across an [exciting post](#) at the US Pits by slimjim—the guy responsible for the awesome Kart mod—where he posted some screenshots which look promising, to say the least. I can't think of a more appropriate playing field for a modern day GPL than rFactor, and let's all hope for the best with this one. For a more in-depth look at the man and the mod, look no further than this very issue. Hats Off slimjim!

X-Race Oval Mod

Bob Simmerman



[Featuring real and fantasy teams](#), this new mod is an absolute must have for the open wheel racing fan. Great physics and great graphics are just two reasons to

give this one a try, and when you take it around a certain track in [Indianapolis, Indiana](#), well, you have a recipe for recreating one of the most historic events in any racing series ... run, don't walk, and get this one now!

Bullrun Released

Bob Simmerman

[In a post by Jan Kohl](#) at the US Pits, the legendary Bullrun track for rFactor is now a reality! This legendary track is as unique as it is fun to drive, and comes complete with plenty of racing history—I hate to keep saying it, but this is a truly must have for the rFactor Universe! For those who don't quite know the history of the Bullrun, it is the closest thing the sim-racing world has to its own classic race-course: a sim-racing legend of a track and we can't wait to run it with rFactor. Thanks guys!

Formula Nippon v1.01

Bob Simmerman

I always felt that the [Formula Nippon](#) mod was one of the best for rFactor—featuring a wonderfully done car model and good physics, this mod has done nothing but improve since the initial release. Featuring updated cockpits and a fantastic body shape, this is definitely a mod for the masses, and remains one of the best online experiences you can get for the year old rFactor platform. After the mod is installed, there is a very well done PDF included that describes the various performance statistics of the car.



T1

BobSimmerman

The Emperor's New Clothes—Is The Past On Our Horizon?

Bob Simmerman previews the making of Grand Prix Legends for rFactor along with its brave creator slimjim ...



T1 The Emperor's New Clothes—Is The Past On Our Horizon?

continued



If you listened hard enough, or overheard a fragment of a conversation while strolling past the local dark alley, you may have taken a leap and begun to wonder if 'it' would ever come to pass ... the 'it' being a 1967 Formula One season mod.

Would we ever see anything like a 1967 Formula One car in rFactor? And, if such a thing came to be a reality, would it be up to the standard that Grand Prix Legends set way back in 1998? I had heard these very rumors myself—some before rFactor even released—but quickly wrote them off as wishful thinking. Although rFactor was more than up to the task of representing the 1967 season out of the box, there has been a tremendous, almost spiritual, importance placed on Grand Prix Legends, an importance that went beyond simple code, and transcended into a way of life for many, many fans of our genre. It was not something to be taken lightly, and while Grand Prix Legends certainly had its limitations, it remains, to this day, in the minds of many, the *de-factor* standard example for a hardcore racing simulation.

"Tough act to follow...", might say anyone who gives it even a modicum of thought.

On October 19, 2006, slimjim let the world know that, not only was a 1967 F1 car on his mind, he had every intention of working, and completing, a Grand Prix Legends-type mod for rFactor. As David Hobbs might say, *"The man certainly has a set of attachments..."*

And Mr. Hobbs—had he actually said that—would be exactly correct, since this is tantamount to someone

wanting to re-make Citizen Kane, re-writing the Bible, and re-shooting a Peter North climax. It just ain't gonna happen the same way twice ... or is it?

The fact is, any modder brave enough to take on this challenge would most likely be under intense scrutiny from many camps at once—Grand Prix Legends isn't just any sim, and the mod had better not be some hack-job tossed out for nothing more than short-lived glory. No, any mod like that would have to pass more than a few tests of worthiness—fair or otherwise.

This is, after all, the sim that started it all; The sim by which all others are judged. The sim that retains a loyal and non insignificant following even after almost a decade since its release (is there another PC-title—in any genre—that can claim that?).

However, with that being said, the world really has moved on since 1967—as it has since 1997. A decade is a long time in motor-racing—and even longer in technology. In 1967, cars had no wings: By the end of 1977, cars had begun experimenting with rudimentary Ground Effects ...

GPL then, is not only starting to show its age—it's been sporting liver-spots for a while now, and its limitations, when compared to sims made this century, are difficult to disguise, no matter how magnificent the eye-candy that is created for it. For some—this writer included—those limitations, over a period of time, has become detrimental to the enjoyment of the sim.



It is well known that, for all intents and purposes, the tyre model in GPL is vastly behind the times (in terms of current technology and coding): Frankly, even when the sim was brand new, there were more than a few grumblings about the lack of traction and the need to drive insane angle of attack to get the most from the sim.

Multiplayer, too, was an afterthought, and the version that did make it into the shipping box was rather rudimentary—such as a rather primitive online collision detection. It didn't ship with Force-Feedback, either, and DirectX support was most likely the farthest thing from the developer's mind. But when you also put into that box a twenty degree of freedom physics model—that addressed valve train friction, for Pete's sake—it is easy to forgive GPL for many of its omissions.

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In any event, the community saw to it that much of this was eventually, and very professionally, rectified. For an example of the quality infused into this slow-selling simulator of no-forgiveness, one only has to look as far as the [GPLeA](#) to determine just how far above amazing the bar was raised post-release. A quick glance at the 1965 and [1969](#) mods also more than hint at racing simulator nirvana. Nevertheless, remnants of GPL's past remained ... such things as the launching of your car into orbit after hitting a massive object such as a chain link fence segment, or worse, a three gram piece of Armco, or the insane level of difficulty that many felt (and continue to feel) was simply unforgivably treacherous—and not always in a realistic way. Dave Kaemmer, in that very revealing interview he conducted for [Gamespot](#) some years back, acknowledged GPL's problems: "Unfortunately, we had to change the design of GPL in order to ship it on time, and instead of starting in the equivalent of a Formula Ford, graduating to Formula 2, and only then to a Formula 1 car, we allowed people to jump right in to the F1 car with no training time. It was like putting a novice skier at the top of an iced-over double black diamond and saying, 'Have fun!' Needless to say, many people didn't. My regrets are that we didn't postpone shipping until the 3D hardware market settled down a bit and until we had finished the experience ladder design ..."

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But what GPL got right, it got perfectly right—immersion, brilliant AI, good multiplayer, historically correct performance differences among the field of cars ... well, really, you could just go on about the things it got 'right'. But more than that, what it got right is unquantifiable, really: It literally defined the market of sim-racing—of 'simulators' and not games—such that the world—in, yes, a very small but, for us, tangible way—really has never been the same again. That is why GPL must be, surely, the greatest sim of all time.

So, remember the part about re-writing the Bible and the rest of it? Well, this is the arena—filled by very edgy lions—into which any modder must step should he want to convert the legend.



But times change—I know because a guy wrote a song about it once—and PCs get faster, video subsystems get quicker, driving gear gets more complex—and expensive—and sooner or later, you look around you and realize that the old days have come and gone and it's probably time to get rid of the mullet.

Departure, though—closure, for GPL-addicts—not not, however, be one of sadness, but one of optimism—the sort of optimism that a well done GPL mod can bring, the sort of optimism that comes from the realization that nothing has to be left behind, and in probably every way there is the *potential* for a better experience. Because the truth is, GPL didn't invent the cars and sounds of 1967—it just got there first, and Formula One, in that year, is really what this is about. Isn't it?

Slimjim—in an understandably secret mod development lab in Minnesota—is the man who has taken on the task of re-creating 1967 for rFactor.

Many of you are probably already familiar (and if you're not, this is a good time to try it out) with his superb KART mod, considered by many to be one of the best mods to date for rFactor. The KART mod's authenticity should come as no surprise, though, because, as slimjim informed me during our secret talks, he has been an avid KART racer for around nine years, a fact that becomes readily apparent even after a short session with the mod.

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Rare indeed is a mod developed by a real-life participant in the modded class, but in this case, our good luck was assured. And with the help of such talents as IDT members, MaTi from Spain, and Adriano Augusto from Sau Paolo, along with the Mr. Mod Team, this mod remains faithful to the real sport in both its look, and, perhaps more importantly, feel.

Another credit in slimjim's CV is the new [Sprint Car](#) mod which is a jewel in the rFactor world. Slimjim—and those who helped him—have created a very convincing, and very good looking, representation of what are quite possibly the most powerful cars on the planet given recent changes in Formula One power plant output levels. Much like the KART mod, slimjim captures the essence of the insanity that is a World of Outlaws sprint car, and all of the mind-bending power to weight ratio revelations that come with it. For my money, it is every bit

as good as the Rat Bag offerings in terms of the sheer fun and excitement of driving. More than that though—it is also easy to note a trend here; it seems this slimjim fella hangs out with top shelf quality on a regular basis and has no problem sharing his talents with the community.

So I should be forgiven for thinking that he had been slaving away for decades racing and modding sims of one type or another. Forgiven, because, as I was about to find out, slimjim is relatively new to this and, much to my surprise, got his first 'real start' a mere three years ago!

"You heard correctly—three years," slimjim repeated. "My first two games were Call of Duty, and Grand Prix Legends. Call of Duty is one of the best, if not the best, shooters ever done. With Grand Prix Legends, I was a fan of the movie {the one with James Garner}, and I just like the cars in general."

I cringed when he told me he started driving GPL with a converted PS1 gamepad. Madness! I must say this all impressed me very much—I have had computers for over twenty years, and have yet to do anything of any real worth {*Bob never lies—Ed*}, to be honest, and to learn of what this guy did in three? Well, some have what it takes, and the rest of us just write about them.

I am only partially kidding. {*Yes, about the writing bit—Ed*}

But for those of us who need to place some sort of blame on what slimjim is up to, we need only look as far as his good friend Steve Boyer who was largely the reason slimjim got involved with Grand Prix Legends at all. "Blame me!" proclaimed Steve during our online testing session, and we all had a good laugh about it.



I must say, Call of Duty and Grand Prix Legends are perhaps the single best examples of each of their respective genres you could possibly wish for. In the day, Grand Prix Legends was all there was, and the rest simply wasn't. Well, at least among the open wheel crowd. I got my first taste of online racing in the wildly popular—and well done—current version of the Papyrus NASCAR series at the time (in 1996 I believe), and never even got my hands on a copy of Grand Prix Legends until about 2001—well after the initial release, but just in time to arrive for my first experience to be the heavily augmented one we all know today. It was eye-opening to say the least, and held my interest for quite a while. Long story short—I missed the renaissance in the genre that was Grand Prix Legends the first time around, like many others, but thanks to those who loved the sim from day one, my first experience with it was far above the original—in terms of appearance and multiplayer functionality.

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And Call of Duty? I played it when it came out, loved it to death, and am now playing the second version on the XBOX 360, and if I could take only one shooter game to an island exile, Call of Duty would most likely get the nod.

However you may feel about these two products, they both represent a defining moment in their respective genres, although an unwavering—and probably in many ways unrealistic—insistence on ultimate difficulty in the case of Grand Prix Legends practically assured its low sales and consequent death as a franchise that Papyrus would enjoy with its NASCAR license using the same engine.

Tragic, to be sure, and had Papyrus' wish—that drivers be eased into the experience—been accepted by Sierra, we may all have been anticipating Grand Prix Legends V this year ...

Now, before I popped the question to slimjim—that is, before I asked if I could have a car to play with—I felt it best to find out some more about him, and we got onto the subject of modding, of all things. In particular, how modding for Call of Duty is vastly different than modding for rFactor.

"For a mod to make it into Call of Duty, it has to be very, very good." He explained, before adding that, "online games such as Call of Duty have such a huge

audience that the mod needs to be as good as it can be, and in some cases as good as the original product itself. With the racing sims, this strictness does not appear to be the case all the time, but then again, the audience is but a fraction of a popular online shooter."

What he says makes perfect sense—while it goes without saying that each and every mod is appreciated, it also goes without saying that some mods, be they tracks, cars, or seasons, are simply not at the level of quality found in certain other mods. There are many reasons for this, to be sure, but I would say that the one exception to this rule—for the open wheelers that is—would be anything to do with Grand Prix Legends, and its representation in rFactor. I can't think of a single open wheel effort that will have more eyes upon it than this one, and slimjim and I both had a chuckle over just how big the bucket of guts are that one needs to attempt a GPL mod for rFactor, much less get it done.

On the other hand, I personally feel that slimjim—or anyone else for that matter—should have every right to attempt a mod such as this ... the last I heard, the true rights to Grand Prix Legends do not belong to a community member, or even a community group, or Papyrus, for that matter. And while I can certainly appreciate a dedicated entity being involved as much as possible, I would draw the line at any type of, 'You can't do this because it is GPL and only so and so can do that'—I simply do not go along with that line of thought. GPL is GPL, as I said—but 1967 is 1967, and for me, those cars take priority over any simulator.

However, with that being said, a quick glance at the US Pits thread regarding this mod announcement has shown plenty of views, and, more importantly—plenty of help from some pretty big hitters in the community.

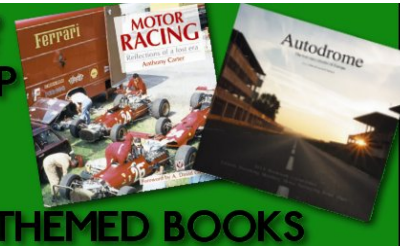
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It would appear that not only has slimjim created a bit of interest, he has perhaps rekindled what, for many in the community, is a long-lost love affair. A reuniting, if you will, of one of the greatest sims of one of the greatest years in Formula One history. Perhaps shaving off that mullet was a hasty decision after all!

But, I hear you ask ... when are we going to talk about the mod, Bob? Yes, okay, how about right now?

"At this time, the mod is approximately fifty-to-seventy percent complete, but a lot of work remains," Slimjim told me to me. "The cars need to be mapped, the physics need to be fine-tuned, and there is currently only one LOD model."

On the surface, one might think that it is too far from a drivable state, but I can tell you for sure that nothing could be further from the truth. After I finally got my hands on the mod—currently around sixty megabytes size—I couldn't wait to give it a try online and slimjim setup a server for our testing purposes. Joining us was his friend Steve Boyer, and we chose Essington as the battleground.

After about a quarter of a lap, I knew one thing for sure—it was going to be difficult, if not impossible, to go back to the original GPL ever again. Bold words, perhaps—but right away in this mod, it became perfectly clear that not only was rFactor a great platform for an endeavor such as this, it had the added bonus of not requiring a lot of hoops to jump through just to get into some online trouble. The actual driving of the thing was a

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huge surprise to me—I will admit, I was extremely skeptical before so much as turning a wheel. As much as I found the original GPL insanely lacking of grip sometimes, I nevertheless have always appreciated its incredible immersion, and its undeniable legacy. Or is it pedigree? But what slimjim has done at this early stage seemed to be nearly miraculous, and I can only imagine how incredible the final piece is going to be.

The grip level at low speed will be the first thing you notice—that is, it *has some*—and the way it will toss you into the wall if you get too confident is the second thing you will notice. The cars are easy to drive, and that's the problem—

that false sense of security can fool you into thinking you have ability beyond your ability, and the next thing you know your four wheel drift turns into a four wheel wall sandwich. The Force-Feedback and response to what is going on with each wheel is well done, and for those of you who enjoy the sliding around—and all cars slide around to some degree—your technique will serve you well. Much like the original rewarded perfection at the limit, so does this mod of slimjim's. It is easy to drive the car, but it is not easy to drive it at the limit, and it will require a good deal of practice to attain your best possible time.

Steve pretty much left both slimjim and I in the dust, but our session was lag free as is usually the case with an rFactor session—a welcome relief after the NASA launch pad that GPL could sometimes be, even with a low client load.

Long story short—it was an absolute pleasure to drive, something that even if it was released today in a fractional state of completion, would no doubt be the online mod of choice for many. It is just damn fun to drive, and even better, it literally dares you to push it a little bit more.

So when can we expect to be able to drive something? According to slimjim, “I could have something ready by next week, but it would definitely be a beta”.

But oh, what a beta it would be! Like the 1979 mod, which has also been released in a beta state, we both agreed that releasing a mod like that can aid a great deal in how well done the final product will be, considering the amount of feedback that sort of release would generate. I can't say for sure, but I wouldn't be surprised if we get a very good taste of slimjim's vision of the 1967 season sooner, rather than later.

We finished up our session with a short ten lap race, and it was quite a bit of fun all the way through, in large part due to the excellent default setup slimjim had for the cars. “At this time, the cars are all using the same engine, tyre, and physics, as well as the same suspension modeling. Creating a good default setup was important because I wanted people to be able to get right in and play.”

Obviously, most will wish to alter that setup like they do for any car they are driving, but for those who want a gentle introduction to these beauties, these will offer that option. I found the default setup just to my liking, with only a small gearing change to lead to my best at Essington.

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Another characteristic of the mod—and the real cars as well—is the seemingly indestructible nature of the tyres. They never did go to the red indicator in terms of temperature, but they did increase very slowly, and subtle increases in grip as this happened were noted. Now, this may seem to be very strange, but keep in mind that it was common for a 1967 car to

drive an entire weekend—practice, qualifying, and a race without pit stops—on the same set of tyres. I would not expect them to turn into a sopping mass of molten rubber after twelve laps, and sure enough, they didn't.

More than that, though, the mod did something that I feel is more than important—it provided that

elusive immersive quality, that strange intangible quality that pushes the factor of believability above and beyond what you may think possible with a computer game, sim, or mod. The first time you follow an opponent through a corner and observe all four of his suspension points realistically, and independently, complying to the surface of the road, or curb, or dirt, you are hooked. To see that level of detail at this early of a stage is very reassuring.

Damage has also been implemented, and much like I used to do with the Papyrus Lotus, I can now do in rFactor—destroy a perfectly good Ford motor with a perfectly horrible start. Suspension parts get bent with the corresponding driving difficulties, and what GPL could not offer can be found here—body deformation, courtesy of the rFactor base.

But as I have mentioned earlier—and by slimjim's own admission—the mod is far from finished. Permissions are still being sought for certain aspects of the mod, and help is being enlisted from the community for painting and texturing work. As for slimjim, he is not the type to shove something out the door just to get it done and call it a day, and that is the kind of dedication to quality this community is becoming famous for. The same beta I played has now made a few trips around the campfire, and the initial response is positive—a good sign, considering the near reverence that many approach the original Grand Prix Legends with.

Keep your eyes open for this one, because I can tell you right now—it's a keeper.

AutoSimSport would like to take this opportunity to thank slimjim for his help in the preparation of this article. And also for that awesome link—thank you!

TPSCC 06 Update—It's In Beta Fellas!

Chaz Teets gets his hands on rFactor's Great White Hope—the US Pits' Stock Car Championship mod. Now in beta, and featuring physics by renowned guru Brian Ring, sounds by Methyl Ethyl, and packaged by one of the premiere mod-houses on earth, the clock is counting down—to rFactor's destiny of ending Papyrus' domination of online oval racing..

ChazTeets





As regular readers will be aware, in August's issue of AUTOSIMSPORT, I managed to secure myself on an early build of the US Pits' special test-build of the highly anticipated US Pits Stock Car Championship 06 mod for rFactor. That build was mainly a car model showcase, and featured the default ISI-stock car physics from ISI's out-of-the-box stock cars.

This month, however, I was kindly given another opportunity to test the TPSCC mod. So what's new, you ask? Well, gentlemen, this time the mod was totally tricked-out with custom Brian Ring physics *and* Methy Ethyl's sounds. And let me tell you here and now, when this mod is released to the public, and stock car rules and spotters are implemented into rFactor, oval racers the world over will be saying, "N2003 what?"

The TPSCC06 mod remains in the beta testing phase, and remains as private. This one—as with all US Pits' mods—will be released when it's ready, so don't ask! The bugs are being smashed, the crinkles are being ironed-out and that is done, we will all be buying a copy of rFactor. Clear enough for ya?

If not, let me give you a little preview. First up—this isn't a NASCAR mod. Although it is ... because, just to be safe, the TPSCC06 mod will be released with a full field of fictional paint-schemes. How long it will take before the NASCAR Nextel Cup cars are reproduced is anyone's guess ... but since I've been predicting the future, I'll venture a guess and say ... days!



So much for the eye-candy though: we all know the one thing that the one arena in which N2003 has never been matched is physics. So how does this compare? Well, let's put it this way—three years ago, Papyrus had the greatest stock car sim on the planet. But time has moved on. I'll give you an example of how this mod outshines N2003: You can actually save the car from spinning out, unlike N2003 where, if you got sideways, you were heading for a concrete wall sandwich no matter how much counter-steer you put into it.

All the garage options familiar to N2003 racers are here, too, and there are even a few more options that aren't available in N2003 setups. The car's are also very sensitive to setup changes, as you'd expect.

The short of it? Brian Ring's addons for N2003 made that sim shine—and for those of you unfamiliar with his work, go do a Google for "BR" and Talladega. He has done the same with rFactor, except that he is now manipulating an 'open' physics engine for which he has the keys—a physics engine, what's more, that is three years advanced from N2003. What more do you need to know? The physics are spot-on, no question.

As for the sound ... Methy has really outdone himself with this one! It actually sounds like there're 800 ponies under the hood. And that's the rub with this mod: What more can I say other than the obvious? I mean, the US Pits, Brian Ring, Methy Ethyl—it's like

those fellas that ask, when you tell 'em some guy bought an apartment in New York for forty-seven million dollars, "but is it nice?" No, it's a dump—seriously, an absolute crap-hole! Of course it's bloody great! As great as this mod ... but ... as those of you who are familiar with my beta testing skills know, there is only one way to know whether a mod *really* works for me ...



Hold on, it's the damage modeling test! The track was Jacksonville, the Turn, 4. After getting loose with a little too optimistic a setup, I hit the inside wall—hard—and smoke immediately started billowing from the engine. When I finally came to a rest in the infield, my engine was actually on fire! Leaving me little option other than to get out and run—which is, I promise you—exactly what you're gonna be doing the instant this mod is released. Running straight over to rFactor ... and not about time either! Time was when us oval-racers had a new quality sim out every year ... well, guys, the three year wait is almost over. This mod is N2003's killer.

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GTR2—The Ultimate Guide

T2

SimLeague.net's painstaking and practical guide to selecting the right tyres and cars in GTR2—from Michelins to Pirellis, from tyre-walls to grip, from GT to NGT— here prepared exclusively for AUTOSIMSPORT's readers ...

SimLeague.net





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Grip: Tyres Used On Rear-Engined GT-Cars

The Pirelli tyre exhibits the optimum absolute grip. The Michelins and Dunlops, however, are not that far removed, and these latter two are virtually indistinguishable from each other in terms of absolute grip.

In the dry

In the dry, the Pirelli tyre offers its maximum grip at a limited slip angle: this means that they dissipate the least amount of power when sliding. This aspect, when coupled with turns that require aggression, result in nervous and difficult behaviour in the tyres when taken to their limit. The Michelin tyre dissipates more power to attain the same grip as the Pirellis, while the Dunlop tyre dissipates the most power in both slip angle and slip ratio—as a consequence, the Dunlop tyre is also the 'easiest' to use on the limit.

In the Wet

In the wet, the situation virtually reverses itself: the Michelins become the tyres that are the most difficult to control on the limit since they exhibit a slip angle that is extremely limited—in fact, almost identical to their dry weather version. The Dunlop tyre remains, like their dry weather counterparts, very manageable, with a slip angle slightly wider than their dry version. The biggest change is that shown by the Pirelli tyres: their wet weather tyre's slip angle is far wider than the dry tyre, and this results in an extremely manageable wet weather tyre, even while their grip curves remain extremely aggressive.

The Dunlops have the softest tyre walls. This means that cars that are shod with Dunlops are able to bounce over curbs with greater comparative ease—but this aspect needs to be balanced against the tyre's loss of precision. The Pirellis' tyre-walls are a little more rigid than the Dunlops, while the Michelin tyre exhibits the most rigid tyre-wall: this loss of flexibility results in a tyre that is extremely nervous over the curbs and bumps, but they are also the most precise.

Wear: Tyres Used On Rear-Engined GT-Cars

In the dry

Dunlop tyres wear the most rapidly: the Michelins enjoy the most longevity. The Pirellis are not in-between, but are, in fact, closer to the Michelins than the Dunlops in terms of absolute wear. The situation remains the same no matter which compounds are used (soft/medium/hard), because these compounds exhibit very minor differences.

In the wet

The situation changes considerably in the wet. The Dunlop tyres demonstrate the least amount of wear, and outlast the other two tyres quite considerably. The wear exhibited by the Michelins and Pirellis, what is more, is very dependent on the compound used, and here, as opposed to their wet cousins, compounds can significantly impact the wear. But whichever compound used, the latter two tyres lose out significantly to the Dunlops in terms of absolute wear in the wet.

It goes without saying, though, that the performance of the tyres alter depending on the car on which they are attached, and certain tyres are far better suited to certain cars than others.

Grip: Tyres Used On Mid-Engined GT-Cars

Again, the Pirelli tyre exhibits the best absolute grip. The Michelins and Dunlops, however, are not that far removed, and these latter two are virtually indistinguishable from each other in terms of absolute grip.

In the dry

The Pirelli tyres offer the most grip with their maximum grip and narrowest slip angle configuration, resulting in a tyre that dissipates the least amount of power when sliding. This, as with the rear-engined cars, results in very nervous behavior on the limit.

The Michelins follow the Pirellis, dissipating more power in order to obtain the same grip as the Pirellis.

In the wet

The situation in wet weather almost reverses itself: the Michelins become the most difficult tyres to manage on the limit since they maintain an extremely narrow slip angle—almost, in fact, identical to those in the dry. The Pirellis, on the other hand, exhibit a wider slip angle, and become the most manageable tyres in the wet, albeit with a grip curve that remains very aggressive.

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Wear: Tyres Used On Mid-Engined GT-Cars

In the dry

«The Michelins exhibit the least wear.

«The Pirellis exhibit the most wear.

«There are very slim differences amongst the various compounds.

In the wet

«The Michelins exhibit, yet again, the least amount of wear.

«The Pirellis exhibit the most.

«And again, as with the rear-engined cars, certain cars marry better with certain tyres.

Grip: Tyres Used On NGT-Cars

As predicted, there are many similarities with the tyres used with the GT-Cars. The Pirellis enjoy the highest level of absolute grip, but the Michelins and Dunlops are very close in terms of grip, but less so in terms of traction. The Yokohama tyres are just a little inferior to the Dunlops.

In the dry

Again, the Pirellis provide for maximum grip at a slip angle that is extremely limited and narrow. As with the GT-cars, this provides for good performance along with skittish and nervous behaviour. The Michelins dissipate more power before exhibiting the same grip level, while the Dunlops, because of the wider slip angle, exhibit the least amount of grip, but remain the easiest to drive on the limit. The Yokohama tyres are very similar to the Dunlops.

In the wet

In the wet, yet again, the situation is almost reversed. The Michelins become the most difficult to manage since they have a very narrow slip angle, almost identical, in fact, to their dry tyre. The Dunlop tyres remain very manageable, with a slip angle slightly wider than the dry tyre. The Pirellis, meantime, exhibit a very wide slip angle, even while maintaining a very aggressive grip curve. The Yokohama tyres are the most nervous and skittish in the wet.



The NGT-car tyre-walls are significantly softer than their GT counterparts, with the Michelins probably the softest of all. The reason for this softness is because they are not required to tolerate the enormous aerodynamic loads of the GT-cars, and therefore allow for a far more aggressive ride while sacrificing on precision.

Wear: Tyres Used On NGT-Cars

In the dry

All tyres are almost identical in terms of wear with the exception of the Yokohamas, which wear faster than the rest.

In the wet

The same situation applies in the wet as in the dry, with the following exceptions: the Dunlop intermediates offer a slight advantage in terms of wear, and the Yokohama tyres suffer faster wear than the rest.

Again, as with the GT-cars, different tyres suit different cars. For instance, the Michelins seem well suited to the Porsches, whilst the Pirellis seem to work best when fitted to the Ferrari 360 GT. The Dunlops are

more generic, but seem best suited to cars with more weight over the rear axle.

A final point to consider is that Michelin are the only tyre manufacturer to create tyres specifically designed for the BMW M3 GTR. They not only offer more grip than any other NGT tyre, but they are also stiffer while exhibiting the least wear over a run. In the wet, however, they are identical to the normal Michelin tyres for all NGT cars.

The Cars

Before examining all the cars in GTR, a quick explanation on some of the parameters used in their evaluation needs to be offered.

«««All data on engine performance is approximate, and have been gathered by our noise meter.

«««Weight is calculated with driver (80kg), and no petrol.

«««Aerodynamic Efficiency: This is a score that takes into account the performance of the car, as well as its aerodynamic resistance (drag). The maximum score is 5.

«««Aerodynamic Sensibility: This is a score that takes into account the difficulty in setting-up a car to achieve its maximum performance, as well as the style of driving needed to get the most out of the car, and, finally, the car's efficiency in critical phases such as under braking. Maximum score is 5.

«««Note that the behaviour of cars, taken from interviews conducted with drivers and engineers, can vary.

«««The scores for aerodynamic efficiency and sensibility between the GT and NGT cars are not comparable.

BMW M3 GTR



Power: 500bhp

Torque: 500Nm

Weight: 1250kg

Aerodynamic Efficiency: 5/5

Aerodynamic Sensitivity: 2/5

Gearbox: Sequential with autoblip and autocutoff. Very quick and efficient.

Handling: Very neutral and stable, the BMW can be difficult to turn-in due to its weight. However, it enjoys a solid mid-turn, and has excellent traction. All-in-all, a very efficient car.



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Ferrari 360 Modena



Power: 450bhp
Torque: 410Nm
Weight: 1180kg
Aerodynamic Efficiency: 3/5
Aerodynamic Sensitivity: 4/5

Gearbox: Semi-automatic version as found in the standard road-going version with autoblip and autocutoff. This is slow, and a principle disadvantage of this car.

Handling: The car offers a very direct turn-in but, unfortunately, the rear, in this phase, has a tendency to slide out. This handling characteristic is difficult to dial-out even with setup work. It is very good in mid-turn, and has excellent traction.

Ferrari 360 GTC



Power: 460bhp
Torque: 410Nm
Weight: 1180kg
Aerodynamic Efficiency: 4/5
Aerodynamic Sensitivity: 3/5

Gearbox: Sequential with autoblip and autocutoff. Very fast, and a vast improvement over the 360 Modena.

Handling: As with the 360 Modena above, the turn-in is very direct. And while the GTC exhibits a more stable rear-end on entry, it still remains a tad unstable. The more efficient aerodynamics improves the already superb mid-turn capability, as well as its handling under braking. Traction remains superb on exit. This model is significantly quicker than the 360 Modena.

Porsche 911 (996) RS



Power: 460bhp
Torque: 420Nm
Weight: 1180kg
Aerodynamic Efficiency: 3.5/5
Aerodynamic Sensitivity: 4/5

Gearbox: Manual without autoblip or autocutoff. This results in a far quicker gear-change than that of the semi-automatic on the Ferrari 360 Modena—assuming, that is, that the driver has the required skill-set.

Handling: The low front weight means that the car can exhibit severe understeer tendencies if not driven correctly. If the driver, however, is able to force the rear to grip on entry, the car's turn-in is very precise, and the rear tends to follow round without much drama. A word of caution however: While forcing the rear down with some corner oversteer is needed, the driver should be very



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careful not to overdo it since the rear weight, once the rear end slips free, will cause the driver to lose a lot of time while sorting out the resulting slide—and may result in a spectacular '360'. The brakes are very good, mid-turn is normal, and exit traction is just jaw-droppingly awe-inspiring.

Be SEEN!

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Porsche 911 (996) RSR



Power: 460bhp

Torque: 430Nm

Weight: 1180kg

Aerodynamic Efficiency: 5/5

Aerodynamic Sensitivity: 4/5

Gearbox: Sequential with autoblip and autocutoff, very quick and efficient.

Handling: Even if it is improved from the RS, the RSR can still find itself in situations of chronic understeer if not driven correctly. Again, if the driver is able to find rear grip on entry, the car is both precise and stable. The RSR, like the RS, can lead the driver into some serious trouble if he overcompensates for the understeer with deliberately induced oversteer, but it is more forgiving in this department than the RS. The brakes are also very good, mid-turn is exceptional, while exit traction is simply the best available.

Nissan 350Z



Power: 430bhp

Torque: 460Nm

Weight: 1180kg

Aerodynamic Efficiency: 2/5

Aerodynamic Sensitivity: 4/5

Gearbox: Manual without autoblip or autocutoff. This results in a far quicker gear-change than that of the semi-automatic on the Ferrari 360 Modena—assuming, that is, that the driver has the required skill-set.

Handling: Very forgiving and easy to drive, the Nissan offers a great and often entertaining ride. However, it is doubtful that it can compete with the classic NGT cars when it comes to straight-out performance. All the same, if winning is not the goal, but having a good time is, then this is the car for you.




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Ferrari 550 BMS

Ferrari 550 JMB

Ferrari 550 Wieth



Power: 630bhp
 Torque: 750Nm
 Weight: 1180kg
 Aerodynamic Efficiency: 5/5
 Aerodynamic Sensitivity: 1.5/5

Gearbox: Sequential with autoblip and autocutoff, lightening quick both on upshift and down.

Handling: Notwithstanding its front-load, the car exhibits a very stable turn-in, and the rear follows without many problems. This neutral tendency means the mid-turn performance is amongst the best, being both secure and predictable. The brakes are excellent. However, with the light rear and the abundance of power, exit traction can be compromised. This can be negated by a skilled driver who is able to get the car into a slight drift on corner exit. This car is also very sensitive to setup changes, and is very gentle on tyre wear. All-in-all, probably the best car available.



Power: 620bhp
 Torque: 750Nm
 Weight: 1180kg
 Aerodynamic Efficiency: 4/5
 Aerodynamic Sensitivity: 2/5

Gearbox: Sequential with autoblip and autocutoff, lightening quick both on upshift and down.

Handling: Notwithstanding its front-load, the car exhibits a very stable turn-in, and the rear follows without many problems. This neutral tendency means the mid-turn performance is amongst the best, being both secure and predictable. The brakes are excellent. There is less power than the BMS variant, but still exit traction can be compromised. This can be negated by the skilled driver who is able to get the car into a slight drift on corner exit. This car is also very sensitive to setup changes, and is very gentle on tyre wear.



Power: 620bhp
 Torque: 750Nm
 Weight: 1180kg
 Aerodynamic Efficiency: 3.5/5
 Aerodynamic Sensitivity: 3/5

Gearbox: Sequential with autoblip and autocutoff, lightening quick both on upshift and down.

Handling: The Wieth did not enjoy the same development, in terms of its aerodynamic package or its chassis, as can be seen on both the Ferrari BMS and JMBs. The result is a car that simply does not demonstrate the handling characteristics that allow it to be as competitive as the latter two models. It is also not only down on horsepower, but suffers from the less linear distribution of power. In all, this car leaves much to be desired when compared to its two sister cars above, and is the poor man's variant of the Ferrari JMB and BMS.



Ferrari 575



Power: 610bhp
Torque: 730Nm
Weight: 1180kg
Aerodynamic Efficiency: 4.5/5
Aerodynamic Sensitivity: 2/5

Gearbox: Sequential with autoblip and autocutoff, lightening quick both on upshift and down.

Handling: The 575 enjoys a little less front-weight than the 550, as well as a slightly better rear aerodynamics, resulting in a turn-in that is more precise than the 550. The behaviour is both stable and predictable. The brakes are superb. The power is slightly down, leading to improved exit traction, and making it probably a more forgiving ride than the 550. Very sensitive to setup changes, and very gentle on tyre wear. All-in-all, one of the most honest and quick cars, even if it is slightly down on horsepower and is, perhaps, a little more fragile than the 550.

Lister Storm



Power: 590bhp
Torque: 760Nm
Weight: 1180kg
Aerodynamic Efficiency: 2.5/5
Aerodynamic Sensitivity: 3/5

Gearbox: Sequential with autoblip and autocutoff, lightening quick both on upshift and down.

Handling: This is a very unique car in GT racing that, after many special dispensations from the GT-Racing governing body, has allowed it to remain competitive. Its continuing evolution has seen the Lister become almost a prototype. Being seriously down on power, the Lister comes into its own through the turns where it enjoys magnificent turn-in and mid-turn performance. Exit traction is equally impressive, considering the front end grip and lots of torque, even if it is as a consequence of its power-limitation.

Creation Lister



Power: 590bhp
Torque: 725Nm
Weight: 1180kg
Aerodynamic Efficiency: 2/5
Aerodynamic Sensitivity: 4/5

Gearbox: Sequential with autoblip and autocutoff, lightening quick both on upshift and down.

As with the Storm, this car has been much helped by the governing body in order to keep it competitive with the passing of time. It exhibits all the same characteristics as the Storm, including its terrific handling but differs in terms of its torque. The Lister—including this and the Storm—is not very sensitive to setup changes, and seems always to maintain its secure and stable characteristics. It is also supremely easy with tyre wear, and this can be used, particularly in long races, to great advantage.

Viper



Power: 630bhp (650bhp)*
Torque: 800Nm (850Nm)*
Weight: 1125kg
Aerodynamic Efficiency: 1/5
Aerodynamic Sensitivity: 4/5

Gearbox: Sequential with autoblip and autocutoff, lightening quick both on upshift and down.

Handling: The Viper is the alter-ego of the Lister. It has monstrous power and torque, but getting it all down on the tarmac can be rather challenging, to say the least. The brakes are adequate. Turn-in is slow. The rear will follow the front on turn-in with something approaching stability. Mid-turn, the Viper is slow, and exit traction is problematic. With both power and torque being so extreme, the rear tyres are always busy doing something—and not all if it conducive to a stable ride! It is also not very sensitive to setup changes due to the nature of the car's power which will throw it into an oversteer condition in any turn, and in any situation, resulting in shredded rear tyres. It is, however, very controllable at the limit, and can be an extremely entertaining ride. Its handling problems, however, make it uncompetitive on many tracks except those—like *Enna* and *Monza*—where its power and its aerodynamic efficiency make it the fastest car in a straight line. A real American Muscle Car!

**In brackets is the power and torque numbers for the Force One Team, which enjoys a more powerful, but also a more fragile engine.*

Maserati MC12



Power: 600bhp
Torque: 650Nm
Weight: 1250kg
Aerodynamic Efficiency: 5/5
Aerodynamic Sensitivity: 1/5

Gearbox: Sequential with autoblip and autocutoff, lightening quick both on upshift and down.

Handling: At the centre of numerous controversies, the Maserati was built with only one objective in mind: to win without compromise. Sadly—or perhaps fortunately—the Maserati has been the victim of a weight penalty handed down by the governing body and is, as a consequence, the heaviest of the GT cars. It also has a very small rear wing, and an engine which is both down on power, and a bit breathless on higher RPMs. But notwithstanding this, the car is able to create an astonishing performance from its diffuser, which sees it literally stick to the road. The turn-in, as a consequence, is superb, even while one can feel the weight. But it is in mid-turn and on exit traction where the Maserati comes into its own: seriously awe-inspiring! However, a cautionary note, because this level of grip comes with a price. The car requires that it be driven very politely—that is, both precisely and cleanly. This car does not forgive anything! In the narrow, tight stuff, it is a little too pregnant, and on the curbs it can be downright dangerous ... but in the medium-speed turns, it has no rival. The brakes, however, are a little disappointing, and top-speed is equally down. Driven in the way it was designed to be driven, it is extremely easy on the tyres.

Saleen



Power: 620bhp
Torque: 780Nm
Weight: 1250kg
Aerodynamic Efficiency: 5/5
Aerodynamic Sensitivity: 1/5

Gearbox: Sequential with autoblip and autocutoff, lightening quick both on upshift and down.

Handling: This is yet another very unique car that is similar to the Maserati in many ways—but not quite as extreme. Very powerful, it is also quick through the turns, and has superb exit traction despite its powerful block. The brakes, however, are a little inadequate, especially considering the Saleen's bloated weight, and these two issues make for an explosive mix that requires the driver to remain extremely diligent and focused at all times. Like the Maserati, the Saleen demands the car to be driven correctly and, equally like the Maserati, it is also exceedingly skittish over the curbs. All-in-all, then, the Saleen is a car that is designed for medium-speed tracks where it will pose a danger. However, due to its bulk, the Saleen, cannot be considered a serious rival to either the Maserati or the Ferrari 550. Having said that, it should be noted that—on its day, and on a track suited to its characteristics—and handled by a skilled driver,, it is - capable of some serious pace. One final remark on the Saleen is: its engine can prove to be very fragile when pushed too hard for too long.



Corvette



Power: 610bhp
Torque: 760Nm
Weight: 1230kg
Aerodynamic Efficiency: 1/5
Aerodynamic Sensitivity: 5/5

Gearbox: Manual without autoblip or autocutoff: it is, however, adequately quick.

Handling: A car with simple and yet effective solutions. Very easy to drive, it is also very forgiving that rarely puts the driver into harm's way despite its powerful engine. Neutral in-turn, it can be easily forced into oversteer with a bit of throttle: the slide, however, is easy to deal with, and great fun too! However, this style of driving will result in excessive tyre wear, so it is suggested that the driver shows a little prudence—prudence that can pay off big-time as this car can be very light on its tyres and can therefore, over long distances, provide for some satisfactory results.

Lamborghini Murcielago GTR

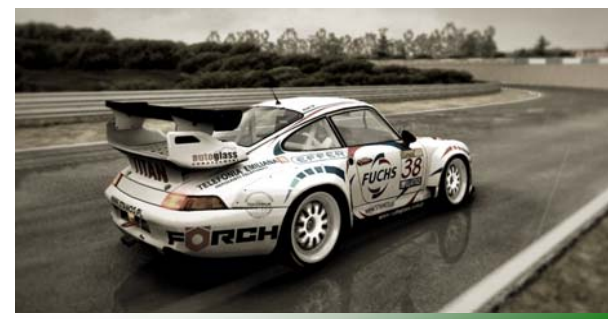


Power: 610bhp
Torque: 650Nm
Weight: 1180kg
Aerodynamic Efficiency: 3/5
Aerodynamic Sensitivity: 4/5

Gearbox: Sequential with autoblip and autocutoff, lightening quick both on upshift and down.

Handling: This car is epitomized by its superb handling—with a very quick turn-in, solid and stable mid-turn character, and good exit traction, its performance through the twisty bits is its strength. The engine, too, is powerful, but a little flat on lower RPMs, and with its high aerodynamic resistance, straight-line speed is compromised. In fact, the Lamborghini is the slowest car in terms of top speed. The car is fantastic on a qualifying lap, but in longer races, one needs to pay attention not only to the very fragile engine, but also to the rear tyres that will wear down quickly due to the car's excessive weight distributed over its rear axle. In race, engine RPM has to be seriously limited to maintain reliability and this accounts for a loss of between 10-15bhp.

Porsche 911 (993) Turbo



Power: 580bhp
Torque: 740Nm
Weight: 1230kg
Aerodynamic Efficiency: 0.5/5
Aerodynamic Sensitivity: 5/5

Gearbox: Manual without autoblip or autocutoff: it is, however, adequately quick.

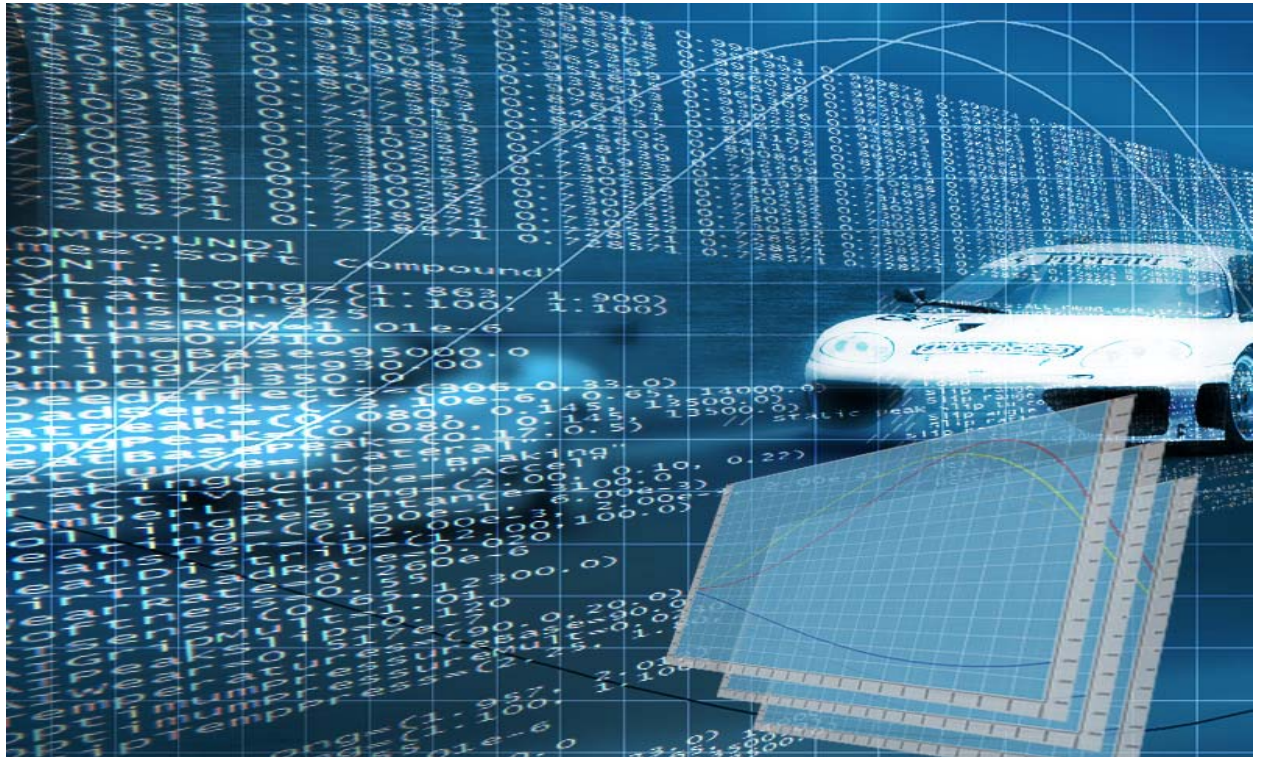
Handling: A beast (and a blast!) from the past. A car that requires maximum focus from the driver, it exhibits handling characteristics from the old-school of Porsche performance and design. It can switch from understeer to oversteer in an instant, especially when the enormous turbo literally explodes a staggering amount of torque through the rear tyres. The car is extremely difficult to tame, and, in a certain sado-masochistic way, it can provide for a lot of perverted fun ... but the driver should remain very cautious, and keep a steady eye on the oil temperature that is crucial for the turbo!

Secrets Of The NAPmod Explained

Using actual race-team and GT-car manuals, the creator of the NAPmod have transformed GTR2 into the most authentic simulator available in today's market—here, in an exclusive for AUTOSIMSPORT, its creator explains the rationale—as well as the physical tweaks—that were necessary to unleash the breathtaking sim that was hiding beneath the slick exterior of GTR2.

Anon

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When I was asked by AUTOSIMSPORT to write an article regarding the creation of the NAPmod, I was very skeptical at first, because I was sure that it would provoke the usual flames on the forums. So what changed my mind? Nothing really—I'm still sure that this article will probably be the cause of arguments and flame-wars ... but, on the other hand, I also realize that some people will appreciate an explanation as to how the mod was created—a validation, I suppose—regardless of whether they prefer the mod, or the original physics. This article, then, is aimed at those who would like to know more about the mod ... I hope you like it. Just one final point: from the onset of this project, I have chosen to remain anonymous because that was the only way to work without external influence. Personally, I find it easier to work and concentrate that way.

Before I start, I think it's important to point out what a magnificent sim GTR2 is, out-of-the-box. The NAPmod wouldn't be possible if the original GTR2 wasn't that good. It is truly an inspiring simulator, with many cool features, graphics, sounds, and multiplayer. Sure it's not perfect—but, then again, nothing is perfect out there, and nothing ever will be. Still, first-class tracks, licensed cars, authentic sounds, and amazing weather-effects make this a milestone in the sim-racing genre.

So why change it? For me, it goes back to my initial reaction when I first tried GTR2—I instantly noticed a couple of things that I didn't like. To begin with, although the tyre model was vastly improved over its predecessor (in particular the slow-speed grip), it was also clear to me

that the physics had now become extremely forgiving over the limit. You could throw the car into the turns without causing yourself any serious problems, and, what's more, you could toss the car into some rather strange drifts—drifts that could be maintained with the wheel pointed straight and the gas pedal fully pressed with the car 'locked' at a given angle.

If you had to try replicating this in real life, at any real life racing school that I have attended, for instance, it would make not only make instructor lose a couple of years from his life—or gain some white hair at the very least—but would, in all probability end in a lot of tears for everyone involved!

The second issue that I quickly noticed was this: The higher your speed, the easier it is to control the car—at any angle. For me, these two issues were central to why I felt the physics of GTR2 stock were off in some indeterminable way...

On the forums, many GTR2 fans were quick to defend the physics of this superb sim: And I believe much of this confusion relates directly to their experience (or lack of) racing purpose-built *race* cars. Street cars, on the other hand, are designed not so much for speed as much as safety—that is, virtually all cars, be it a Volkswagen or a Ferrari—are designed in such a way as to understeer in any given situation. One need only look at the toe-in found standard on many Ferrari models to determine this fact.

But going back to racing experience and cars built for racing: Even a usually laughed-at race-driver like Alex

Yoong is vastly more skilled than your average sim-racer ... and yet, we see that he spins, while the average sim-racer—the white van man—seems to believe he should be in total control of a purpose-built 600bhp plus race car one hundred percent of the time.

Now, I know what the replies to this will be: They will vary from those who claim that anyone who isn't spinning in GTR2 just isn't driving fast enough to those who claim that finding real pace in GTR2 is still very difficult to those who will claim that real-life racers tested and validated GTR2 to those who will ask—who am I to question GTR2's validity when I haven't driven any real FIAGT cars either?

These arguments, however, need not detain us at this stage since I am more than willing to concede these points.

Then again, I could argue that you can spin your car in Need For Speed Underground, too, and that Rory Byrne doesn't have to drive Michael Schumacher's Formula One car to be able to design it, and Dave Kaemmer never has driven (as far as I know anyway) a NASCAR at race-pace, and Geoff Crammond, and the ISI guys have definitely never driven a modern Formula One, and ultimately—and this is the point—finding real pace in Wipeout is extremely difficult too. Exaggerated? Probably. Nonsense? Surely—but probably as nonsensical as your point of view because, when we narrow it down like this, we get to the core issue at hand, which is—this is subjective, and what we really need here is objectivity.



One of the most used defenses, when GTR2's physics come up, is the, "real drivers have given it their thumbs-up" approach. In other words, the fact the real-world drivers have validated it means, in this argument, that there can be no doubting the authenticity of the physics involved. But is this really the case?

Even if we can assume that the real-life drivers' opinions are objective, and not influenced by outside forces such as marketing claims—which, in the case of GTR2, I am perfectly willing to believe—we still need to look at the transition that these drivers make, from racing in real-life in ultra-sophisticated and wondrous cars, bucketed in hand-made seats in which they work under maximum concentration, sweating and suffering, feeling every bump, every slide come up through the seat of their pants, to suddenly sitting before a tiny 17-inch monitor, with an absolutely different sense of speed from what they are used to, trying to squeeze feather-sensitive pedals with their race-shoes that would, were they actually driving these cars for real, be braking with seventy kilogrammes of brute force; now, these self-same drivers are sitting sit inside a tent somewhere, with music and people watching them and asking for autographs, and they drive for about ten minutes, turn to the cameraman, smile and say, "oh great job! Amazing game". Is this really objective? And would these self-same drivers arrive at the same conclusion should they have spent, say, twenty hours testing the sim in a motion platform?



The banner features the Sim-Gear logo on the left with the website www.sim-gear.com. The central text reads 'Lightning SST™ Regularly \$199 - NOW JUST \$179' in large, bold, blue and red fonts. Below this, it says 'Special 10% Discount for AutoSimSport Readers! PLUS Special Holiday Shipping Rate!'. On the right, there is an image of four racing steering wheels in red, black, silver, and blue, each with a gear shifter. Above the wheels are logos for PayPal, Visa, MasterCard, and American Express.

Moreover, I find it strange that these same drivers—who are forever complaining about a lack of grip in reality—are suddenly advocating that a sim's physics should allow the sim-racer to save a spin from which, in real-life, none of them would have a chance in hell to recover. No, sorry guys, but personally, I just don't trust such a statement, not for a sim—not even from Schumacher or Alonso.

But let's now move on from the subjective debate and begin to analyse GTR2's physics a little more ... scientifically. With the original physics, it seemed not only possible—but necessary, should you wish to have any pace—to set the rear wing down to levels which cannot be sustained in real-life ... I am talking here of clicking down to "4" or "5". This unlikely scenario was made possible by GTR2's physics offering a big-fist-full of mechanical grip to overcome aerodynamic instability. This meant that the sim-racer was immediately able to achieve significantly faster lap times than those seen in the real world. Again, I'm well aware that sim-racers will always achieve faster lap times (even in the unlikely case where the simulator simulates the real to absolute perfection) since we don't care about our physical integrity, we have infinite track time, and can mess with setting for as long as we want ... but in the case of GTR2, we are not talking the usual two-to-three seconds faster range, after perhaps weeks or even months of practice—we are talking *eight-to-ten* seconds faster after two *days* of practicing. In this, too, we should recall that GTR2 has—and I don't even think its detractors would argue against this—probably the most authentic and accurate

tracks ever created for a simulator ... which brings us back, again, to the eight seconds faster after two days of practice predicament.

These are just some of the reasons why I felt that a tweak to GTR2's physics were needed: and having decided that, you can imagine my surprise—and joy—when I discovered that the physics files that came with GTR2 were left completely exposed and open to editing ... so, with the above-mentioned concerns fresh in my mind, I decided to begin reading the physics files and experimenting with some of my own numbers.

And just as I started doing that, coincidence intervened, in the shape of the guys from the SimLeague.net community ... it turns out that they, too, had similar concerns to mine, and inquired as to whether I'd be available to do some customizing.

For those who are unfamiliar with them, SimLeague is one of the most famous Italian leagues that enjoy not only a good reputation, but also a very solid membership. Let me just take this opportunity of thanking them before we delve into the actual logic of the physics discussion—the guys there have done an amazing job, and discussion on their forum was always free of flaming and, indeed, always courteous and conducted within an atmosphere of respect where all of us were able to express our opinions with arguments and logic.

With SimLeague's support, then, we began working on some physics modification to see whether we could achieve something we believed would be a little more ... authentic. It certainly did not surprise me, of course, to see how accurately the ISI-engine reacts to data input—

that was a given. What did surprise me, however, was the sheer amount of raw data that slowly but steadily was accumulated by the SimLeague admins. From real race-driving school instructors' advice to FIA GT drivers and race engineers' input to actual tyre data from one manufacturer to actual clients' race-car manuals, I was literally floored by how much material came my way.

So much raw data, in fact, that what started life as a simple tweaking of GTR2's physics became a full-blown modification ... and that, of course, meant certain compromises had to be made for a variety of reasons. Not least is the fact that, whilst our modern-day sims are amazing pieces of software, they are not perfect. Some things work very well, and one can easily verify them with telemetry, a clock, and some simple math'. The maximum downforce, for instance, or the aerodynamic resistance, or the maximum lateral and longitudinal grip of the tyres—stuff like that is really simple to verify, and relatively simple to recreate in a modern simulator.

The trick, however, is in how you arrive at these values, what happens between them, and what happens when all these events combine. This, of course, is the most crucial aspect and, predictably, also the most complex since there are no road-maps, the documentation for the physics engine is non-existent, and, what's more, real-life experience can both fool you and help you at the same time. And at the risk of drawing this out, I would be remiss in not noting that it is here—in this precise dilemma—that we can find an explanation on why person X prefers sim Y over sim Z preferred by person T.



All simulators on the market today—and the operative word here is simulator, obviously—do the same thing (replicate the physical manifestation of a motor-vehicle in action), but how they do it, and what feedback they provide, that is what separates them. It is in this 'feel' that each of us finds some residual response to the simulator such that one becomes, in our own minds (and hands, and visceral perception), 'better' than another. People who spend their time involved in flame-wars that involve such claims as, 'my sim is better than yours,' are really claiming nothing more than that their subjective feel is somehow superior to others' subjective feel. It is like saying that my gravity is better than yours because, well, I have managed to feel it while falling from a helicopter as opposed to an airplane. Senseless and really quite stupid ... objecting to someone's subjective and visceral response to a simulator is, in my opinion anyway, a giant waste of time.

But enough with the pseudo-philosophical treatise of modern physics engines, let me, instead, move on to what those of you who have read this far really want to know: What were the main, specific goals we tried to achieve with this mod, and how, precisely, did we go about achieving them.

Simulating the complexity and sensibility of a modern race-car

Modern race cars are extremely complex and sensitive animals, and, in reality, the race engineer doesn't just simply turn a couple of notches of this and a couple of notches of that on a PC-screen and expect to achieve the perfect results that we are accustomed to achieving in our simulators. Setups take hours of telemetry research, and a great deal of testing to achieve advantageous results. Being such sensitive beasts, every click on this or that setting can totally transform a car from excellent to ill-handling faster than you can say WTF, and when you're dealing with over one ton of weight, and 650bhp cars, you had better be very careful on what changes you're doing to the car's setup. What this means is: Setting-up a car is a totality, it is not an individualistic world, and all settings impact all other settings in ways that are not necessarily predictable until they have been tested. In practice, this means that you must make the suspension of the car collaborate with the tyres while, at the same time, maintaining the car's driveability. For instance, in race-series such as World Series by Renault, as Alx Danielsson wrote in this very magazine, considerable time is spent by race engineers on making the tyres operate within their correct temperatures at the expense of other variables since so much of the car's grip is created by the tyre: Their optimum performance is absolutely crucial to the car's pace.

Accounting for aerodynamic stability and efficiency

You can slide a modern race-car—if you want. Not much, but it is certainly possible to achieve. Limited steering lock is probably one of the main reasons why racers are generally unable to catch a vicious tank-slapper, but still, sliding a car remains possible. Real race-drivers, though, rarely do it intentionally because sliding compromises the aerodynamic efficiency of the car, and because a car that

changes its yaw and pitch angles drastically can lead to some serious aerodynamic instability and thereby become very unpredictable, race-drivers are not keen on doing so in order to find out what happens when one ton of energy moving at 200mph loses traction. That's why modern racing is 'ruined' (okay, this is my opinion) by train-like processions. Race engineers, too, have to work hard to make the aerodynamics of the car work at their best at any given track without compromising the aerodynamic resistance, and thus top speed of the car.



Simulating tyre heating, wear, camber thrust, and other variables

Any of you that have had the pleasure of driving a race car or a motorcycle with slick tyres will be aware that one of the race-driver's key tasks is to make the tyres 'work'. This means that the tyres have an optimum temperature range in which they are designed to work best, and running them above or below this range will result in less grip than optimal, as well as in unpredictable wear. It's not uncommon that certain tyre compounds, at some given temperature and setup, will be unable to reach optimum temperature or, conversely, begin overheating.

Either situation will result in loss of grip, and a concomitant and logical loss of pace. Getting the tyres to 'work' in tandem with the suspension, on a given track with a given car, requires an immense amount of work from the race engineer, as well as correct driving from the driver. The higher the level of racing, what's more, the harder it is to make tyres 'work' correctly.

Eliminating (as much as possible) classic ISI-engine issues and tricks that sim-racers manipulate in order to find un-realistic speed

If you're a seasoned veteran of sim-racing, you are probably aware of this issue which sees sim-racers manipulating the ISI-engine (or any other sim-engine for that matter) in order to maximize sim-speed at the cost of 'reality'. These 'tricks'—like pumping the negative camber to maximum on all four corners to get maximum lateral grip while at the same time not losing any longitudinal grip (in fact, actually *gaining* grip!), and using as-soft-a-spring-setting as possible and as-low-a-setup as possible with, usually, the dampers set at maximum, and using exaggerated toe-in-and-out values—come at the expense of 'reality', and take away from the simulation of real-race-cars. Moreover, the ISI-engine is notorious for penalising counter-steering methods that result, unrealistically, in spins, while straight steering through a wide angle slide usually means saving the car from a spin. Anyone who has ever driven a car through such a moment will know that this is, in fact, contrary to what would occur in real-life.

Further 'tricks' employed by the experienced sim-racer involve minimizing pressure values on all tyres, thereby gaining more grip without the concomitant penalty associated with this in the real-world, and jumping over chicanes without any problem even while using a minimum height ride ... these are just some of the 'tricks' that can be used on an ISI-engine-based simulator that

have very little bearing on what would happen in a similar situation in real-life and, while they are not 'cheats' (because, in the end, these sim-racers are doing precisely what their real-world counterparts do every race weekend, and that is find the fastest way to get around a track), they *do* transform our simulations into 'games', since to go faster, you don't think about how to realistically set the car, but how to 'fool' the physics engine.

Getting closer to real-life laptimes

The tracks that came bundled with GTR2 are, for me, the most authentic ever created in terms of precision and accuracy. Sure, they are not perfect, but they are very close, as anyone who has ever raced on any of those tracks will confirm. Considering that GTR2 also provides a great amount of variable track conditions, I believe it would be correct to try and get the sim-times to mirror, as far as possible, real-world laptimes. We decided therefore that, depending on the track, the so called 'alien' drivers should be able to be between two and three seconds faster than what the real-life drivers could achieve. That way, a quick sim-racer should be very close to the actual lap times. Obviously, it goes without being said (even if I say it!) that the lap times should be achieved with the correct values—that is, grip and speed traps, verified by telemetry data.

Keeping the original grid and performance values of all cars

This was a very important goal since the main use of the mod was—and remains—for online leagues. Leagues often implement complex rules with various handicaps in order to create a climate in which their drivers choose different cars, and not just the fastest one. This, obviously, make the races not only more entertaining but also unpredictable. Reassuring the leagues that the actual values of the cars haven't changed was very important to us and, in the end, led to some compromises as well.



Raising the realism by providing sim-racers with actual data they can use

In real-life, racing teams get important data and information from the car, as well as tyre and, where it applies, engine manufacturers. Complete manuals, with all the information needed to make sure the race engineers know where to put their hands, are crucial for real-world teams. Weight, center of gravity, wheel suspension rates, aerodynamic balance and maps, engine power graphs and more—all this information is what teams can and do expect from their manufacturers. Of course, some very important information is always kept for the Works Teams' use only ... but a customer-team can expect a vast amount of raw data without which setting the car up would be like translating a foreign language without a dictionary.

Sim-racers, on the other hand, are lucky if they even get a generic maximum horsepower and torque value, total weight and, maybe on Christmas Days, optimum tyre temperatures and pressures for our sim-cars. What's more, many times those values are either not very precise or just flat wrong, leaving the sim-racer (who doubles as his own engineer most of the time) to guesstimate on how best to setup their cars. I can still remember the absurd procedures we were required to perform in the Golden Era of GPL just to understand the actual horsepower of the cars ...

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These, then, were the goals we set for ourselves in order not only to maximize our time, but also maximize our energies ... and with a common focus, then, we got down to work ...

First-off, we were very fortunate to have real race engineers who were prepared to give us some advice and answer some of our questions and, perhaps even more importantly, they were also prepared to hand over some rather precious race-car manuals! It is for this reason that it is best that we do not discuss which cars, or which teams—and definitely not which race engineers!

Equipped with these manuals, then, we were able to glean some crucial data such as: Wheel suspension rates, aerodynamic values, gearbox information, and a host of other details that are generally not freely or publicly available. Of course, we only had data on two cars, and that meant that we couldn't replicate, to such a fine-tuned detail, all the other cars. Fortunately, I must say that the original physics, when compared with the data we obtained, were already set to a very high standard indeed, and this enabled us to focus on the values that would make the cars more complex to comprehend and to setup, and we tried to replicate the same values, in a proportional way, to the rest of the cars. We were very gratified to find that, every time we got a new car ready for testing using proportional data from the other cars for which we had the required data, the results were always perfectly balanced and predictable. That was very reassuring for us.

Simulating the complexity and sensibility of a modern race-car

In the original physics for GTR2, the placement, in height, of the fuel tank was equal in all the cars: We naturally changed this. We also altered the fuel tank motion value that controls the way fuel moves within the tank. This resulted in cars that are trickier to drive, and also slower

in race conditions. In fact, in reality, the cars are much slower in race conditions than in qualifying trim. We then modified the cars' ride-height limits which were yet another value that was (erroneously) identical in most of the cars. Unfortunately, the ISI-engine does not simulate the phenomenon known as tyre graining and its effects. Graining is, for those unfamiliar with the term, caused—amongst many reasons—from extreme toe-in-and-out values. We couldn't simulate this, so, instead, we opted to limit the toe-in-and-out values to a range that the race engineers advised us was the usual setting used.

The gearbox was another area in which we found that the ISI-engine offered us a host of fascinating possibilities. The original cars came with the same gear-change timing: That is, a manual H gearbox, a semi-automatic, or a sequential gearbox all simulated the time it took to switch gears identically. Clearly, this is not correct, and we altered this to reflect what we believe are real-world values, thus making the gearbox behave at different rates and speeds. The results, we believe, have been very satisfactory indeed.

Accounting for aerodynamic stability and efficiency

As was reported on certain forums, we altered the base-value of downforce the cars were generating, but ... we didn't just replace the original downforce with an arbitrary half the downforce, as some people initially posted. What we did was this: We lowered the initial base value, but on this we added a value that is taken from every step of the angle of the wing and/or splitter. The total downforce is indeed lower, but it is certainly not half of what came with the original sim.

This alteration was created because the original values seemed, shall we say, highly optimistic to us, and our data confirms this belief. Also, because our consultants explained to us that, in reality, you can never get one hundred percent aerodynamic efficiency (as the cars'

manuals—obtained by wind tunnels that work in optimal and controlled situations—amply demonstrate), we believe that altering this aspect of the physics is both correct *and* crucial. Another aspect of GT-cars that we learnt was that wind tunnel simulations, for these cars, are not as precise as one would expect from Formula One cars, for instance. Furthermore, we also altered the amount of drag caused by the wings and splitters, and their settings. The maximum speed of the cars is still similar to the real-world data, but you must work harder with the setup—with particular attention to the wing angle—in order to find the optimum compromise between downforce and aerodynamic drag.

Aerodynamic sensitivity and balance is yet another factor that we paid a lot of attention to, with the front splitter and diffuser now becoming far more sensitive to regards ride-height changes. In particular, the rear diffuser on some cars operate efficiently in a very narrow height range, and lose efficiency quite drastically when set either over, or under, such a range. This was another value that was identical for all the original cars, as was the ride-height adjustments in the garage for all cars: We modified this from within the garage-screen as well.

Aerodynamic devices also lose efficiency from yaw. This means that, if a car is traveling sideways, its wings, splitters and diffuser won't have the same efficiency as they would should the car be traveling in a straight line. This, incidentally, is one of the reasons why modern rally cars have wings with lots of vertical fins—to compensate for yaw sensitivity. Of course, a diffuser will be much more sensitive to yaw than a large rear wing, and complex designs will be more sensitive than simpler ones. We took careful account of all of this, and the result is that every car in GTR2 now has its own, individual values, which were, once again, identical with the original GTR2 cars.



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The ISI-engine is not perfect, of course, and aerodynamics is an extremely complex argument, but we are pretty satisfied with the results. You can now experience the overwhelming downforce that is generated by the Maserati MC12—but, equally, as in real-life, you must also be very careful on how you set the car up, and also on how you drive it in order to eliminate aerodynamic imbalance and efficiency loss.

Simulating tyre heating, wear, camber thrust, and other variables

I totally agree with Doug Arnao's claim in October's issue of AUTOSIMSPORT that actual real-world tyres are even more forgiving than those that shipped with the original GTR2. Our data, from one of the real-world GT tyre manufacturer's, reveals that the tyres actually have no significant fall-off from their peak value to a wide slip-angle.



As a consequence, we attempted to slide those curves into the ISI-engine, but found that the result was a bit 'flat' and 'slippery'. There wasn't a real feel of a tyre snapping into a slide, or that bite that is the result of the tyre re-establishing its grip. The ISI-engine, as I have maintained throughout this article, is really quite exceptional, but it is still unable to simulate many details that are of crucial importance: Some of these failings are phenomena like the twist of the tyre, the actual and precise deformation of the sidewalls, chemical compositions, and so forth. Even combining forces can be, and are, a problem.

Faced with this problem, we decided, as the Americans would say, to think 'outside the box'—literally! Experimentation is always important when you know that the model you're working with is not perfect in every detail, and in the course of our experiments, we finally settled on what has become known as our strange 'double-peak lateral curve'.

Let me explain this in as simple a way as I can: The original, real tyre data, demonstrated a flat straight line that went from our first peak to the second, before then continuing again in a straight line. As I said before, this

was producing what I can only describe as a 'flat' behavior when implemented in the ISI-engine. The double-peak, however, provided us with a far more lively feel, while maintaining the correct nature of the tyre—that is, one that is ultra-forgiving in a condition of an extreme slip-angle. In fact, with our double-peak curves, it is now possible to actually counter steer in a drift without inducing a spin. There is logic behind this curve, and I am more than willing to spend the next ten pages explaining it ... but I suspect there aren't that many that would be that interested so, suffice it to say that, for those of you who do not agree with the curve, it is the best solution for us, and one that created a condition that is, we believe, identical to that experienced in real-life.

Easier to understand are the changes we introduced in order to simulate the optimum temperatures at which the tyres 'work'. Dry tyres work best at eighty degrees Celsius, and lose grip very quickly if they're forced to operate at anything under this ideal temperature. They also lose grip if run with higher temperatures, but not to the extent that one finds when they are run cold. Wet tyres, on the other hand, offer good grip within a far broader range of temperatures, especially when they run below their optimum grip, which is at ninety degrees Celsius, since this is when the threads generate more heat. We worked hard to guarantee that the tyres achieve the correct temperature in relation to the car, suspension setup, driving style, as well as ambient and track temperatures. Tyres are also much more sensitive, now, to camber values. Each tyre manufacturer has different optimum camber values where it provides for its maximum lateral grip. But you must compromise, because the more negative camber that is dialed-in, the less longitudinal grip the tyre provides. This is another aspect that differs with every tyre manufacturer, while in the original physics, it was identical for all.

Eliminating (as much as possible) classic ISI-engine issues and tricks that sim-racers manipulate in order to find un-realistic speed

One of the results from altering the tyre values, as explained above, is to make the use of extreme negative cambers absolutely useless, and, as a consequence, one of the most crucial aspects of setting-up real-world cars—the camber—becomes equally as important in GTR2. With the maximum values at any situation now made irrelevant, the sim-engineer must think carefully how best to resolve the problems introduced by camber changes, as well as how to achieve the correct compromise. Minimum pressures to gain maximum grip, equally, has been obliterated by the change in tyre values, and this means the sim-engineer will need to work hard to find the correct compromise between the perfect 200kPa pressure, and the rigidity of the sidewalls.

Extreme toe-in-and-out values are also impossible to achieve since the values are now limited to real-life ranges. We attempted to simulate the effects that an extreme toe-in would create, but that wasn't possible within the ISI-engine, and left us with no option other than to limit the actual range.

All of this has resulted in elevating aerodynamic sensitivity and efficiency into an absolutely crucial aspect of GTR-car setup. Cars with high aerodynamic sensibility, for instance, must now—as their real-life counterparts must—use stiffer suspensions in order to make sure the car remains flat for as long as possible. Maintaining a constant pitch and roll angle is key, while a softer setup, as used in previous titles, will result in unpredictable handling since the front splitter and the rear diffuser's height from the ground is in a constant state of flux. Again, you need to establish a reliable compromise between mechanical grip and aerodynamic grip.



The banner features the Sim-Gear logo on the left, which includes a checkered flag and the website www.sim-gear.com. To the right of the logo, the text reads 'Lightning SST™' in a stylized blue font. Below this, a large red and yellow text block states 'Regularly \$199 - NOW JUST \$179'. Further right, there is a 'PayPal BUY NOW' button and logos for Visa, MasterCard, and Discover. On the far right, four different colored racing pedals (red, black, silver, and blue) are displayed. At the bottom of the banner, a black text bar with yellow and red highlights reads 'Special 10% Discount for AutoSimSport Readers! PLUS Special Holiday Shipping Rate!'.

Finally—and by no means least important—yes, the car can certainly snap into oversteer, but—crucially—if you counter-steer fast enough, and you modulate the gas pedal, you will be able to induce the cars into some serious drifts. Useless for lap times, these drifts are certainly both rewarding and fun, while, at the same time, giving you a sense that you are in control of your car's destiny ... rather than leaving you in the kitty-litter wondering how the hell you landed up there to begin with. It should also be pointed out, of course, that some cars are able to drift better than others, for logical reasons.

Getting closer to real life lap times

As we discussed earlier, the target—'aliens' lapping about two to three seconds faster than their real-life counterparts—has been achieved. Good drivers are lapping almost identically to the real-world benchmarks. But most importantly, for us, is that slow drivers report that they feel they have sufficient grip, and that we are not in the same situation as we were with GTR1.

Keeping the original grid and performance values of all cars

Lap times taken from fast-to-normal-to-slow sim-racers demonstrates conclusively that the goal was achieved. Cars have the same relative performances with the NAPmod as with the original physics.

Raising the realism by providing sim-racers with actual data they can use

This is a point that I'm particularly sensitive about. In this month's issue of AUTOSIMSPORT, you will find an extra article that briefly describes the cars, as well as their performance. In order to get an idea of the capabilities of every car, you will also find, in this issue, a manual for every car that includes all the important data that you will need to better understand how to get the most from each: Data for each tyre manufacturer, for instance, along with all the specific tyre information such as rigidity, camber values, ideal temperatures, and pressures is included. The manuals will also include specific car data such as power, torque, engine brake graphs and data, reliability issues and advice, weight, center of gravity, weight balance, aerodynamic balance, gearbox information, wheel rates, and much more. This kind of information—which real-world teams cannot do without—is crucial in sim-racing too, should setting-up your sim-race-car be something you wish to take seriously. If you are using the NAPmod, this type of information is, of course, crucial.

Conclusions

As you can see, the NAPmod is far more than just some random tweaking of a couple of values here and there. In fact, a lot more has gone into it than I have been able to describe in this article. They are less important and, as such, didn't warrant an inclusion. The mod has been created with one over-riding goal in mind: To attempt to recreate the experience of the real with data *taken* from the real.

Is it perfect? Far from it—perfection, in simulators, is a long way down the road. Is it better and more realistic than the original physics? I wouldn't say that either. What I would say is that it suits us, and whoever has the same needs as we do.

What I do believe, however, is that it pushes the envelope in certain key aspects that many of us felt needed altering in the original. We can't say for sure that the behavior of our tyres is better and more realistic than the original ones—but we *can* say that not to be able to pump the negative values to the maximum without consequences is an improvement. Equally, we can say that having to create a stiffer setup in order to maximize downforce stability is also an improvement, because we know this is the case in the real-world. Moreover, the Ferrari 360 Modena's semi-automatic gearbox is much slower than the Ferrari 550's sequential one—this we know is a real-world fact, and it is now a sim-world fact too. We know, too, that all the superbly modelled cars in GTR2 do not share the same aerodynamic sensitivity.

Of course, some would claim that these are just details. And I would agree with that: The NAPmod doesn't change the fact that GTR2 is a great sim, judged on its own merits. But I like to believe that what it succeeds in doing is pushing the realism of GTR2 that bit further along. It demonstrates, too, that there is still a fine margin to the things that can be achieved with the ISI-engine, or, indeed, whatever physics engine one chooses to put the data into. If we want our genre to progress to even more realistic titles, then we must start to look at the little details. Because, like that famous sim-racer said, the devil is in the details.

AUTOSIMSPORT

Test Drive

GenePenman

V8FACTOR

Gene Penman recalls his laps with V8 Supercar driver "Frosty" Winterbottom, compares his real-life ride to the outstanding Australian V8 Supercar mod, and then gets the scoop on what next from ORSM's Neil Faichney.



Phillip Island, Thursday 15th December 2005, 11:00am. Mark 'Frosty' Winterbottom, the twenty-five year old Australian driver, rumbles towards me in his 2005 Ford Performance Racing V8 Supercar. It's his first test for his new team for 2006—and I get to be a part of it. As the car pulls up, I am ushered by his pit crew in through the passenger window, somehow folding me through the dense mess of roll cage before strapping me tight in the seat.

"G'day Frosty," I say, shaking his gloved hand, before asking him if he's sick of it yet, having already done fifty laps during the morning.

Frosty replies (in an unnervingly satanic voice), "could never get sick of this... and in about five seconds, you're going to find out why, mate."

As the final ball-crushing adjustments are made to my harness, he presses a button, and the car roars to life. Damn, it's loud. Damn, it's hot. Damn, I'm excited!

Frosty engages first, eases off the clutch, and cruises out of pitlane on the limiter. We hit the pit exit line and ... *bang* ... with a deafening roar, the Supercar shoots out onto the track struggling for traction as Frosty clips through the gears—third, fourth, fifth—sixth as we approach Turn 1 at somewhere near 250kph. I feel panic as I realise he doesn't seem to be braking for the turn. Just as I think we're going flying off into the tyre wall, Frosty stabs the brakes for a fraction of a second—my head lurches forward and presses left against the roll cage—before turning in. The *grip!* I fight to keep my head leaning into the turn.

Even around the Honda hairpin, the thing was going so much quicker than any road car. It felt like a ride on a rollercoaster. When I shouted "woohooo!" after he got it up on two wheels bouncing off a curb, Frosty laughed—before proceeding to hang the back out on the next few corners for my amusement.

A promotional graphic for the rFactor PC CD-ROM. The background is orange. At the top, it says "rFactor for the rest of US!" in white and blue. Below that, "On CD in the USA!" in white and blue. The price "\$39.90" is in large white font. Below the price, it says "v1.150 w/ Stock Cars" in green. The GoGamer.com logo is at the bottom left, and "Get Your Race On!" is at the bottom right. In the center is a CD-ROM case showing a red race car and the rFactor logo.

I was watching him drive, and it was amazing. Flat shifting, my head lurched violently forward and back on every gear change. The car was just so damn brutal ... and the slicks gave heaps of feel, I could really tell when the rear tyres were on the limit of adhesion ... it felt so natural and raw. In a road car, there's a lot of damping going on, but this was just completely in your face.

Three blurry laps later, and we're cruising down the pits again. His time with me in the car would've put him on pole. I couldn't wipe the smile off my face for three days.

From that day unbelievable day forward, I had a renewed respect for the V8 Supercars. I developed an insatiable desire to drive one. Unfortunately all I could do was wait for that phone call from FPR in vain, until ORSM (Ozzie Racing Sim Modders) came along and released the much anticipated V8Factor mod for, you guessed it, rFactor.



Put simply—this mod **delivers**.

The Australian V8 Supercar series is a national institution. It is, put simply, motorsport in its rawest form. A swarm of fire breathing racing machines boasting 650 horsepower from NASCAR-based blocks. H pattern shifters, Holinger six-speed box, Ford 9 inch diffs, live rear axles, slick tyres Holden Commodore versus Ford Falcon—the archetypal Australian motoring rivalry. It's really little wonder that for many Aussies, V8 Supercars is not so much a sport than a religion.

Boasting a thirteen-round series that spans three countries—from Australia to New Zealand to the Desert 400 in Bahrain—a championship which is going down to the wire, plus a global TV audience—V8 Supercars is fast becoming the world's most spectacular touring car series.



Brought to you by ORSM, the team behind V8 Supercars for F1C and GTR, V8Factor for rFactor includes all of the drivers and cars from the 2006 season. The mod also ships with a scratch-built version of Mount Panorama, Bathurst. A place described by many as the most challenging circuit in the world. And—wow—what a version it is!

Sitting in the car for the first time, you get an immediate feeling that V8Factor is something special. The cockpit modelling is of a high standard—from subtleties like the heating elements visible on the windshield, as well as a few stains from some unfortunate insects. If

you're in a Ford, you can see the bonnet bulge in front of you. The first time you engage first gear and ease your way out of the pitlane, you know this mod is going to be one hell of a ride. It just feels so *polished*. From the toolboxes in the garages to the air hoses and swing arms to the Team transporter trucks that fill the back of pit lane, this mod is packed with those little details that separate the good from the great. You can even, if you find yourself without the required nerve for the real-thing, drive out to the car park ... but for the purposes of this review, let's ignore the distractions, and stick to where these beasts are meant to be driven—on the track!

Easing out of the pits and onto the circuit proper, you immediately notice how big and heavy the car is. The thing is as raw and brutal as real-life as it powers along, the sunlight and shadows flitting through the cockpit. A cacophony of V8 goodness fills your ears as you open her up and pound through the gears. A good force feedback steering wheel like the Logitech G25, mated with an H-pattern shifter, is a perfect combination for ultimate realism in this mod.

The car models are fantastic, and the textures look superb (especially with the essential Hi res textures available from www.rfactorcentral.com). The exhaust flameout effects are very well done considering the rFactor engine limitations. But eye candy aside, how does it feel?

I can safely say that, having been strapped into a real V8Supercar at race speed, V8Factor is pretty damn close to reality. Murmurings on RSC forums regarding the grip, or lack of, have been the main discussion point regarding the physics. Certainly the car feels nervous over the curbs which seems in direct contrast to real life where they seem to pound over them easily. However, this may just be down to the track modelling at Bathurst, as curbs on other tracks (such as Adelaide or Sandown) are a lot more forgiving.

Getting these V8s around corners is a delicate art. The cars initially feel prone to understeer, but this can be countered by ensuring the car is balanced properly for the turns (the old slow in fast out routine is crucial), and by tweaking the setup. These things weigh 1,400kgs, and you can certainly feel it! They respond well to a smooth entry, with the car set up well before entering the corner. Sure, you can be brutal about it, but you won't be quick getting all out of shape like that. They like braking and accelerating when in a straight line. Not only will you be rewarded with better lap times, but your tyres will also last longer—and in a 30 lap race at Bathurst, where you're lapping in the two-minute range, tyre management can play a major role in the outcome of the race!



Gene and "Frosty"

Racing online with a field of thirty-five plus, the V8 Supercars mod is an exciting experience, to say the least. It's close, it's fast, it's tiring. You can run close to the guy in front, and even if he brakes earlier than expected, a little nudge can often be corrected with little ill effects. It certainly encourages close racing, and this—coupled with the general goodness of this mod—probably explains the level of participation online—log on any time of the day or night, and you're bound to find a V8Factor server filled with eager racers.

The damage model is sufficient; It certainly makes good use of rFactor's rather limited damage capabilities, and is right up there with the best of them (I'm looking at you, Meganess!). You can dent the front and rear fenders—or lose them completely, including the bonnet and quarter panels. You can do more subtle damage too, including bending the suspension and steering. I've even had an engine burst into flames. Roll the car, and you might end up with a slightly modified roof line, too!

But as if that wasn't enough, the guys at ORSM decided to bundle the mod with the scratch-built version of Bathurst modelled by Stu. In a word, this version is simply breathtaking. It is considered by many to be the most accurate version of this hallowed place in any simulation or game released to date, and I would agree wholeheartedly. The smallest details, like that funny bent gum tree just before the dipper, have all been faithfully reproduced. The sand traps are very well modelled, and actually trap your car should you blast off the track (of

course, the downside is that they are very difficult to get out of—but not impossible). Blasting up to 300kph along Conrod, to negotiating the dipper, the flat out hairyness of the Chase ... this circuit has it all. The sheer level of detail just keeps astonishing; you never grow tired of it. Much like the Nürburgring, Bathurst is a magical place, and one that challenges you to try just that one more lap in the knowledge that, with every passing lap, you will discover another of its secrets. When you finally hook up a fast lap, the feeling of exhilaration really is unmatched in any sim or mod to date, as far as I am concerned. You really feel a sense of accomplishment when you keep it together. Just ... one ... more ... lap!

It's hard to fault this mod. If one were picky, there are some minor modelling issues with Bathurst. The curbing could use some softening in places, and there is some small pop-up with trees in places. Some would say the grip level is too low—but telemetry tells us that they are pulling very similar Gs around corners to their real-life counterparts. Real-life lap times around Bathurst have been beaten by the fastest sim-racers, but the majority will struggle to even get within a second of the real-life lap record. I think this is a perfect balance.

I caught up with ORSM's Neil Faichney (aka Krunch) to find out what we can all expect from ORSM in the near future. After some much needed R&R and family time, a patch, Neil confirms, is certainly being considered. "At this stage, we have a few tweaks and ideas that could go into a patch for V8Factor, but nothing has been chiselled into stone at this point," he told me. "Things like physics can always be improved, but we'd only release a physics patch if we made significant improvements to the already well-received release physics."

What about future ORSM track releases?

"As we've mentioned publicly before, we intend to release a number of Aussie tracks in the future. We already have Wanneroo well underway using our scratch

made F1C version as a base. Surfers Paradise is also coming along very well as a pure scratch-made project. Hidden Valley will get the rFactor upgrade sometime after Wanneroo is released, and Winton is another scratch-made in-house track being built that is a fair way along. We would eventually like to get all the Australian V8Supercar Championship tracks done, but that could take a while."

No doubt. But as ORSM have already shown with V8Factor—it'll be worth the wait. In the meantime, other great mod groups have already made or converted the remaining circuits, so it is possible to run a full championship at all the venues.

A worthy addition to the rFactorcentral.com hall of fame, and a great mod to show-off the V8 Supercars to the world of sim-racing. Mods like this are the reason we all bought rFactor, and ORSM have shown the world what V8 Supercars is all about. V8Factor is certainly a hit with some of the volunteers here at AUTOSIMSPORT, some of whom had never heard of the series—and now they are scouring the web for videos of past races! What are you waiting for? Download it now!

For more info on the series, check out V8 Supercar wiki: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V8_supercar



According to ORSM's [website](#):

•Accurately modelled Ford Falcon BA & Holden Commodore VZ

•Includes realistically modelled Bathurst track

•Detailed vehicle interiors including drivers with detailed suits and helmets, roll cage

•Upgrades including cockpit customisations, wheels

•Damage model including parts that fall off

•2006 season with accurate liveries, drivers

•Full grid multiplayer and single player racing

•Online racing through built in lobby as well as 3rd party utils

•Championship mode

•Realistically modelled cockpits including switches and wires, working readouts, roll cage

•Realistically modelled steering wheels (including built-in readouts)

•Menu graphics and load screens

•Extremely accurate vehicle physics based on data and feedback from real V8 teams

•Optimised AI including driver temperaments and skills

T3

Nicola Trivilino

Cluster Company Faster Pedals

DrivingItalia.net's Nicola Trivilino sat down with Stefano Vietri, founder and director of Italian-based Cluster Company (who are about to enter the sim-racing market with their state-of-the-art pedal-set dubbed 'Faster Pedals'), to find out exactly where they 'fit' in to this ultra-competitive market.



T3 Cluster Company Faster Pedals

continued



Italian hardware firm Cluster Company is the new kid on the block; their mission statement, however, makes it clear they're not just in the business to clean-up the remains of what is left from their main rivals. Building well-designed, competitively priced, and innovative products specially-tailored to the grueling and precise nature of sim-racing, they seek to bring the best of the real-world to the simulated. This philosophy is amply demonstrated in their first product, due for release before the end of the year—the 'Faster Pedals', that boasts not only moddability and customization, but design and construction values to the rival the very best.

In line with what is becoming an industry-standard, Cluster Co. see the future of sim-racing in its validation as a sport, and its training-potential for real-world motorsports ... and their objective sees this possibility being realized only through the construction of hardware that resembles—and functions—like their real-world counterparts. Offering serious and friendly support, and innovative solutions to the problems of 'realism' in simulation, they are all set to become a major player in the industry.

Nicola: First off, the logical question—can you tell us where the idea came from?

Stefano: GLA! Good Luck All, be careful at T1! The first turn of an important online race, I guess that would be a good place as any to find the initial moment when this venture began—at least in our mind. From 1998, with the release of Grand Prix Legends, the challenge of all sim-racers has always been controlling these virtual-cars at the limit, and in traffic. Sim-racers have always been interested in finding solutions to the problem of

competitiveness, and how best to improve their pace. With the passing of time, and the ever-increasing sophistication of our simulators, sim-racers, too, have found ever-increasing technical solutions, and hardware solutions, to improve performance. But not always has hardware proven to exert the robust endurance and precision that has now become sought-after by the serious sim-racer. How many of us have had to endure that tedious rigmarole of replacing broken springs and pots in our broken-down pedals?

Over and above this, of course, has also been the knowledge that—as confirmed by the driving-school Sim-Min—a big part of the sim-racer's pace can be found in his feet ... or rather, to be a little more accurate, in his capacity to brake well, and his capacity to accelerate well ... the response to these problems has been varied, of course ... from those that have found solutions in home-designed DIY projects, to products specially designed by a small amount of globally-positioned custom-based production houses.

It was this that inspired us to create a specifically Italian solution that will be not see us build pedals of high-quality, but also offer an original, high-quality design along with competitive pricing.

Nicola: Can you tell us a little about Cluster Company?

Stefano: We have five firms in the cities of Trulli and Liuzzi that are working to provide our company with components, design-solutions, and quality-control.

Nicola: Why the name 'Faster' for your pedals?

Stefano: There are two major reasons: The first lies in the fact that, even from the very first prototype, all our beta-testers were able to lower their times on all circuits, and

on all simulators. So we wanted to make sure people understood that the Faster Pedals would pretty much guarantee better performance. The second reason for the Faster tag is one of friendship: It is dedicated to Fred Faster, Team Manager of [Scuderia Ferrari Legends](#), who has been, for years, a major part of Italian online racing. Fred has been one of our most important and passionate beta-testers, and his advice and ideas have been crucial in the development of the pedals.



Nicola: At first glance, your pedals seem to be very similar to the ECCI product, with maybe a pinch of FREX thrown in. Would you agree?



Gas Spring Bracket

Stefano: In order to bring an effective project forward, we naturally looked at the experience and solutions brought forward by other firms that have, for years, been at the forefront of the market. So of course we studied their products—we did this, however, with humility, analyzing them in order to see what, on their products, worked well, and what didn't—what were their strengths, their weaknesses. We were then in a position to retain what we felt were the good solutions, and ditch what we felt were the not-so-good solutions—this, it bares saying, was based around what we believed would work for our project, our vision, which was one that was based around both rational and efficient solutions.

ECCL, for instance, offer very good pedals, and it was from them that we came to the idea of implementing, in our design, the pedal stand, as well as the design of the brake-axel. But what we rejected was the system of cams for the brake; our solution, instead, was to insert two coaxial springs to simulate the increase in non-linear resistance that happens when you apply pressure with your foot.



Coaxial Springs on Brake

The accelerator, on the other hand, is completely an in-house design, and has borrowed from no-one, not even FREX. I have always preferred the gas pedal hinged to the bottom. If you look at ECCI's pedals, for instance, you will see that they have used the central stand to attach both the gas and brake pedals: I assume this American solution is probably more economical when compared to our solution, which sees the brake pedal attached to the central stand, while the gas pedal has its own independent structure. This allows the Faster Pedals to be more sensitive, we believe, in the process of acceleration, and also offers a very satisfying ability to blip the throttle.

Nicola: Can you tell me a little about the design of the pedals, and what new solutions you are bringing to pedal design?

Stefano: Well, to begin with, a design that sees the gas pedal hinged to the bottom, while the brake and clutch pedals are affixed on-high, is a configuration that does not exist in the sim-racing market; what's more, this configuration is one that evokes the spirit of real high-performance cars, like Ferrari, Porsche, BMW, and other

legendary marques; this is the major reason why we chose to go down this original route with the Faster Pedals design.

Attaching a gas pedal on the base is a difficult solution to implement correctly, but it is the best way to assure the user maximum precision and, equally, to fulfill the potential that a well-structured gas-pedal is able to offer the skilled sim-racer: We have managed to achieve this in a way that is solid, simple, and yet extremely effective.

We have also designed a pedal set that is very versatile, and can fit all types of user-needs—from the traditional desk-top, to more professional setups. We are convinced, too, that the realism of our pedal system will cause a lot of confidence in sim-racers to the point where many, we believe, will move to using the clutch pedal: This is something that can be done with the Faster Pedals because of their real-world-based design. The other aspect which we believe is a first in sim-racing is the open-structured nature of the pedals themselves: They are very moddable, and are very easy to tune to one's own personal tastes.

Nicola: Which means?

Stefano: What we know is that pedals, like shoes, are more comfortable if they're made to order and to fit, and this has been an integral part of the design of these pedals. The pedals are therefore very adjustable to really satisfy any driver, even those who have extremely refined palates.

Nicola: Could you tell us a little about the price and availability?

Stefano: We are looking at November for first consignments. The price, which we have yet to finalise, will reflect the fact that this is a high-quality pedal set, designed with performance in mind, not the market, and constructed with durability as a foremost component. It is, therefore, an investment, and one which can also be used with the Logitech DFP on the PC, or on the PlayStation 2.

Product Preview: The Numbers

The springs—mechanical resistance:

Gas (total spring compression = 50mm):

Spring1: 0,2 kg/mm with a total force at full gas of 10kg

Spring2: 0,17 kg/mm with a total force at full gas of 8,5kg

Clutch1: kg/mm

Brake2: coaxial springs—1kg/mm plus 1,84 kg/mm from about 50% of pedal travel

■ Specs

Weight:

Faster 2Ld/2iU: 7,6 kg

Faster 3iU 9Kg

Dimensions:

35x48x(35/42) cm

Further Information:

- Equipped with compatibility cable for Logitech® Driving Force Pro (PS2), and Logitech® Momo Racing (PC)
- Constructed in high-quality steel
- The Cataforesi* process was used for painting almost all the external components, others were treated with nickel
- Footboard and gas pedal are built in aluminium
- Brake and clutch pedals are fully adjustable: both height, as well as inclination adjustments can be made corresponding to the gas pedal and footboard position favoured by the final user
- Footboard is both inclination, and depth, adjustable, corresponding to the pedals
- Brake and clutch footplates are sideways adjustable (for example, one can shift the brake pedal nearer to the gas pedal, thereby creating an easier heel-to-toe driving technique)
- Anti-sliding support under the pedals' platform, as well as on the rear, provide for the best possible floor, and wall contact
- Equipment includes two different, and easy to replace gas springs, which will allow the user to alter the gas pedal's resistance to the user's optimal foot pressure.
- Double coaxial spring on the brake pedal simulates the non-linear resistance that increases, as in the real-world, under the user's foot pressure
- Three different bracket positions for brake and clutch springs in order to vary the overall pedals' resistance to foot pressure: low, medium, and high
- Pre-charge adjustment available for all pedal springs in order to fine-tune all three pedals' resistance
- High precision mechanical movements assured by high-quality manufacture
- Pedals' mechanical axes turn inside auto-lubricating journal boxes
- High-quality and precision potentiometers, specifically designed for the implemented mechanical movements
- Installation of clutch pedal on the Faster 2 models is possible by assembling the clutch kit on the same original frame.

**The process of cataforesi is a varnishing-applying process in which the pedals are immersed in a bath composed of watered-down varnish into which a current is passed which results in the surface of the pedals being completely immersed and covered.*

1979 F1 Mod— Wolf WR7 And Arrows A1 & A2

Ivan Askew examines two of the more exotic rides from Shutt1e and Simioni's upcoming Formula One mod for rFactor.

IvanAskew





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To call the 1979 mod a mod is a bit of a disservice: Yes, it uses the ISI-engine, so technically, it is exactly as advertised. But behind the scenes, much work has gone into this wondrous creation, not least of which has been an absolutely painstaking attention to detail which continues unabated as the mod approaches version 0.8., which is scheduled for delivery this week.

Boasting many of sim-racing's top names as beta testers, as well as the rumored participation of GPL beta testers Alison Hine and Steve Smith, the 1979 mod offers a depth in historic realism that would make GPL's modding world green with envy. It is believed that Renato Simioni—the man responsible for the physics—has been in touch with some of the eras engineers and designers, and is striving to force the ISI-engine to replicate what it was not designed to do: Simulate the magical sorcery of ground effects cars, which was introduced to the world by Colin Chapman as early as 1977, and was described by him as 'something from nothing'. The something, in that formula, was a staggering amount of downforce, and the nothing was the air which was forced under the car to literally create a vacuum.



By 1978, Chapman had heralded a new dawn in aerodynamics with a car that was virtually carbon-copied by the entire field come 1979. Sadly, though, Chapman's own Lotus 80 proved to be a disaster, suffering from a lack of chassis rigidity.

Wolf WR7

Walter Wolf was an Austrian who, having moved to Canada, found fame and fortune as an oil equipment supplier in the 1970s. In 1977, he founded his own team, and two quick years later, he had secured the services of legendary designer Harvey Postlethwaite, and Formula One Champion James Hunt. The WR7 was

Postlethwaite's solution to the ground effects era, and sported the customary Batmanesque flare-ups at the rear. Much was expected of the car, but it simply did not deliver, with the net result that James Hunt packed it in half way through the year. The WR8 and WR9 evolutions proved to be little better at the hands of future champion Keke Rosberg, and by the end of the year, Wolf—a man who was not used to failure—sold the team to Fittipaldi, and drifted away from the sport. He was rumored to be interested in returning in the late 1990s when the Tyrrell team was up for sale, but that never amounted to much.



Arrows A1 and A2

The birth of the Arrows team, in 1977, was somewhat ... interesting. It started when the top echelons of the Shadow team walked out, *en-masse*, at the end of 1977 to form their own concern—Arrows, which were the initials of, respectively, Franco Ambrosio (Arrows' financier, who would give the team the "A" in its name), Alan Rees, ex-driver Jackie Oliver, and designers Dave Wass, and Tony Southgate.

The team, however, seemed cursed from day one: Ambrosio would be implicated in a financial irregularities scandal in Italy, their first-choice driver, the highly-respected Gunnar Nilsson, would sadly be diagnosed with a fatal illness, and, finally, to top it all off, Shadow's chief Don Nichols would sue Arrows for allegedly basing their FA1 (which had been built in a scant fifty days!) on Shadow's DN9.

Hardly surprising, of course, since Southgate had designed the DN9 before leaving Shadow! Knowing this, Southgate began designing a new car while the High Court in London deliberated over Nichols' claim: Meanwhile, the FA1 did rather well for itself, leading the 1978 South African Grand Prix with the very wild Ricardo Patrese at the helm (he would, later that year, be judged—unfairly—to have started the first-lap multiple-car pile-up that would take the life of the much beloved Ronnie Peterson, whose team-mate, Andretti, had clinched the Championship for Lotus and their revolutionary Lotus 79), and finishing a solid second in Sweden. Lord Justice Templeman, however, would put an end to the FA1 by ruling in favor of Shadow and Don Nichols—in his ruling, Templeman noted that forty percent of the FA1 was directly taken from the Shadow DN9, and was therefore in breach of Shadow's design.

Southgate, expecting the ruling, had his next car, the A1, ready in time for the next race of the 1978 season. But while that was a rush job, Southgate was far more deliberate with his next project—the so-called A2 that would be his reply to Chapman's ground effect revolution.

Side-by-Side

continued

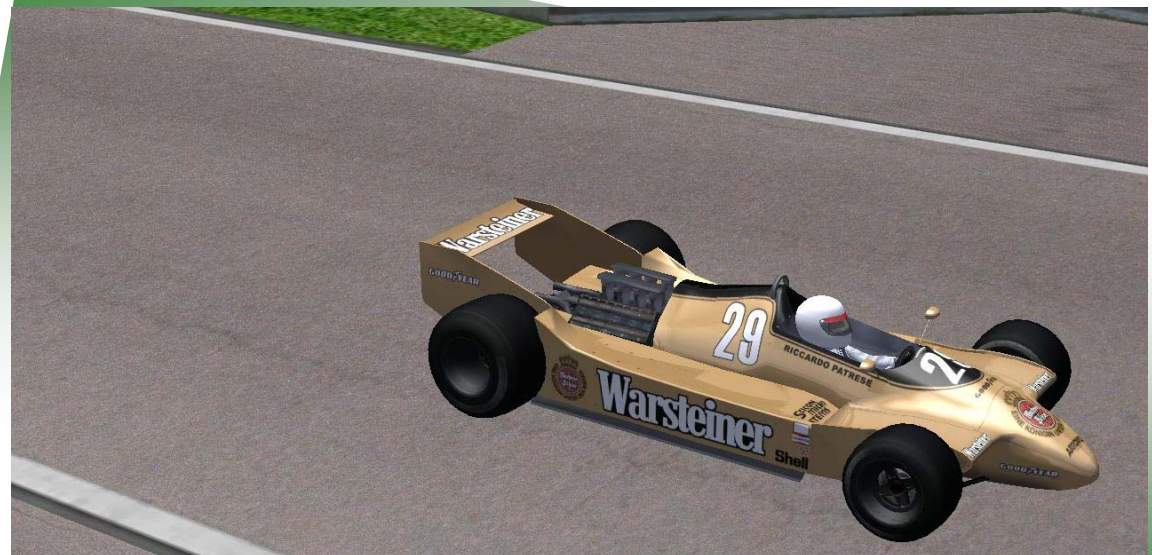
The A2 was a futuristic looking car dubbed the 'buzz-bomb' by the press, and had the distinction of not having any front wings at all. David Tremayne and Mark Hughes, in their Concise Encyclopedia of Formula One, describe the A2 as follows: "... an extremely low bullet-shaped car with faired-in bodywork. Its engine and gearbox were canted upwards at the back to facilitate the use of a full-width under-tray to maximize the amount of downforce generated by the air flow. Unfortunately the engine installation raised the centre of gravity and, in this era of experimental engineering, the team never satisfactorily discovered the cure to persistent 'porpoising' at speed. This was an aerodynamic phenomenon in which the air forces acted upon the car—the centre of pressure—moved about constantly as it raced."

!



1979 was still the year of the "garagistas", of which there were many. Top of the list must be the terribly designed Merzario A1 and A2 (the A2 was introduced at the Spanish GP), entered by one-time Ferrari works driver Arturo Merzario (of the cowboy hat with Marlboro advertising fame—though, to be fair, he certainly smoked what he promoted!). Merzario battled heroically all season long to get the A1 and A2 onto the grid. Huge shunts like at Zolder aside, little Arturo never managed to get much out of that heap and, one year later, things got so bad he gave up on Formula One and entered Formula Two instead, with much the same car. Sadly, the Merzario was so bad it landed up struggling in that field as well.

The Rebaque was the entry by ultra-wealthy Mexican Hector Rebaque who didn't pay-to-drive as much as paid-to-own-a-team: His own. Buying a Lotus in 1979, he quickly vanished into the nether regions of the field and, frustrated by Lotus' refusal to help him with the car, he ditched the Lotus in favor of a purpose-built Penske (which he has specially commissioned, and was based around the Lotus. It entered three Grands Prix, and managed to qualify only once.



T4

ArturoVegaAlvarado

La Vida Loca: Virtual Speed Bar & Grill

Arturo Vega-Alvarado got there when sim-racing was still in its infancy ... welcome to the dream that was the Virtual Speed Bar & Grill ...





This is the story of a special project that I was able to make happen. It is the story of how sim-racing has evolved, and it is the story about a racing center built around my desire, and yes, it is the story about a time in

my life when my passion for this sport probably overrode my judgment.

So where did the odyssey start? Difficult to know—maybe it started with my love for cars (my first collection

of model cars dates back to when I was six years old). I have always harbored this great fascination for cars and car-racing. Being a racing driver was, I suppose you would not be surprised to learn, always my dream. But I had neither the funds nor the true ability, I guess, to make it real ... so, like so many of you, I found a rather more comfortable seat in sim-racing.

But perhaps the dream of a racing centre started sometime later—in the early nineties maybe, when, quite by accident, I heard about some computer 'games', like NASCAR, and Indy Car Racing, and Grand Prix. For me, though, these early sims would be both a disappointment, and a revelation. You see, as soon as I installed the games and began racing them with the keyboard, I realized that something ... significant was missing—the immersion, I quickly realized, was ruined with the keyboard interaction. Determined to solve this, I went out and bought a joystick, but ... it was still not right. It was time to upgrade to my first wheel—a Thrustmaster... and that is when I actually started getting hooked on sim-racing.

I used the Thrustmaster wheel for a few months ... until it broke down. Then I tried other brands until I discovered the Thomas Steering Wheel (TSW). I was quite surprised when I first got it, the weight of that thing being the first thing I noticed. The wheel was solid, and clearly a step ahead of all the commercial brands available at the time. But several nagging issues with potentiometers forced me sell it a few months later, and left me searching for a replacement.



After months of looking for a replacement for the TSW, in shops and on the internet, I came across a product called the Hyper Stimulator during a demonstration at a shopping mall in downtown Montreal. I saw it, jumped in, tried it ... and was immediately hooked. As soon as my wife looked at my face, she knew what would happen next.

I bought the basic kit, dragged it home, and began assembling. It took me several days to assemble and paint it during the winter of 1998, which was quite interesting considering that I had to work in the garage with the door

open and a freezing cold outside—and no, if you're wondering, this was not my wife's punishment!

In 2000, after four years of working in Canada, I decided it was time to return home to Mexico. I brought the Hyper with me, of course, and, now settled in my new life, I began hearing ... voices ... well, perhaps a voice, that sounded a lot like mine, and it kept on wondering whether there was actually a market for Hypers in Mexico. Doing a little research, I quickly realized there was very little knowledge about

either sim-racing or Hypers ... and in that, I saw an opportunity.

My next step was to acquire the distribution rights for the Hypers in Mexico—this was in 2001. I talked with Steven Teear, Hyper Stimulator's General Manager in Australia—he and his partner, Jon Crooke, are two very nice guys—and I started show-casing the Hypers at car shows in my home town of Monterrey, which had, coincidentally enough, just begun hosting the Champ Car races.

I enjoyed a lot of success at the shows, with lines of people all day waiting for their turn on the Hypers which were never idle. We had a lot of enquiries from people wanting to know more about these weird things which were providing them with a stimulating experience, especially from people who were accustomed to console games and not PC-based simulators. Potential customers were quickly disenchanted, however, when they learned about the prices. Having no commercial agreement between Australia and Mexico made importing the Hypers an expensive business, and the cost to the consumer made them pretty-much prohibitive.

With the home-user basically priced out, I decided to try and work the commercial side of the sim-racing business, and began negotiating for a deal with the Champ Car team Gigante Racing who, at the time, had Michel Jourdain driving for them. While working hard to make this deal happen, I landed up meeting some, shall we say, extremely difficult people, but also some great racing personalities such as Bobby Rahal, the Champ Car president at the time, and Michel Jourdain along with his lovely family. At Long Beach, I got to meet Emerson Fittipaldi, amongst several other drivers, as well as the owners of the Herdez Racing Team. My idea was to create a promotional tour along with Gigante, which at the time seemed to have a lot of money to

T4 La Vida Loca: Virtual Speed Bar & Grill

continued

burn, but this really never happened. As for Gigante, I think now, with hindsight, that the team was poorly managed by people who knew very little about racing.

The trip to Long Beach, though, is a good example of the difficult—and yet rewarding—times I was having back then. An engineer with a Masters in IT management by trade, I'd worked for twelve years for a leading telecom company and made a very good living at it as well, enjoying the perks ... until 2002, that is, when the company closed its doors after the 2001 telecom world crisis. That meant I lost my job ... and money became a little tight. This, of course, happened around the time when I was delving into the whole Hyper-business, and I really believed that there was money to be made in sim-racing. Who knows, maybe this was because I liked it so much that I didn't have a cold head to really think things through ... but it seemed like a good idea at the time, and so I persisted with the venture ... and that meant traveling ... to places like Long Beach ... on a very small budget!

I traveled to Tijuana on a cheap overnight flight. Rented a cut-rate car, and drove north to Long Beach. I met there the then U.S. distributor of Hyper Stimulators. If I needed any further persuading that this was a market with possibilities, the U.S. distributor's BMW X5, his trailer packed with freshly-painted Hypers, his wheeling-and-dealing with guys like Tony George from the IRL, and big teams in Champ Car (CART, at the time, if memory serves), was it. Especially when I compared his life with mine—because here I was, driving a cheap rental Nissan Tsuru (Sentra), with very little money on the credit card, and staying at a Motel 6!

There was an opportunity that presented itself with TECATE, who were sponsoring Adrian Fernandez, and putting a lot of money into the promotion of the Monterrey Grand Prix that year. But as much as I pushed for this deal, I just never managed to meet with the right

person. In business, having the right contacts is often the only thing that separates success and failure. TECATE had a big 'riding simulator' at the time, which was basically a movie theater on wheels that would shake around as it projected race-scenes on its screen. Completely non-interactive, and I remember thinking that that thing must surely have cost them several hundred thousand dollars. But my budget being what it was meant that I was unable to do what I believe, now, would have made all the difference—that is, making the Hypers look more glamorous. That could've caught their attention.

Truth be told, it would have meant more to me than a simple business deal. Their driver at the time, Adrian Fernandez, has been a driver that I admire greatly, and not only because we are both from Mexico. I visited with Adrian for five years in a row at the Toronto CART race, and he was always very kind to me, and I value his items the most in my personal collection. I have many photos that were autographed by Adrian, and he has dedicated a small replica helmet, a model car, even a visor from his helmet after a qualifying session to me ... but despite of all of that, it is the pleasure of knowing him, and talking to him, that makes me so fond of Adrian. He's one of the most professional people I have ever met, and the failure to get the deal done with his team hit me pretty hard ... and made me realize (finally!) that the price of the Hypers was going to be a very difficult barrier to overcome in Mexico. After all, with the money needed to buy a Hyper, potential buyers could go buy a go-KART instead. If I'd been living in a country where people were more educated about sim-racing, perhaps I would stand a chance, I realized, but here, in Mexico ... people kept referring to these things as toys and videogames. It was time for me to face the truth: selling Hypers in Mexico to the consumer was never going to work—and closing deals with the corporate teams in Champ Car and other series would involve a great deal of capital—capital that I was fast running out of.



Bruno Junqueira at the ChampCar Conference held at the Virtual Speed Bar & Grilla

Nevertheless, there was something lurking in the background ... what I had realized was that, after punters had tried the Hypers, many kept asking me whether there was a permanent facility where they could come race them ... and this sort of triggered a memory ... to sometime last century, to 1995, specifically, and an overseas flight to Denmark. It was then when I first thought up the idea that would later materialize into the racing center.



He never recovered those caps—one of Arturo's greatest regrets!

A year earlier, in 1994, I had been living in Brighton, England, for a few months, and during that time my passion for racing had flourished into a full-time occupation. The day that Senna died, I was in Amsterdam celebrating the May 1st holiday. I was out all day on Sunday, and didn't watch the ill-fated *Imola* race, but first thing I noticed on the newspaper on Monday, right before boarding at Schiphol, was something about Senna ... no photos, however, elucidated the text, and since it was written in Dutch, I couldn't understand anything it

said. But it was enough to pique my curiosity and, as soon as I had landed in London, I grabbed the Daily Mirror, which had the news of Senna's death on its front cover. I still have that newspaper. This is what marked me forever into Formula One—and it was perhaps thinking of that flight, in 1995, that made my mind drift into wondering, "well ... if there is a Hard Rock, which is the rock & roll palace, an All Star café for sports, and a Planet Hollywood for movies, why isn't there something for all race fans out there?"

Believe it or not, I had written this on an airline napkin—instead of 'Hard', I had written, why not put the word 'Race' before 'Rock Café'? A few months later, I read in the news that the first Race Rock Café was actually being built in the U.S. I was rather surprised—my dream was actually going to be materialized, although not by me... A few years later, I would pay a visit to this place. It was a nice experience due to all the racing stuff, cars, bikes, and all that that was on display, but the food and the general ambience was just so-so. It was more of a tourist place, and was lacking the warmth of a place where you gather with your friends once a week, which was what I had been in my imagination.

And so, in 2001, I was back to that thought scribbled on an in-flight napkin ... a permanent fixture along the lines of a Race Café, with good food, good friends, and ... the Hyper Stimulators as a central attraction. Everything suddenly just seemed to fit ... the last decade or so, all of it now made some sort of sense ...

I talked about the concept of the racing center with the guys from Hyper Stimulator in Australia, because I didn't have enough money to fund it on my own. Then I talked it over with a good Italian friend—a man as passionate about racing as he is about *Futbol*—and we decided to become partners in creating the first racing center in Mexico.

The location we settled on was a small room in a shopping plaza, about fifty square metres or so, into which we placed four Hyperstimulators, along with four computers linked to one another for head-to-head racing.



The TECATE girls having some fun

We also set up four videogame stations, with racing games like Project Gotham, Colin Mcrae Rally, and other titles, for people waiting their turn on the Hypers.

In order to generate further revenue, we sold racing-related bric-a-brac, and racing videos on the TVs were shown on a loop. The place was decorated with racing flags, posters, and autographed photographs from my personal collection, a collection I had been putting together since my years of living in Canada—such as those with Mario Andretti, a picture that Greg Moore signed for me just a few months before his death in California, pictures with Adrian Zanardi before he went to Formula One, a Formula One model car that Juan Pablo Montoya dedicated to me and my two-year-old boy at a BMW dealership in Montreal, a picture I took of Michael Schumacher at the *Circuit Gilles Villeneuve* that, when I brought it for enlargement, people working at that place asked me if they could also keep a copy because they liked the picture so much!



Fittipaldi in the Hyper Stimulator at Long Beach

So much for the décor and concept ... now, the final touch was finding a name for our project. The name *Virtual Speed* somehow landed up sticking in our minds, and finally, after much thought, we decided it didn't get better than that ... For the opening ceremony of Virtual Speed Racing Center, we had the ribbon cutting by a local professional driver, along with cocktails for the press and a local TV station even pitched-up, taping some segments for a racing weekly show. The press invite resulted in a nice article in Mexico's biggest-selling daily, and Virtual Speed was lauded as an innovative concept. With all the attention we were getting right off the bat, we could almost have been excused for thinking we had a hit on our hands! We had people coming from different parts of the country asking us whether we were

interested in franchising! That was completely ridiculous, of course, since we were just starting ourselves, and the business formula was one that had not only not been proven, but one that, we quickly began to realize, was a little ... over-optimistic.

During the next few days, we realized we needed more than just an article in a newspaper to attract customers to our center. We had customers, of course—from kids who thought it was just an oversized joystick to grown-up boys with expensive toys like convertible



Mercedes Benzes, Bimmers, and Porsches to experienced professional drivers who got stung by the realism of the simulators—we had guys racing at the Hypers for more than three hours in a row!—but, after a few weeks of operation, it was obvious we needed to add some drinks and snacks if we wanted to create a locale where friends would gather to have a good time out.

Remember the franchise and business formula I was talking about? Well, we had, for some reason, never considered the need to sell food and drinks ... and so we'd managed to rent in a location where we were not permitted to sell either of them! The moment we realized that, we realized it was senseless to continue with the center—it was only postponing the inevitable. The decision—however difficult—was taken to close it all down. But at the same time, we were left with a sense that the center was not a failure—if done right, the center, we believed, had the potential for success.

Over the course of the next months, we evolved the concept further, and, over a year on from when we closed the doors, we were finally ready to see our dream re-open its doors to the world.

Now in a bigger place, the concept had grown up in size and budget, and required a third partner, a friend I've known all my life. My long association with the Hypers had also come to an end—we had sold them to the promoter of the PanAm GP series (Copa Corona at the time), which is a Pan-American racing series using Formula Renaults. As an alternative, we built our own simulators using a steel frame, OMP racing seat, ECCI pedals, and Logitech MOMOs.

Believing in the concept of the earlier Virtual Speed, we wanted not only to retain its basic idea, but also its name—and so Monterrey was introduced to ... Virtual Speed Bar & Grill.



The smile was from his sim-racing ride of course!

The décor was similar to the first incarnation, featuring my personal collection of posters and autographs, a hood with the logo hanging from a wall, flags from the Formula One teams, a big screen and a projector, and five TVs featuring racing and car footage on a constant loop. The menu was quite special, too: We invested in a good design, and included what we believed to be a top-notch menu. The 'Schumi' burger was probably the most requested item from the menu. We had a special drinks menu, too, with some special combinations. I had planned to have each table embossed with a Formula One track, but budget didn't allow it. We did have enough to cover an entire wall with a GTR poster. The image was a screenshot of a driver's view crossing the line at the *Barcelona* track.

We also had a very good relationship with the people from 10tacle Studios who sponsored us, in a way, by sending us German copies of GTR, because the U.S. and international versions were still not ready. We had some t-shirts and caps, many posters, and some promotional videos. We did quite a bit of promotion for GTR at the same time we were promoting our Virtual Speed Bar & Grill.



David Martinez, NASCAR hopeful Jorge Goeters and ...

We held a virtual race amongst go-KART drivers and other amateur drivers from the local racing scene, and, equipped with a video camera, we broadcast to the TVs and big screen all the action in the virtual race track, while the local announcer from the *Autodromo Monterrey* did the commentary for us. We wanted to add a little glamour, too, so we asked the drivers to come in their racing suits. The girls at the bar seemed to get a kick out of that for sure!

As time passed, we began throwing even bigger events. The Champ Car guys came over for the press conference to promote the Monterrey race, and Virtual Speed was being featured on all the local newspapers. It was at this time that I met Bruno Junqueira—the circumstances of that meeting were a bit odd because he asked me whether there was a quiet spot in the place where he could rest-up before the press conference, and so I brought him up to the second level, where we had the simulators. As soon as he saw them, he asked me if he could give 'em a spin. What a question! As soon as he jumped in, he immediately recognized the *Barcelona* track, and starting lapping



rather quickly indeed. He then wanted a race against two other friends who were at the place at the time (intentionally, as they wanted to race against Bruno) ... we arranged it and watched as he promptly lost!

After the press conference, all the journalists and photographers had a chance to chat with Bruno in a very relaxed atmosphere. Then the press started to ask him if he could pose at the simulators, but he was in a mood to do more than just pose. He challenged the other drivers for a rematch. We gave them time to qualify, and then sat back and watched them race. He

was leading before making a mistake, and finished second. As he had done in real-life that very season.

The press even published this fact with a title like, "He's second also in videogames". But maybe the practice did him some good since he would later win the race at *Monterrey*. Bruno liked GTR so much he asked me for a copy, and told me that he practiced with his computer at the trailer before the races. I fed this information back to the guys in 10tacle Studios, and they were quite pleased that a driver like Bruno had liked GTR so much.

But it wasn't only GTR that Bruno liked: he developed a liking for the Virtual Speed Bar & Grill as well, and promised me that he would come back a few days prior to the race. And so he did. I went to pick him up at a fancy Italian restaurant where he was having dinner with team bosses Carl Hass and Paul Newman. When he came over to the Bar & Grill, he signed a lot of autographs, and chatted away with the regulars—he was a real nice guy. He then raced again with other fellow drivers like David Martinez (Champ Car Atlantic and probably a Champ Car driver next year). I'm sure he had a lot of fun, and we certainly enjoyed having him with us ... as I say, a real nice guy.

Another professional driver who came to visit us was Jorge Goeters, a driver from Mexico City who participated at the Champ Car race, but was more into NASCAR. He tried the simulators, but only for a short time, because he got nausea! He couldn't explain why, but said that he always got that feeling with any sort of driving game, but that this never happened when driving for real. Huh? Anyway, he returned several times, not so much for the simulators but for the good food and the environment. He gave me one of his shirts for the collection. And speaking of the collection—I'd be remiss not to mention a very special item we had hanging behind the bar: A jersey worn by the late Pedro Rodriguez that was signed in 1967. Not many people would recognize the jersey, but those who recognized it were quite surprised to see this very valuable item ...

We also had the guys from the Champ Car Pace Car Team pay us a visit. They had a very good time and enjoyed our food, so much so that they asked us to be the providers of their food during their stay in *Monterrey*. They came a few weeks prior to the race, and had an event at the track driving some fast Ford Mustangs with professional drivers.



Telmex was always a good sponsor ...

They gave a very good show, all smoking tyres and crazy speed with regular people hanging on in the passenger seats. They gave us special race seats for the winners of a promotion we had at our bar, and we did a Fast Lap competition with the top five drivers winning a free ride at the track. I got to ride twice with a professional driver and a professional lady driver.



Yup, he took GTR and the cap home with him ...

We had visits from local auto clubs and auto enthusiasts in general, and everything was going very well.

Except for one small thing ... over the course of a few months, we began to realize that the racing public was a very niche market, and one which couldn't provide us with enough income to keep the business afloat long

term. We began searching around for solutions, and finally had to cave-in to what the general public kept asking us to do ... to show football matches on the screens, and transform the Bar & Grill into more of a sports-bar. I guess that's when we started losing the original spirit, and our identity, and that eventually made us close the doors indefinitely.

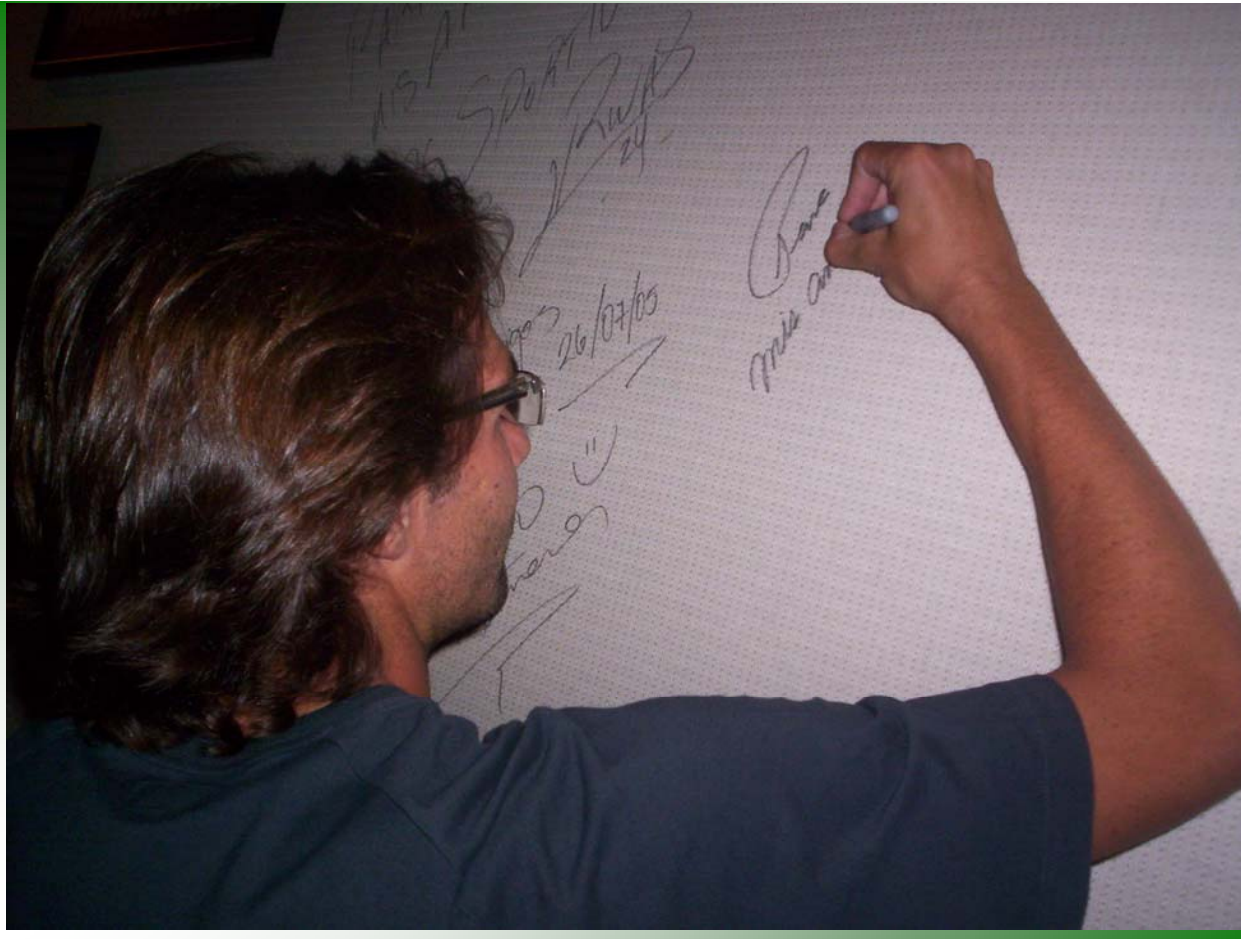
After several months of money issues—that is, losing money issues—we yet again had arrived at that place where no businessman ever wants to be—with no option available other than to shut-up shop. Decision made, we shut down the Virtual Speed Bar & Grill ... this time for good.

The simulators we had built are now in the hands of professional young drivers who use them to train. One of them is an upcoming Champ Car Atlantic driver who has just finished the BMW series in U.S.

And as for my dream, you ask? Well, we lost a lot of money with this project. That's the only negative aspect, and it is far outweighed by the positives ... after all, we got to meet a lot of famous people, drivers, promoters, not to mention mixing with the beautiful people ... we made very good friends, too, and got to drive exotic cars (like an Acura NSX we borrowed for the Champ Car parade). We learned a lot, too, about how (not) to make a business. In short, I saw my dream come true—and it doesn't get better than that. Sure, it came at a price. But do I regret it? No way. I'd pay the price again for the experience.

In any event, I make my living now in another business related to cars, and the connection was made thanks to the simulators, so something good came out of this, after all, besides personal satisfaction.

I know many fantasize about opening a sim-racing center in an exotic location ... and there are some successful models out there, too ... but in the end, this is a business, and you need to come into it with a solid plan ... and then, still, you must be prepared to alter your plans because no plan is reality-proof ...



The writing was on the wall—but the ride was worth it! A pro-footballer leaves his mark at the Bar & Grill

Right now, I'm the director of a big car-wash franchising company in Mexico. There is a big action field for my creativity now linked with a very respectable and experienced businessman I met thanks to the Virtual Speed dream. So, I'm still related

to cars and, I hope, one day I could make my own business again. But this time, I hope the end will be a successful one ...

All in all, it was a great ride. I still use one the prototypes we built at home, with the new generation of racing sims like GTR2, rFactor, and LFS. Because you can take the sim out of the racer ... but you can never take the racer out of the sim!

Be SEEN!

For rates and further
information,
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lou.magyar@autosimsport.net

The Logitech® G25— One Month On

Lou Magyar has had thirty days to test Logitech's G25—time for a performance evaluation..

LouMagyar



So here I am sitting behind my wheel, racing away at the latest mod from the rFactor mod crews—of which there are more to choose from than anyone could have ever imagined—and I thought I might as well give you my impressions after using the Logitech® G25 Racing Wheel for a month.

Overall, I still love the feel of this wheel. The Force-Feedback, while still gear driven, doesn't suffer the backlash one might expect. I think this is probably due to the tighter gearing specifications demanded by the dual-motor Force-Feedback mechanism. The action is smooth and precise, providing the user with a greater sense of what the car is doing, and consequently a greater sense of immersion.

I also noticed that my frame rates are a bit better with the G25 versus my old Momo Formula Force. Logitech really hit the nail on the head with their on-board FF processing, and while Momo was good, the G25 is just so much better. The overhead demands of the G25 are minimal, yet it easily provides valuable information to help you, as a driver, feel what the car is doing 'under' you.

I didn't do a benchmarking test, but I would estimate a twenty to twenty-five percent improvement in FPS over the Momo FF wheel I previously used ... and yes, it is very much *previously*. The Momo is now mothballed ... that makes two (no wait ... three) mothballed Logitech® wheels.

I started with the Logitech® Wingman Formula Force (black base, red foamy wheel), then tried the newer Logitech® Formula Force GP Racing (I switched back to the Wingman FF). Next came the Logitech® Momo Force (red base, black leather wheel), which I thoroughly enjoyed until the G25 came along. Oh sure, other wheels have come and gone, but the Logitech wheels still remain part of my inventory, and are broken out of isolation when the yearly USGP LAN party rolls around.



The G25's plethora of shifter-mounted buttons is great. With eight actual buttons, and a gamepad-style hat, you can make the shifter-mounted buttons do just about anything you need to do while removing the need to fumble for the keyboard. I would like to see at least a couple more buttons mounted on the wheel, though. Having just the two seems a bit of a step backward.

Additionally, the two buttons that are mounted on the wheel are in a difficult position to reach with your thumbs unless you happen to be double jointed. I have the left button mapped to my Push-to-Talk feature for TeamSpeak applications. My regular racing league is big on using TeamSpeak, and talking while driving is a necessity. Having the button mapped to the wheel just makes sense. The problem is that the location of the button on the spoke of the wheel is really out of reach when you drive with your hands on the wheel at the 'grip humps'. For me, at least, I need to let go of the grip and rotate my hand to what feels like an ergonomically incorrect position to reach the button. If they were higher up (like on a tang on the wheel spoke), and closer to the center, less effort would be required to reach it. The button layout on the Momo Force seems to work better. I

assume that the lack of buttons on the wheel proper is dictated by the abundance on the shifter, and the hardware interface's ability to accommodate them all.

My impression of the pedals has changed little—with the exception that the throttle and brake might be closer together, and the clutch separated a bit more from the brake. The actuation of all three is superb, though, and they feel very realistic in that regard. Because of the separation of the throttle and brake, heel-and-toeing becomes difficult during extended races. It isn't too difficult when you get started, but after a while the reach gets to be a pain—in the leg. The carpet grip mechanism, on the other hand, could not be better on the G25. Since the day I 'planted' the pedals on the floor, they have not moved an inch—and I am not known for my slimness!

Speaking of grip, I am still trying to find mine ... or, more aptly, I'm still trying to come to grips with the whole thing. The G25 wheel, with all its immersive qualities, is certainly something that takes time for acclimation. Having raced for nearly ten years with the aforementioned Logitech® line of wheels, graduating to something that drives more like my street car controls is really kicking my ass. I am still blowing shifts (both up and down), and occasionally find myself applying brakes rather than hitting the clutch to shift (again, both up and down), or using the clutch as a brake pedal—which I can tell you is not the best way to approach a turn-in point.

For the hardcore sim-racer, or the once a week racer, the Logitech® G25 Racing wheel is well worth the \$300.00 MSRP price tag. Comparable wheels easily cost twice as much as the G25. After using the wheel for a month, my overall impression is still one of satisfaction. It increases the realism and immersion of my simulator racing experience, and I would recommend it to anyone in the market for a new wheel. It doesn't getter better at this price—and probably doesn't get a whole lot better at double the price. Superb.

Struck by Lightning— Twice!

Lx Martini has had sixty days to test the Lightning SST™, the 'fastest shifter on the planet'. Is it as good as all that?

LxMartini



Sim-Gear.com introduced their H-shifter in AUTOSIMSPORT's September Issue, when they were kind enough to give us a build to test. The idea was for the shifter to slowly travel its way around the world, from one writer to the next in a chain known in some circles as Communism. Well, those who know me know that I have buried my Red-past somewhere near the Chambers Streer subway station, and have embraced—like all new-century, former Reds—the fine and upstanding virtues of capitalism. Which is to say—to hell with everyone else, the shifter has not moved from my desk since it got here—and it ain't gonna be moving anytime soon either. So, for those of you who have been waiting for your turn, I have, like Heston, only five words for you: All-together now! "From my cold, dead hands!"

Let's, before moving on to my personal thoughts, quickly look at Lou Magyar's review in September's issue.

"The Lightning SST™ shifter, in the box, felt much heavier than I had expected. And that made me anticipate precisely what I found: A well-crafted, made-to-last unit."

Lou was quite correct: This baby weighs solid, and it's a blessing too, because I am abusing this thing, slamming in the gears with Jean Genet-like gay-abandon!

"The Lightning SST™ is made from high-tech, durable materials. The entire base unit, including swivel mounting plate, shifter housing, and visible shaft is made from CNC-machined billet aluminum, available in three anodized colors, or polished to a fine mirror-finish. The shift knob, along with all internal moving parts, is made of [Delrin®](http://Delrin.com), for a lifetime of maintenance free, greaseless operation. The internal shaft is steel. The shift gates themselves are protected by a flawlessly-fitting spherical piece of Delrin® mated with an ABS shield which completely covers the opening, creating an exquisitely finished and professional looking item."



That's what Lou wrote: Sounds good, too, but since I don't know how to wire a plug, I will take his word for it. What I do know is that, in its two months of use, the shifter has not changed its 'feel' one iota: The gears clip in with a satisfying click, and once you get used to it, changing down from sixth to third in the V8 at Bathurst is one of the most satisfying experiences I have ever felt in sim-racing.

"The attachment mechanism is a slick cantilever plate and pin design that allows for a simple, quick attachment with just a few turns of the clamp screw. The allowable attachment thickness ranges from as little as you like

(although the unit is heavy enough that I wouldn't dream of attaching it to anything thin and flexible), to a whopping 1.75 inches (44.5 mm) for compatibility with pretty much any simulator rig you can imagine—or are running."

All of it true: I managed to get this shifter running in less than three minutes—attached it to the desktop (realizing, in the process, that I have become a right-hand-shifter after learning to drive, and spending years using the left hand {odd, really, but the right hand is now what feels more 'natural'}), shoved the USB-thing into the slot, mapped the gears on nKPRO and rFactor, and away I went.

"The shifter itself presents an exceptionally smooth action. With eight positions in all, it is configurable to almost any gear-pattern you care to use. The throw, from gate-to-gate, does take a little getting used to due to the shortness of the throw involved. Shifting is fast, silky and effortless, and results in a positive engagement at each button."

Yes, it most certainly does take a little getting used to. The first few days involved me shifting from second to first (when third is what I was aiming for), and from sixth to second (when fourth was what I was aiming for), and involved literally tons of exploded pistons lining race-tracks the world over.

But here's the thing: I was *thinking* the gear in, as opposed to just doing what comes natural. This I realized when I was involved in an online race with the 1979 Demo at a track that I know like the back of my hand: Kyalami. So involved was I with the actual race that I forgot to think about the gear-changes and realized, half an hour later, that I had hardly missed a gear-shift at all over twenty-some laps. This shifter works—and when you find your rhythm, it is an enhancement that will not add to your racing immersion, it will subtract from your overall lap times.



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There is, for me, no going back: Yes, I know I can't run a modern Formula One car with an H-shifter (I tried!), but at the moment, I'm completely hooked on nKPRO, and the V8 Supercar mod for rFactor—as well as beta testing the 1979 F1 mod. So, my impressions using these sims?

With nKPRO, the feel is just inspiring. With the 1979 mod, the feel as you barrel into Crowthorne under brakes, shifting down and blipping the throttle, is just pure bliss. And at Bathurst, with the V8, is as close to the best sim-racing experience I have ever had: Coming out of the right-hander at T3 and hanging on to the rear while up-shifting with the other hand fulfills all my fantasies, and reminds me of my mis-spent youth beating an old Alfa Junior around parking lots with the rear-hanging out like a hooker on 11th Avenue at 5AM.

Only one thing I would like to see improved is the reverse-gear situation: Yes, the shifter has eight slots, but I have yet to find one that 'works' for reverse—that is, that doesn't pose the threat of being engaged by accident in the throes of battle. Over-and-above that, I have also mapped third into two slots—one beside the other—because that seems to be the gear I most use under brakes. A simple mechanism that sees the shifter 'become' reverse, as found in many sedans—for instance, the click-down and back method, or the finger-clip on the shaft—would be a welcome addition to any new upgrades.

My verdict on this shifter is simple: It isn't leaving until it breaks. And considering the sturdiness of the thing, that eventuality is not likely to be happening anytime soon. If you haven't yet experienced the joys of an H-shifter, do yourself a favour—go buy one. And yes, I know Sim-Gear are one of our sponsors, so I'll add—I don't really care what shifter you buy, just buy one. It'll transform your sim-racing experience.

Mod Money Blues

Nothing's for free ... except in the world of sim-racing where those who pay are the same as those who create ... is this community able to sustain such an un-even equilibrium, even as the role of modders becomes more significant with every passing sim? We asked some of sim-racing's top-modders for their opinion ...

AUTOSIMSPORT



A few weeks ago, I stepped into my local 'game' store for a browse—not a normal process in this day and age, I admit, since typically I prefer to pay less and buy online, but as I was in town, I thought—why the hell not?

Being the obvious sad case I am, I gravitated towards the sims section, and began to peruse the various offerings displayed on-shelf along with a gentleman who, now standing next to me, held a couple of flight-sim addons in his hands, clearly in a process of deep procrastination. I edged over, casting my eye over Just Flight's recent SR71 Blackbird (because we like things that go fast!) on the shelf, before, being the nosey sort that I am, examining the gentleman's choices—he was holding two more samples of Just Flight's offerings, '707 Professional', and 'C-130 Hercules'. Being an extremely casual flight simmer—and one who likes to fly supersonic jet fighters—I obviously struggled with this chap's choice of two giant bus-plane things; personally, the very idea of paying anything for a Boeing 707, perfect sim-rendition or not, is fairly alien to me. But, recalling the outrage at SimHQ and AVSIM over Just Flight's recent increase in price on single aircraft mods, I turned to the guy and said: "Fairly outrageous, don't you think, charging thirty quid {\$58.00} for a single aircraft? I mean, the quality is stunning, I know, but ... well, you know."

He glanced up, visibly taken aback by the fact that some random stranger was talking to him, (not really commonplace in the UK, where we all prefer to pretend we hate everyone!). I watched as his face slowly registered the reality that someone was actually talking to him—and not only that, but talking to him about his flight-sim addon choices.

"Well," he replied, finally, "to be honest, mate, I don't know which one to choose, but if you look at how much effort has gone into these mods, and the sheer complexity of the aircraft systems, the comprehensive manual, it all starts to add up, dunnit? Plus, if I think about

the amount of time and enjoyment I will get out of flying either of these aircraft, it makes the price seem pretty irrelevant, you know?"

I did know, and whilst I did not buy the 'SR71' (also £30.00), I knew that the time and effort that had been put into the modeling of that particular vehicle was second to none—the thing *leaks on the ground*, for crying out loud! I promptly agreed with the chap, and we went our separate ways.

The whole exchange struck a chord with me. Sim-racing has not stepped into the world of pay-for-mods that is now *de rigeur* in flight-simming, and I couldn't help but wonder about the reaction in a community that is usually outraged at the retail price of titles like GTR2 or rFactor ... one can barely imagine the outcry should some poor modder charge thirty pounds for a single car addon for rFactor ... doesn't bear thinking about, really ... poor Hudson, who chose to charge some paltry amount for his textures, barely managed to get out of the community with his life!

Which is unfortunate, because sim-racing's modders are creating some truly fantastic products: ORSM's V8Factor mod is just a super work of art, and outshines any 'official' product available for the same series by quite a substantial margin. Ditto the CTDP F1 mod, and, as many are soon about to discover, the NASCAR mods coming to rFactor. Not to mention the 1979 F1 mod ... So, anyway, that set my mind wondering ...

Imagine a world where your only V8 Aussie Supercar sim comes courtesy of Codemasters ... where your Formula One thrills come via the PS2 ... where historic Formula Ones do not exist (except for a sim made in 1997) ... and where the only tracks available are those licensed by developers ... imagine not having any mods, and being reliant simply on the products dished-out by the sim-racing developers (of which there are, arguably, five at best) every couple of years or so ... imagine being

reliant on Codemasters for one's sim-racing pleasure, for the rest of time ... scary thought, isn't it?

The simple truth is this: modders *are* sim-racing. Without them, we don't race the cars we really want to race ... on the tracks we want to race on ... with the graphics and physics and realism we all not only want—but pretty much demand nowadays.

So it's a little sad, isn't it, that this community would be so paltry with its financial contributions as to force guys like Pete Walsh, from rFactorCentral, to actually *ask* for financial aid. Why on earth would this community place this guy in such a position? This sense of entitlement—that would see sim-racers assume that Pete will just keep paying for the terabytes of downloads he makes available until he either goes bankrupt or quits in despair—is one that is not only morally outrageous, but it is also unsustainable.

More than that, though, it is a very sad reflection on this community: That the vast majority of modders have made almost no money whatsoever—including those who have seen their mods downloaded over 50,000 times—from voluntary contributions is not something we should be proud of.

And yet, here we are, in a community that would not only *not* offer one single cent to the modders whose mods make this entire genre worthwhile, but a community that thinks it perfectly acceptable to then jump onto RSC to declare that they will *never* forcibly pay for mods ... *ever*! All of which is to say ... sim-racers *demanding* that modders work—for free—and then refusing to consider payment or, even, a voluntary donation for their work ...

Is it actually possible that many in this community believe modders work for the thrill of seeing a dancing banana at RSC?

All of this leaves us with one question: How the hell did we get here, and how do we move forward before it all collapses, as rFactorCentral almost did last month?



Sim-racing survives, draws its very breath, from modders ... modders who actually *pay* to create their products, which are then distributed by sites who *pay* to host them ... and all of this for a community who seem quite content to keep taking as much as they can without even a thought of contributing back. Can this continue? *Should* it continue?

We thought we'd ask some of sim-racing's top modders for their opinions on where this community is, at the moment, and where they see it going, and whether modders are now faced with a simple choice: mod for free, don't mod at all, or start charging for the products they create, because those are ultimately the products that we *want*, and history tells us that the voluntary payment route, in this community, means no payment at all ...

AUTOSIMSPORT: What is your motivation when it comes to modding?

Mike Tyler {GPLeA}: For me, modding is a natural extension of something that was one of my favorite hobbies as a kid—building models. Naturally, I ran around and played ball, rode bikes, built forts, and collected frogs, snakes, and creatures of all sorts, and did all of the other things that little boys do ... but some of

my more reflective and joyful moments were spent building models.

Even though I built quite a few planes and ships, my favorite models were racing models, and the more detailed the better. I loved the 1:12 scale Tamiya models above all others because of the detail involved, and of those, the Formula One models—such as the Lotus 72, the Ferrari 312B, the Tyrrell 003 and the Honda RA273—held a special place in my heart.

I also spent a lot of time building very detailed slot-car layouts where, again, the bigger and more detailed the layout, the better. Even as a kid I found the challenge of building a model as realistically as possible to be a great joy.

As I got older, I moved from models to real cars. First, the family race cars and, eventually, I helped pay my way through college by building custom engines. As you can see, sim-modding was a very natural fit. In fact, just as I did thirty-five years ago, I often stay up late into the night with my desk lamp on and some music playing in the background working on a mod.

Of course, I do enjoy and appreciate the fact that so many people have enjoyed and appreciated the work that I've produced, but the truth is, I don't really mod for the community as much as I mod for myself. The advantage—which can also be a disadvantage too, at times—is that I have such high standards, and such a self-critical eye that few people are willing to put in the kind of time and effort that I'll put into a project. In fact, I'm pretty sure that particular aspect of my personality has frustrated some of my modding partners, because where they're willing to say, *"That's good enough"*, I'll look at it and say, *"Perhaps, but it could be better"*.

Jan Kohl {USPits}: I think I was initially interested in modding when Jed (originator of The Pits) played around with the Indy Car Racing 2 demo to fix some things. Initially, it was very hard ... no tools, only hex

editing to do the trick. However, it was fun to start playing around with things, realizing that we could do add-ons and other mods to create a new depth of realism for simulator racing. It was cool to realize that some of the things that were left out of the original NASCAR Racing could be put back into it ... by *us*.

Nick Steelman {Sim Factory—ARCA Sim}: The reason I got involved with modding stems directly from my vision of—hopefully—contributing something tangible to the community in terms of development directly related to stock car racing. The initial goal was, for all intensive purposes, to possibly fill a void that I, among others, felt was being neglected by the big software companies in recent stock car releases. I personally feel there is no better representative in regards to what the sim-racing community yearns for than the ideas and needs of the individuals that are participating members of this community.

Renato Simioni {GPC—F11979}: The sense of accomplishment from bringing a particular series or even a particular era back to life.

Luciano Amaroli {CEO ASRWC.com, and armaroli.com}: To develop more and more skills in CG/Art—I'm a Master of Arts from SCAD, and love design in any form, and I the challenge of making creative things. Over and above that, I do it in order to develop more and more technology for the community, and for our company, of course ... And, finally, to proudly see that Felipe Massa practiced in one of our simulators before winning the Interlagos GP! Coincidence? I don't believe so. Ask Rubens Barrichello if he practiced in our simulator. Of course not! He didn't want, did he ...

Petros Mak: {MMG—1950-2006 F1} First and foremost, the group I have formed, and their sheer passion and dedication to the vision I have created, is what motivates me to mod ... my love for racing, Formula One, and game development is another factor. And then there is the

community who support the work we do, and enjoy what we release. There is nothing more satisfying than seeing the community enjoying what we have spent our time creating for them. With their support, and the support of those we look for in companies, and magazines, the morale of everyone in the team rises, and the motivation to keep at it grows stronger. Our sheer love for modding is what fuels the fire inside us, what drives our desire, our dedication and passion to mod on the MMG 1950 – 2007 mod.

Slimjim (KART mod—F11967): I just like to have things in the game that I like ...

detail, as well as their knowledge of racing and skill as artists, created the community in which we live today. GPL may have jump-started it, but make no mistake—the phenomenal global growth of the sim-racing community is the bastard child of modders.

These folks were all instrumental in setting a standard by which every modder today is still judged. And let's be clear; when I say 'modder', I'm not just talking about the modelers, physics wizards, and texture artists, I'm also talking about all of the software programmers who created the modding tools and utilities, and web masters whose sites have become the anchors and the

consulting with Pete, because he's the only one who ever got it right. Everything you need to know about rFactor is in one location, every mod, every utility and update, and even the works in progress are all in one, easy to navigate location. It's clean, simple, straightforward, and informative. In fact, there are far more rFactor resources and information available at rFactorCentral than there is on rFactor.net.

Renato Simioni: Very crucial. Given that the current leading simulator developer is a former modding house, you already know that there are people out there delivering things that go beyond the scope

GPL MAY HAVE JUMP-STARTED IT, BUT MAKE NO MISTAKE—THE PHENOMENAL GLOBAL GROWTH OF THE SIM-RACING COMMUNITY IS THE BASTARD CHILD OF MODDERS.

AUTOSIMSPORT: How crucial a role do modders now play in sim-racing?

Mike Tyler: Are you kidding? I mean, all due respect to Doug and Ian, because I really respect what they've brought to the sim-racing community, but the fact is—there's no way they'd still be able to make money without the modding community.

Think about it; can you imagine how long GPL would have lasted with only the eleven original tracks? And even though it sounds a bit self-congratulatory, despite all of the add-on tracks, can you imagine still racing with the original cars if the GPLEA hadn't stepped in and said, "Yes, it is good enough, but it could be better"?

Folks like Martin Granberg and Bruce Johnson, Brian Wong, Nigel Patterson, Gustavo, and Nils, and Lou, and Alison, Phil, Ron O'Dell, Paul Jackson ... Frankly, there just isn't enough page space to include all of them. These folks, with their dedication to sim-racing, their eye for

foundations of the sim-racing community. Guys like Stefan Magnusson, or Bob Simpson, or Alessandro Pollini—guys who weren't necessarily artists per se, but still managed to give so much back to the community in their own ways. Modders are the living and breathing soul of the sim-racing world.

And the good news is that there's a constant flow of new people coming into the community who are continuing the tradition, and doing some absolutely brilliant work on everyone's behalf. For example, Pete Walsh's rFactorCentral site is, in my opinion, one of the most brilliantly conceived sim-racing web sites ever published. It ranks right up there with GPL Rank and as one of the most community-critical and utilized and yet, sadly, I also think, to some extent, under-appreciated web sites we have.

Personally, I think the staff of SimBin, Blimey, 10tacle, nKPro, iRacing.com, and ISI should all be taking notes and

of amateurism. And be it either due to licensing restrictions or lack of broader commercial appeal, modders are currently the only link between sim-racing in its current technological capabilities, and the series and cars you really would like to see, with the depth and realism the hardcore simmer has come to expect.

Jan Kohl: Extremely crucial ... especially with some products. NASCAR Racing from Papyrus could (and did) stand on its own merits, but I don't know how many emails we got from people who said, "if you hadn't made <insert Pits mod here>, I would have never bought this game". Obviously, when you get to other platforms like rFactor, the modding community is essential for continued productivity for the game.

Luciano Amaroli: We are helping the whole community to grow faster, become more organized, and making technology more and more accessible and

democratic to the community. This is helping us to push the {sport} to the next level.

Nick Steelman: Modders are crucial in regards to fulfilling the needs of the community at this point in time. In a perfect world, the role of a modder could be drastically reduced by developers listening to beta testers, end users, and ultimately knowing their consumers. A lot of recent sim-racing releases, in my opinion, haven't taken advantage of the wealth of ideas and requested needs as expressed by the community.

Petros Mak: Modders play a bigger role to sim-racing then the actual game creators do in the modern world. Whilst some may not agree with this, at the end of the day, it must be noted that these sims would not have the lifespan or playability if they were left un-modded. With modding groups constantly modding and expanding the capabilities and content of the game, it keeps the game playable for an unlimited time as long as more mods keep coming.

slimjim: Big ... it gives people many things to choose from, tracks and cars ...



Every button and gadget actually works ... worth \$58.00?

AUTOSIMSPORT: Is there a time when modders should begin to charge for their products?

Petros Mak: Absolutely ... *not!* I do not endorse charging for modding. But, having said that, I also do ... *but not* in the way you think. I will explain. MMG, for example, is working under an immense workload, and all our mods will be free of charge. First and foremost, because we do not own the engine we work on, and even though we make cars and tracks and content from scratch, it still does not make it right to charge. However, our despite the fact that the MMG season downloads will be available for download for free, and we *will not* charge for it, we will give an option to fans to be able to buy the seasons on a CD/DVD coming in a labeled DVD Case with a nice front and back cover label, as well as maybe a booklet. This CD/DVD will be for sale ... however, the season will still be available free to download. The paid-for CD/DVD is for those hardcore fans who wish to have the season on CD/DVD to display on their game shelves. This would also support the group. That is the only way modding groups should really charge for money—they should still have the mod downloadable for free, but with the option to have it on CD/DVD shipped to you for a small price.

Luciano Amaroli: I think that modders have to get together and make bigger development groups—that way, people will start to see the improvement. Then they will get paid by companies that are looking for talented artists. I also think that there are creative possibilities: for instance, modders could suggest to developers like ISI to organize a huge rFactor game DVD/Box, to be sold, containing all the best mods and best tracks, which you could then buy from rFactorCentral. And modders would then get paid (percentage-wise) for each copy sold. Of course, that would mean rFactor would be more expensive than it currently is, because it would bring a whole complete world in simulation, and anyone can have it. I wouldn't have to download all the mods and

tracks to see what's best out there, and would have everything I need by just buying a DVD/box. And every modder would have their percent if they get their mod chosen to fill the list. Just an idea!

Mike Tyler: I don't know. When your wife and family start to question your sanity after staying up until two or three AM for weeks at a time, recreating the dash boards of 1967 Formula 1 Cars?

Seriously, I think that time has long past. People gave Hudson Kerr a lot of grief when he started charging for his track textures. But most of them have no idea how much time and effect it takes to create high-resolution detailed textures. Or the time it takes to create a new model, or working on the physics of a new mod. And for most of us, that's time that we'll never get back. And then there's the software involved. Do you know how much a copy of 3DS Max or Photoshop costs?

I'm currently part of team that essentially has three projects in various stages, two car mods, and an enormous track with three alternate layouts that started out in Autocad and already has nearly 500 total man hours devoted to it, and it's *still* about a year from completion. The real-world costs associated with just the number of man-hours would be enough to make your head spin in Linda Blair-like circles.

The thing is: had anyone taken the time to analyze how much Hudson was really making, versus the time he spent creating the textures, as well as the cost of his tools, and his website and online transaction processing service, they would have come to the realization that he was really only making about \$1.00-2.00 U.S., per hour, for his time. He certainly wasn't getting rich, by any means.

And I guess recently Pete Walsh had to make some significant changes because of the enormous traffic and resulting costs that he incurs for the three servers that make up the rFactorCentral web site.

For the most part, modders tend to be very generous people, but there is an undeniable reality that nothing is

ever really free. For example, someone somewhere has to bear the financial burden for the tools that allow us to do what we do.

Of course, there are some people who will inevitably respond, *"If you don't like it, don't do it"*, but that's not my point. The real point is that we long ago surpassed some indefinable moment in time where we crossed over from, *"Wow, this is great! I can't believe how generous you are"*, to, *"What's taking you so damned long to release your mod?"*. There's an undeniable and embedded sense of entitlement on the part of the greater sim-racing community, and along with that sense of entitlement, is a belief that all mods should be given freely. It was amazing and sad too to see how so many people were outraged when Hudson stood up and politely told the rest of us, *"I can't continue to do this for free."*

Even though I was more than capable of creating my own textures, and had already created some textures for a number of tracks, I bought some of Hudson's textures on principal. I also try to donate funds to certain web sites as often and as generously as the opportunity permits.

Renato Simioni: I think time has come for the community to support the modders somehow if they want to really see the potential of the current modding platforms being fulfilled. I don't think payware is the best solution for modding, not least because, for many of the most popular mods, that would bring legal implications. Besides, the burden and hassles inherent to going commercial wouldn't necessarily be a positive development for modders and users alike.

Ideally, the best development would be if the community could naturally evolve to the point where it would choose to support the most accomplished modders on their own accord, which would, in turn, open a semi-professionalism scope for the modding teams. For the user, it's about as favorable as it can get, as he would

only open his pocket for whatever he thinks it worth it, however much he thinks it worth it, when he thinks it's worth it.

Jan Kohl: Sure. When they feel that they would like to recompense some of the expenses of their time for working on things. It's not for everyone, and you'll never see a fully 'pay for community', despite what some doom-and-gloom people will claim. Won't happen. There are too many people out there who like to mod for free, just to do something on their own.

slimjim: I don't think that would fly to well in the modding community ...



AUTOSIMSPORT: Have you made any money from modding?

Luciano Amaroli: We are trying to do it, of course with permission of ISI, but still haven't close any deals. There are some possibilities coming up ...

Petros Mak: Whilst MMG has received one donation over its time, no, we have not made money. A lot of people don't realize that modding groups do actually spend money to make mods. Upgrading computer components, buying updates or new programs for modelling and/or other sections of modding—the group ends up spending a lot of money before the mod is done.

Mike Tyler: No. Although Lord knows my wife thinks I should. I've posted some skins at rFactorCentral, and left it optional for now. I hope for the best, but given the choice, I'm sure ninety-nine percent of us would choose the free option.

Renato Simioni: Not yet.

Jan Kohl: Yes and no. Dave's {Noonan} converters helped keep The Pits afloat a few times when my USAF check wouldn't cover it, but overall, counting eleven years of doing it ... very little.

slimjim: No

Nick Steelman: No, I have not.



AUTOSIMSPORT: Would your mod be better if you were charging for it?

Luciano Amaroli: Yeap!

Petros Mak: In MMG's case, absolutely not. Our passion—to create the best material we can create—is there regardless of how we release the mod. We put in the self-same hard work we would even if it was paid for, always searching what extras we can add to enhance the experience the community will attain from the mod. We work for the community's enjoyment.

Mike Tyler: No. The problem with your question is that it implies that I'm willing to release something that is "good

enough”, as opposed to it being the best I can possibly make it. As I mentioned earlier, I have a very difficult time releasing something that isn’t the best it can be.

That said, if I ever seriously started charging for my work, I would probably wind up twice as retentive as I am now. I don’t think the quality of my work would be any better than it is now, I’d just stress over it more!

Renato Simioni: If there was some financial reward involved, it is likely that our current project would be more developed, and within a shorter time-frame. More importantly, it would significantly increase the chances of us continuing to do it in the future.

Jan Kohl: That question would probably be better asked as far as “if the mod made enough money to allow us to spend more time on it”. In other words, if the mod let us drop doing a full-time, ‘real’ job to work on the mod ... then yes. Otherwise, you’re just robbing Peter to pay Paul, and you’re making money, but still not getting the extra time to put into the mod. And that also supposes as far as how much time we generally spend per week doing mod work. Some people have tons of time in the evening (or take tons of time, whether they have it or not) to work on things ... I don’t anymore. So to my mind, it’s actually not really worth much to get paid for modding, unless it was enough money to actually allow me to drop my ‘real’ job. And considering my current job, it would have to be a fair amount of *dosh*!

slimjim: Not sure ... it would be a quicker release, that way I could spend more time with it.

Nick Steelman: My current project is not a mod in any way, shape or form. If it was a mod, the only real advantage I see in charging for it would be to recoup any loss in monetary value directly related to the use of contracted professionals. If a mod team or individual chooses to go this route for specific reasons, the obvious advantage is the speed in which the development process progresses. With that being said, there are plenty

of truly talented modders out there who do equal quality of work given the time, when compared to the hired-out pros, without requiring any sort of financial compensation. These modders are truly special people, contributing long, countless hours. They spend time away from their family, as well as other areas of their life. For no reason other than the pure enjoyment of creating a mod or add-on that helps make an existing platform reach its full potential.

AND BE IT EITHER DUE TO LICENSING RESTRICTIONS OR LACK OF BROADER COMMERCIAL APPEAL, MODDERS ARE CURRENTLY THE ONLY LINK BETWEEN SIM-RACING IN ITS CURRENT TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITIES, AND THE SERIES AND CARS YOU REALLY WOULD LIKE TO SEE.

AUTOSIMSPORT: How would money—and charging for mods—change the community and the sim-racing scene?

Luciano Amaroli: We have to be very careful on that. I believe we have to make an accreditation, like a syndicate, or official community of mod-makers, to legalize it and organize it, and therefore also guarantee and support a certain level of quality.

Petros Mak: It would completely destroy it. Most people can’t afford new games until six-to-twelve months after release, so how do you think these people will buy mods, too? It’s not enough they pay to get the stand-alone game, but make them pay for mods too? To me that’s ripping the community off, and I don’t agree with it. The community should be given something in return for their dedication and love to that specific game, and mods are the gift for their support.

Mike Tyler: I think the initial response could be outrage and anger from a very vocal minority. Like I said, there’s a deeply embedded sense of entitlement woven into the very fabric of this community. But I also think there are a lot of people, like me, who form a sort of silent majority—

people who understand and appreciate the contributions that are made and, even though we’ve never made a big deal of it, we’ve always found some way to contribute funds or show our appreciation for those we felt were deserving.

Would I pay for a monthly subscription to a sim-racing site like rFactorCentral? No question. I already try to contribute when I can. Do I make annual contributions to SpeedGeezers? Absolutely. Would I pay for a monthly

subscription to this rag? *Hell no!* ... Yes, of course I would. Like I said, there are sites and features and community entities that are very deserving, in my opinion.

We’ve only recently begun to see a glimpse of what’s coming. All you need to do is browse some of the chat boards and community web sites and check out the PayPal buttons.

In a very real way, we’re victims of our own success. The sim-racing community has grown enormously in the last five years. The internet traffic that surrounds us is incredible, and like it or not, someone has to pay for all of the terabytes of data and information that flow through this community every day. More people means more traffic, and there’s just no way any one person or group can keep up and bear the costs for the increase without some assistance.

The only thing that worries me is the legal aspects behind the concept of charging for a mod. That was probably what I was most interested in watching when Hudson started charging for his sky and track

textures. Even though he was only charging what was essentially a token fee for his time and talent, the work was still based on the ISI engine. I think, had the situation occurred under normal corporate circumstances, he would have been charged a licensing fee by ISI for the right to produce, publish, and sell his wares. But at the same time, I'm sure ISI knew what they were getting into when they created the "ultimate modder's simulation."

Renato Simioni: It would change quite a bit. The fact is that developing mods—good ones—is very rewarding and fun, but an extremely time-consuming activity. And time, as we know, is money—at least for us economically-active people out there. For some modding teams, it might not make a difference, and they might even not be interested in such development. But I imagine that for several people, it would bring a very different approach. Some modders might find that, with further justification involved beyond the fun and the sense of accomplishment, they could suddenly dedicate more time, and put more effort into their projects. Other modders might find the time to get involved, if there was the chance of getting rewarded for their efforts in the end. It would open the scope for semi-professionalism in the modding scene, which could be nothing short of a revolution. Currently, there are very few mods that even scratch the potential of the best modding platforms such as rFactor, simply because very few of us can afford the investment of time and dedication such a mod would demand. If the community truly embraces the concept though, I suspect soon we would see better mods being released in a shorter time frame.

Jan Kohl: Hmmm ... hard to say. If the community went more towards paying mods, where more modders started asking cash, I really don't see a problem with it strategically. However, it would cause a considerable amount of legal problems—how could you charge for real vehicles, tracks, and so on, unless you licensed them

from the real owners? Sim-racing is not quite like trains or airplanes ... older trains and airplanes typically don't need any license. However, a 1967 Ferrari still would require licensing the Ferrari logo to make it legal. If you didn't, and charged for it, Ferrari could arguably take someone to court and claim damages for the amount you had been paid for the mod. While that particular scenario has not happened in sim-racing (to my knowledge), I would think most courts would consider it an open-and-closed case ... Ferrari owns the logo, and you charged someone to buy a product with it on it.

So from a perspective of selling things, most modders would have to go out and spend a lot of money that they currently don't. And I'm not sure that a fantasy mod (maybe a few tracks and so on, and Hudson did 'okay' with his graphics updates) would get that much attention monetarily. Certainly not enough to make us at The Pits want to change any of our plans in the near future.

Tools are another story. If someone builds a tool that

of your I's dotted and T's crossed. One thing I've learned during the development of the ARCA Sim Racing software is how labor intensive it is getting all the required releases and agreements in place prior to the release of the software. Obviously it's a lot easier doing things right the first time to avoid any un-needed legal repercussions in the future. The same goes for mods in that respect. The sim-racing community is not accustomed to paying for mods, or game add-ons as a general rule. The flight-sim community, on the other hand, is. As an example—often times, in the flight world, you will find yourself paying more money for a specific plane than you spent on the software the plane runs in. I imagine, at some point, the sim-racing community will evolve and end up becoming more like the flight-sim world in a lot of aspects. At that point, it would become a lot less of a shock to most users when a modder asks for financial compensation for his or her work. This would be dramatically different than the norm in that respect.

I THINK THE INITIAL RESPONSE COULD BE OUTRAGE AND ANGER FROM A VERY VOCAL MINORITY. LIKE I SAID, THERE'S A DEEPLY EMBEDDED SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT WOVEN INTO THE VERY FABRIC OF THIS COMMUNITY.

works really well, and they provide support for it (such as David's 3dSimEdit and Trackmaker), that is a better scenario than charging for mods. You own the product, you control all aspects of it, and you can work on it whenever you want to make it better.

slimjim: There would be less stuff out, but it would be better quality ... I don't think that most people would pay for half the stuff that has been released at this point ...

Nick Steelman: Charging for mods is a real slippery situation from a legal stand point. If you are going to charge for a mod, you have got to make sure you have all

AUTOSIMSPORT: Do you think the community needs to get more involved—financially—in helping modders?

Luciano Amaroli: On the internet, things are good, because things are free. Therefore, we have to be very cautious when we start charging for what is supposed to be free. Because we are always going to have serious competition with things offered for free. But, if we get accredited by the whole community, and start charging little by little, together with the guarantee of excellent and qualified work, it will start to attract people that want to have the latest release of a mod or simulator—meaning the latest *fun!* Otherwise, I don't

believe on charging anything, and please, keep it the way it is, as rFactorCentral.com is doing a superb job!

Petros Mak: Financially, in paid subscriptions or optioned payments? No. In donations, maybe yes. The community need to realize that these people making mods do spend money, and they do spend a lot of time making something for them to play and enjoy for free. Donations made out of the courtesy of a person's heart to a mod group to thank them for their work, whether it be one Dollar or one thousand Dollars, anything would be welcomed by the groups, and appreciated. But at the end of the day, it should be each person's own choice to donate, not something that they are forced to do.

Mike Tyler: Yes, but it will take time. There are a few people who will certainly reject the idea out of hand, but in doing so they'd be overlooking the fundamental idea behind capitalism—free choice. No one says you have to buy a mod or a skin, or visit a web site. If you don't like the idea of paying for something, don't buy it.

Clearly there's a change underway. It's not what you could call a rapid change, but the trend is certainly gaining momentum. At the moment, the most significant motivation appears to be the attempts to recover the out-of-pocket expenses for things such as web sites, race servers, and bandwidth. Nevertheless, there still remains an underlying and intrinsic value to these products, services and artistic talents that we've all taken for granted.

It's easy to debate what form of tribute should be exchanged for these things, but whatever that may turn out to be, I think we all owe something more than a hardy congratulations to all of the gifted and generous people who continue to share their talents with the rest of us, though frankly, there's also part of me that deeply and sincerely hopes that that particular flame of our collective nature will never be fully extinguished.

Renato Simioni: Absolutely. Looking from a sim-racer perspective, I am not very satisfied with the current situation where sim-racing products are either poorly developed or dumbed down for the sake of better sales, coupled with an amateurish modding scene that generally fail to bring up the best of what they're modding within the capabilities of the platform they are using. Once in a while, we get the rare cases in which true talent meets true passion, and we get some truly kick-ass mod, but from my view, those cases are too few and far between. It's not enough. As a sim-racer, I would find it perfectly reasonable to contribute, for example, a total of U.S. \$50,00 or so in the course of a year for the two or three mods that truly grip me, and still spare a few bucks for the most useful sim-racing resources such as rFactorCentral, RSC, or AUTOSIMSPORT. And as a modder, I can see how much of a difference such a relatively small amount, for any individual that can afford sim-racing in the first place, would make, if enough people embraced the concept.

If such change of mentality took place, we could move into a completely new level. Otherwise, we'll simply continue to get what we pay for, and waste an opportunity in the process.

Jan Kohl: Sure. As recent problems at rFactorCentral illuminated, it costs money for us to provide people with free downloads. We at The Pits have not used advertising for years ... and it didn't do that well when we had it. It would be nice to at least be able to run the servers for free, instead of providing everyone with free stuff out of our pocket.

I suppose that we are partially to blame for our current situation. When modding was in its infancy, we at The Pits were providing stuff to everyone for free, and didn't even think of charging for it. While we certainly support authors like David Noonan, who are trying to get something back, something for all their hours of research and programming, we've not done it ourselves. And now, whenever people charge for something, you get a huge outcry from people who think it still needs to be free. Frankly, that annoys the

heck out of me. If we choose to allow people to download our stuff for free, that's *our* prerogative ... not theirs. And if we choose to sell something that we built ... again, that is *our* prerogative ... they were not the people who slaved over the product for hours on end. They can choose to decide if they want to buy it or not ... but that is where their interest ends. When they fork over money to us for the time and money we spend keeping The Pits online and building mods ... *then* they can gripe over how we do it. That's not to say we're planning on changing The Pits anytime soon ... just that everyone who puts time and effort into this entity we call sim-racing has a right to decide if they would like monetary recompense or just a simple "thanks".

slimjim: If there is something they really like and enjoy, sure, why not, help out the people that're giving them all these wonderful toys to play with!

Nick Steelman: Personally, I don't have a problem paying for game mods or add-ons, if I feel the quality of work dictates compensation. On the other hand, I have downloaded projects which didn't require a fee that where of the utmost quality. I feel modding is becoming more of a skill-set then a black art, which I believed it was once perceived to be. ISI really kicked the door down, and introduced a lot of people to the possibility of modding by making rFactor so open-ended. In my opinion, I feel this has really helped push the community in the right direction. As far as being able to realize its wants and needs, and allowing the end users the ability through tools, documents, and so forth, to make their vision become a reality. Good or bad, right or wrong, it's ultimately up to each member of this community to decide whether it's right for him or her to pay for mods and game add-ons. As more individuals hone there skills, and new users join in on the modding of sim-racing platforms, I believe you will ultimately see more people asking for financial compensation. Although you will always have those 'special people' contributing to the community through the art they love—for you.

The Wreck

Mitsufumi

Mitsufumi-san!

Mitsu-san answers your questions—pens an ode to Michael Schumacher—and gives advice on how to entice your pet to love sim-racing...

Ask Mitsu

Hi mitsufumi san,

I would like a Mitsufumi Cap or nice T-shirt. Will you make it some merchandise for your fans?

Kind Regards, Sean Smith

Hi!!! Smith-san,

Thank for you note. The *first* note I answer!!! You are the special one homo sapien.

A shirt is designed—MITSUFUMI-SAN APPROVE!!! Stamper—on shirt! or mug!! OR THE HAT for the head? On back of T-shirt it say "Sim Race is my excite!" If you want I become manufacturing shirt to sell to you at inflate!! HAHAAHA. No I sell it normal. If a print is desired, they print it! You will wear it. I print it merchandise. You buy it. The labour of children is certainly not on the happening of the manufacturing. Regers, Mitsi

Dear Mitsufumisan.

Can you please advise me on how to train my dog to develop an interest in Sim racing like your cat? At the moment he appears disinterested, but I have caught him glancing at my cockpit from the corner of my peripheral.

Keep it up,

Cletus the slack jawed Yokel

Thank to you!! For note. I am proud to receive and give advise is given to your animal. Shinji born to me with sim-sense. Also I think he become attraction to my sweat when I manipulate my column. Also also have

connection with Shinji! We are one being, mind fused together.

A dog can be forced for they are dim-sum, to sit and enjoy the racing! Smear tuna onto sim race wheel—dog sniff and become interest in sim race. Then smear it tuna onto monitor. Dog sniff and watch it race! Then when race dog become an attention!! But the saliva commence when race! And screen licked. And oceanic smell becomes a trouble of fumigation.

Alternate—attach it string to dog teste satchel. To other end to cockpit, attach!! Upon sim race disenchantment, dog will have a trouble!! When string become taught and wrench on teste satchel. Without destruct dog—this becomes his attention.

I think you to be thanks your animal show no interest in race—for it become my hardness to race whereupon Shinji sit on lap, he PURRR but sometime—my testicle scratch!, you know? What cat does become lazy. Hurt almighty!! I feel like to cry but must continue to race, concentrate. When Shinji damage testicle on last lap of 20 lap Nurburgring race it becomes my disturbance. You avoid this!

Regers,

Mitsi

Dear Mitsu,

You are a funny man. You should be on TV.

All the best, Initial D

Hi!! Initial D—san. On television cannot! An incident, occur. You leave it, subject. Mention cannot! Regers, Mitsi

Time Of Sadden

Hello reads!!! A great upset is become my time. I tell it, I try a poem. A hero retire, Michael Schumacher. You read it. I try. You will cry in enjoyment.

Michael Schumacher

From days of your kart,
You drive like it dart,
Like you ignite it, fart!!

My face become the amusement,
When you car it not dent,
With WIN becomes a merriment!

SUDDENLY! I cheer for man,
Who drive car of redness can,
And if don't win, you damn.

My hand is vibrate!!!
When Alonso lead frustrate!
I wish his engine conflagrate!

What happen when you losed,
I become anger and USED,
The many drug abused!

You have the bad luck!
When engine it destruct!!
The 8th title get stuck!!

Now have you retirer,
Big Thank!! to Corinna,
For Michael is impregnator.

A Schumacher baby is had,
Mick become it champ like the dad!
Hopeful to drive not bad!
Goodbye Michael.

Hiroku, In Month!

Mr Hiroku is looking for money for lady time! He approach three mans—Japanese, Mongol and Rich Thai.

Japanese man say, "Money, have not! You go NOW!"

Mongol man say, "Money is my want! And need!! YOU GO IMMEDIATE!"

Rich Thai man say, "I have the spare 50,000!!! For your time!!"

Hiroku punch fist into Thai face!! Thai destruct.

"THAI MAN CASH ADVANCE? YOU ARE NOT PERPENDICULAR, TWIT!!" shout Mr Hiroku!!

HAHAHAHAHAHAHA!! I hope your enjoyment is followed by the reading of joke, for western man.

A question!?? You send it!! to askmitsu@autosimспорт.net.
I wait it. See next month you!



AUTOSIMSPORT Are Going Racing!

Jon Denton

Down here at the ASSLair we have been enjoying ORSM's V8Factor mod so much that we decided it was high time we put our right foot where our mouth is and took to the track.

We contacted the guys at Australian Online Racing Competitions (AusORC – www.ausorc.com) and secured the AUTOSIMSPORT Holden Racing team's place on the grid for the prestigious Bathurst event in their AUSORC V8 Factor Enduro championship.

Set over 60 laps of the breathtaking Mount Panorama circuit, with two compulsory pit stops and driver changes, AUTOSIMSPORT's Alex Martini and Jon Denton will compete against Australia's finest on the sub-continent's most challenging course.

The event takes place on Saturday December the 2nd, commencing at 7pm Sydney time (Also known as 9am GMT and 5am EST). Testing has begun in earnest in the AutoSimSport Holden and we can only hope to come away with our pride intact.

Read our full race report in next month's issue. With any luck it will last longer than one lap!.

Be SEEN!

For rates and further information,
contact:

lou.magyar@autosimспорт.net

Keeping Track Of One Hand Or Two

RACER Eric Alexander puts all hands on wheels as he compares driving styles and sim-racing tracks ... so are there really one-handed sim-racers?

Eric Alexander



Tracking In Sims

Way back in the beginning, electronic racing games had flat black roads against a bland horizon. I'm talking about 'Grand Prix Circuit' era sims ... although perhaps that 'sim' designation is stretching things a little, as they were hardly simulating anything much (more like emulating, perhaps). Yet, back in the day, they were awesome to out unspoiled eyes. Remember—this was back when, for those of us in the United States, we'd be lucky to catch the qualifying order of the weekend's Grand Prix in the morning paper before the ESPN broadcast. To actually find news about Formula One was nigh on impossible. Yet, we still had our choice of driving the McLaren, Ferrari, or Williams, on flat renditions of Monaco, Detroit, Silverstone, and other world-renowned tracks. All the cars handled like slot cars, of course—there was no proper technique to learn—just point and squirt. Still, modern racing was on our computers, and that was a pretty big deal back then.

A quantum step forward in electronic racing was Geoff Crammond's F1 Grand Prix (known as World Circuit stateside). F1GP captured the Grand Prix tracks like never before. We had elevation changes, familiar landmarks and buildings, even the backgrounds got a facelift. For the first time, we could practice for the upcoming real-life Grand Prix on the same track as Ayrton Senna and Alain Prost while running lap times very close to reality. The tracks in F1GP set a benchmark for racing sims, and

started in motion a trend that continues to this day—the art of putting real-life circuits into electronic racing form.

And as sim-racing continues its march into respectability and validation, so too do we get new buzzwords in the ever-improving world of track-making. Words like GPS data along with what promises to be the last-word in track-design, Laser Scanning—both of which are proven technologies.

However, neither automatically equate into 100 percent perfection. Take GPS data, for example. Remember when the GP series claimed GPS data was used to build the track models? A lot of people made a connection to GPS data as 100 percent accuracy. That was incorrect ... and I believe a more honest way of looking at it is that, by using GPS data, the tracks created have the *potential* to be more accurate. But while they certainly enjoy some extra numbers to help in creating the model, the 3D model still has to be made, and in the process of making a 3D model for a simulation, one must always make compromises. After all, there are more things to consider than just accuracy. Frame rate and playability come to mind.

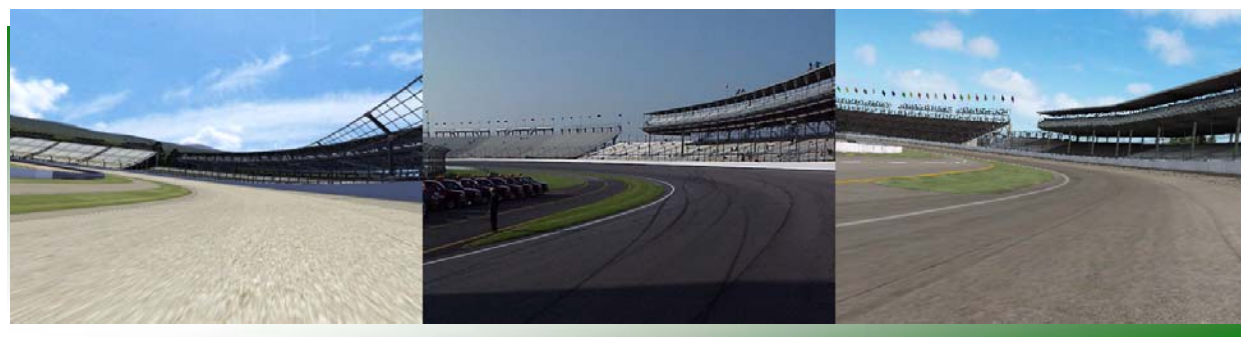
Plus, isn't it interesting that one developer claims the tracks as completely faithful to the original, then a year of two later a *more* accurate version comes along? So let's face it, we're still a few years away from getting 100 percent accurate tracks into a commercial racing simulation. We might as well accept that right now ...



So in the meantime, what really matters is ... which one do *you* like? Often that means what is most important to you. The road camber, corner angles, and elevations—do they reflect the real track? Or how about the track-side objects like buildings, trees, and bridges? Are they in the right places? Sometimes it's some intangible immersion-based combination of everything—does it *feel* like the real thing?

This aspect of *feel* is what drives me when selecting tracks. Take the Indianapolis Motor Speedway (the 2.5 mile oval—not the road course). I can think of at least three conversions of IMS made from NASCAR Sim Racing. But all of them are flawed by design. Now most folks believe NSR was ISI's final NASCAR title, but they are wrong. Tiberon—a group of EA Sports developers along with some ex-Papyrus employees—made NSR with some basic code leased from ISI. In actuality, NASCAR Thunder 2004 was ISI's last full-fledged NASCAR title, and in my opinion, this sim enjoys the most accurate Indianapolis Motor Speedway oval version out there. I know the guys at ISI have all been to IMS, and they have done a fantastic job of capturing the *feel* of Indy.

Take a look at the photograph: The center photograph is one that I snapped on the morning of the Indianapolis 500 in 2001. As you can tell, I am standing more or less on the racing line as you enter Turn 1. The photo on the left is one taken from EA's NASCAR Sim Racing, and to the right is a photo taken from NASCAR Thunder 2004.



For me, the Turn 1 upper deck is iconic as it looms over the track. As you can clearly see, the guys at ISI with NASCAR Thunder captured the *feel* of Turn 1 far more accurately than Tiberon did in NSR. So for me, it has nothing to do with the actual track in this example, but rather the overall feeling one gets from driving around the track. It's the proportions and proximity of objects that make the track accurate.

Now in Tiberon's defense—some aspects of their version are better (the small grandstands exiting Turn 3 are more accurately shaped, for instance). But this goes to show how there is no clear cut right and wrong. In-between gathering all the data, and building the 3D model, there is always the human element that gets factored in. The artist's interpretation, if you will. Or perhaps simply the time constrictions of the project ... or the budget ... or a combination of many other factors ...

But another way to look at it is, we aren't driving real tracks—we're driving sim-racing tracks. Who cares if this

bump is or isn't there in real-life? In a way, it's exactly like any real-life track. You show up, unload the car of the transport, and get down to the business of racing. You adapt to the track, and the track is always changing. So there's no bump in the actual *Eau Rouge* at *Spa*. But you never know... there might be one there by next year!

Also, just because everyone says it's the best version out there doesn't make it so. Choose your tracks carefully based on what feels right to you. Understand that just because some track developers claim to have used GPS data, doesn't necessarily mean they're 100 percent accurate.

And finally, know that, just because everyone uses a track as a base for conversion, it doesn't stand to reason that it's the best one to use in the first place. And with that said, I still patiently await someone to finally bring the Indianapolis Motor Speedway with all of its glory into rFactor (and that would, of course, be absolutely in my opinion).

One Hand Or Two?

A recent RaceSimCentral rFactor forum thread posed the question: “Is it better to race with two hands on the wheel in race sims?” Wow! What a question! But the more I thought about it, the more I realized that it really does hit at several key points about sim-racing. I was quickly preparing my thoughts for a reply, but then thought better of it. After all, this is good fuel for Interactive Racing! It lands a blow against the notion that there is any one way that’s right in sim-racing. Much like forced cockpit view and anti-game pad rants, the ‘one hand vs. two’ debate instantly hits at the similarities *and* difference between sim-racing and its real-life counter-part.

So, what’s my opinion? Well first, let me remind everyone that this is my opinion and not anything I’m forcing on anyone else. But for me, anything less than both hands on the wheel is simply not correct racing technique.

Any student attending one of the several world-class racing schools would simply fail to graduate if he routinely drove with his left hand at twelve o’clock and his right hand on the shifter as if he were negotiating a traffic-jam on a motorway somewhere. He would also simply fail to win a race, as the physical forces at work in the cockpit of a racing car do not permit single-handed driving to be an effective technique. The core principles of racecraft are based on defined techniques, and those techniques are relatively specific for holding the steering wheel in a number of situations frequently encountered by the racer. Opposite lock and/or full lock are two situations where two hands on the wheel allow seamless and controlled transitions throughout extreme steering inputs.

Now when it comes to the placement of those two hands on the wheel, this is where personal styles vary greatly. A driver who consistently catches my eye for

his unique technique is Indycar driver Scott Sharp. Scott, on oval track corner entry, will shift his right hand as far down as five o’clock on the wheel while keeping his left at ten o’clock. It appears to me that Scott uses his upper body strength to stabilize his steering inputs by keeping his elbows tucked into his body, and his hands both on the lower portion of the steering wheel when negotiating the turns. Scott’s an extreme example, but highlights just how different hand placement can be among professional drivers.

However, I have yet to see a professional racing driver drive with only one hand on the steering wheel. Even in the Craftsman Truck Series where such a technique might be considered ‘authentic’!

So there’s my opinion. But here’s the truth of the matter—we’re driving computer simulations, not real race cars. So you can throw my opinion out the window if you want to. I know of several folks that drive racing sims with one hand alternating between the shifter and the beer bottle—and never even bother touching the wheel. And those guys are still fast!

The bottom line is—it’s up to you. If you’re attending the Skip Barber racing school, and sim-racing is an extension of practicing proper technique, then chances are you have both hands on the wheel. And I think it’s great that racing sims have come to the point where it’s possible for real drivers to practice their racecraft (go Denny Hamlin, who is becoming one of sim-racing’s biggest pundits—even that venerable racing commentator Dave Despain, on his WindTunnel program, featured sim-racing on Sunday October 29th along with co-host Denny himself!). But if sim-racing is just another means of enjoying your love of racing—well, there are no codified rules ... just try different things, and see what works best.

Be SEEN!
**For rates and further
information,
contact:**

lou.magyar@autosimsport.net

AUTOSIMSPORT
Nascar HEAT

ISI's Sports Car GT Is NASCAR HEAT Bound

Magnus Tellbom imagines a world where the unique charm of ISI's much-loved Sports Car GT is transported to the online world of NASCAR HEAT ... as this world exclusive preview will demonstrate, Sports Car GT imagination is no longer required for Sports Car GT is about to be given a second-breath in what is sure to be one of HEAT's most defining mods.

MagnusTellbom

SCORE





Sports Car GTS Preview

For those who read the review of the Group C mod in the last issue of AUTOSIMSPORT, it should be clear that the mod-maker Cholerix is in a league of his own when it comes to creating mods for NASCAR HEAT. Such was the standard introduced by this mod that anything created in its aftermath will be compared to this magnificent mod that borders on perfection ... so, when I got my hands on

an early beta of the upcoming Sports Car GTS mod, it was with both anticipation and trepidation that I fired up ModLauncher along with this new mod.

But before we go into any further details of this brilliant new mod, a little history lesson is needed.

Many of sim-racing's biggest names began their cyber-careers with ISI's Sports Car GT, which was released in April of 1999. It was ISI's first racing sim, and it was, for

many, the dog's bollocks when it hit the shelves. It featured graphics never before seen in a driving simulator, and it featured physics no one thought possible. What made it differ from that other legendary sim of the last century was that it didn't feature formula cars, but rather the much-more-fun GT tin-top cars like BMW M3s, Porsche 911s, Saleen Mustangs and the Vector M12s. It also featured the faster GT1 class cars like the Lister Storm, Mercedes CLK, and McLaren F1 GTR.

Sports Car GT, like GPL, will go down in history as a demarcation point in this sport of sim-racing: Where the latter introduced online racing on a global, affordable scale, ISI's sim opened the doors to the modding community, and it would be a brave man who would argue against the common contention that Sports Car GT introduced modding to sim-racing.

So successful was the open code of Sports Car GT that it still enjoys—like all ISI's sims—a tremendous following to this day, and many of rFactor's most talked-about mods were created by those who developed their skills with this 'pocket-rocket' sim. Indeed, there are more third-party tracks made for Sports Car GT than I am able to count, and the number of mods and stand-alone cars available for it is absolutely stunning. Not one other sim even comes close to the number of add-ons available, and add-ons continue to be created to this very day—some of it even converted from modern sims like GTR and GTL.

Like all ISI's sims—up until the online-splendor that is rFactor—Sports Car GT lacked only one thing to make it perfect, and that was its netcode. If you tried to race more than six at a time, the races was ruined by warping cars and what can only be described as shadow-crashes. This was the main reason why many gave up racing with it and the major reason why SCORE went the NASCAR HEAT route.



But while the online code of NASCAR HEAT is superior, it does lack the charm of Sports Car GT. The look of the user interface, those beautiful cars that are so closely matched ... all of that was lacking in HEAT.

But not for much longer ... not if Cholerix has anything to do with it, anyway.

Yes, my friends. The entire concept of Sports Car GT is being transferred into a mod called Sports Car GTS for NASCAR HEAT. For me, this will be the ultimate add-on for HEAT if it comes out right ... and the preview promises a lot.

The user interface is nothing but breathtaking as it looks and feels just like the real thing. This is something that has never been done before, and even though I find minor issues in this early beta preview version, it's still amazing. This total rework of the HEAT user interface will probably set a new standard in mod-making for HEAT.

For those that worry about the low poly-models in the original Sports Car GT, fear not. Cholerix has created all the new models from scratch. The models included in the preview are the Porsche 911, the BMW M3, and the Vector M12. All three of them look so much better than the original ISI models, but still manage to bring on that retro' feeling of good old Sports Car GT. And when I drop these cars into the venerable and converted *Sardian Park* for a few laps, the feeling is complete. It's good ol' Sports Car GT once again ... only in a better looking suit.



Because this is a beta, I can say nothing about the physics, the AI, or the sounds. But knowing Cholerix, he will not rest until he has got the feel of Sports Car GT just right. I can, however, tell you that this mod is scheduled for release some time later this year, and it will include both GT3 and GT2 class cars. For starters, the Porsche, BMW and Vector will be included, and possibly also the Saleen Mustang (fingers crossed). There might, in addition, be GT1 class cars as well.

I really look forward to this one, and for those who never have tried mods for NASCAR HEAT before, I'm sure it will be a good mod to start with. And for those who still have Sports Car GT on their hard-drive for nothing but nostalgic reasons, I suggest you keep an eye out for this one. It will most probably knock your socks off.

For mod status and other goddies, please visit [speedsims](http://speedsims.com).



Rouen-les-Essarts Review

While I'm not a track-designer, I can imagine that creating an historical accurate track is probably one of the most difficult things to achieve as a modder ... especially when that track no longer exists. Sure, *Spa Francorchamps* is one of the oldest tracks known to man with a history that goes back to 1921, and *Monza* has a history reaching as far back as 1922, and, despite the fact that their histories extended further than most people alive, they remain still in use. But a historic track that isn't used anymore, now that's a challenge. I mean, you can not rely on current technology, and can rely only on someone else's memory, someone else's photos, someone else's notes. And you need to get it right as well ... because when it comes to historical tracks, sim-racers are notoriously fussy ...

These were some of the challenges Smoke had to face when creating his version of *Rouen-les-Essarts*. Challenges that he not only embraced ... but, I can report, amply defeated. The original *Rouen* for NASCAR HEAT was created a little over a year ago, and it remains a blast. But ... a little constructive criticism from a few people led to ... yes, you guessed it—*Rouen-les-Essarts part-deux*! Fresh out of the store, it hits us like a ton of worn tarmac, curb markings, and road signs. And this time, I get to review it. Life is good!

The original *Rouen* was planned in the late 1940s, and stood ready for action in 1950. It received a nip/tuck four years later, and actually went through five changes until it finally settled on its final profile as late as 1974. By then the French Grand Prix had been there five times ... but they never did use the final configuration.

The track record on the first layout was set by Alberto Ascari in a Ferrari in 1952. The second layout's record, which was used for the remaining four French Grands Prix races, was set in 1964 by Jack Brabham in a Brabham-Climax. The time was a stunning 2:11.4. And it is this version—the 1955–1970 layout—that is the template for Smoke's masterpiece.



The track is 6.542 km or 4.065 miles long. The guide mention no less than eleven turns, out of which one is a really slow hairpin. Together with really fast, flat-out, pedal-to-the-metal sweepers, setting up the gearing and brake-balance for this track is a serious challenge. A challenge that takes you into an outrageously gorgeous part of the world ... you almost expect to see a family having a picnic trackside, complete with a red and white blanket and a basket-full of wine and cheese. Smoke has caught this landscape perfectly, and turned it into a terrifically immersive graphical experience. To be honest, there is a little 'frosting' on the trees but, if you have time to notice this, *you're not going fast enough*. When combined with the Spirit of HEAT, or the Gasoline Alley mods, you really do feel the wings of time brushing by you, and the experience is awesome.

But let's get technical for a while ... The track download is 15.7 Megabytes in size, and the track comes as an install.exe. No trouble at all, just point the installer towards your Run directory as usual, and the track shows up in-sim. It is a clockwise track that is boxed in by heavy-duty safety fences all around it, which makes the use of Time and Sputter traps almost unnecessary. But they do exist and they are, as usual on any track made by Smoke, very strategically placed.

The setups packed with the track are, I'm sorry to say, the crappy old average oval setups I have seen in so many track. Now I know I've said this before but ... I will keep saying it until someone listens! I would have expected a setup suited for the 1950s Formula cars, or perhaps a Group C setup, so this was disappointing. The AI line is made for the WGTC mod, which is

reasonable, but no gold star, and it means you will have to make your own AI line pretty soon. What is worse is that the AI physics seem to be optimized for WGTC, which means that any mod making use of AI physic in the cars will be no good for offline play on this track.

Still, those are the only negative things I can say about this track, and it has absolutely nothing to do with the online behaviour. And it's a great drive in the Spirit of HEAT mod. It loads fast and there's no FPS trouble at all. When I took out the trusty STCC mod to test the FPS, I got a very stable average of 45FPS on any given part on the track, traffic or not.

The bottom line and final score for this very beautiful track must be a good 8 out of 10, and I really recommend it.

This track is available for download [here](#).

NASCAR HEAT News

Appeal for news items to post!

I do my very best to hunt down any and all news items in the NASCAR HEAT community, but I'm no search engine. Some things are bound to be missed due to lack of time, or just plain human errors. So I ask anyone with the slightest bit of news to send it to me by [email](#). Anything newsworthy goes. Got a new site? Setting up a new league? Are you releasing a mod or a track? A new utility for the NASCAR HEAT platform? Anything at all, just send it to tellbom@hotmail.com. No news is too small. And ... any news sent in will not only be posted here in AUTOSIMSPORT, but will also be posted on the main page of SCORE.

2fnlow is busy again!

It seems that 2fnlow, that gave us the DTM 2002 and WGTS for HEAT, is once again modding away. He just released pictures of a paved Talladega and an EVO mod, featuring the (yes you guessed it) Mitsubishi EVO. Info and pictures are [here](#).

AUTOSIMSPORT

Chequered Flag

DennisHirle

If you would like to see your series of league featured in these pages, please contact us at alex.martini@autosimsport.net.

Formula SimRacing

The star-studded league that will be featured—monthly, in AUTOSIMSPORT!





Interlagos, Brazil. October.

It's the season finale, and there's five minutes to go before the green light. A La Ola pulsates through one of the overcrowded grandstands. Hot-looking girls dancing the Samba make us forget about the freezing weather outside our houses. Really, it must be so fantastically hot, there on the other side of the planet. If good old Murray was still in the business of talking into his mike, he'd probably be explaining the important details of the circuit; for example, that it "not only goes uphill, but downhill as well!" Yeah!

Excitement overhangs the hilly main straight in the guise of an echoing chant of 16,000 horses rebelling in their little cages. Just three minutes now. Journalists leave the grid. Crews make some nervous final checks on the twenty-two race-bred monsters. And the driver ... he just sits there. Buckled in. Absolute concentration as he stares through the tinted visor, looking towards the light and the end of the tunnel he's now in. He knows that now it's all up to him, and only him. He reigns over victory or defeat, over life or death. He barely acknowledges the "thirty seconds, mate" coming in from his team radio. Systems OK. Temperatures OK. Track is clear. Ten seconds.

And it's finally ... GO GO GO!



Formula One. The dream of millions—the reality of a handful. The absolute pinnacle of motor-sports. Formula One is more than a 'world event', more than a unifying moment of time when fans from every corner of the globe crowd around their TVs sharing one passion. More than a showcase, more than a casting area, more than a 'seen and be seen', more than a logistical and technical challenge of the highest kind. It is an embodiment, a metaphor for life.

And, what about us? The fans? We're watching every Grand Prix, and if we're lucky, if we can afford to pay Bernie's prices, we're there, live, a few times in our lives, listening to that spine-rumbling sound, watching our gods down there. Yeah, the usual suspect. Again in the gravel trap, no chance to get out of there, mate! But keep trying anyway! Laughter. And here he comes, my hero, 'the greatest' anyway, for sure. Yeah!

But can that really be enough? Let's be honest—every one of us would like to be a real racer. Admit it! But it's wasn't to be, of course: we didn't have the budget. We didn't have the parents supporting us. Maybe we didn't want to take the risk? Of crashing, of dying? Maybe so.

Still, there are those I want to thank, starting with that one dude who invented the computer. And those nerds who invented the 3D graphic cards, and the double-core processors, and the PCIe slot, or the more important stuff like blue, red or green ventilators. Hey, some are even

twinkling! But seriously, and above all, I want to thank these fantastic people who invented ... sim-racing!

I'm not even sure, but it must have been somewhere in the 1990s when sim-racing really started to gear-up, and surely we're all thankful to Geoff Crammond and his beautiful Grand Prix X Series which, at least for me, marked one of the first experiences with a hobby that has captured my imagination to this very day, and that will surely be in my heart for a long time to come. Sim-racing is what, finally, gives us this fantastic excitement of racing, of competition, of battling, of becoming the fastest. Finally, the ultimate challenge. And fun too!

At first, sim-racing was, indeed, just that: Fun. But I'm amazed at how sim-racing has been evolving over the past years, and I'm excited to see how it will yet improve in the future. A lot of leagues have risen, and worldwide leagues, worldwide events, worldwide challenges have become almost common place now. In fact, sim-racing has become more and more professional, leagues with professional organizations have come up, big companies are nowadays sponsoring these leagues or single teams competing in them.

The first of these leagues created to offer a professionally run platform for all who love the sport of was established in the year 1999, and its name was: 'Grand Prix 3 Global League' (GP3GL), nowadays known as 'Formula SimRacing' (FSR).

Back then, already seven years ago now, a Swiss racing fan called Kurt Baumann had the idea to open a club for cyber-racers, the 'International Sim-racing Club', and from then on, a new era of sim-racing would start.

As you will have noticed, I've finally come to the point of this little article: Here, I'd just like to take this opportunity of thanking Mr. Alex Martini for giving Formula SimRacing the opportunity to be regularly present in what is surely the greatest sim-racing magazine on the net {thanks mate!—Ed}.

I'll just briefly explain, for those who don't know yet, what our project is all about, what we've done in the past, and what we can expect in the future.

The afore-mentioned 'International Simracing Club' was founded with the intention of lifting the sim-racing sport to the next level of professionalism, and to encourage and support realistic racing simulations. The project was in its planning stages for two years until the league's first season kicked off in 2001.

In these six years since, we are proud to have had many of the world's sim-racing legends race in our series: stars like Greger Huttu, Artur Mlodzinski, Ernesto De Angelis, Roy Kolbe—really, the list of 'great names' that have honoured our series is far too long to mention here.

To top it all, this year we even had the honour of welcoming ChampCar driver A.J. Allmendinger, who competed in one race in our league—A.J., however, is not the only real driver who we have welcomed.

So, who are we? A highly professional organization, full of politics (and fights), rich and arrogant people, just having their own success in mind, with knives between the teeth, without much sense for humanity, and everyone pretty much doing his own thing?

Nah, come on. If you want to define professionalism with the above lines, then no, we aren't professional. But we're people with passion, racing enthusiasts basically, and we've got advanced structures within the club and the league which have the potential to make the project become something very big. Every person in Formula SimRacing's Administration—doing their work with integrity—is highly dedicated because every single one of them loves the sport. We love motor-racing. That's why everyone at FSR is working so hard, and that's why we would like to encourage you sim-racers that share in our vision to come and join us so that we can move forward together for a common vision.

Let me explain a little about what makes Formula SimRacing so unique.

The teams in our 'World Championship' category have to buy licences from the International SimRacing Club in order to compete, and in order for the Club to provide the necessary technical devices and prize money.

If that doesn't fit with your vision, we have the 'World Series' category, which is divided into further sub-categories, and where everything is absolutely free, and offers different levels of driving aids—kind of a driving school, to prepare rookies for how to take up the challenge of competing against many of the best sim-racers on the planet.

Another unique feature is that Formula SimRacing uses Formula One cars exclusively in all of its different categories. This has provided us with a few challenges in the last few years, especially when rFactor was released without the base for us to base an entire Formula One season on. But we've survived, and, at the moment, it looks as if the 'World Championship' will have its sixth different world champion this year, demonstrating the diversity and the close nature of the competition.

Our races, of course, are supervised and analyzed by our Race Directors, giving 'road-rowdies' little chance of surviving—but equally, encouraging new sim-racers to learn what it takes to be up front.

A few regular 'World Championship' drivers have stated that this season has been the best Formula SimRacing season ever—a nice compliment for the Administration, but one that we believe will be surmounted by our 2007 season.

The new season is being planned as we speak, and we have some very interesting concepts to look forward to, such as the likelihood that we will feature Live Race Broadcasts. This is one of the main areas that we are exploring at the moment. Of course, it goes without saying that we have used a rather simple Broadcasting

solution already this year, but Formula SimRacing is currently developing a completely new system, together with the U.S.-based ATMOSPHERE company, and supervised by our Technical Director, Michael Theis. We hope to be able to provide high-quality streaming for our upcoming seasons.

Apart from that, we're also actively seeking new partners for the 2007 season. We're trying to get more companies involved in our project in order to foster the continued growth and validation of sim-racing, as well as reaching out to a broader audience, and, finally, to provide more prize money for our teams and drivers.

And of course, the Administration is in constant talks and discussion with the league's drivers in order to adjust and improve parts of our rules, striving for the best compromises, and the best overall package.

We are happy that the Club's and League's Administration consists of quite a few very experienced people in sim-racing, such as the Club President Roald Reurink, 'World Championship Director' Christian Smirnoff, and Website creator Jaap Wagenvoort, just to name a few.

As I mentioned earlier, we're proud to be in this magazine and, in the future, we'll present detailed race reports and other features from our 2007 season. More than that, we'll have longer interviews with some of our Aliens, and we also plan to feature some setup advice from many of our best teams and drivers.

Until then, we invite you to check out <http://www.formula-simracing.net>, or to look for Formula SimRacing in the English version of Wikipedia.

Now, allow me to present you the ten Formula Simracing 'World Championship' Teams, along with their talented drivers, and, of course, their beautiful cars: they are presented in accordance to their current position in the Constructors' championship, with only two races to go.

Chequered Flag

continued

Coca-Cola Kiwi Virtual
(Roy Kolbe / David Greco)



Twister-Racing
(Dennis Hirle / Ernesto De Angelis)



Roaldo Racing
(Christian Neumann/Danny Davison)



Diamond Racing Team
(Bruno Marques / Ondrej Kuncman)



Red Bull Kiwi Virtual
(Dominik Binz/Sebastian Schmalenbach)



DaSilva NetRex
(Fausto Pappalardo/Paolo Ceccarelli)



Chequered Flag

continued

F1 Racing Kiwi Virtual
(Zaahir Essa / Patrick De Wit)



Virtual-Games.com Racing Team
(Denis Kiriakopoulos/Phil Hildebrandt)



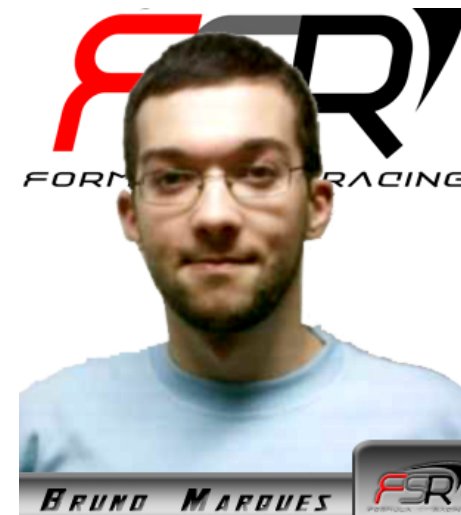
Ash Racing
(Marc van Huffelen/Geoffrey Veenings)



Faster Than Speed
(Giuseppe Marconi / Theo Gort)



The Two Main Championship Contenders For 2006:



Chequered Flag

StephenBopple

If you would like to see your series of league featured in these pages, please contact us at alex.martini@autosimспорт.net.

It's the start of a new season at TPG Racing with a brand new sim—GTR2. The league has seen dramatic growth over the season break as veteran sim-racers have come back to see how 10tackle has improved its classic, and new racers are discovering the sim for the first time.

For Season 3, TPG is running two American series (North American Championship, GT2 Cup) on Monday and Thursday nights. Because of the exceptionally strong demand, two European series are being run on Wednesdays, back to back (European Championship, European B Championship). In addition, the league will continue to donate to the Make-A-Wish Foundation through the GTL Make-A-Wish Classic series on Thursday nights, alternating with the GT2 Cup.

Last season, we gave AUTOSIMSPORT readers a summary of all leagues' racing action each week. This season we'll be following several teams and their drivers as they make their way through the season, giving their spin and perspective on the league, the competition, and their own personal performances.

TPG Racing starts its third season the week of October 15, 2006. This month, we asked selected team leaders about their thoughts concerning Season 2, what they expect in Season 3, and what they think of GTR2 in general.

Holger Gross
Boxing Eagles Racing
Germany

TPG: Boxing Eagles Racing (BER) dominated The Season 2 European Championship Series, winning the GT Team Championship by 120 points over the next

TPG Racing

TPG Racing Season 3 Preview.

team. BER also swept in the GT individual championship, taking 1st, 2nd and 3rd. You yourself finished 2nd overall in the individual points with 4 wins and 3 poles. That really says it all right there, but what is your analysis on Season 2 at TPG Racing?

HG: Most of the drivers improved their driving and lap times in Season 2. For myself, with my teammate Dirk Suder entering Season 2, we had another Alien join the races, and I knew it would be hard for me to win the driver's championship. I enjoyed seeing more drivers in the league aim for the pole, and more were finishing races than in Season 1. I missed two races and had two DNF's in this past season, so I was more than glad to get 2nd place overall.

TPG: What are the plans for BER in Season 3? Obviously as a team and as individuals you want to repeat your performances from Season 2, but will the team make a foray into the GT2 class? Can Tomaz Ostrovnik be beat there?

HG: Team-BER will primary go for the team-standings. If we can get the individual titles again, we'll see. With GTR2 we all start from scratch, but you can be sure we will fight for the team and individual titles in the Euro Series. This coming season will see Team-BER aiming for the GT2 class titles, as well. We don't know actually how many drivers from the team will start in the GT2 class, but we're going to be a part of it.

I'm sure Tomaz can be beaten, but it will hard. He's is a very fast and stable driver.

Actually we're discussing the possibility of opening a U.S.-based part of the team to enter the North American Championship and/or the GT2 Cup Series in Season 3. But it still may take a while to get all things sorted.

TPG: What are you looking forward to in Season 3 with GTR2? The tire wear model seems to be much improved over GTR and that should open up the possibility of drivers using more cars than with GTR. BER primarily drove the Lister Storm in Season 2, will the team continue with Lister in Season 3?

HG: The tire model and the physics have been talked about a lot. Some find them good, others too easy. Whether we like them or not, we have to use them. More GT1 cars would be fine in races, but a bigger field of drivers with GT1 and GT2 cars would make it more interesting. As I said before, all drivers are starting from scratch. I think there will be a closer field in the GT1 class and more drivers will finish their races than in GTR.

Lister? I'm sorry, but we're still testing the new cars in GTR2. In GTR, the Lister was well balanced - it is still in GTR2 but not as competitive as in GTR. All I can say at the moment is that Team-BER will not use Lister Cars in Season 3.

Mark Johnson, Captain GBR Legends Racing UK

TPG: You finished 8th in the individual points last season in the European Championship Series, and your best finish was 2nd at the Spa Enduro in the Saleen - an impressive feat, considering the Saleen was brutal on tires in GTR. You took almost the entire BER team to task in that race. Tell us about that race and your strategy for it.

MJ: Well to be honest, this was the first full competitive season I had taken part in as a GT driver, so it was a fairly steep learning curve and I was pretty much using it as a test bed to get used to the handling of the beasts on all the tracks available over a season.

As for Spa, being a total motor sport enthusiast, I was really up for it on the night, particularly as I had watched the movie In-car 956, about the classic Porsche the night before which the Saleen reminds me of. It strangely gave me extra impetus and charge!

I drove like a man possessed on the night and ran a near perfect race, keeping the ever problematic rear Saleen tyres in good condition by keeping my lines through the turns ultra smooth and it worked a treat, no high temps or excessive wear. I thoroughly enjoyed it and it was extra special to take on the super fast German team in their Listers and finish 2nd on this epic track, a great result.

TPG: This season you've added Tomaz Ostrovnsnik (TrueTom) to your team. How did that come about? He will be running, I'm sure in the European Championship GT2 class this year and attempt to defend his title. Will you continue to run in GT1 yourself or will you move to GT2 to support him and maximize team points?

MJ: Tomaz was a real surprise turn up. He and I had enjoyed constant on track battles and off track banter throughout the SimRacing UK championship series and it came as a bolt out the blue when he pm'd me privately asking if there was any chance of him joining the team (Legends Racing). Naturally we jumped at the chance to sign a quality driver like him and we had also been talking amongst ourselves of needing to expand slightly. I will miss him as a great opponent on track but its great to have him fighting alongside (literally) for the same team.

As for running GT2 myself, I had not quite made my mind up yet. I race so much GT2/NGT in SRoUK that it made for a pleasant change to run GT1 in TPG. But I guess, running a 2 car line up in GT2 would be the sensible thing to do for maximum attack on a championship. Another Legends team mate has

threatened to run some races so that could also be a points booster if he does. My decision may also be affected by the number of entrants in each class. I might leave TrueTom to fight for GT2 while I have another crack at GT1.

TPG: What are your impressions with GTR2 and how do you see this new game affecting the Euro Championship this coming season?

MJ: My impressions of GTR2 are very favorable. It is improved all around over its predecessor and now allows some fantastic close racing without always feeling like your on the knife's edge of losing control. So far, to me, it has proved more physically and mentally demanding in a race, as to be very fast you have to push really hard from start to finish. Graphically, it looks simply awesome too. There should be some fantastic racing in the season ahead with a better variety of more balanced cars and some interesting new tracks.

David Nichols, Captain Racing for Yorkshire UK

TPG: Racing for Yorkshire placed modestly in Season 2, as you were primarily the only driver until the addition of Jens Poczka (Morgoy) late in the Season. With the addition of Poczka, RFY has the chance to contend and win races this year in GT1. How did Poczka end up on your team?

DN: Jens came to the team purely by chance. Myself and Brad Johnson made it known on the TPG forums we were looking for new drivers and he approached Brad. Being an ex-member of Boxing Eagles Racing I think he was out to prove something, which he did quite well!

TPG: The last two races of the year were interesting to say the least. Jens won the Monza round by a

comfortable margin of 17 seconds and he was in a position to win the Mugello race until he was bumped by Holger Gross after a pass and knocked off the track. In your opinion, what happened in that race?

DN: I wasn't in that race, but I certainly heard about it afterwards. After watching the replay it seems Jens made a late dash up the inside going into Correntaio and took the place, later round the corner the driver he had lapped knocked him off track. In my eyes it was a deliberate foul by the other driver, but the stewards ruled otherwise and we had to accept that. You win some, you lose some. Had he won that race we could have sneaked 2nd place in the Team Championship.

TPG: What is the team strategy for RFY this season? What classes and cars will the team be running?

DN: Well the team lost two very good drivers after Season 2 and replacing them has been hard. I think a team title in the European Championship GT1 class is out of our reach, so I'd like to see Jens lift the drivers title. He really is un-stoppable in a Lamborghini. Also if Brad Johnson is a little more consistent I could see him upsetting a few of the older hands. We also have master car skinner Thomas Romundstad (Outcold) backing them up in GT1.

The team is also mounting a two car challenge on the Group 2 team title, even though competition will be light in that class, a title is a title. That will be myself and Stephen Bopple using the BMW M3 and SEAT. It should still be hard work though, given that last season's North American GT champion (Cash Johnson) has decided to run in the class.

**Luke Harding, Captain
Boxing Eagles Racing UK
UK**

TPG: Last season, Rumblestrip Racing was the only team that mounted a credible challenge to BER. You

personally experienced a lot of misfortune in races the first half of the season, but you still managed a 2nd at Imola and had three top 5 finishes at the end of the season. That earned you a 6th place overall in the final standings. What did you do to turn it around at the end of the season?

LH: Well to be honest last season didn't really go according to plan. Leading at the first round (Barcelona) with 3 laps to go and tripping over a backmarker started me on a very bad run that really only ended with second place in Imola halfway through the season.

Going in to Season 2 we had very high hopes of mounting a strong challenge to BER and it was only through the efforts of my teammate Matt (Spudgun) Cox that we were even in touching distance. Whilst Matt remained very patient all through the season and picked up points at every round (I think), I spent most of the first part of the season over driving the car and making small mistakes that seemed to have big consequences. You could say I was just unlucky but I made a conscious effort to try to be more patient and my results towards the end of the season reflected this.

TPG: Towards the end of last season, you announced that Rumblestrip Racing would join BER for Season 3. That raised a lot of eyebrows in the league. I don't want to use the term "sell outs" but it was felt that Rumblestrip Racing was the only team that could compete with BER, and now you're part of their team. How did the merger come about? What do you see as the benefits in the upcoming Season?

LH: It was not a decision that was taken lightly I can assure you. Please bear in mind that I have only been Sim racing since the start of February and to be recognized by an established team such as BER and then to be asked to sign for them is extremely flattering. Myself and Matt did have a good hard think

about the right way to go but as we are both very ambitious we felt that signing for a team like BER would only help us to improve in the long term.

You could say that we have taken the easy way out, the "if you can't beat 'em join 'em" attitude but for what its worth the competition within the team is enormous. Once we get out onto the track we all want to beat each other. We don't drive round in formation too scared to try to pass. We train and share setups. As far as TPG goes, very little will actually change. Myself and Matt will continue to run as a separate team (Team BER UK) and we will be out to beat Team BER at every opportunity.

TPG: What are your thoughts on the upcoming season? Any predictions for the Euro Series?

LH: With the release of GTR2 I think we will see a large number of new drivers in the leagues and this will only serve to make the competition much stronger. This can only be a good thing.

As far as the European Championship series goes, both myself and Matt would hope to regularly be in the top 5 and I know that both of us will be pushing for a first win in the series. Holger and Dirk are going to be the guys to chase but I defiantly think I have the measure of them at a couple of tracks at least. As for dark horses, well, if Morgoy enters he will be worth watching as will the Racing For Yorkshire boys. They seem to get quicker all the time.

**John Gordon, Captain
The Chasers
UK**

TPG: Last season you and Craig Kirkwood were the only drivers for The Chasers. Craig finished 7th overall in the points and yourself 11th. How did you both wind up racing at TPG and what is your analysis on Season 2?

JG: Thanks for reminding me I only came 11th; it's a shame really, it was going so well at the start of the season.

We discovered TPG when I arranged the two-hour enduro race at spa, a lot of the TPG competitors took part in our event and we had so much fun it seemed like the only logical step was to enter into your championship. To be honest we have a fairly realistic outlook for this season, it will be the first time that any of the Chasers drivers drive under our own banner. We are not as technical as some of the other competitors so we have a lot of learning to do. We'll be very happy if we score a mid field position this season.

TPG: This season, the Chasers has 10 drivers. That sounds like you and your team are going to mount a serious assault on the team and individual championship this season. BER did as well as they did last season due in part to the tremendous depth of their team. How do you see it?

JG: BER are a fantastic team with huge skill, if anyone beats them it won't be us. Our team is very mixed skill wise, but none of us are up there with the likes of Holger or Dirk. I would really like us to at least try to put some pressure on them as I feel we will be strong at certain events and we have seen them make a few mistakes last season so hopefully we may be able to steel a few points here and there.

TPG: What classes will you be racing in Season 3? Has the introduction of GTR2 and the improved physics re-evaluated your team's choice in cars for the coming season?

JG: All of our drivers bar one will be racing in the GT1 class, our only driver that won't be running GT1 is Dan who will be taking an M3 into the Group 2 class.

The physics have improved a lot in GTR2 and I think it's a good thing for online championships, The faster teams from GTR will still be fast but I don't think the

improved physics will aid them as much as it will the lesser drivers. The only physics that seem to have improved to me are the tyres, this means that the characteristics of the cars have carried over from GTR; only the cars have become more driveable. I have chosen to stick with the Saleen as I find it the most balanced car, the rest of the team will be driving a mixture of lambos' and F550's, car choice to me comes down to driving style and whatever suits you best.

**Brian Venable, Captain
Team Hotwheels
USA**

TPG: Team Hotwheels dominated the team championship in both the North American Championship and NGT Cup last season. As a team, the one-two punch that you and Edwards provides is pretty hard to beat. Looking over the entries for this coming season, is there any other team that can challenge you two as a team? Who do you wish would run against you?

BV: The team competition dynamic for the upcoming season has definitely been supercharged. I expect us to trade paint mostly with A5 Racing and R.C. Motorsports, which have not only very strong and consistent drivers - there are more of them! I'm happy Edwards is returning for another season, we have a good synergy and his natural speed keeps me working hard.

TPG: You finished 2nd in the points for both the North American Championship and NGT Cup last season. That is a remarkable accomplishment considering the competition from drivers like Kruger and your own teammate Edwards. Some people have said you can win poles (4 vs 2 for Kruger) but you can't win races (2 vs 6 for Kruger), especially in the clutch. You actually won more races than Edwards in the North American

Championship, but still finished 2nd overall. What do you say to those critics? What are you doing to do this season to get over the hump and win a championship.

BV: I plead guilty to the charge from the critics. Being inconsistent has been my downfall and I'm working hard to overcome costly mistakes. This season I will be helped in part by the better tire physics residing in GTR2 because my driving style calls for the rear of the car to be rather loose, the rest is up to me. The origin of mistakes will be more easily placed on the driver. Making less mistakes goes a long way to your overall points tally but you still have to be fast no doubt.

TPG: What are your impressions of GTR2? Some people say the improvements to the game will actually dilute the competition because the cars are easier to control.

BV: I would agree that the entire field will be tightened up. The GTR2 physics make you more confident and you feel you have a second chance to regain control of the car if it gets loose. The consistency of every driver will most likely improve, this is very good for racing in general. My opinion is GTR2 lives up to the hype it has received.

**Eric Kruger, Captain
Elm Street Racing
USA**

TPG: Last season you ran as a privateer and dominated the NGT Cup Championship Series. This season you've entered the North American Championship Series as Elm Street Racing. Will you be adding a teammate and try to go for both the individual and team championships in the GT2 class there?

EK: I don't plan to add a teammate, but if another Porsche driver would like to join up with me, he'd certainly be welcome. Looking over last season's final results, I found that I would've ended up second in the

team standings, so I've entered my one-man team this season just as a lark. I don't expect a result like last season's, but it'll be interesting to see how I do.

TPG: Last season, your main competition in the NGT Cup Championship Series was Brian Venable, Mike Edwards and Courtenay Smith. Each of these drivers challenged you at different points in the season, but you managed to hold them off for the most part, winning 6 of 10 races there. Which of these drivers do you feel will challenge you the most this coming season?

EK: Team Hotwheels (Brian and Mike) are always a serious threat. They both have raw speed in abundance; they out-qualified me pretty regularly last season. We had a tortoise and hare relationship, and I was able to finish in front of them a number of times only because of some mishap that befell them. This time around, I think GTR2's physics will reward Brian and Mike's more aggressive driving style, meaning I won't be able to take advantage of their tires (or cars) going off like I have in the past. This will also be my first season of mixed-class racing, so their experience in that regard will give them another edge. Mike is the defending North American NGT/GT2 champion, and at most of the NGT Cup races that he drove last season, I rarely even saw him. So it's going to be extremely difficult for me to wrest his title away, but win or lose, I look forward to the challenge and, more importantly, plenty of great racing.

TPG: You raced the 996 GT3 RS last season. This season you're taking the 996 GT3 RSR. What do you feel is the main difference between these cars? How does the RSR compare to the Ferrari 360 GTC, which will be run by Edwards and Venable.

EK: Well, the RSR has that additional R in its name, so it's got to be faster, right? Honestly, I haven't driven the RS or 360 in GTR2, so I can't compare them. I felt at

home right away in the RSR, so it's definitely got that Porsche character. The RS and 360 were quite evenly matched in GTR, and I expect the same will be true for the RSR and GTC.

Scott Newgent, Captain San Antonio Motorsports USA

TPG: Last season you and your teammate, Ron Ellis, were the runner-up finishers in the NGT Cup team standings. Did you expect to do that well? Starting with the Spa Enduro, something must have clicked for you, because you not only started scoring points but you had a number of top 5 finishes. What happened for you?

SN: Honestly? No. We both struggled in the beginning, this being our first true GTR season, but once we got comfortable in our Porsche 996's things got a little easier, plus the fact we concentrated on finishing races as opposed to winning them. Sure a win would be great but getting established as a championship contender was the main objective.

Spa was my break-out track, by mid-season not only had I honed my driving skills I also made a breakthrough in car setup, in part due to some one-on-one help from none other than Dino Scuderia, one of Team SAM's most contentious opponents. That goes to show you what a great group of drivers we have at TPG, a team Ferrari driver helping out a team Porsche driver, that shows a lot of class.

TPG: The North American Championship Series didn't go as well for the team, but that was probably due to your team's nostalgic choice to run the Porsche 993 GT2, in the GT class. Are you going to continue to run the Porsche this coming season? Outside of car choice, how have you and Ellis progressed as drivers during the off season? What are your goals for Season 3?

SN: Well, as much as I love driving the Porsche 993 We'll have to leave it in the garage this season mostly due to it being outclassed by the rest of the GT1 field. It pains me to abandon the GT2 but Ellis and I have plans to make a serious bid for a Top 5 in GT1 this season and we're going to lean on the strength of the Lamborghini to accomplish this.

In the off-season besides participating in the GTL Make-A-Wish Classic beta test series we've cranked up an intensive practice session schedule that will hopefully get us ready for the start of season 3.

As stated earlier, we're looking seriously at a Top 5 GT1 finish, we feel the stability and speed of the Murcielago will help us in our quest and Team Lamborghini is happy to see Team SAM willing to battle the Ferrari's and Maserati's in what should turn out to be the most competitive season we've been involved with.

TPG: Any predictions for Season 3 with either of the American series?

SN: Predictions... I predict that this will be a very competitive season in ALL the series, a lot of the new TPG members came ready to race which has raised the level of competition greatly: However Team SAM is going to take this challenge head-on and make the best of it.

Lee Allen, Captain A5 Racing USA

TPG: Last season was your first with TPG. How would you describe the experience and what did you learn?

LA: The experience for me was fantastic. I found the league to be a great place to learn how to drive. Prior to joining TPG I had ran without aids for about a week. So I really just learned how to drive the cars this past season. I

still have a long way to go, but I think the most important single thing I learned was to finish the races. That sounds pretty simple but I had to force myself to make decisions about setup and race situations, that gave me the best chance of completing the race distance. Even when it meant being slower or giving up a position.

TPG: You've added Cash Johnson to your team (last season's North American Championship GT Class Champion). Now that you have a big gun like Johnson, are your days of Gentleman racing in Group 3 over and will you run GT1 to support Cash and try to contend for the team championship in the North American Series? What about the GT2 Cup, what are your plans there?

LA: I am very happy that Cash agreed to join the A5 Racing Team. Having a driver of his caliber immediately makes the team a legitimate contender in the North American GT1 class team championship. I have also added Mike Smulcheski (Poiznos). Mike has

definitely been a surprise. I would venture that he will contend with Cash for the GT1 class championship this season. I will run support for the two drivers in GT1 and look forward to helping them on and getting the team our first team title in the TPG League.

In the GT2 Cup Championship I will be running two F360 GTC's piloted by myself and Brandon Fiege (Stormbringer). Brandon is new to TPG but has showed a great deal of promise in testing. I am still getting accustomed to the GTC and look to run this season as a information gathering venture with my sights set on the next season. Cash Johnson will join us in the GT2 Cup fight as well, piloting a 996 RSR. With Cash running up front the A5 team looks to score some points and contend in the GT2 Cup series as well.

TPG: Last season was not only your first season with TPG, but you also ended up taking a job as a race steward. How is that experience going? What is a

typical day like for you? Has it changed you as a driver, being part of the "big picture" now?

LA: Early on in my time with TPG I knew that I wanted to be more involved than the average driver. When a position came available I did not hesitate to offer my services to the League. Since becoming a Race Steward I have become deeply involved with all aspects of the league, but have focused my energy and efforts on the day to day administration, hopefully leaving General Manager, Steve Bopple, more time to concentrate on the big picture direction of the league.

The experience has been phenomenal. I have really developed a deep appreciation of what it takes to manage a league of this size, and manage all the personalities involved in its membership. In the short time I have been with TPG the league has grown at an unbelievable rate, as Steve put it "We are in the right place at the right time". With the release of GTR2 the buzz and excitement around the league has gone off the chart.

After a few months of working as a Steward my focus in race situations has definitely shifted. I initially was focused only on being as fast as possible, now I look more towards running a race that I enjoy. By that I mean that I may choose to run a Group 3 car that is fun to run around in, knowing that I will be well off pace, rather than choosing the GT1 and fighting for positions. I also get a lot of enjoyment out of seeing a race come off smoothly with the membership enjoying the event. That is more important at this point than my own personal success. Not to say that I am a push over on the track, if I get a chance I will push and mix it up.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this article and the best of luck to you all in the upcoming TPG Racing season.



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