



AUTOSIMSPORT

Volume 2 Number 11

Slidin the Sport into the Sim



Special 131-Page Holiday Issue!

- iRacing.com—ECCI&Speedway Motorsports Secured
- WITH: Ian Bell—Race2Play Exclusive—GPLPS—Simioni
- Reviews: Faster Pedals—UltraForce GS-1 G-Seat—CST DIY Pedals—RACE—Microsim Design ...

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Contributors

Eric Alexander/Chaz Teets/
Leigh Hobday/Björn Erik Hagen/
Magnus Tellbom/Jimine Smith/
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Logo/Website/Design

www.graphical-dream.com

Contributor Relations

Lx Martini/Jon Denton

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AUTOSIMSPORT Media LLC covers sim-racing by focusing on every area that defines the sport/hobby including hardware, software, and competition.

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AUTOSIMSPORT

HeadOpEd

LxMartini



Here's a fun thing: Get on the Macau Ferry from Hong Kong, get off at the Macau Terminal, walk outside and hire one of the rickshaw guys to take you around the track! The guy who took me around—and who stands behind the lense that took this photo—swam to Macau from China ... an amazing story and a really fascinating guy!

What A Difference A Year Makes

Well there it is—another year. Which is clearly my cue to indulge in some lame-fisted (steady!) sentimentality. This Issue is our twenty-third, as well as being our largest to date. We hope you will find some distraction in it during your holidays.

Since we started this magazine, we have seen sim-racing's validation grow in leaps-and-bounds (whoever thought up that line?): Only last week, for instance, the BBC brought us news that Mika Hakkinen was training on McLaren's simulator in preparation for a yet unspecified role within the team. And, as we reported during the year, simulators are becoming real tools in the boxes (steady!) of real-world racers: Everyone from Hamlin to Danielsson to Dale Jr. is testifying to sim-racing's importance.

Added to that comes news of real-world 'bodies' recognizing sim-racing as part-and-parcel of the motor-sport scene. The ARCA/ReMax series, for instance, are onboard with running an online series that is fully-sanctioned by their real-world body, and this month brings news—exclusively found in AUTOSIMSPORT—of yet another national sanctioning body linking up with our sport.

NASA (that's the National Auto Sport Association, not, as Bob will explain, the space kadetts (and he should know!)) have taken the decision to bring sim-racing into their fold.

We're living through some exciting times indeed ... and I'm old enough to still be amazed that I can produce an entire magazine—every article, every word produced digitally by amazingly talented people the world over—along with the entire layout, on a Toshiba laptop ... I can still recall a time when there were no cell-phones on the planet!

Which takes us in a rather ugly segue (as my American friends like to say) to my point: All things cyber.

Cyber Relations

As many of you know, this magazine went through a sticky patch earlier this year. It was at this time that I realized something rather ... odd ... and that is ... I had made some real friends over the internet. Now I know, this sounds really sad—in fact, it's the kind of thing Bob would say (bless his

heart of madness!), and I am ashamed at even having brought it up. But, since it is now 4 am, and the deadline for this magazine is in three hours, the delete and edit buttons on my trusty Toshiba will not be used, meaning ... I will have to see this thought through to its horrid conclusion ... and the conclusion is thus: This magazine has managed to draw to itself a group of guys and gals to whom I am—and will always be—grateful. What started as a project to keep me entertained in the evenings has turned into a massive job which keeps me working like an animal for twenty-seven hours a day for a week before we go live! So thanks chaps!

On The AUTOSIMSHOP

We are opening our shop this month—officially. We have paid the dues to the man, and you can now buy stuff with credit-cards, Pay Pal, and all sorts.

In line with the fact that we will be selling only an exclusive range of quality products (huh?), I wanted to call it a boutique (being a New Yorker for close on a decade!), but Lou (who, sadly for him, lives in what we would call the Fly-Over country!) was pretty quick to vex that idea (we need not go into details here—suffice it to say the same allegations were made about Sponge Bob's pal, Patrick). In fact, he wanted to call it a 'store'. So we came to a compromise ... all of which is to say, our shop is now open! (Yes, I know, cheap double segue, but I wanted to make sure our readers are aware that *our shop is open!*)

The shop features many unique and exclusive products only available through us (for the U.S market at present), and we will be supplying the shop as we go forward with some very juicy profucts indeed. Moreover, you will find that our prices are competitive. So please keep us in mind when you're thinking of upgrading or buying that special sim-racing treat ... because it would be nice if we could make a little bit of money so that we won't all go hungry, especially now, during the Christmas season (cue Jingle Bells and all that!). So, there is it—we wish all our readers a Merry Christmas and a safe New Year. And thank you for reading ... and a special thank you to all the writers and artists that are always helping me out—you know who you are!

News



WE HAVE A WINNER!

The Winner of last month's TrackIR4:Pro was ... Well before we name the winner, just one word for thos of you who wrote in ... this is the last time we hand out a prize by fielding such an open question—we were inundated with wonderful replies and selecting a winner turned out to be an ugly affair ... each of us had someone in mind, and, sadly, none of them happened to be the same person! So, we whittled down the field—and then finally came upon the winner: Simon Croft—well done!

iRacing.com to Partner with Extreme Competition Controls, Inc.

High-end Simulation Hardware to be Showcased at Events and Tradeshows

BEDFORD, MA (Dec. 12, 2006) – iRacing.com Motorsport Simulations today announced a promotional partnership with Extreme Competition Controls, Inc. (ECCI), manufacturers of professional-quality controls for PC-based simulations. iRacing.com will utilize ECCI wheel-and-pedal sets for testing and demonstration purposes at upcoming events and in other high-demand applications.

"The iRacing.com development team is working hard to produce the most accurate, most realistic driving simulation ever created," said Brett Roubinek, chief operating officer for iRacing.com. "As we demonstrate our software to accomplished real-world racers, including people who make their living driving racecars and who are evaluating our simulation as a training tool to give them an edge in their profession, we can't take a chance on their driving experience being compromised by a malfunctioning wheel or pedals that aren't up to the rigors of constant use in a tradeshow or at-track event environment. With ECCI controls, we don't have to worry."

iRacing.com will demonstrate their work-in-progress simulation for a group of invited guests at the Performance Racing Industry (PRI) trade show in Orlando, Fla., Dec. 14-16, employing two ECCI Trackstar 6000 GTS wheel-and-pedal sets. The purpose of the demonstration is to solicit feedback from members of the motorsports industry on specific elements of the iRacing.com simulation. The team plans to conduct several such "pre-production tests" with select members of the racing community during the development process.

"We at ECCI pride ourselves on the quality and precision of our controls," said Andy Cers, president of ECCI. "Dave Kaemmer and the iRacing.com team have the same attention to detail when it comes to software,

so this partnership is a natural fit. Their plan to advance sim-racing by bringing it to new audiences, most particularly real-world racers, will expose our brand and our products to a whole new market."

Although the PRI test will be limited in scope – invited guests will have a chance to drive a Skip Barber R/T 2000 formula car on the Virginia International Raceway road course and a Legends Car on Lanier National Speedway – iRacing.com's online racing simulation will eventually feature multiple ladders for advancement through the different disciplines of motorsport. Starting in 2007, drivers will be able to participate in racing schools, including a recently announced online version of the Skip Barber Three-day Racing School. Members will also be able to test a wide variety of cars on tracks around the world and compete in time trials, races and even season-long championships.

About ECCI

Extreme Competition Controls, Inc., based in Minneapolis, MN, was founded in 1995. As a manufacturer of professional-quality racing hardware for the PC, ECCI applies real-world racing experience in the design and engineering of each of its products. The company has pioneered control technology, including the Monopoint II cam resistance system and the Fluid Damped Steering system, in an effort to provide a more realistic driving experience for simracers.

About iRacing.com

iRacing.com Motorsport Simulations, headquartered in Bedford, MA, was founded in September of 2004 by David Kaemmer, co-founder of Papyrus Racing Games, and John Henry, principal owner of the Boston Red Sox. iRacing.com's mission is to create the world's most authentic, most sophisticated, most accurate PC-based racing simulations and advance a new branch of motorsport – known as sim-racing – through globally sanctioned, real-time, online competition.

COMMENT

RACE, SimBin, And All Those *Thats!*

While tinkering around the demo for SimBin's RACE, one of our readers came across a strange .gpx file which, he thought, had very little in common with the WTCC on which the sim is based.

He wrote in to AUTOSIMSPORT and showed us this jpeg which, he assured us, was taken directly from one of the files in the demo.



So, being the purveyors of yellow journalism that we are, we thought we'd do exactly that, and see if we could put the pieces together ... you know, one plus one equals three—or 3000, as the case may be!

However, just as we were going to make the case that World Series by Renault Champion Alx Danielsson now 'works' for SimBin, and *that*, added to the fact that SimBin released RACE over STEAM (making add-on content a viable option and strategy), and *that*, added to the fact that F3000 was often a supporting series for the WTCC, and *that*, added to the fact that F3000s and Macau are practically synonymous—all those *thats* could mean but one thing: SimBin's next sim would be a fully licensed F3000 job.

It is difficult to fault such carefully worked out speculation—except for one minor flaw ... the F3000 series is no more. Kinda like RaceMore, if you think about it, only the opposite ... or actually, no—it *is* the same, really, both having expired, the former in 2004.

So, with no fuel left for a well-constructed conspiracy theory, we were left with only one idea: should RaceSimCentral be re-named as RACE Sim Central?

iRacing.com and Speedway Motorsports, Inc. Announce Partnership

Legends Cars to be First Among SMI Properties Incorporated into High-tech Simulation

BEDFORD, MA (Dec. 12, 2006) – iRacing.com Motorsport Simulations today announced a partnership with Speedway Motorsports, Inc. (SMI) that will see the Legends Cars of 600 Racing and all six SMI racetracks re-created in the ultra-realistic racing simulation under development at iRacing.com. The Legends Cars, 5/8-scale models of late-1930's era NASCAR Modifieds, will constitute the entry level of iRacing.com's oval-track racing ladder.

"The partnership with Speedway Motorsports is really a strategic alliance for us," said Brett Roubinek, chief operating officer for iRacing.com. "SMI is one of the major movers in U.S. motorsport, and its portfolio of companies includes six of the most significant facilities in racing and the largest mass producer of racecars in the world. We're looking forward to exploring the different ways that we can work together with SMI to enhance the experiences that both our companies provide to racers and race fans around the world."

iRacing.com's online racing simulation will offer unparalleled accuracy and realism and feature multiple ladders for advancement through the different disciplines of motorsport. Starting in 2007, drivers will be able to participate in racing schools, including a recently announced online version of the Skip Barber Three-day Racing School. Members will also be able to test a wide variety of cars on tracks around the world and compete in time trials, races and even season-long championships.

"iRacing.com is building a new branch of racing, and given our position in the sport, Speedway Motorsports wants to be a part of it," said H.A. "Humpy" Wheeler, president of SMI. "Many of the drivers are already using sim-racing as a training tool, and for the fans, it's a chance to actively participate rather than just watch. This partnership offers many new opportunities for us to engage with all of our customers, including sponsors, fans, teams and drivers."

The SMI – iRacing.com partnership will kick off at the Performance Racing Industry trade show in Orlando, Fla., Dec. 14-16, where a running prototype of a Legends Car simulation will be unveiled. Visitors to 600 Racing's display (Booth #980) will be able to see the prototype in action, and invited guests will have a chance to test drive the virtual Legends Car on Lanier National Speedway. A second demonstration of the iRacing.com simulation will be featured in the Virginia International Raceway display (Booth #713) at the PRI show. Invited guests will test drive a Skip Barber R/T 2000 formula car on VIR's 3.2-mile road course.

About Speedway Motorsports


Headquartered in Concord, N.C., SMI owns and operates Atlanta Motor Speedway, Bristol Motor Speedway, Infineon Raceway, Las Vegas Motor Speedway, Lowe's Motor Speedway and Texas Motor Speedway. The Company provides souvenir merchandising services through its SMI Properties subsidiaries and Motorsports Authentics joint venture, and manufactures and distributes smaller-scale, modified racing cars through its 600 Racing subsidiary. The Company also owns Performance Racing Network, which broadcasts syndicated motorsports programming to over 730 radio stations nationwide.

Green Flag

Race2Play

Bob Simmerman sits down with Tim McArthur and Todd Weiss to discover why Race2Play—already sanctioned by the National Auto Sport Association—is about to change the way we race and play ...

BobSimmerman



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From oval racing to road racing, nightly sprints to multi-hour endurance races, from high-end supercars in international locales to the production models we see racing on local circuits, the Race2Play world reflects what is the world of motorsports and sim racing. Using the latest motorsports simulation software and the highest quality addons, drivers of every skill level and experience from around the world have the gamut of racing choices on the gamut of equipment choices. That's motorsports in the outside world, and that's motorsports in the Race2Play world.

Computer simulations are highly valued at many professional levels, from training astronauts and airline pilots and tank drivers to, yes, auto racers. It's no secret NASCAR stars such as Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Denny Hamlin, or former Champcar wonderboy AJ Allmendinger, have been avid sim racers, extolling the virtues of learning track layouts and braking points, racecraft and patience, in a realistically simulated environment using publicly available software for the PC. And having a blast while they're at it!

First-person motorsports for everyone

Race2Play organizes multiplayer online auto racing events and series for virtual as well as real-world motorsports professionals and amateurs on the PC. [Sign up](#) for your free Basic membership today.

This week [Sim racing]

Sat Dec 09 Qual 12:00 PM
Spa (GTC-76)
[Spa-Francorchamps](#)

Sat Dec 09 Qual 03:30 PM
V8 Supercars
[Bullrun](#)

Sat Dec 09 Qual 03:30 PM
Spa 500k
[Spa-Francorchamps](#)

Sun Dec 10 Qual 01:30 PM
Exhibition: F3 @ Limerock
[Lime Rock Park](#)

Fri Dec 15 Qual 08:30 PM
New Hampshire 150
[New Hampshire International](#)

Fri Dec 15 Qual 10:30 PM
Silverstone GP Feature
[Northamptonshire GP](#)

Fri Dec 15 Qual 11:39 PM
Silverstone GP Sprint
[Northamptonshire GP](#)

Help docs [Help]

- [About our Policies](#)
- [0.0 - In-game player names](#)
- [0.1 - Race Steward Instructions](#)
- [0.2 - Chat / Voice](#)
- [0.3 - Headlamps](#)
- [0.4 - Racing to a caution](#)
- [0.5 - Re-joining the racing surface](#)
- [0.7 - Smoking Vehicles](#)
- [0.8 - Use of ESC key in Qualifying](#)
- [0.9 - Miscellaneous items](#)
- [0.9.9 - Self-spins \(optional\)](#)



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The one great thing about our community is that you don't have to wait long for the next big thing. In most cases, it will be interesting, useful, and a lot of fun to use. If it isn't, then it's probably something that comes with my name attached to it!

[Race2Play](#), dear Reader, is the next big thing. And, yes, it's interesting, well done, and it is one hell of a useful addition to our entire community. Oh, and no-one gets left behind, and it doesn't cost a dime.

Designed from the ground up by Tim McArthur and Todd Weiss, Race2Play has the ability to run with any current sim—and future sims that have yet to be created—and promises to revolutionize the way we go about our cyber-racing lives. Yes, I hear you say, you've heard it all before, right? So what makes this so special?

That question is difficult to answer since, well ... there's so much here. So let's start with the fact that

NASA—that's the National Auto Sport Association headed up by Jerry Kunzman, not the rocket guys—have recognized Race2Play as their official provider for online racing. NASA is on a growing list of real-world racers and sanctioning bodies to realize that sims can, in fact, help real-racers with the real deal.


But what, I hear you ask, is Race2Play?

"Race2Play," says Tim McArthur, "was conceived by Todd Weiss and I to take our simulated and real-world experiences to a level that wasn't being met in the multiplayer online world. Our hope is to provide professional, quality racing and a social-networking outlet for both the sim-racing and amateur real-world racing crowd, and (even) take steps to bridge the gap between the two."

In order to get a better idea of where Race2Play is going, it is worthwhile to examine for a moment where it has come from. If there is one thing that has been perfectly apparent

during my correspondence and discussions with Tim and Todd, it is the fact that they are both fully committed to this venture—spiritually as well as financially, funding, as they are, the whole development out of their own pockets. More than that, though, this system has now become their full-time gig.

Clearly they have a lot of belief in their system—and rightly so. The community has been waiting for something like this for a long time indeed; look at it as a way to bring sim-racers together, if not by a common simulator, then by a common system. All the same, it must be a bit nerve-racking—with families to support, mortgages to pay, and no guarantee of success—to have one's entire livelihood attached to a joint venture of such ambition. In order to run Race2Play, they have launched a company called VindexWorks Inc., which will serve as the corporate umbrella.



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Track records

| TRACK | DATE | DRIVER | CAR | CLASS | TIME |
|--------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------|---|-------|-------------|
| Magny-Cours GP | Sat Aug 05 | Jeff Stibling | Ferrari 550 Maranello | GT | 0:01:34.459 |
| Brno | Sat Aug 19 | Bjarne Siggaard | Saleen S7-R | GT | 0:01:54.437 |
| Monza GP | Sat Jul 08 | Steve Smith | Ferrari 550 Maranello | GT | 0:01:43.351 |
| Oschersleben | Sat Aug 26 | Steve Smith | Ferrari 550 Maranello | GT | 0:01:22.701 |
| Estoril | Sat Sep 23 | Craig Hattingh | Lamborghini Murcielago | GT | 0:01:35.363 |
| Anderstorp GP | Sat Oct 28 | Ari Nieminen | Chevrolet Corvette C5-R | GT | 0:01:25.500 |
| Barcelona | Sat Oct 14 | Craig Hattingh | Lamborghini Murcielago | GT | 0:01:38.502 |
| Donington GP | Sat Nov 11 | Kent Welker | Lamborghini Murcielago | GT | 0:01:26.344 |
| Monza GP | Sat Jul 08 | Claus Juel | Ferrari 360 Modena | nGT | 0:01:49.415 |
| Brno | Sat Aug 12 | Claus Juel | Ferrari 360 Modena | nGT | 0:01:59.643 |
| Magny-Cours GP | Sat Aug 05 | Kent Welker | Porsche 911 GT3-RS | nGT | 0:01:39.899 |
| Oschersleben | Sat Aug 26 | Wilfred van den Brink | Ferrari 360 Modena | nGT | 0:01:26.128 |
| Estoril | Sat Sep 16 | Claus Juel | Ferrari 360 Modena | nGT | 0:01:38.803 |
| Anderstorp GP | Sat Nov 04 | Claus Juel | Ferrari 360 Modena | nGT | 0:01:29.657 |
| Barcelona | Sat Oct 14 | Claus Juel | Ferrari 360 Modena | nGT | 0:01:43.776 |
| Donington GP | Sat Nov 18 | Ari Nieminen | Porsche 911 GT3-RS | nGT | 0:01:31.737 |
| Birmingham Motorplex | Fri Aug 04 | David Fish | Formula 3 | F3 | 0:01:18.352 |
| Trois-Rivieres | Fri Jul 21 | David Fish | Formula 3 | F3 | 0:01:01.323 |
| Brands Hatch GP | Fri Aug 18 | Conor McCarrell | Formula 3 | F3 | 0:01:21.873 |
| Montreal | Fri Sep 08 | Conor McCarrell | Formula 3 | F3 | 0:01:35.114 |

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Done

Like the rest of you, I have heard about these types of systems and concepts before—only to find them run as if they were someone’s private New York City Condo’ ... so I approached Race2Play with a certain amount of skepticism. It took me about ten minutes of playing around on the site to realize my skepticism was way out of touch with reality: Maybe it’s because these guys have been in the community for a long time (McArthur was a few votes shy of winning the perhaps dubious distinction of AUTOSIMSPORT’s Personality of the year in 2005), or maybe it’s because their mortgage payments are directly linked to the success of this site, but whatever the reason, this site—and this system—is well thought-out, simple to navigate, and absolutely bottle-necked with fabulous features that will please even the most jaded of sim-racers.

And to top it all off, Todd pointed out something pretty incredible about the NASA deal: “We will be the first and only sim-racing organization in the marketplace acknowledged and recognized by a real-world national sanctioning body.”

This is more than just a name-tag though: As Todd explains: “From NASA’s point of view, we will be the official provider (for) its online racing division.” Now that is high praise indeed—to be not only recognized, but for all intents and purposes to be a functional part of an official sanctioning organization, shows how far sim-racing has come. More than that, though, it means that sim-racers are now a part of a recognized real-world organization. This is truly a remarkable breakthrough—especially for a couple of guys who have yet to even go live with their site.

But like that guy on TV says—wait, there’s more. A lot more. So let’s take closer look at just what it is that makes Race2Play the most exciting concept to happen to sim-racing in quite some time.

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Tim and Todd began the groundwork for Race2Play about a year ago when they established VindexWorks Inc, thereby laying the groundwork for the whole enterprise. The hard-coding for Race2Play began in March of this year after several months of careful planning. Creating, as Todd puts it, “from line 0 on a blank screen”, allowed them to implement features that would not only adapt to the vast majority of current sims currently, but equally those that have yet to be made.

“Race2Play was created with the intention of being a service,” explains Todd, “and in that regard, we are offering so much that just isn’t found elsewhere in the sim-racing landscape.” Which is to say—the system will be far more than just a statistical database of lap times and miles driven (both of which, incidentally, are included, amongst a host of other stats for the sim-racer)—it will, says Todd, be an inclusive system where,

“fans of multiple types of racing can come to one place for all of their online racing wants and needs.”

Those of us who in the sim-racing world who bemoan the loss of the glory days of our sport—in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when one or two sims ruled the roost and sim-racers really had a ‘community’ based around a handful of sites and, in the case of VROC, a race-list that was pretty much the place to go for a chat and a race—will instantly see the benefit of this inclusiveness. We may not all race the same sim, anymore, but there’s no reason why we can’t hang out in the same place on a cold Wednesday night and chew the fat with fellow sim-racers. Clearly, Todd and Tim have seen the existing gap and are seeking to bridge the divide that has arisen as our sport has grown in terms of accurate simulations, and this bodes well—both for our community and, I’d imagine, for their business plan.

During our discussions, the topic of statistical tracking in currently shipping sims came up, and we agreed that it is a bit lacking, to say the least. There are, again, a handful of sites out there that log all kinds of stats—ISI’s tracking system, for instance, and the more notable versions created by the community that track the best times, and so forth. But where Race2Play differs in its in scope and ambition: It plans to provide us with practically every stat we can think of, and then some, and all of presented in such a way as to not overwhelm the user. In fact, that is the essence of the site: Simple to use, and yet rich in detail. In all my wondering around the site, I have hardly ever felt somehow overwhelmed, despite the plethora of things that one can ‘do’ here; exploring is both simple and richly rewarding.

We also got around to discussing the community-at-large for a while, and it is easy to see that both Todd and Tim have a great deal of respect for the sport, and that respect extends to respect for your fellow racer on the track.

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Both Tim and Todd are aware that such a system can only work if there is respect amongst the races that will be using the site, and its scheduled races (yes, a proper schedule of races run every day of the week for which you can register way in advance—a perfect combination of league and pick-up races) will be ‘troublemaker’ free. Tim practically guarantees it: He was very quick to point out that anyone caught deliberately messing-about with other racers will be dealt with, as he put it, “severely”, and I can’t agree more with his stance. The truth of the matter is this: It takes only one wrecker to destroy an entire night’s racing for multiple pick-up races ... However, Tim is quick to point out that some sort of Hand of Doom will not hammer down from the sky—he has too much respect for the users of this service to do anything like that ... but, should it turn out that some sort of wrecker has invaded the camp, then, says Tim, “yes, there will be a Hand of Doom.”



R2P **RACE2PLAY.COM**

Top 25 rankings for drivers

| Overall | Sports car | Touring car | Open wheel | Stock car | Rally car |
|---------|----------------------|-------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Volker von der Borch | 9,446 | 9,520 | 7 | 10,300,649 |
| 2 | Craig Hedberg | 9,068 | 9,268 | 8 | 10,196,723 |
| 3 | Samuel Fowler | 8,546 | 8,482 | 14 | 2,881,811 |
| 4 | Art Hesterman | 8,265 | 8,249 | 12 | 19,141,918 |
| 5 | Chris Judd | 8,062 | 7,873 | 16 | 10,097,835 |
| 6 | Mika Valtari | 7,982 | 8,124 | 6 | 310,586 |
| 7 | Rene Smith | 7,807 | 7,708 | 17 | 2,916,550 |
| 8 | Ralph Smith | 7,330 | 6,922 | 10 | 19,666,225 |
| 9 | Jeff DeLong | 7,068 | 6,821 | 13 | 2,017,857 |
| 10 | Tim McArthur | 6,974 | 6,869 | 26 | 27,717,174 |
| 11 | Jeremy Engels | 6,863 | 7,888 | 17 | 18,009,168 |
| 12 | Josh Wright | 6,451 | 7,951 | 10 | 10,600,387 |
| 13 | Mark Strasser | 6,442 | 6,288 | 9 | 17,665,875 |
| 14 | John Johnston | 6,331 | 6,263 | 19 | 2,058,658 |
| 15 | Chris Davis | 6,239 | 6,362 | 24 | 2,102,179 |
| 16 | Allen Mueser | 6,167 | 6,426 | 5 | 943,907 |
| 17 | Steve Swanson | 6,116 | 6,103 | 23 | 27,788,807 |
| 18 | Patricia Burtis | 5,829 | 5,726 | 25 | 24,112,729 |
| 19 | John Cane | 5,762 | 5,946 | 20 | 14,872,203 |
| 20 | Adriano Marzocchi | 5,668 | 6,454 | 17 | 16,613,174 |
| 21 | Brian Hesterman | 5,532 | 5,823 | 21 | 31,025,398 |
| 22 | Jim Vanden | 5,521 | 5,381 | 14 | 12,716,635 |
| 23 | Scott Michaels | 5,520 | 5,196 | 27 | 375,883 |
| 24 | Colin McCandl | 5,456 | 6,468 | 29 | 23,326,328 |
| 25 | Karl Weller | 5,432 | 5,754 | 19 | 24,223,316 |

Considering the fact that NASA will be bringing a lot of their drivers—their real-world drivers—to the multiplayer world, Todd will want to introduce them to sim-racing as he would any other newbie—that is, they won't be, "tossed to the wolves their first time out." Which is important, for both sim-racers and the real-world cousins. The relationship between Race2Play and NASA extends to the possibility of the two entities developing future programs that may allow experienced sim-racers a way to 'fast-track' through the competition licensing process.

Did I say there's more? Plenty more! This is simply the beginning of Race2Play—their 'special introductory offer' as it were, as they officially open their doors for business. This is, for both Todd and Tim, a long-term project, and their dedication to the entire concept is admirable indeed. Sim-racing has taken a huge and important step here, and much like flight-simulators have, for years, been used to train real

pilots, racing-sims are now no longer poised to follow suit—they have crossed the barrier into the arena of real-world validation. Race2Play, with the full confidence of a real-world sanctioning body to back it all up, is a serious validation for our sport. Folks, it is one thing to have a real-racer give a 'shout-out' to training on a sim before a race, *à la* Denny Hamlin at Pocono, for example, but to actually have a sanctioning body on board the sim-racing train is a very significant step forward, and one that I feel has been due for a while now.

Here is but a brief, and I mean real brief, list of some of the features of the Race2Play system.

Features Of Race2Play

- §Time zone is tailored to your location—no more complicated time conversions!
- §Extensive help documents
- §Drivers' Pitbox—Information specific to your career at Race2Play, including a racing preferences survey system to help you find the type of racing you prefer
- §Extensive team information and statistics section
- §Rankings, featuring driver, team, and Top 10 lists
- §Compatibility with current and future sims
- §Consistent rules no matter the race series, based on NASA real-world regulations as they pertain to sim-racing
- §Exhaustive driver statistics page—Events, wins, top 3s, top 5s, top 10s, poles, laps, miles, DNFs
- §Sim-ranking page—vast statistical display with records of teams and drivers covering multiple genres of sim-racing including oval, open wheel, and rally

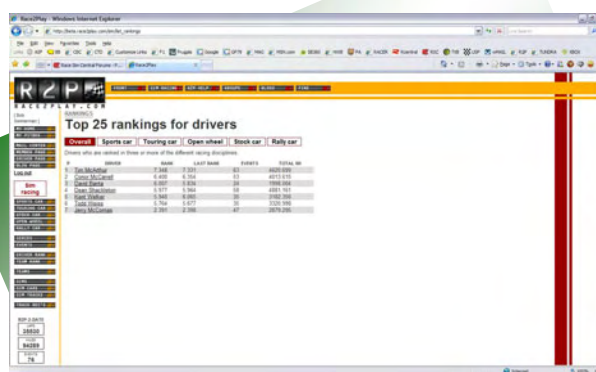
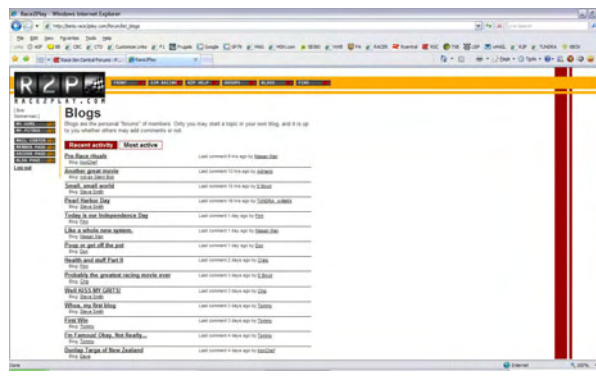
Clearly, Race2Play is bringing a new level of multiplayer racing to the table, and it really looks tasty to me. As stated, the above is only a partial list and only a visit to the site will do it any justice in terms of what it has to offer to the online racer.

Both Tim and Todd were quick to note that they have given every consideration to what *they* would want to see in a service such as this, and given the complete 'scratch built' nature of the service, it will be a simple matter to configure Race2Play to meet the needs of the online sim-racer now, and in the future.

"We wanted to create a system that takes full advantage of the latest technology and techniques, something that we could easily adjust should we need to, and we kept the idea that Race2Play is a service firmly in mind during the design process," Todd explains.

Which goes a long way of explaining the incidentals—such as the fact that you can Blog your way to legend status if you so desire—on the Blog page for both you and your team!

The one thing to note, as well, is what Race2Play is *not* doing. "We've tried to apply real-world philosophies to sim-racing where they fit, and not get hung up where they don't," says Todd. "For example, in the real-world, the entry-level cars are the affordable ways for racers to get their feet in the door. That limitation doesn't carry to sim-racing, however, and we won't force it upon our users. Simply put—Race2Play is a service custom-built to maximize everything that is great about sim-racing itself, and the sim-racing community. Producing professionally run, well-organized series is just a part of that, and the level of competition you'll find, I think, is among the best anywhere."



What I have tried to describe, then, in rather difficult to do since 'describing' a service with so many variables is much like drawing a map of the Coastal Water off the Maine Coast on a napkin with a crayon. Essentially, then, what we have here is this: We have a site—which is the physical representation of a system—that will enable sim-racers, no matter what sim they prefer, to link up with fellow racers (of all sims) within a club-like atmosphere that is run according to the rules of a real-world sanctioning body (NASA) and features scheduled races (posted weeks ahead of time, along with all drivers entered, and their skills and stats obtainable with a click of a mouse) for every sim that will be professionally run, and for which stats will be collected for every racer ... moreover, it will also feature team and driver Blogs, all-time wins, rankings, TeamSpeak lobby, as well as a planned chat-only lobby for all drivers irrespective of the sim, and a mountain of other features.

So when does Race2Play rollout? When do you get to see it? How 'bout right now? Go on—follow the link because, as of this moment, the site is live and waiting for you.

Both Todd and Tim were more than accommodating in their help with this article, and if there was anything difficult about it, it was trying to not use all the information! They were a literal fount of information, and the passion and commitment to the Race2Play site, and the racing community, was easily discerned in my correspondence with them. Race2Play is an evolution in sim-racing. I'm not sure if all sim-racers will embrace it immediately (discretion and a certain skepticism being very much part of this community), but this concept—and the way it has been presented at Race2Play—will become a part of the very fabric of our sport. Because this is the next evolution of our genre, bridging the gap between the virtual race track and the real, and ushering in a new age of acceptance and credibility for our sport..

AUTOSIMSPORT Side-by-Side

AutoSimSport

Bell In Five Minutes

AUTOSIMSPORT were given five minutes to ask Ian Bell about Blimey! Games' officially licensed Ferrari-sim—what can we expect from sim-racing's most immersive developers now that they have the world's greatest marque to exploit?



AUTOSIMSPORT: Why the Ferrari license? And what made you believe you could get it, and how did you go about securing it, and how long have you had it for?

Ian Bell: Eek! Well, in our opinion, it's the most prestigious license available. But the details are with 10Tacle at the moment, as it was they who went about securing it. As their racing studio, we've been tasked with the work, and what nice work it is. I can't go into signing dates or details, sorry.

AUTOSIMSPORT: When do you think the sim will be completed, and is it based around the GTR2 code (ISI), or something else?

Ian Bell: I can't give a release date yet, sorry (this is a bit of a pattern I know ...). And no, it's not based on any GTR2 code. We're working from scratch on everything. We will be implementing some off-the-shelf code, but the majority is home-built.



AUTOSIMSPORT: Can you tell us about the cars that will be featured with the sim? Are we talking about *all* Ferrari cars or ...?

Ian Bell: The license covers all Ferrari cars yes, from all ages and all genres—that is, road, GT, race, and Formula One.

AUTOSIMSPORT: From 1950?

Ian Bell: 1947, I believe ...

AUTOSIMSPORT: How are you going about getting research for these cars—and how are you selecting which to include, considering Ferrari have created what must be at least a thousand models, if not more?

Ian Bell: We're starting from the basis of the most exciting and iconic models, and the most interesting Ferrari-based series. We'll have every famous modern and classic in there, and not necessarily the fastest. As for research, we're visiting Ferrari's museum in Maranello to get hands-on access to the more obscure vintages ... we have CAD and blueprint data also to work from, as well as the Fiorano and Mugello circuits as part of the license, so we will take full opportunity of our visit to map the circuits in the way only Blimey! can.

AUTOSIMSPORT: Does that include a spin for you?

Ian Bell: Many of us in the team will get hands on with them, yeah.

AUTOSIMSPORT: Designing a scratch-built simulator seems like a giant task—can you tell me who is involved in the design of the physics themselves?

Ian Bell: We're re-using the suspension, and some other aspects of the ISI tech' here. And adding Ageia PhysX

layers on top of that. We have probably the strongest coding team in the UK now. Last week, we grabbed two leads from EA Warrington that have just closed. We've been doing this for a good amount of time now. All of our coders are at senior or lead level, and all have multiple projects behind them. The physics work we're designing ourselves will make full use of the PhysX API, and Doug Arnao is, of course, in there ensuring the coders produce what he needs to give us something magic. Our coding team has over two hundred man-years of experience at the front line in AAA game development.

AUTOSIMSPORT: I'm assuming this is going to be for consoles and PC—will the PC version be open like GTR2, and will it be a 'real' simulator and, finally, will we finally have some fully-active cockpits!

Ian Bell: I can't state formats as yet but yes, the cockpits will be completely interactive and 3D. In a way that has never been attempted before—the immersion will be ... immense! If it's in there, it will be interactive, and animated.

AUTOSIMSPORT: Can you tell me whether it is true that you were the person who bailed out RSC—and, if so, when did you start paying them, and why?

Ian Bell: Lol, wha'? Dunno about bailing anyone out ...

AUTOSIMSPORT: Well they were in financial problem at the time, right?

Ian Bell: Oh, you mean the servers, right?

AUTOSIMSPORT: Yup. RSC.org's official statement claimed there was one person who had basically stepped in to save them—not many in the community are 'suspects', so ... you're the most likely candidate!

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Ian Bell: When I was back running dev' at SimBin, I did offer to take on the costs of that {RSC's servers}, yes, as they had run into some problems. I think they do a great job for the community, and I personally have found a lot of great staff from their pages—seemed the least I could do, yeah.

AUTOSIMSPORT: So this was, as RSC.org have stated, you as a private individual? **Ian Bell:** Ahh ... well, I can't take the glory on myself, no ...It was paid from the company {SimBin's} coffers.



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AUTOSIMSPORT: But RSC.Org said it was a private individual ...

Ian Bell: Well, I did offer as an individual yeah, but as I say, the company footed the bill. I should add that I insisted on absolutely no bias or special treatment as a result, and they came through.

AUTOSIMSPORT: Did this offer involve paying any of the admins at RSC? Or the staff?

Ian Bell: No-no, there was nothing dodgy about it; it was simply an offer I decided to make as I heard through the grapevine that they might have to close. That would have been a loss. We had a reasonable hosting company in Sweden at the time, and I felt they deserved a little back.

AUTOSIMSPORT: Are RSC still being funded by SimBin, as far as you know, and do you detect any bias in their coverage of the community?

Ian Bell: You're still referring to the RSC servers?

AUTOSIMSPORT: Yup ...

Ian Bell: When I took most of the dev' team from SimBin with me to form Blimey! in March 2004, I lost touch, so I haven't a clue ... As I said above, there was no bias—back then—at all. I insisted on it. If anything, we seemed to get a harder rap than most ...

AUTOSIMSPORT: "Back then" would suggest ...

Ian Bell: Yes, what about this Ferrari thing? ...

AUTOSIMSPORT: Right—okay—do you have any cars running at the moment?

Ian Bell: We have something running, and we have cars—the new tech' is building up to meet the art over time. It's looking fairly amazing already though.

AUTOSIMSPORT: When will we start to see some renders and screenies and, finally, what do you think the sim-racing scene will be like when you release?

Ian Bell: You'll see screens, but no renders, though we are confident you'll think they are ... I imagine late next year we'll start showing off ... As for the sim-racing scene, I

think it will continue to evolve gradually. We're never going to see things pushed forward as with GPL again, in my opinion. I think we have some revolutionary things we're bringing to the table, graphics being one, and the others I'll keep to myself. We want to cause a few slack jaws when we start showing them, and we also want to be close enough to release that others can't catch up ..."

Be SEEN!

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

T1

Bob Simmerman

GPLSPics courtesy of Paul Skingley.
All 1971 CanAm pics and graphics courtesy of the team led by
Bob Berman, Shaun Collins of done3d,
and Rory Gibson

Grand Prix Legends Preservation Society

Bob Simmerman sits down with the GPLPS and gets a most revealing look at GPL—far from becoming a museum piece, the cataloging of GPL's history is just a prelude to what comes next ...





On November 6th, 2006, David Fletcher announced the formation of the Grand Prix Legends Preservation Society, an organization dedicated to "... actively promoting Grand Prix Legends both within and outside of our community..."

But there is more to the society than that, including the full support of the online community, and the creation and maintenance of a catalog of information

about Grand Prix Legends that must surely be the most comprehensive source on Papyrus' masterpiece, and its various enhancements to date, available anywhere on the planet. Much like the GPLEA, the GPLPS will fill the role of yet another foundation block for a simulator that has over eight years of them, and a fan base with an almost spiritual dedication to the product.

While discussing the new organization with the founders of the GPLPS, I learned of many projects in the works for Grand Prix Legends, projects I had no idea were being worked on, or even possible—such as the 75 Km Targa Florio (for which we will have a full preview in next month's issue), Can Am, Caterhams, and Formula One season mods to die for—such as two from the classic era of Formula One, 1935 and 1937, as well as the seasons 1951 and 1955—are just a fraction of what I learned during my correspondence. So without further delay, let's have a real good luck under a real bright light, and see just what this GPLPS business is all about along with David Fletcher, Bernd Nowak, Arturo Pereira, Richard Cooke, and Paul Thurston.

Bob Simmerman: In the [posting](#) at Race Sim Central forums, one of the main points of the GPLPS is given as "...the GPLPS was formed with the mindset that all aspects of GPL and its community need support from a central group for its continued longevity ...". With that being stated, in what ways will the GPLPS be different from the GPLEA or the GPL Track Database, for example?

David Fletcher: Let me address the two individually. In some ways, our goals are similar to what the GPLEA's were. I think the primary difference is that the GPLEA focused on bringing a group of editors together with a specific purpose of standardizing the way the cars were produced, and to elevate the quality of that aspect of GPL. And this carried over to their track production, of course. To a certain degree, we are looking at ways of improving the product also, but our focus is much broader, in that we are looking at all aspects of GPL,

whether it's the tracks, the cars, the tools and utilities, and all other associated files. Originally, our intent was only to acquire, catalog, and store all these files, but as it turns out, we're already looking at ways of making improvements to the product itself. The cars, for all intents and purposes are perfect (thank you, GPLEA), but we are exploring ways of making some changes to some of the tracks to improve performance, especially when racing online.

As for the GPL Track Database, it is an integral part of the GPLPS, in that it is the best resource we have to identify all of the venues, the authors, and so forth. Bill Cooper and Keith Smith-Gillespie (Dangermouse) are important pieces to this puzzle, and are key members of the GPLPS.

Bernd Nowak: The GPLPS is different because we don't want to create cars nor do we want to create a second Track Database. The GPLPS will archive most of the stuff which has been done, and what we feel should not be lost. This includes car sets, tracks, and track updates, to name the obvious ones.

On the other hand, we would like to archive some of the main important stuff things like source codes from VROC or iGOR or the race-list server itself. Reason to do this is to have a backup for the author, and to be able to work from there instead of recreating the wheel. Some of the content will be public available, other stuff will be given when author gives permission.

Arturo Pereira: One of the problems many newcomers have had with GPL is that they found it very difficult to install and to get updated with GEM-iGOR-VROC-mods-tracks and so forth ... One of our projects is focused on this necessity. We are planning to develop a GPL installer that will help to make things much easier for all GPL users, or so we think ...

Bob Simmerman: How involved does the GPLPS plan on being with anything related to Grand Prix Legends, such as mods for other simulator products that are based on the 1967 Formula One season, for example?

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DF: There are some of us who would just like to ignore other platforms altogether {smiles}. But we realize that may not be realistic. If it should come to pass that a GPL-period mod is realistically going to be made for another platform, then I imagine we would rather provide the help and see a quality mod produced (as the GPLEA

members tried to do with Slimjim and his rFactor GPL mod) than to see a poor-quality representation hurried out to the masses. We have already been contacted by one of the premier F1C/rFactor modding teams, offering their assistance should we want to get involved in such a project. But it's not in our plans at the moment. At the

moment, there is still a lot that can be done on the GPL platform, regardless of its age, and that's where we want to focus our efforts.

AP: Some of the members of the GPLPS are also members of GPLEA, and almost all of the GPLPS members are also part of the GPLmods Team. Back to the old days, when the 1965 Formula One mod was being developed, we decided to follow GPLEA standards on the quality of the cars included in any mod we make. This is also extensible to the menus and all other aspects related with this, including the physics. This perspective could be summed up as; if we are going to make it, we will make it well. I think it is important to point out that, besides the many personal reasons that we can have as individuals for getting involved with this activity, we do this for fun and because we love historic motor-sports. So, by making these mods, we've found a way to have fun and also to honor the sport as we see it and as we appreciate it.

All this to say that, if a modder would want to develop a 1967 Formula One season using another platform, and if he wants our help—both as a group or individually—there won't be a problem. However, there will be some conditions, mostly based in the way we found to make things well; for instance, no public beta releases, no compromises about release dates ('it will be released when it is finished'), credits to be given to the original authors of the files used as a base, and more of this kind.

BN: With the knowledge some members have, and with the knowledge we like to archive, the GPLPS will provide you a lot of information. And we're not self-centered around GPL.



Bob Simmerman: At this time, how many members are involved with the GPLPS? Do you have any self-imposed limits on how large the GPLPS can be with regard to members?

BN: I don't count them! It's more or less that, at the moment, we have a good group, but maybe some important guys are still missing. But we have no hard-coded limits here. Is there a reason why we should have a limit?

DF: At the moment, there are approximately thirty people or so that are involved in some manner or another. We don't have a limit on the number of members involved, as long as the member has something to offer the group. We have been very selective up until now, making sure that we are getting the absolute best people together. The membership list is an impressive group, and I'm astounded by the quality of people involved in this. We do have a couple of notable omissions for one reason or another, but even those who don't want to be directly involved at this time are very supportive of the GPLPS concept.

Bob Simmerman: No doubt, there will be a few skeptics in the community—but given the fact that the 1969 mod, Part Two, had over 10,000 downloads, what would you say to those folks who feel GPL is on the edge of being replaced altogether?



DF: I would say that they might be in for a shock. And actually, that 10,000 download figure may be rather conservative. Perhaps someone can give a more definitive answer, but it's my understanding that the figure of 10,000 is from the backup server. The primary Speedgeezers server was experiencing some problems, and didn't keep accurate records of its downloads. So the actual figure maybe a good deal higher. But no matter what figures you use, it's apparent that there is still a very strong GPL community. The outpouring of support that the GPLPS has received, from many different angles, is astounding. There are still a significant amount of simracers out there that still get their best thrills from GPL, and they are chomping at the bit to get their hands on some of the projects that are in the works. The 1966 Mod is getting close, and is simply an amazing piece of work. Rory Gibson's Sports Car Mod, and Steffen Wietzdorfer's Cortina mods are coming along nicely, and they too are gems. Work has started on the Can-Ams, and of course the 1968 Tasman, and the Caterhams, are still in production. This creaky old girl has some life left in her yet.

AP: This is a free world, and I think all users have the right to any carsim that works for them. If there are some folks that are feeling that GPL is on the edge to be replaced, I think they are wrong. Not only because of what David

pointed out, but also because GPL has enough potential 'under the hood' to be here for the foreseeable future. If somebody wants to race modern Formula One or Sports Cars, certainly GPL does not seem to be the right way to go, but for those interested in historic motor-sports (not vintage cars racing on modern tracks, but original cars racing in original tracks), then GPL is, and will be for the moment, the only way to go.

To the list of mods that are in the making, with different degrees of progress, I would add the 1935 and 1937 Grand Prix, the 1951 and 1955 Formula One, the 1968 Tasman Cup, and the 1967 F2!

BN: 10,000 downloads had been counted at the GPL Mirror Zone which 'gently' helped the Speedgeezers host. So you can be sure that it has been downloaded some more times ...

But what to say to folks who feel GPL is on the edge of being replaced? I tried a lot of sims in the past three years. I have bought a fair amount of them, and luckily some have been released as a demo. Nothing can give me the feeling I have when I join a club race at for example, Laguna Seca in my trusty Cooper T81b, feeling like Jochen Rindt when I'm out of the pits, sitting in the car and play a bit with the wheel, with the throttle and then switch to first gear and immediately fall into race mode. No other current sim has given me this feeling.

Sure, there's a lot we would like to change. The installation process, installing/updating tracks, and so forth. But nothing in the near future will bring us DirectX10 graphics and surround sound.

Bob Simmerman: In your email, David, you mentioned that there are ways, even now, to improve Grand Prix Legends—could you state some of the things that have been done in the past, and some of the things you feel could be accomplished in the future?

DF: Certainly, some of my more-knowledgeable colleagues will need to step in here with their expertise

on these matters, but I think even to the layman GPLer there are a couple of things that have been extremely important to GPL's growth, and it's longevity. Most importantly from my view is Paul's GEM program. Without GEM, it would be impossible to do what we're doing now, or contemplating for the future. His front end is able to do some amazing things with the GPL.exe, without actually altering the .exe itself (keeping us all out of *that* ugly quagmire). Secondly, the discoveries that have been made, such as downforce simulation by Gene Fryman, coupled with what people like Richard and Nigel Pattinson have been able to do with GPL physics-wise, are enabling us to do things that the developers never imagined. There are other excellent ideas to improve GPL in some very innovative ways that are being discussed and explored, but I don't feel at liberty to discuss those things, firstly because I don't feel qualified to, and also because I don't want to put any undue pressures on any of our team members to work their magic. And I would be remiss if I didn't mention a couple of other things. Chasing a rank at Uwe Schuerkamp's GPL Rank has been instrumental in creating a generation of very quick sim-racers. And of course the online racing community would not exist without VROC and IGOR. While I'm mentioning VROC and IGOR, let me say that trying to unify and improve the online racing community is one of the goals of the GPLPS. Some of us, in various forum threads at RSC and elsewhere, have tried to move the community toward some kind of solution, but so far it's been unsuccessful. But perhaps as a group we can make some inroads in that area.

Richard Cooke: One of the accomplishments that Nigel Pattinson is responsible for is the long track mod that has extended the max track length from 25km to 100km. This makes the GPL the only platform on which you will be able to run a track like the 72km Targa Florio, which should be released in about six months.



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DF: This also makes the full-length Isle of Man possible, and Jim Pearson is currently working on that.

Paul Thurston: Speaking with my modding hat on rather than the GPLPS one ... Adding aero effects to GPL's physics model has improved it substantially. We can now model aero lift on the pre-wing cars, which goes a very long way towards solving the main criticism the modernists throw at GPL—the low speed grip problem. The 1966 mod can't be driven like 1967 GPL. I tried throwing a Cooper round Abbey at Silverstone the other day and went straight on. I had to brake harder and change down to get round the corner. At Zandvoort, though, I could run realistic 30/85 diffs in a race situation without spinning every lap. 45/60 was my limit before.

The main thing that makes GPL look old though is the graphics. We've learnt a lot about how GPL paints the screen and the ultimate aim would be to rewrite the

graphics code to properly support modern graphics cards. Whether we have the required skills on the team is another matter entirely. If there are any bored assembler/D3D programmers out there who fancy a challenge, drop me a line.

BN: Did anyone think that wings without external program would be possible? Complete 1965 Formula One and 1969 Formula One seasons with changed physics and car graphics? Next mod will be the 1966 mod, which works with aeros to give you better low grip. The Cortina Mod with door-to-door racing. The Sportscar Mod. And of course the Targa Florio, which gave GPL track length which no other simulation has.

Bob Simmerman: Are there any plans by the GPLPS to maintain an archive of literature relevant to Grand Prix Legends? That is, are there any plans to have a library of sorts that might contain interviews with Dave Kaemmer, GPL developers, reviews, and other various documents related to Grand Prix Legends?

PT: We have one. He's called Arturo!

DF: Arturo is rather the Chief Historian around here, isn't he? That's part of our plan. People like Arturo, Keith, and a few others have a ton of GPL stuff stashed away on their hard drives. And we know other people do too. Once we have a structure put together of how we want to store and catalog everything, we'll start searching every nook and cranny for everything we can find, GPL-wise.

BN: As I stated at the beginning, the GPLPS is archiving the past and trying to find some solutions for the future. So yes we will archive a lot of stuff.

AP: To literature, I would add pictures, blueprints, articles, and specific information about the performances of the cars. It took years to have all this information at hand, so if anybody is interested in a specific historic era of motor-sports, it will be highly probable that we have it.



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Bob Simmerman: What are some of the challenges and difficulties with forming an organization like this? Considering how vast the Grand Prix Legends 'universe' really is, how do you plan on handling the massive amounts of files and data that must be available in one form or another since the October 31, 1998 release date of Grand Prix Legends?

DF: Surprisingly, the initial creation of the GPLPS has been pretty smooth. As mentioned in the GPLPS announcement, Bernd had the original idea. While Bernd and his girlfriend Bernadette were in the U.S. on holiday visiting my wife Marsha and I in the fall of 2005, he first proposed the idea to me. We discussed some ideas and outlined some basic concepts to get started. Then in an email with Arturo on another subject, Arturo mentioned to me something about wanting to preserve GPL files. So I mentioned to him somewhat tongue-in-cheek about

'starting a GPL Preservation Society', to which his virtual eyes lit up. So the three of us got our heads together, and decided who the people were that we felt needed to be in such a group. That list started with Paul and Richard at the top, and it seemed like a logical progression to have the five of us making up the GPLPS 'Board of Directors', and that's what got the ball rolling. We then started the invitation process. That was the easy part, though; now the real work is going to begin. As for how we're going to catalog and store all the data, Bernd and Arturo are spearheading that part of the project, so I'll defer to them for those answers.

AP: As David suggested, the biggest problem by far is to catalogue all the available files. If we consider cars, tracks, add-on for tracks, menus, sounds, and so forth ... we are talking about eight or nine GBs of information already available. With good criteria, Bernd suggested to start

with the original eleven tracks, more specifically with the graphics add-ons for them, and also with add-ons that are not just graphics enhancements, like Monaco Rocks or RSC Monza. Since this work will be pretty tough, we are focusing on add-ons that were focused on the historically accurate versions of the tracks; in the case of the eleven originals, their 1967 versions. Our target here is to include an installer that will make things much easier for both the new and the old GPL users.

PT: Disk space is cheap. The problem is storing it in a way that we can find things easily.

One of the longer term plans is to add facilities to GEM+ (or another utility) to support mod downloading. The later versions of the Season Manager have links to the Alternative Track DB to get information on tracks and point people to the download locations. It's just another step on from that to link to the GPLPS storage structure to allow mods, tracks, cars, and what have you to be installed automatically.

BN: There's no real problem with the storage, but Paul's right. The hardest part is to find the structure for it, as we want to achieve two things: Access from a webpage, and maybe use it for some kind of web update too.

Bob Simmerman: What are some of the things you have planned to support the online GPL community? Do you think it is possible to improve some of the original product online shortcomings, such as the online collision detection which at times has shown to be less than ideal?

DF: As the President of the Average Drivers Club, this is of course an aspect of the GPLPS that is very important to me. I've been in this community for a long time. I remember the heyday of VROC very well, when you could get a good pick-up race or two virtually anytime of the day or night *{those were the days—Ed}*. And during peak periods, the race-list would be full of options. It was glorious! *{Sim-racing was never any better than VROC on cold, wet nights in the late 1990s early 2000s!—Ed}* Sadly,

that all changed with the release of NR2003. From that point until now, the options have increased to include rFactor, GTR & GTR2, and GTL. And of course LFS and netKar to a degree also. Whereas GPL was once the only game in town, we now have to share from the cyber-driver pool, and I don't think it's incorrect to say that GPL has come out on the short end. A browse through VROC and IGOR on any given evening is evidence of that. We would like to see an improvement in the pick-up race participation, and in my opinion having two separate race clients is a detriment to that. But we realize it's a sticky subject, so we're treading carefully. We do want to look into ways to at least combine the two racelists, but time will tell if we're able to do that.

Another part of the online GPL community is the leagues. Certainly, many have disappeared over the years, but there are still some well-established leagues that are running GPL. We want to find ways to support them, to keep that a viable option for the GPLer who wants some serious online competition. With the ADC, I (and Bernd, as the ADC European Division Director) have a pretty good knowledge of how to run a club, but I will admit that I'm not that familiar with GPL league theories and principles. To that end, certainly Arturo has some knowledge there, but we've also brought in League Directors such as Bob Simpson of VOR and Bo Bruce of the oAo to assist. And as time goes on, I'd like to have some kind of running dialogue with all the GPL League Administrators in the community, and we'll work on ways of strengthening that aspect of GPL.

As for online collision detection, I really don't know if anything can be done about that. Perhaps one of my colleagues may have a different idea, but for the most part I think that's one quirk of GPL that we'll just have to live with. And to be honest, as long as you're aware of the limitations of the collision model, and drive accordingly, it's really not that big of a problem, in my opinion.



PT: Again that's a modding question rather than a GPLPS one. Steffen has already modified the collision box to support the Cortinas. You can race door handle-to-door handle with them and not get launched. In reality though, as more and more people get broadband, the chances of being launched skyward are receding. With good connections all round you can race wheel-to-wheel online with GPL.

I've always made sure my connection and machine are both optimized. In the six years since I moved away from a modem connection, I've been disconnected less than twenty times, and have never been launched skyward. That tends to suggest that if we optimize the connection, the problems will be reduced, so maybe we need to write utilities to examine peoples' connections and make suggestions for improvement.

AP: One of the main problems that a carsim user that wants to race online faces is to find a league that suits his availability, both of time and skills, and that also runs the carsim of his choice. In the case of GPL, there are many available choices at this moment (1967 Formula Ones, 1965 Formula Ones, 1969 Formula One and F2s) and soon there will be more, with the release of the 1966 Formula One mod.



From the perspective of a league, our basic idea is to provide a common environment where GPL leagues can coordinate their activities, including which mods they are going to use, the days where they will race and the start times for their races or practices. As David mentioned, here we have the owners of the most prestigious and stable GPL leagues, both for experienced and for newcomers, so I think we will find many ways to provide all GPL leagues a way to work well together.

BN: The major problem is that we use two clients at the moment. For sure it's nice to have a backup system, but compared to actual sims, we have three. Vroc, iGOR and the integrated Multiplayer Client. It would be nice to have both racelists integrated in one client. But I had no real problem with collision detection. It works like a charm for me and even racing against Paul Smith in Australia I could clearly see the engine details from the back (he was too fast for me!).

And there's no more problems to drive online compared to newer sims, beginning with disconnections from NASCAR2003, GTR, GTL, LFS, rFactor or NKPro. For sure it would be nice to have influence on your car livery or download the missing liveries. Or even to be able to rejoin, but it's not that these are things which can't be changed. People with dedication have changed a lot what could not have been changed.



Bob Simmerman: Recently, Grand Prix Legends has come under a bit of criticism as being perhaps a bit too old now—in other words, some folks feel that the aging base product—eight years old in October—is falling short in terms of newer sims with advanced physics engines and multiplayer components. With these comments in mind, what, in your opinion, does Grand Prix Legends still have to offer? How long can it go on? We have seen this very same situation in the flight-sim genre with Falcon 4.0, also released in 1998; this particular product has done nothing but improve over the years thanks the amazing efforts of the community that surrounds it, and is now back in full-blown production after the rights were purchased, but it is a vastly improved product than the one that shipped in 1998. Could something like this eventually happen with Grand Prix Legends? Has anyone, to your knowledge, approached the copyright holders for a possible right to recode and republish the sim, perhaps this time around including a large amount of community improvements?



DF: At the moment, GPL still offers the most realistic simulation of 1960s Formula One racing. GPL looks right, and feels right. It has the most extensive list of available tracks for any sim, past or present. And many of these venues themselves are legends in their own rights. Even if a GPL-era sim was developed for another platform, I think it's unlikely that this sheer number of venues would be converted for use elsewhere. And that would also hinge on whether the track authors will allow these conversions to take place. So if you want to turn some laps on some of the really legendary venues from the past, it's likely that GPL will be the only place to do so.

How long can GPL endure? Well, that is a tough call. But as I stated, there is still a tremendous amount of support in the community for GPL. In the ADC, I still get at least a couple of new applications every month. And I'm sure many of us have seen the threads at RSC and elsewhere from people that are still discovering GPL for the first time. I think as long as there is GPL support, there will be people racing it.

As for trying to obtain any of the 'rights' to GPL—it has been considered. I know I have read various comments as to who owns GPL, and the reality is that it is owned by both Vivendi and the Papyrus authors. One group owns the marketing and distribution, and the other has some intellectual ownership rights. And for the record, all third-party licenses (cars and tracks) have expired. And I'm afraid it's unlikely that either party is going to relinquish those rights. So purchasing GPL, like what was done with Falcon 4, is probably not an option. What is in our favor however is the unwritten, 'hands-off' approach that the developers and third-parties seem to be taking. If, for example, Cooper Cars or Honda were upset about their names being used in the sim as they are now, I'm sure they would have complained a long time ago. Same goes for Papyrus. Certainly, we are doing things that the developers never imagined, yet they've never complained. I think that largely stems from the fact that we are not modifying the .exe itself, but rather applying patches to it. We feel that as long as we don't go too far, we'll be free to do largely what we want without interference. Further, I think that in reality we're no competition to any of them commercially anyway.

AP: GPL was developed many years ago for sure. By then, the available technology for graphics, sounds, and other important topics was limited when compared with what is available nowadays. However, I would put an example of the whole situation with GPL. Let's use some fantasy here. Suppose you have the money to pay for a wish and the chances to make it possible, and that wish is to drive the 1967 Ferrari at Monza, which will be your choice? To

drive a 1967 Ferrari Formula One replica at modern Monza? Or to drive *the* 1967 Ferrari Formula One at the 1967 Monza??

I have made my choice ...

PT: People look at VROC and iGOR and see the online community has gone elsewhere, but the download figures tell a different story. There're a large number of people who play GPL offline. The mod teams are doing a lot of work improving the AI in the mods because of that. Even online, many of the leagues are still thriving; UKGPL is about to start Season 13 with four divisions. GPL isn't going anywhere for a while yet.

rFactor, NKPro, GTR and the like are all excellent simulator platforms, but that misses the point. Having several hundred parameters to change on a car model is only useful if you know the correct values to put in them. That's possible with modern cars; you can ask the people who own the cars, but with historic racing, the cars have either been modified or simply don't exist any more. Ninety percent of it is educated guesswork based on extensive research and test driving. There are no short cuts.

GPL is as good a platform for that as any of the newer sims and, in some ways, better. Think about it; GPL has more historic tracks available than any other sim, the user interface has just the right historic ambience for historic cars—no flashing lights or spinning cars ... there are people at the trackside waving flags rather than icons flashing at the top of the screen, there are no graphical displays to show where the other cars are on the track, no text above the cars to say who they are ...

Anyway so what if it's old. I'm not aware of any relevant changes to the laws of physics since 1998, or does rFactor support Quantum Mechanics?

Some people talk about 'GPLers' as this strange community of hermits who don't realize the war's over. GPL is about a group of people who enjoy simulating

historic motor-racing. When another sim comes along that provides a demonstrably better environment to achieve that, we will move. 'Better' physics and graphics alone don't cut it on their own.

Bob Simmerman: I don't think anyone missed it, but there was more than a rough time last month with what turned out to be a 'suspect' GPL 1967 season mod released for rFactor. What are your feelings on that whole matter, and do you feel that the GPLPS can make an impact on any future mod releases of the 1967 cars for any simming platform?

AP: As I saw it, the whole situation was quite simple. A guy decided to play with the possibility of making a 1967 Formula One mod for rFactor. He started by himself and posted some screenshots of his work in progress at the RSC forums. Some GPLEA members found this interesting and offered him their help, both in the form of car models and information, but with some clear conditions. Considering the huge amount of time GPLEA invested in the making of their cars as we know them, I would say those conditions were pretty fair. However, this guy decided to continue by himself and not to follow GPLEA's advice. This would be okay if it was not for the fact that he was not only using parts of the 1967 GPLEA cars, but also parts of the 1965 Formula One mod cars, and of the 1969 Formula One mod cars, all without asking for permission from the original authors. When this was found, he refused to accept what he had done wrong and, from then on, things went pretty bad. His mod was removed from RSC and from The USPits forums, and the case was closed for good.

My feelings about the whole matter were mixed. It would be great to see a 1967 Formula One mod developed for other platform, but not at any cost. As an end-user, even with a very particular taste maybe, I would want it to have the same level of detail and of quality standards GPLEA showed with their cars and that the

GPLmods Team showed with the already released 1965 and 1969 mods, and that everybody will enjoy with the 1966 mod. No more, no less. That is to say that—if I get involved with the development of a mod for other platform, I am only interested if there are chances to get a high-quality final product, no beta, a high quality final product.

PT: It was down to a clash of cultures really. The GPL community works to a different set of rules, possibly due to its higher average age, which is one of the biggest reasons it's still there. We're not going to change the way we work just because another group thinks we should.

Some good has come out of it because there is now a serious effort being put into an rFactor 1967 Formula One mod based on proper research and testing. I'll certainly be trying it.

DF: That was a bit of a mess, wasn't it? As a group, we decided to take a 'no comment' stance at the time, and I'm glad we just stayed out of it. From my personal perspective, I don't want to pretend to know what Slimjim was thinking, or what his intentions were, but I can't help but feel that he just wanted to be 'the guy'; the one that brought GPL to the rFactor community. It certainly would be 'feather in the cap' for a modder. There is no doubt that his KART mod is rather nice, so he appears to have some talent. It's just a shame that it turned out the way it did. Certainly, there were people that offered him help and advice as to how to go about this, and for one reason or another, he appeared to ignore that advice. The situation could have turned out much differently if some patience had been exercised. And as I stated previously, I think that, under the right circumstances, we as the GPLPS would rather assist in the creation of such a mod rather than seeing an inferior product released.

BN: My feelings have been very mixed. I don't think that GPL has owned 1967 or 1965 or 1969. But to be honest,

doing a 1967 season for, let's say, rFactor, I would expect all cars in it to be like the products from Simbin/Blimey. And in 1967 there had been a total of thirty-two different cars (not seven), not counting the special event at the Nürburgring which had been a mixed field of Formula One and F2. And of course the eleven tracks from 1967.

And would it be clever to just import/convert the eleven tracks as we all know that they aren't right? And to develop the physics isn't easy. I have access to some beta groups and it takes months and years to get the physics right, so that you have the feeling that the lap times are right, and the handling is more or less right. The main problem is that it's so hard to get historic data from this time.

So it was a 'What!?' How can you produce a 1967 mod that fast? Then it was 'Ah, it's a beta'. And then I realized it was more or less a copy of GPL 1967. Then I was done with it. I was shocked about so much which said, 'This is a fantastic mod! Now I can drive these cars.' Because if the 1967 Formula One cars are too much, why not use the 1965 Formula One or 1969 Formula One cars? If you can drive these cars to the limit you can drive the 1967 cars too.

Bob Simmerman: What are some of the things, in your opinion, that have contributed to Grand Prix Legends' longevity as a simming platform? Do you feel that there are any things with GPL that will definitely improve in the future?

DF: I think it's the uniqueness of GPL; the 'aura' that seems to surround it sets it apart from other sims. It's very difficult to master, first of all, and it takes a real dedication to be proficient at it. That, combined with the incredible work that has been done by the modding community, I think, are integral factors to explain its longevity. And hopefully some of the work that's going on behind the scenes will result in some new things that will keep GPL a viable sim-racing option for many years to come.



AP: The work of the modding community as well as the end-users interest. I could add many other points, but I guess that, when you are involved with GPL, you have the chance to race a very good carsim, both offline and online, in a gentlemanly environment, but, which is also quite important, you have the chance to learn about the history of motor-sports, to drive at tracks that were gone a long time ago, and to drive cars that only a few guys were able to master, risking their lives in the process.

In this sense, GPL is a window to the past of motor-sports, some may say to the glory days of motor-sports, and it's unique in the way it lets you get in the cockpits of Clark, Hill, Amon, Surtees, Gurney, Brabham, McLaren, Hulme, and more of this kind, and to live to talk about it after driving at the old Spa-Francorchamps, the 22km Nurburgring, the amazing Monza10k, and so forth.

Hopefully, we will be able to add Nuvolari, Rosemeyer, Caracciola, Fangio, Ascari, Moss, and many more to that

list of drivers, and, among other wonders, the venerable 72km Targa Florio to the list of tracks. In my opinion, this alone justifies to keep GPL in my HD for the foreseeable future as it is. If you ask me, this is too good to be true!

On another topic, as David already mentioned, there are many topics that many guys are deeply working with to improve GPL in almost every aspect, but I would let the real experts talk about them when they consider it is proper.

BN: Haven't I answered this above?

PT: Dave Kaemmer wrote the physics engine as a base for future development. The GPL community has accordingly developed it for him. The main thing though is that nothing has yet come along that gives what GPL does and improves on it. Until it does, we'll carry on modding what we have.

GP79—The Wait Is Finally Over

Renato Simioni finds time away from .RARing-up Grand Prix Classics' 1979 mod to tell us what we can expect from the mod that will breathe a beautiful new soul into rFactor.

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Let's start with being honest. Which is a rarity in AUTOSIMSPORT! Running this magazine is a lot of work—as the magazine has increased through the years both in content and quality, we find ourselves working eighteen hour days to get this baby out once a month ... Bob, of course, works twenty-three hours a day, but that's a different story. So why am I boring you with this? Well, because I want to tell you that there are no benefits to running this magazine—except one. Occasionally, we get a mod-group crazy enough to imagine we know what we're talking about, and invite us in to the ground-floor of their evolving mod.

Grand Prix Classics is just such a group. Shutt1e and Renato invited AUTOSIMSPORT into their beta-test team some months back, and we have been really privileged to watch the back-breaking work that has gone into the creation of this mod. Of course, we were invited to give our feedback, and while some of us did exactly that, I simply contented myself by pigging-out over the cars, and making the occasional fool of myself (for which I have an innate—or is that inane—talent!).

Those of you that have enjoyed the demo will understand what I am saying—those of us who have played version 8.1 (which is to the demo as GTR is to GTR2) will perhaps confirm what I am about to say: This mod will be spoken of in the same breath as the greatest sim-racing mods of all time.

Yes, I know—I'm biased. I have wanted a 1970s Formula One mod since, well ... 1979! All the same, this mod really is outstanding: Not only in its historical authenticity (which is GPLesque in its anality), and in its immersive-qualities, but most importantly, in its feel. The first time you get one of these beasts into a power-slide, and intuitively counter-steer to correct it—and realize that the tyre-model actually allows you to do this, and you're holding on to 500 horses with your throttle and wheel, you too will be hooked.

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Renato Simioni: *Planned release is before the holidays; we're aiming at the twentieth of December or thereabouts.*

As I mentioned, the difference between the mod—in terms of feel—and what was offered to the community as a demo is staggering. But I wonder—does it meet Renato's expectations ...

Renato Simioni: *It never stopped evolving, which is noticeable even when you compare the contents of the demo, now and then. Not in eye-candy per se, but just the amount of detail and depth that's being explored. In a way, it makes me ambivalent to release it because there will inevitably be room for improvements. But we can always update it later.*

1979, of course, was the year of ground-effects. A simple way of looking at this aerodynamic effect is to turn an aeroplane upside-down. So how does the ISI-engine cope when trying to simulate this?

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Renato Simioni: *There's a decent range of parameters in the physics engine to simulate ground-effect reasonably well. In the case of ground-effect cars, with most of the downforce being provided by the undertray, you can often get away with fairly low levels of wing, provided the track allows you to run low enough. That's in the case of the good ground-effect cars, though. Many of the cars in the mod can't be put in that category; some of the older models weren't GE cars at all.*

The mod will ship with forty cars, and Renato is referring to cars from the 1978 season (many teams only introduced their new GE cars in Europe, after the fly-away races to South America and South Africa), as well as teams that struggled to incorporate Colin Chapman's aerodynamic revolution, including Chapman himself, amazingly enough, whose Lotus 80 was too limp of chassis to tolerate the forces being exerted on it by the

ground-effects. Of course, GE cars were particular in how they handled—including 'porpoising' at high-speed, along with high-speed understeer, and other strange phenomena. So how would Renato describe the cars of GP79?

Renato Simioni: *Difficult to say in general terms, as there are so many different concepts and approaches in the 1979 field. For the true GE cars, basically you have great performance capabilities, but more unforgiving handling. The more conventional models can be simpler to drive, but are generally a lot slower.*

With forty cars, each with accurate physics, Renato and the guys from Grand Prix Classics have had their work cut out with research ... and while I am not permitted to name names, I can confirm that there were real race engineers of the time involved in providing certain feedback ... but how extensive was the research?

Renato Simioni: *Most of the research was done on the internet for the raw data, as well as drivers' and engineers' feedback, videos, and so forth. Obviously—for some cars—we had more material than others. Some didn't have much material at all. Since there's just so many details that could be simulated, this is another aspect of the mod that is under constant development. If the mod was to come one year from now, it would certainly be more advanced. But what we got, I think, is a rather reasonable representation of all these great cars.*

One of the things that has surprised about this mod—especially for those who have found many rFactor mods to be a little 'unrealistic' in their tyre-models—is the tremendous feel of the tyres which allow for amazing control and power slides—how did he get this so 'right'?

Renato Simioni: *Tweak and test, tweak and test, repeated ad nauseam ...*

Indeed; since the demo, GP79 has gone through numerous physics-updates, as the guys behind the mod were fed more technical specifications on the various cars. With this in mind, and with so many cars to choose from (each with its own unique character), which would Renato select?

Renato Simioni: *Hard to say—like asking a father for his favorite child. If I was running in a league, and needed a competitive car, even if not outright the fastest, the Ligier would be an obvious pick. I have a soft spot for the Ensign N177, though, which is one of the most uncompetitive cars in the mod, but a great sample of your typical 'kit' Formula One car of the 1970's. Then there's the Arrows A2, and Lotus 80, the Alfa Romeo ... all interesting rides in their own right.*

I have become rather besotted with the Wolf; yes, it is underpowered, but ... it's *black*, and has a wonderful balance between ground-effects and old-fashioned open-wheel feel. A really responsive car that is designed to be thrown around! But getting back to the feel—what can people who have sampled the demo expect from the final version of GP79?

Renato Simioni: *Well, it's still aiming in the same direction, so it will have some familiar characteristics, but it's a lot more developed, with a lot more real-world data. The tyre model is much better, the engine torque curves are a lot more tractable, so it's, all-in-all, a far more intuitive driving experience.*

The tracks that will ship with GP79 are quite superb—the Kyalami version, for instance, that was released with the demo, has been improved to make it, without any doubt, the best Kyalami ever made for any sim—and Long Beach, in its 1979 configuration, is a [wild ride](#) (the link is a youtube movie, and you will be happy to learn that you can throw these GP79 cars around in exactly the same way). Will the final version ship with all the 1979 tracks?

Renato Simioni: *No, unfortunately they won't all be there in the initial release. We'd love to have a complete package right away, but we just don't have enough good material to develop all tracks within a reasonable quality standard, and it would be doing those great tracks a disservice to deliver them in a sub-par form. So we've settled for those we're happy with now, not least because it would be counter-productive to hold back releasing the mod just because of some tracks. By having it out, we also hope to gather a similar support from the community like we got after releasing the demo, which could help us to deliver those tracks to the standard they deserve in the future.*

And speaking of the future—now that the GP79 mod is about to be delivered, what next for GPC?

Renato Simioni: *Well, we want to have it out by the holidays in part because we want to be able to chill out for a while, as working in the mod has become a bit of compulsive obsession for us! For the same reason I imagine it won't be long before we get back to it, and then I imagine we'll get on with the 1992 mod parallel to further developing the 1979*

project, and hopefully pick another exciting prospect along the way.

For those who recall Team Redline's GTP mod for N2003, one of the more remarkable parts of that mod was the ambient sounds—will a similar feature be present in the GP79 mod? And are there any more immersive elements coming which will surprise people? And is it possible that GPC have just created the greatest sim-racing mod of all time?

Renato Simioni: *Ambient sounds will be fairly limited in the initial release unfortunately, as our sound guy is kinda busy these days. We hope to explore that aspect further in a future update. All-in-all, the immersion has been of the main focus in developing this mod, and since immersion is all in the details, I couldn't possibly name them all. Better if people find out by themselves. As for making the greatest mod ever—that's something we're not in a position to judge, though I'm fairly confident most people will enjoy it. The sim-racing world has been sorely missing a 1970s Grand Prix sim for quite some time now, and we'll be happy if we manage to fill that void in a satisfactory manner.*

Since the others members of GPC were too busy, I asked Renato to name the who's who behind this mod.

Renato Simioni: *Shutt1e is the guy really, without whom this conversation would not exist. He's just a master. Fellow GPC members Motorfx, Vassalfada, and Lord_Kamder deserve obvious mention, as well as several other people who helped us put this together. Once the mod is out, please take a good look at the readme so you know everyone who helped bring this to life.*

And once you know that, don't forget to thank them—this mod has been in creation for a very long time—years, if you count its initial iteration as a GP4 mod by Tony and Shutt1e. And it shows. The community has never had a better Christmas present!

The Cars of 1979



Arrows-Cosworth A1 Mk1



Arrows-Cosworth A2 Mk1



ATS-Cosworth D2



Arrows-Cosworth A1 Mk2



Arrows-Cosworth A2 Mk2



Brabham-Alfa BT48

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Brabham-Alfa BT48 front wing



Ensign-Cosworth N177



Ensign-Cosworth N179 Mk2



Brabham-Cosworth BT49



Ensign-Cosworth N179 Mk1



Fittipaldi-Cosworth F6A



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Ferrari 312 T4 (T3 as seen eerlier)



Ligier-Cosworth JS11 (Monza Config)



Lotus-Cosworth 79



Ferrari 312 T4 Slow config.



Ligier-Cosworth JS11



Lotus-Cosworth 80 Mk1



Lotus-Cosworth 80 Mk2



McLaren-Cosworth M28B



McLaren-Cosworth M28D



McLaren-Cosworth M28



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Shadow-Cosworth DN9C



Tyrrell-Cosworth 009 Mk2



Williams-Cosworth FW06



Williams-Cosworth FW07



Wolf-Cosworth WR8B



Wolf-Cosworth WR8



Alfa-Romeo 177

**GP79 Full
Manual—
Available At
Our Website
December
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T3

LouMagyar

NicolaTrivilino

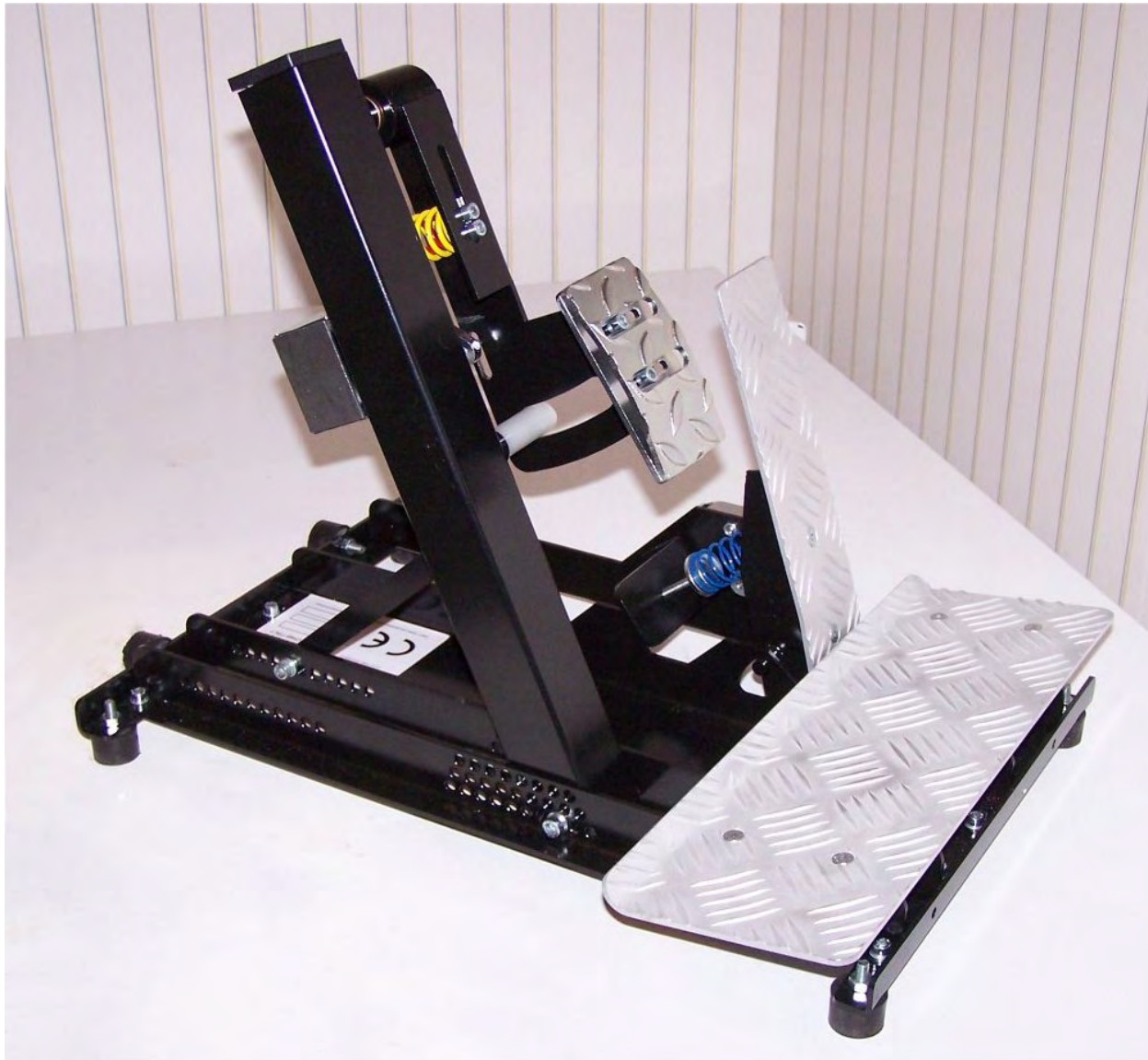
You Want To Go Faster? Get Some Faster Pedals!

Lou Magyar and Nicola Trivilino assesses the performance of the Faster Pedals as Italy's Cluster Company motors onto the after-market scene with a sleek, all-steel, quality-built pedal-set that's certain to kick your sim-racing up a notch.



T2 You Want To Go Faster? Get Some Faster Pedals!

continued



When it comes right down to it, motor-racing and Italy go together a bit like ... well mozzarella and tomatoes or, uhm ... vodka and cranberry juice! The long and rich history of this small nation's motor-sport excellence must course through the veins of all Italians, and Stefano Vietri—founder of Cluster Company—seems to be no exception. The Cluster Company pedal-set—unveiled this month—hopes to bring a little of this legendary mystique to sim-racing with its Faster Pedals, available in a two or three pedal configuration. Have they succeeded in capturing the magic?

Stefano sent me a set of his 2LD pedals to find out. My first impression—which did not change after much testing—was that these pedals perform much as they appear: Stout, more than capable of standing up to being stood on (even for a two-footed, brake-stomping, rubber-burning, streak-leaving panic stop, the kind found in most pick-up races as everyone screams into T1 trying to win the race at the first corner), and designed for an almost limitless range of personal configurations.

The 2LD pedal set is a direct-connect replacement for the Logitech® pedals that come with the Logitech® Driving Force Pro (DFP), Logitech® Momo Racing, and Logitech®G25. All of these Logitech® wheels use a DB9 connector for pedal integration, and the 'LD' stands for 'Logitech® Direct'—as in, these babies plug right-in and work like a charm, replacing the pedals for your wheel with a top-end, full-travel, fully configurable, ultra-precise pedal-set.

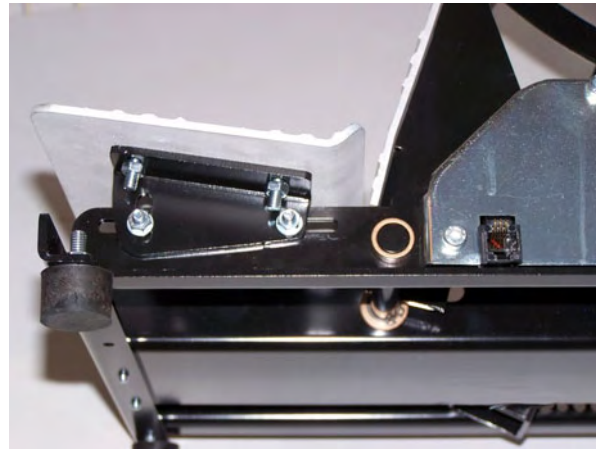
Connection and setup is simply a matter of plugging the DB9 connector onto the wheel base, and inserting two RJ11 (telephone plugs) connectors onto the pedals themselves. The cabling system is modular, with the exception of the static ground wire that connects the solid metal pedal-base to your computer case.

T2 You Want To Go Faster? Get Some Faster Pedals!

continued



The Faster Pedals come complete with a full-tool set. All the tools you need to work on your pedals are included with every order, from Allen wrenches—all the bolts are Allen head bolts—to hex wrenches, spring clip pliers ... everything, in short, that you need to configure your pedals comes in the package. This, combined with the excellent manual (plenty of pictures so that even Bob the Builder's intellectual cousin can use it without much problem), makes configuring these pedals a saunter in the park, which is a good thing because, as I soon discovered, you're going to enjoy messing about with the countless settings these pedals support.



Connection and setup is simple. The modular plugs make connecting the set to your wheel a quick and painless exercise. Because the pedals are connected to your Logitech® wheel, and are a direct replacement for the pedals that came with it, the game controller sees the Faster Pedals as if they are part of the Logitech® hardware, making calibration effortless. After configuring and setting it all up—all ten minutes of it—I was ready to give these pedals a serious work-out.

The pedals themselves are solidly built from square tube, steel stock. Diamond plate abounds on the footboard and pedal surfaces. No matter what your footwear choice—from socks to racing shoes—there will be no accidental slipping. I thought at first that the diamond plate on the footboard was going to tear up my sock and heel, but after an hour of racing with the pedals, I was pleased to discover no discomfort.

And speaking of comfort: If this—along with the ability for almost limitless adjustability are important to you—then you need to take a closer look at these pedals.



To begin with, the footboard itself is adjustable in two directions; that is, you can alter the angle and depth of the plate to suit your driving style and shoe size. And while you're at it, the entire pedal-rig is fully configurable as well. The throttle pedal spring pre-load, as well as the spring change, allows for a complete adjustment in throttle feel, and travel, to suit any driver's preference for throttle sensitivity. I didn't fiddle with the adjustment of the throttle much at all, as it was a pleasure to drive as it came out-of-the-box, but, as found in real-race cars, these pedals are adjustable to suit the user's need (close-push *à la* Barrichello or long-push *à la* Schumacher?).

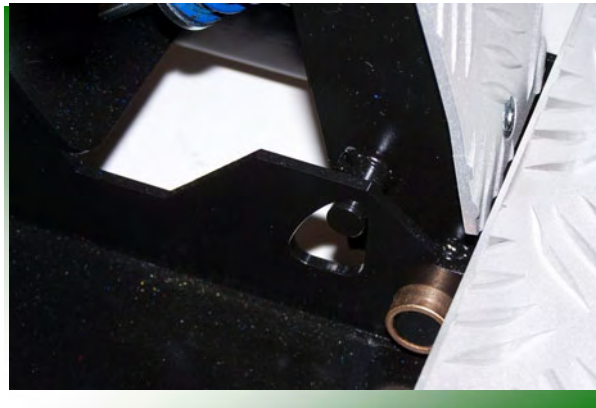
Getting used to the realistic travel, after using stock pedal-sets, requires a bit of an adjustment (in the mind, not the pedals!), but it is not as difficult as I had envisaged, and you won't find the transition that difficult either since it accurately replicates what you have probably become accustomed to in a real car, or race car. I say either, because the pedals are configurable so as to replicate any racing series you care to name: That is, the

short action of open-wheelers, or the longer action of GT or stock cars. Indeed, configuring the pedals to simulate your actual car's pedals should be entirely possible—both in placement of the pedals, their inclination, and the range of their 'push'. As such, it is immensely satisfying to mash the throttle to the floor and feel like you've accomplished something special as you exit a turn, and there is no need to worry about mashing the pedal too hard since the pedal design—featuring strong, hard mechanical stops at the extreme end of travel—means these pedals, like their real-world counterparts, are made to be driven hard.

The brake pedal, on the other hand, is even more adjustable than the accelerator. The tube that supports the brake has what amounts to an infinite number of adjustable positions, as well as inclinations. The channel that holds the tube has more holes in it than a block of baby Emmental ... if you can't find a position to mount the brake pedal that suits you, then you must like Limburger—me, I thoroughly enjoy a nice baby Swiss.

The distance from the footboard and inclination of the pedal mount are both adjustable as well. After a short test drive, I found that a bit more inclination was just my style. The pad of the brake pedal is also adjustable horizontally. If you like your pedals close together for heel-and-toe pedal work, the pad can be moved to a position that suits your style. Equally, if you want to replicate the pedals on your pick-up truck, adjusting the pedals is as simple as finding the right hole.

Still *more* customization, however, is possible with the brake pedal. Depending on how hard you like your brake pedal, you have three options of pressure adjustment—soft, medium, or hard, each also adjustable with pre-loading as well. Like the throttle pedal, if you can't find a brake position and feel that you like, you aren't looking hard enough. Judging from the documentation, the clutch pedal is equally adjustable and fully customizable to suit your needs.



If you've ever had a pedal, shifter, or wheel move during an intense race, you know how frustrating that can be. This won't happen with the Faster Pedals, equipped as they are with rubber feet on the bottom, and bumpers on the back. Obviously mileage will vary, but the pedals were an almost perfect fit for my desk (or the underneath of it), and proved just the right length so that the back bumpers made contact with the back of the desk and thereby prevented any possibility of the pedals moving when I was racing. This, coupled with the weight of the pedals themselves (the two-pedal rig weighs nearly twenty pounds {nine kilos}), means the pedals are not going to move, no matter how over-enthused you get with them. On the other hand, should you be using an office chair with wheels, I would strongly suggest you change it to something a little less prone to sliding about!

So, having given the pedals a quick spin, I thought it was time to have a little closer look at the construction. To start with, I took the protective cover off the brake pedal potentiometer for a look-see. The pots are easily replaceable, and the documentation provides detailed instructions for getting the job done. No soldering or electrical skills are required because the connection to the pots is affixed by a slide-on connector.



With the pedals now optimized for my foot and feel, I was comfortable enough to begin a serious test drive. It took about two laps for me to realize how little throttle 'feel' there actually is with stock pedal-sets. I had no idea what I was missing. Sim-racing pedals that replicate the feel—both in feedback and in push—of real-world pedals make an enormous difference to how you interact with your sim of choice. If you read my review of the Logitech® G25 Racing Wheel, you remember how steep the learning curve was when I switched to a three pedal system. The Faster Pedals feel so much more like driving a real car than the G25's pedals, which meant that the learning curve was somewhat flattened. With the Faster Pedals, the motion comes much more naturally, and I took to it like a duck to water, quickly finding the rhythm. This, of course, should have come as no surprise considering I've been using them—or pedals that feel almost identical—in my real car for a decade or two!

As it came out-of-the-box, the brake pedal was stiffer than the new Logitech® G25 brake pedal. I thought that the G25's new brake pedal was leaps ahead of the Momo pedal in its feel of realism, but the pressure required on the brake pedal of the Faster Pedals is even closer to the feel of a real brake pedal. If you like a brake pedal that doesn't move more than one-half an inch, full

travel, and is as stiff as a board, the Faster Pedals can accommodate you. If, on the other hand, you like your brake pedal with a bit of travel and fairly light to permit more modulation, then you are in luck, because the Faster Pedals can accommodate you too! The brake pressure and travel are adjustable from stock wheel pedal feel to nearly real-world hydraulic brake feel.

I can honestly say that after years of sim-racing—and being satisfied with stock pedals—I had no idea what I was missing. How many of you raced GPL when it first was published? Did you have a video card that was capable of the full thirty-six FPS right away? I didn't ... I learned to drive GPL with a video card and PC that was only capable of fourteen FPS. I had no idea how much better my driving was going to get, and how much more *fun* it would be when I could get thirty-six frames per second as feedback. Aftermarket, high-quality pedals are like that. The change you get when you have what you didn't know you missed is a revelation! Faster Pedals is no exception, and sim-racing with them is a pleasure I didn't know I was missing.

Cluster Company will shortly have a three-pedal set along with a USB-ready system so owners of other racing wheels can enjoy the Faster Pedals as well. If you are serious about your sim-racing, and want a quality set of pedals to improve your racing experience, then the Faster Pedals from Cluster Company are the pedals you need. And coming in cheaper than its main rival means Stefano and his crew are setting out their stall to sell what I believe to be the leader in the high-end pedal-set market.

Made in Italy, designed for infinite customizability, manufactured with quality materials, and purpose-built for ease-of-use and years of endurance—it just doesn't get better than this.

Second Opinion

Nicola Trivilino—DrivingItalia.net

When the Faster Pedals were delivered to me for this review (the two pedal version), my first thought was, “finally!” Finally we have a product of this type—professional and high-quality—that was fully realized in Italy and, what's more, in my own region—Abruzzo ... does it get any better than that? My second thought, however, was one of pre-occupation: There are numerous high-end pedal-sets made outside of Italy (many of them extremely well-made), and I wondered if the Cluster Company could compete against these established brands by using an entirely Italian design.

Well I needn't have worried: I can tell you, right off, that the Faster Pedals are better than many of the high-end pedals on the market at the moment and, in fact, in certain ways—and thanks to some ingenious design qualities—may well become the new reference point for the professional pedal-set market.

But let's take a closer look ...

The package in which the pedals arrived was itself rather impressive: It's a hefty box, well-stacked with protection for the Faster Pedals that come in at just under nine kilos: Inside, in addition to the pedals, one finds keys and tools that are needed to modify and personalize the pedals, the cable for the 'earth', a spring with diverse resistance, along with other components. The manual, meanwhile, is downloadable from the official site. And while we're on the subject of the manual, it warrants a comment here because it is extremely well put together, rich with explanatory images and detailed explanations that would enable anyone—even those who have no experience with the 'nuts and bolts'—to not only to get to the track without much problem, but also to be able to set the pedals up to their personal preference, or to emulate the set-up of the type of sim-car being raced (racing pedals obviously vary depending on the type of series, and this adaptability is what really sets these pedals apart).



After having connected all the wires (as simple as that), and configured the software (even simpler), I found I had to do very little else since the faster pedals were already set-up for GT cars, which was a blessing since the sim I had decided to test-drive the pedals with was GTR2.

But before I give you my thoughts on the performance of the pedals, I should point out—this being a review, after all!—that the level of tuning and personalization of the Faster Pedals is, without a doubt, at a level far higher than with any other pedal-set available today. It is not only possible to change the height, and the lateral position (necessary for the heel-toe method), and to adjust the depth and inclination of each pedal independently of each other, but it is also possible to directly adjust the breadth of excursion (or push), as well as the rigidity of the springs themselves in such a way that, for instance, it is entirely possible to have a much 'harder' brake pedal (the diverse positions of resistance and the double coaxial springs work amazingly well indeed!) and a softer, longer accelerator.

T2 You Want To Go Faster? Get Some Faster Pedals!

continued



The advertisement features a racing pedal assembly on the left, set against a background with a green and red diagonal stripe. The Cluster Company logo is in the top left. The main text reads 'WHATEVER THE RACE... WE ARE AT YOUR FEET'. Below this, it says 'Visit www.clustercompany.com for "where to buy" links'. A yellow starburst contains the text 'Free shipping', '€ 447 (Europe)', and '€ 415 (Italy)'. At the bottom right, it says 'Faster pedals 2nd for Europe available at: <http://shopping.multiplayer.it> www.shop.it'.

Since GTR2 was my sim of choice, the ideal pedal set-up entailed a medium excursion for the brake pedal that requires a firm press of the foot along with an accelerator that is very soft with a long and progressive push. The importance of the two pedals that are completely independent, with the brake pedal attached to the top and the accelerator to the bottom, cannot be understated, both in terms of its functionality, and its realism.

Driving with the Faster Pedals is a simply exceptional experience: The pedals are practically anchored to the ground thanks to the significant weight of the pedals themselves which are built with steel. What's more, because of the almost limitless ways in which the pedals can be adjusted, it is a simple thing to find the perfect position for your unique needs, even if the pedals are destined for a cockpit or other specially made driving unit. Obviously, driving with shoes is suggested, and I would recommend racing shoes or, failing that, shoes with soft soles.

The emotions that this hardware offers is really difficult to explain: Once you're on the track, a title like GTR2 will seem completely transformed because the Faster Pedals will fool your mind, so to speak, and send impulses that make it almost feel 'real'—it is, simply, like having Force-Feedback—only this time, it is originating from your feet. For the lack of a better term, I would describe the sensation as 'Foot-Feedback'!

After a little training, I have little doubt that these pedals will improve your performance. The brake pedal—longer and with more resistance—allows you to amplify the brakes in a far more precise way, so as to avoid lock-ups as well as creating the ideal base for trail-braking. The force needed for a decisive braking maneuver will really surprise you the first time you try it, and you will suddenly understand what a real-race driver means when he says he 'stood on the brakes'. The same can be said for the accelerator: The long push, the 'progressivity', and the final 'blip' are really quite astounding, and the exit to

turns, when you nail the throttle, are very satisfying indeed. Simply put, there is very little difference in the pedals you will find in a GT-car and these pedals.

After having turned countless laps in various sims—always with amazing results in terms of performance—I finally decided to put the pedals to their ultimate test!

After about thirty minutes of messing around with the settings and springs, I finally managed to create the exact setting for which I was searching: I managed to reproduce, to an absolutely faithful degree, *the exact same pedals as found on my Alfa 147!* Launching the 147 Cup mod for rFactor, I found myself in front of a monitor with my feet using the very same pedals as those found in my car parked outside!

The only problem I found with the Faster Pedals is the height of the pedals from the floor; I measured the distance—from the base to the extreme point of the vertical support of the brake pedal—to be about thirty-nine centimeters, which might pose a problem when

T2 You Want To Go Faster? Get Some Faster Pedals!

continued



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trying to slide the pedals under certain desks or, indeed, within certain cockpits or race-frames. On the other hand, changing a desk or modifying a cockpit or race-frame is always possible and, on the opposite side of the scale, the possibility of buying the kit to create a third independent pedal for the clutch is very welcome indeed.

In conclusion, the 400 or so Euro necessary to take one of these gems home is not cheap—but having said that, I can assure you that we are talking about an investment for three reasons: The first is that the Faster Pedals are practically indestructible and will last pretty much forever.

The second is that the tuning and personalization options are simply staggering and practically infinite,. And finally, the realism and performance they will offer you are well -worth the price on their own.

Guys, Foot-Feedback is born!

Bob Simmerman and Jon Denton (in Italics) get up to speed with SimBin's latest offering, their first sim since the split with Blimey! Games ... do they still have that magic something?

T2

Bob**Simmerman**

Jon**Denton**



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It seems that new PC sims are becoming as difficult to find as a two-headed rattlesnake in the middle of a Northern Michigan winter. But this past year of 2006 has given us at least two excellent simulator choices for the PC—netKar Pro, albeit a bit hobbled in the MP department, showed us just how amazing a dynamically calculated tyre model really is—and GTR 2 reminded us that, though there was a bit of a shakeup at SimBin, there were enough concerned citizens left around to get one hell of a sim out the door. And though it released in 2005, rFactor continues to impress, and if I had a nickel, I would bet that the GP79 Season mod is not only going to turn a few heads, it is going to twist a lot of them completely off—and this should come as no surprise because, as we all well know, the community, when given an open platform like rFactor to play with, are going to show the

big-boys that multi-million dollar budgets may buy you a license, but it doesn't buy you the passion and desire necessary to create an accurate sim.

Recently, however, we finally made it to the point of release of the new simulator from SimBin—RACE—another fully-licensed simulation from the erstwhile Swedish house, this time featuring the thrills of the FIA WTCC (World Touring Car Championship). So, what does RACE have that warrants its \$40.00 entry fee?

STEAM, for one. Now, I am all for the online content delivery method of *delivering content*—but only if it has been thoroughly fleshed out and actually does as advertised—delivers content!

In my case (and several others), there was a ... slight issue with the system. The slight issue being—you paid the price, but you didn't get the download—to the point where one poor fella who pre-ordered the thing was left hanging for several days after the official release before his download would even start. Meanwhile, at a RACE forum near you, everyone seemed to be getting the blame other than SimBin, which, I suppose, for a community-run forum like RSC was a bit peculiar ...

While those of us unable to download after purchase were in the minority, the fact remains that there were those of us out there—and no telling how many others, those others who never post on forums for any reason—who were out forty-five bucks with nary a sim in sight. Eventually, the problem got straightened out, but I never did find out what really happened, and this, in my opinion, does not bode well—SimBin has a bit of a troubled past in the customer support department, and this was an unpleasant bit of *deja vu*. At one point on the official support forums ... *for the sim* ... we were directed to the STEAM FAQ and, while the support effort was appreciated, it was in the end just barely on the useful side of useless. In other words, it didn't help, and served only to deflect attention away from the real issue of

people having paid real money for a product that was unavailable—without being told that the product was, indeed, unavailable.

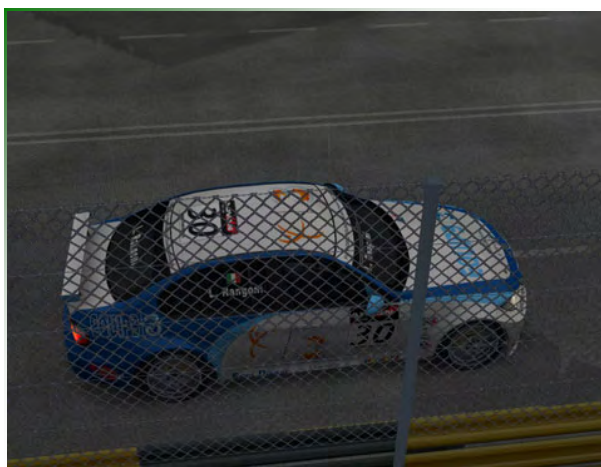
As for me—well, during one failed attempt at the download—around a gig—I nearly threw my house out of the window when the download 'attempt download box' got to within one bar of the 'end' of bars ... only to be kicked and told that the "*Server is too busy now...*" once again. I took a step or two back, ate some rusty nails, shoved some broken glass shards in my eyes, stole some kids' lunch money, and tried again. And again.

And again.

I finally gave up trying to get the thing late Sunday night, the 26th of November, after having my Pay Pal account depleted on Friday the 24th of November, and enduring more than a bit of frustration that I felt duty bound to *strenuously* express on the very forums I am supposed to behave at.

But Monday rolled around as it often does and, when I got home from work, I began what would prove to be a six-and-a-half-hour download. Finally I got the damn thing! I had had my fill of STEAM with Half Life 2, and did not appreciate one bit this latest episode. Yes, I realize that millions of people are starving and dying and killing and raping and pillaging and voting democrat and me getting this sim is way down on the global list of importance, but the fact remains—*this was a Friday release, and every single Elvis on the face of the earth had left the building and folks were getting upset and SimBin may wish to reexamine the method of getting their sim to those who wish to grab it by download in the future!*

I can't say if there were any activation problems for those who purchased the disks at the shop, disks that also required the services of STEAM, but that is something else to consider.



But before you go jumping to conclusions, let me just add that I'm not entirely against all this STEAM business—for one, patches are pretty easy to get, requiring next to no effort, and even better, not much brainpower. I could patch stuff all day ... in fact, during the play testing for this review, I believe STEAM updated RACE four times—and not once did I have to extract a zip, click an exe, point to a directory, and so forth—it just updated it, and then it played. I liked not having to put the disk in the drive, and, if I can only give you one word of advice it would be—just make sure to get that thing backed up to prevent a lengthy re-download. In this regard, the instructions for making a backup are clearly and plainly stated, and it is not much effort at all.

When all is said and done I have to honestly say I miss the secret code wheel and the page in the manual you had to turn to in order to get the secret unlock code. Pure elegance, if you ask me. In other words, while not militantly opposed, I think I'd prefer my sims without STEAM, thank you very much.

Unlike Bob I had no real problems with Steam. Having purchased the boxed version in a shop, it was just a matter of installing and logging into the STEAM account I had setup from previous games, and I was up and running in around ten minutes. It is a double-edged sword, as Bob says, but I think it's a good idea overall since there's no necessity to put the game DVD in the drive, and it adds to a hassle-free environment with easy and transparent patching. Some will inevitably have problems, but in reality this is true for any PC software.

So, download and install done, I finally made my way to the actual game proper, and right away it was apparent that quite a bit of attention—loving attention—had been given to the interface. Crisp, clean, and more than pleasant to look at. Important? Not crucial by any means but one way to look at it is that the developers give a rip for the whole ride and want that first look at the sim to be as perfect as it can be. With the admiration of the interface out of the way, I quickly made my way to the controller setup and here is where I first noticed something a bit out of kilter. I first mapped the keys to the DFP wheel, proceeded to the input selection and selected the proper input device and then noticed, upon returning to the controller mappings, that they were no

longer as I had set them. Ok, fine then, I did this in the wrong order so ... patience ... first off, the controller. I was surprised to see, upon returning to the controller tab ... nothing was selected. Odd, since I had just gotten done selecting it. I finally settled on selecting the controller, mapping the keys, *then* dealing with the Force-Feedback settings, and not looking back. So far so good. A minor issue to be sure, and may perhaps be fixed by the time you read this, but I wondered what else was in store for me.

Before I settle into a sim for the long run—or a review—I like to determine the ultra-maximum amount of graphics and number of cars I can run in the worst possible conditions. I feel that by doing this first, you make things a bit easier in the long run, as you do not have to worry about sudden frame and controller response issues in the heat of battle. Normally, I am able to ramp it up pretty high in terms of resolution, graphical detail, and field size—but not with RACE.

At the maximum settings—1600x1200x32bpp—with max in-sim, Max AI field, and in the rain, RACE was unplayable. Besides being slow—which is understandable, I suppose—there was also an extremely annoying stuttering present that only compounded the problem. I quickly learned that with a few adjustments—reflections to off, shadows to medium, wheel in the cockpit off (thanks Jon!), and fourteen AI—the sim quickened up substantially, and the experience was finally playable. Whether it was any good or not remained to be seen, but at least I could run the thing. I believe it is

DirectX 9.0 only at the moment, but I am doubtful that was the problem. Since our mileages vary, it is certainly possible there could be something going on with my system. It could also be certainly possible that the sim is not optimized as well as previous SimBin offerings—and I say this because, not to step too far ahead—this sim seems to have been a little hastily put together. On my system, GTR 2 runs—roughly, and by estimation—two-to-three times as fast as RACE, given roughly the same graphic settings. I find this odd because they are both using ISI licensed code, and similar rendering engines...but there it is, after endless tinkering, RACE would not perform anywhere near GTR2.

With the way things look and feel out of the way, it was time to have a look around the front-end before hopping on the track for the first time; although I was dying to drive Macau, I forced myself to check things out first. With a couple exceptions, there is the usual assortment of game modes—championship, quick race, testing, race weekend, a replay mode, multiplayer, as well as a time-attack and driver-duel modes. There is definitely plenty to do, though the driver-duel sounds a little ... well, you know ... most, I imagine, will head straight for the championship mode; whether it be the official WTCC of 2006, or the 1987 Alfas and BMWs, or a fixed class of Mini Coopers, this is the meat and potatoes of the sim, and for WTCC fans, an apparent dream come true. The cars and drivers of the 2006 WTCC are all here, as well as all ten of the tracks. But before we take this baby out for a spin, a small note on another error (and again, it doesn't mean much except, for me, pointing to the unfinished feel of this sim—in the car details screen, the Alfa 75 is noted as being a front-wheel drive which, clearly, it is—and was—not. SimBin, though, modeled the car correctly in the sim—I did a few doughnuts to make sure the rear-tyres were spinning, but still ... pretty shoddy work).



For me, running at 1280x1024x32bpp, I found a very happy frame rate with up to 20 cars on track, but only after I removed the visible steering wheel and driver arms, which were, quite frankly, not very well done at all. In fact, the cockpits on the whole are way off the standards set by GTR2 and, in comparison, RACE offers low-resolution, turgid

abominations, as if the cockpit view was a complete afterthought to the sim. At the same time, quality control seems to have been having a day off when it came to the tracks too. Some are better than others—namely those lifted from previous titles such as Magny Cours or Monza—but even they are not devoid of odd graphical glitches in places.



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Load times are not too bad, and once you get to the session, there are various sections to examine such as timing, car setup, race conditions, and which part of the race weekend you are currently attempting. For those who have used ISI sims, and sims based on their gMotor code, everything will quickly look familiar. Those new to the genre—something I am sure SimBin is counting on—will catch on pretty quickly, but I warn you now—the button that takes you to the track, and the button that changes to the next session, have been exchanged and are now in somewhat opposite positions than many of us have become accustomed to. That is, if you blindly click on the lower right button to hit the track, you are promptly advanced to the next session! I did this about a million times before finally remembering what happened before, and I still make the occasional wrong button press. It reminded me of that time a Software Giant made it mandatory in some cases to use CTRL+ALT+DEL to start

their software, as opposed to restarting the software. In other words, I found it to be a bit odd, but nothing to freak out about.

Another one of my tendencies in sim-racing is to do absolutely nothing to the default setup until I have extracted all the time out of it that I can extract, so, without much more delay, I jumped into the RACE. And began doing exactly that.

And quickly began to have a really good time—I *liked* it. A new level of windscreen attention via the modeling of dirt, bug splatters, rain, glass chips, and those moving wipers we have all waited so patiently for immediately immersed me into the world of Touring Car mayhem.

The physics and tyre model are not as refined as they were in previous SimBin offerings—this was pretty evident from the get-go—but they nevertheless did a good job of conveying the motions involved when one is driving relatively low powered—and in many cases FWD—cars on relatively long tracks. Monza felt like a lap around the Nordschliefe! And speaking of Monza: The surface of the track is modeled, and if there is any accuracy to the sim at all, then this track is one hell of a bumpy ride. Given the claim that telemetry data was used in the creation of the RACE physics and track surface modeling, I would imagine this is authentic ... but then, strangely, the MoTeC telemetry was left out of the package this time around, so there's no real way of telling. There must have been a good reason for this oversight, because, for my money, MoTeC is one of the most crucial aspects to a sim. Not a deal breaker, sure, but definitely a disappointment.

Something of an outrage if you ask me! MoTeC has become a staple in sims in recent times, and since GTR, I have personally found it rather inexcusable for any sim to be released without some manner of telemetry software. With MoTeC becoming the standard for ISI-based sims since the rFactor plug in, it really is ridiculous that SimBin, as the

people that brought MoTeC to our sim-racing lives, would not include this. As an ISI-engined sim, surely it would not have been beyond the wit of man to place this compatibility into RACE? A huge oversight in my books.

As to the cars, the physics and the tyre model, well, like Bob, I have enjoyed driving this sim a lot more than I really expected to. I am not the greatest fan of 2-litre super 'tourers', but the cars are reasonably entertaining to drive, and the racing is very close—too close sometimes! Touring car racing is very much a contact sport, and the first time you get rear ended by the AI, this becomes rapidly apparent. The FWD cars provide a new driving style for some, but for me the finest cars in the game are the 1987 offerings. Both are classics; a BMW M3 E30, and an Alfa Romeo 75. They offer rear wheel drive fun with much less grip than the 2006 WTCC cars—the modern-day cars suffer, to some extent, for being very heavy and relatively low powered.

At around 300bhp, the modern-day WTCC cars push out less power than quite a few roads cars I have driven and, at the same time, their slicks are very grippy which presents a fairly easy-to-drive racing car. At the same time, the tyre model, in congruence with GTR2, is very forgiving when pushed past the limit. Doubtless a gameplay decision, this personally does not impact me negatively as I tend to drive the car within the limits, but physics purists will find plenty to complain about here. What I would say, as I said about GTR2, is that driving in this sim is fun which, lest we forget, is what we do this for ...

Once in the car, the user will note a certain ... darkness to the environment. I am informed that this is, in fact, the case in cars such as these, but I never really thought much about it as, although it may be a bit dark, it is nothing that can't be driven. There are a few textures mishaps with the cockpit interiors, notably a strange flickering of the drivers arms at maximum wheel turn in one direction or the other. What I mean is that the arms would simply disappear into thin virtual air, then

reappear as the wheel moved. It was a bit freaky, so I didn't miss the wheel and driver arms at all. The gauges appear to be non-functional (how long must be live with non-functional cockpits? netKar PRO, despite its problems, showed how fabulously immersive a fully-interactive cockpit can be—but SimBin have not only not bothered with the functionality, they have not bothered with even working gauges ...), and the overall feel inside of the cockpit is indicative of perhaps a bit of rushing to meet a deadline—the cockpits were simply nowhere near the level of detail set by GTR2, for example. Something has definitely changed, and it isn't the weather ...

Quite. As mentioned previously, the cockpits seem something of an afterthought, and while the 1987 cars have possibly the best looking interiors (and the least dark, as their interiors are not black), there are a huge load of gauges on the dash that simply do nothing; disappointing, to say the least. It is a fact that WTCC cars have a pretty dark cockpit—everything is black, which makes for dark—but some of the cockpits in the sim feel very desolate and gloomy. But then, you're not sitting there to enjoy the view!

Many would consider these niggling issues, non-essential to the simulator experience, and they would most likely be correct. However, it does detract from the immersion level when it becomes difficult to believe in the environment the developer has surrounded you with. On the exterior, the models are not too bad, but again, they are simply not to the level of previous efforts. We are speaking graphically, and while important to the experience, certainly not essential.

As you say though, Bob, my old friend, this is all about immersion, and the whole suspension of disbelief is ruined by small things sometimes; it can be these small things that ultimately niggle away at you until you find yourself reaching for the uninstall icon.



I found the tracks to be very well done, and aside from a strange blue glow in the distance (with the view distance set to 'Normal'), they were gorgeous. Macau has to be seen to be fully appreciated, and it looks as if a lot of time has been spent there in the graphical department. But even with the beautiful track models, we have problems with some of the tracks surroundings—texture

flashing and invisible barriers to name but a couple. I can see a JumboTron flashing all kinds of moving images out of the corner of my eye and not be distracted in the slightest, but a flashing, large, piece of fabric—or a paintjob on a walkway—is extremely distracting sometimes, and it goes without saying invisible barriers are not likely to make many friends.



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Erm, JumboTron? Okay. Well, I have found the tracks to be very nice on the most part, though there are problems in places. I have found Macau the finest experience—it's tight, twisty confines provide a genuine challenge while many of the other tracks, being 'world stage' circuits that run Formula One and other high level motor-sports, are far too wide and long to be wholly enjoyable in cars that are not very fast. As Bob mentioned above, the front straight at Monza seems long enough to reach for the glovebox and pull out a Werther's Original. This is a difficult thing to find criticism in, of course, because in real life the WTCC calendar runs on these tracks, but you have to wonder if the FIA should not reconsider their options. Fact is, long time UK-based touring car followers will remember the glory days of the early 1990s when Steve Soper and John Cleland battled on some of the finest British circuits with much sentiment when they find themselves nodding off watching the months tick by on the way to the Adelaide hairpin. Now, a run around Oulton Park or Cadwell that would work!

And as for invisible barriers .. Well, there I was, at Macau, a practice session for track-learning. Missed a braking point, thought to myself, "It's okay, I can just drive down that run-off lane, pop a quick 'U -ey' and rejoin the track". So, down the run-off lane I went, and about 10 metres down it wrote off my car on a complete piece of invisible nothing. Anyone for suspension of disbelief?

Ok, back to the cars. I like the BMW, so I went ahead and took that one out for a few laps and, as I mentioned previously, this thing's a lot of fun to drive. And given the fact it doesn't have thousands of horsepower, is relatively easy to drive—but be prepared to lose the rear-end should you get too aggressive, or too unlucky. So, while it's pretty simple to keep the thing on the road, driving fast can be a little tricky. The default setting, obviously, is not ideal, and I can't help but wonder when a sim is going to ship with a default setting that does not have strange gearing ratios given how the rest of the car is setup.



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Really, I have never understood the gearing oddities with default setups unless it is an effort to make sure the newbie doesn't spin the rear tyres, and the default setups in RACE are no different in this regard.

It is nearly always the case the default setups are awful in sims, obviously to make it so that newbies can pick the thing up and run with it easily. I don't have a problem with this, but I do agree with Bob that it should not be a big issue for the testers to at least provide a default setup for each track that at least has gearing that can fit the straights. It isn't a big problem to adjust them manually of course, but it smacks too much of lacking real attention to detail.

I found the changing view through the windscreen as the practice laps wore on to be fascinating and extremely well done. I have to hand it to SimBin for this one, because it goes a long way to suspending disbelief. As you drive along, the windscreen is changing dynamically as you move through the virtual environment, soon

becoming cloudy with dust and dirt, the occasional unlucky bug, and the super cool visual—and auditory—cue as the integrity of the windscreen becomes no longer completely intact. In dry weather, a flip of the wipers removes the grime and guts from the view, but the chipped areas remain, as they should. In the rain it gets even better as you have all of the above to deal with, and the addition of low visibility due to blinding rain. I had an extremely tension filled race at Magny Cours in a heavy downpour. Even with the working wipers going, it was tough to see! Toss in the very well done headlight effects, and soon you are finding a lot to like with this sim.

Yet another area I feel that SimBin did a great job at was the appearance of the other cars on the track in terms of their movements over the track surface; a very important part of convincing us we are driving a real car is seeing what appear to be other real cars in front of us, or behind us, on the track. The more those virtual cars

behave like the real deal, the farther from deskbound reality we can go, and I am glad to see this sort of attention. Not all racing-sims or games pay much attention here—admittedly, some from only the visual aspect, not the physical mechanics—but SimBin did, and it is much appreciated. I also found the sounds to be perfectly acceptable considering the small displacement, low power output of these cars. They may have sounded a bit too processed in some rev' regimes, but overall I have no complaints, and the backfire sound very good.

It is true, the sounds are very smooth, and the windscreen effects are delightful, and this is one area where this sim stands above the competition. The steaming up and grime build-up when running with other cars really adds a lot to the immersion; going back to GTR2 after this makes you feel hard done-by on the windscreen front.



The saddest aspect of the sound really is that the cars have tiny wheezebox 2 litre lumps that just don't sound too good, and in reality, the gearbox whine can overpower the engine note in the cockpit. The Alfa 75 sounds wonderful, as the only six-pot in the game, but the WTCC cars sound authentic—just not very good!

More realism—the full deal of the WTCC, all the drivers and tracks from 2006—go a great ways to further enhancing the attractiveness of this sim, especially to those fans of the WTCC series. It is tough to give licensing a hard time—though it rarely guarantees a good product—but in my opinion, RACE does a great job at

replicating the official series and rules of the series for our PCs.

One area where RACE falls noticeably short is the AI. Granted, I don't have as much time with it as all my other sims, so I have not seen all of their tendencies yet, but I did many races at Macau, purposely starting in the back, and T1 was more often than not a terrible crash fest. If you brake too early for the AI driver's taste, he will sometimes use your car to slow down. This is behavior we have seen in previous sims, but not to this degree. Most likely, I am simply too slow, but when I wasn't involved; there were more than a few AI incidents, and this with a few cars more than half a field. But Macau did seem to be the worst example of this, and at other tracks, depending on how tight T1 was, the events usually got off to a good start and the race was definitely a lot of fun.

The AI robots are very poor in my opinion, and can make running offline quite disturbing. Macau, as noted, is their biggest problem, just running in practice sessions seems to find them bashing into walls right, left and centre. I am all for 'non perfect' AI drones, but when they cannot complete a lap without binning it into a wall, you have to wonder if the right and proper attention to detail has been applied back at Simbin HQ.

Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to test the multiplayer as both of my wheels suffered failures shortly before the MP testing was to begin, but I did notice the absence of the online file transfer system, unless I missed it ... definitely a useful feature, and it is too bad it did not make it into RACE.

A strange omission for sure, and I cannot think why features like this, which were innovated in previous SimBin offerings, would be omitted from RACE; another oversight that will push away serious simmers, but at the same time it, will have limited affect on the 'gamepadders' out there. You have to wonder who SimBin were targeting with this title when some of the design decisions were bashed out.



Aerial scale model of the Macau Circuit, as found at the Macau Museum of Racing ... since 1954 (when it started life as a treasure hunt around the city), Macau has become one of the world's most famous and exotic race tracks, and remains the only street racing circuit to feature both motor cycle and car races. The Guia Circuit has seen many legendary drivers, and some equally impressive winners: Ayrton Senna in 1983, and Michael Schumacher in 1990 being the most notable. Legendary Teddy Yip, of course, was instrumental in bring

motor-racing to Macau, and you will find the so-named Teddy Yip turn in his honor. Yip's Macau parties were a staple of international motor-sports during the heady days of the 1960s and 1970s, not least due to the fact that his name was synonymous with the casinos that have made this ex-Portuguese colony world famous. Yip died in 2003.

Length: 3.8 miles (6.2 km)

[Website](#) with fascinating information and history



For the most part, I have nothing but good thoughts about this sim, but there are some very irritating bugs, and they are not all graphical in nature. For example, on occasion, a show-stopping game stuttering would begin making the racing extremely difficult for varying lengths of time, and this stuttering would happen at any time, not just during the graphically-demanding phase of changing weather, or heavy rain. With Magny Cours in GTR, we had the atomic bollards to deal with, in RACE we have what appears to be, at times, stop-motion video to deal with in that same general area of the track. Or at least I do because, as well all know, our mileage varies.

It is no secret that SimBin has undergone some recent development staff changes, and it was a question on many minds how they would 'recover'. In many ways, RACE has answered that question in the positive, but there are simply too many loose ends with RACE to not notice that something is different from previous offerings, and not always in a positive way. Couple that with the fact that SimBin's GTL and GTR 2 could both be picked up at Best Buy for less than the price of RACE, and it is difficult *not* to expect a bit more polish. I find the content to be excellent, the license seems to be well represented, and the on-track feeling enjoyable for the most part, but there are definitely some issues here that SimBin can hopefully address and support before too much time passes.



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I have not suffered this stuttering, and I think that is for the best because I would not have felt so charitable about it. I realize you mean well, Bob, old chap, but I really think you're being too kind. I mean, I like this sim, I really do, but there are so many fundamental issues with quality control that quite simply should not have been allowed out of the door.

It feels a little like this product was rushed out to coincide with the Macau WTCC weekend, and very little attention was given to making the product a solid piece of software. You can say what you like about physics in previous SimBin offerings, but the fact remains that graphically, aurally and technically, they are solid pieces of software. Take aside networking and run a race

weekend in GTR2 or GTL and you can find very little fault in what you see. Do the same in RACE, and you find yourself constantly in a state of mild annoyance by the small omissions that someone somewhere obviously figured were not that important.

Sure, there is nothing that is "Go outside and beat up a homeless guy" rage inducing, but there are enough problems to make you feel like a beta tester working on a release candidate. Of course, a patch or two can resolve these things, and Steam provides an ideal framework for pushing these out.

What it comes down to is this: did SimBin release a title based on a commercial deadline, or because they had a finished product? RACE feels an awful lot like the former.

Under all the problems, there is a damn good sim trying to get out, and, while it's not to everyone's taste (if you are not a touring car fan you might find limited appeal in cars), if you are a touring car fan, you can definitely have a lot of fun. And it helps, too, if you blind yourself to many of the issues and learn to simply ignore them.

Should you buy it? Well, probably not; GTR2 and GTL are both better products, as is rFactor. If you have an interest in the series or the cars, then I would suggest keeping an eye on the community forums for updates and patches that can bring this title up to scratch. I hope SimBin make the effort to do so, because with a bit of spit and polish, this sim can be worthy to stand alongside SimBin's previous work with pride.

PLUSSES

- \$Windshield effects very well done
- \$LiveTrack and gorgeous tracks
- \$Convincing physics model
- \$Full licensing of WTCC 2006 season and rules
- \$1987 WTCC and Mini Cooper cups
- \$Macau

MINUSES

- \$STEAM
- \$MoTeC MissInG
- \$No online setup swapping
- \$Hefty performance requirements
- \$Pit stop issues during a race
- \$Numerous graphical glitches
- \$Car models not up to previous SimBin efforts
- \$Limited in game menu setup options
- \$AI issues
- \$Poor cockpits

Bob Scored RACE: 71%

Jon Scored RACE: 62%



European Touring Car Championship

Magnus Tellbom gets behind the wheel to race Race's free-incarnation—the ETCC mod for rFactor ...

Magnus**Tellbom**





In my opinion, Touring Car Racing has never received the attention it deserves. People see these BMWs and Alfas and Seats and say, "Heck, I know people in Indiana that have more horsepower in their lawnmowers", and they move on to watch Formula One or perhaps ALMS, where prototypes dominate everything. Not many care about the standard looking cars, and that's sad, because this is about great motorsport. So when a sim or mod of this series makes its appearance, you can pretty much bet I'll be first in line to have a look-see.

This month, then, I have been treated, haven't I, with SimBin's Race and ... The ETCC mod for rFactor, which was originally made by the brilliant RSR team for F1C. NFR have converted this one-time classic to rFactor, and I'm—as you can imagine—pleased as a fox in a hen house.

You have to do some serious searching if you ever hope to find racing tighter than that found in the Touring Car Series. I have yet to see one race in any Touring Car series where every car makes it to the finish line with the bodywork intact. No matter if it's BTCC, STCC, ETCC, DTC, or any other regional variant, it's all the same—tight, furious racing that really gets the adrenaline going. But why is this? Well, it might have something to do with the cars being so closely matched, the weight penalties, the reverse starting grids, the medium speeds, and a host of other rules and regulations that seek to make Touring Cars the ultimate in close racing. Whatever it is, the result is non-stop action that you never will see in any Formula One or ALMS race.





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The ETCC mod comes as an .RAR download, and it is available from a number of locations. The package is 252MB, which might seem big to some, but you get some real value for those download bytes: No less than seven car makes (Honda, Alfa, BMW, Seat, Audi, Volvo, and Skoda), all in glorious 2048by2048 paint-schemes, and with sounds that are velvet-authentic. The mod-makers, though, have been very thorough in their presentation, and, for low end systems, there is a paint pack available with 1024by1024 paints for the cars. Yes, my friend, this is a great, quality mod, and created with a lot of thought for the end-user.

The cars—like their real-world counterparts—have their strengths and weaknesses, of course. The front wheel drive cars suffer from high front tyre temps, since everything depends on those tyres, braking, acceleration, and steering all putting massive stress on the front shoes.

The BMW, on the other hand, is rear wheel drive, and is therefore much easier on the front tyres by taking some load off them; but with that comes the ever present problem of oversteer. Too hard on the throttle, and you will spin out. Too fast with the down shift, and you will spin out.

The Audi, on the other hand, takes the best and worst of both worlds—an all-wheel drive car that has the traction of a centipede, but is as heavy as a dinner table on Thanksgiving, which makes it suffer from poor acceleration (in spite of AWD) and accelerated tyre wear (even though it's more equally distributed than it's two-wheel drive brothers). Of course, this is just the way it is in real-life, and that is one of the highlights of this mod—each car has been carefully crafted to replicate its real-world counterparts not only in looks, but in performance.



There are some problems with the mod, though. One thing you will notice as soon as you go online is the join lag. Every time a new driver comes online and the car loads, there is a very noticeable glitch. The first release, too, suffered from too high a fuel consumption, and a really outrageous tyre temp problem. The 1.1 patch, released a few days later, took care of the tyres and the fuel, but the join lag is still there. The lower resolution paint pack helps, as does the 1.1 patch, but not enough. Still, since new drivers can't join once a race is afoot, this is not a major problem. During practice and qualifying, it's not that important to have a one hundred percent lag free environment since you're only racing against the clock.



The cars that come with the mod, too, have not been created equal—if you're not driving the Alfa, you're going to be fighting for the nether places on the grid and race. Patch 1.11 helped elevate the BMW on the same pace as the Alfa, but that's about it really—the cars unashamedly replicate the performance from their real-life originals, and that means that, if you're not driving an Alfa or a BMW, you are something of an underdog in the races. Not by much though, and I'm pretty confident that you could put most cars within half a second of the best times set by the Alfa or BMW. Most online sessions I've been to have featured at least four makes in the top five, and not always the Alfa or the BMW at the top. My advice

is to find a league that features weight penalties, and the trouble with unequal cars will soon be gone.

I know some will argue that not making the cars absolutely equal will ruin any and all online racing, and that basically they will end up with a one or two car mod since everyone will drive the Alfa or the BMW. But for once I think they might be wrong in arguing for this point. As I mentioned above, these cars all have their strengths and weaknesses. Some are better out of a turn, and some offer better braking abilities. Some enjoy an almost perfect 50/50 weight balance, while some have a heavy front, and so on. This means that if you find a car that really suits your style of driving, you may just be good enough in that car to challenge the generally faster Alfa or BMW. Especially if those are driven by people who just selected them because they are said to be faster, but don't know how to drive them. Personally, I'd like to be able to drive the Volvo flawlessly, but I suspect that the Seat suits me better. And that's how you should select your car in this mod. Test them all, give them an honest run, and then pick the one you can keep on track at a reasonable pace.

Bottom line, I will give this mod 8 out of 10 possible. If they fix the join lag in a future update, it's most definitely worth another point on that scale. I can do nothing but recommend this mod to anyone who is slightly interested in online racing. Now if I only had some templates

It's All In The Seat— *Under Your Pants*

Lou Magyar shares some time with fellow Hoosier, Pat Dotson, who has chosen AUTOSIMSPORT as the vehicle in which to introduce his ingenious new product: The UltraForce GS-1 G-Seat.

LouMagyar



Pat Dotson is an engineer, a KART racer, and an avid sim-racer. He has always been one of the fast ones, and those who were around in the glory days of GPL will recognize the name instantly—the kind guys like me call ‘alien’. He has long been exploring ways in which to combine his engineering skills into his passion for sim-racing in order to further the realism of his sim-ride.

Pat’s sim-racing career, in fact, dates back to Papyrus’ Indy 500 and GP1-World Circuit, using, he recalls, “A 486 computer—320x200 16-color graphics—*awesome!*”

His sim-racing résumé makes for some rather impressive reading: His first offline league, for instance, was in Tony Johns’ IWCC using NASCAR 1 as base—Tony Johns, of course, later went on to work for Papyrus. Pat also has the distinction of winning the inaugural season of The Pits’ TPTCC Touring Car Championship. He was part of the Hawaii beta-testing team, and was in the top three in NROS/TEN rankings with NASCAR 2 alongside oval sim-racing greats like Mike Blackstock, Charlie Mone, and Mike Grandy. On top of that, Pat was also a member of NASCAR 4’s beta testing team.

In somewhat of a role reversal, though, Pat’s career went from sim-racing to real-racing when, in 2001, he started racing Go-KARTS. When he returned to sim-racing, a few years later, he was immediately struck by the lack of ‘feel’ to his sim-ride when compared to the physical forces he had become accustomed to racing in the real-world. “I found the lack of seat-of-the-pants feedback to be a big problem,” he recalls. “Force-Feedback steering wheels just weren’t enough anymore. That’s when I began to conjure up the idea for the patent-pending UltraForce GS-1 G-Seat.”

Pat’s new sim-seat—the UltraForce GS-1 G-Seat, which is now ready to go into production—is a remarkable new twist on a theme; that is, finding a way to bring the ‘seat-of-the-pants’ experience to simulated-racing using a system other than a motion platform. Pat’s seat has been

designed so as to provide G-Force-Feedback depending on how your sim-car—or, indeed, plane, truck, boat, or whatever you are simulating—is behaving. Using six moveable pads, a realistic seat-of-the-pants feel is added to your sim-experience. Simple?

Yes: It’s the kind of simple, yet effective solution that makes the rest of us say—how come I didn’t think of that!

“I got the idea for the GS-1 while driving in my car,” Pat explains. “I noticed how much of the feedback received in real-life is created as the driver’s body moves around in the seat. The weight of the driver is pushed in different directions as the car maneuvers. That weight transfer is felt as the skin of the driver is pushed or pulled against the seat. I realized that I didn’t need a motion platform to create those sensations.”

The traditional solution to simulating the all-important seat-of-the-pants feel sees the cockpit or motion-simulator literally impose on the sim-racer physical forces that push the body around—not so much simulating but, rather, creating the real-world forces. Generating these kinds of forces, however, is an expensive business, and the most accurate motion-simulator (or platform) is the Force Dynamics 301, reviewed by AUTOSIMSPORT in March, 2005. The price tag on that unit is somewhere in the region—at least, at that time—of \$20,000.

Pat’s solution was to find a way in which to generate these forces—but to do so in a way that would be cost-effective. “I quickly began working to invent a seat that would generate motion cues that correspond to real-life movement of a driver in the seat of a car. The result of that work is the UltraForce GS-1. Where a motion platform will move the entire body of the driver, plus the display and controls to simulate G-forces, the GS-1 applies pressure and tension changes directly to the skin of the driver,” Pat explains. “This results in a much more compact piece of equipment—not to mention much less expensive! If you want realistic motion feedback, you no



longer need to add an extra wing to your house to make room for a motion platform. The GS-1 is basically a computer seat that can be used full-time at your computer desk for general purpose computing tasks, but then transforms into a high-fidelity motion-cueing tool when you fire up your favorite racing or flight sim.”

Invention at its very best!

Since Pat lives fairly close to me (about a ninety minute drive), and his prototype seat wasn’t very portable at the time, I decided to take him up on his offer for a test-ride, and duly took a ride up to his house.



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I was greeted at the door by my buddy Pat ... in his robe; seems he takes his days off seriously! Good thing too, because that serious nature transfers to everything I've ever seen him pick up. No corner cutting or fudging for Pat. But unlike his robe, his solution for recreating the seat-of-the-pants feel—in your sim-seat—is absolutely unique, and bears no resemblance whatsoever to the many other units available in today's market—either in design, functionality, or price.

Pat, in doing research for his seat, has tested various products. "Audio vibration-based hardware that only provides vibration, such as the 'Intensor Chair', can increase the immersion factor, but don't to a good job of giving motion cues. On the other end of the spectrum are things like the Force Dynamics 301. That thing is awesome, but I'll never own one—not only is the cost prohibitive, I just don't have room for it! The GS-1 is

designed to provide high-fidelity motion cueing at a reasonable cost—all in a small package."

With the advent of bigger, better, and more accurate sim-engines, the door has opened up for new means of gathering data and feedback to provide a sim-ride that is ever-increasing in its realism. Pat has tapped into that wealth of data to create a seat that uses actual physical feedback from its environment to generate impulses for the user.

This, for those of you who have done a little research into this market, will immediately strike you as a genial idea, since virtually all other units use (rather than physical data from the sim-engines themselves) sound to recreate the physical movement. Pat has chosen to use actual loading data—the same data that allows sims like rFactor to use MoTeC—to simulate (or should that be stimulate?) the actual physical forces at play.

This, for Pat, is the most authentic and realistic way to convey the vehicles dynamic motion to a stationary seat and, logically, to the sim-racer. He has achieved this by using exclusive software, that he has written himself, to 'pick-up' the physical feedback output of the sim-engine which, in turn, reproduces the physical movement to the pads on the seat that, ultimately, simulate the forces through the skin of the sim-racer.

"The UltraForce GS-1 works directly from inertial acceleration data generated within the racing sim," Pat explains. "None of these handling effects are canned. All the handling forces calculated by the simulation physics are translated in real-time directly to the seat of your pants."

The seat—all set-up for me—was really quite elegant in its simplicity. Six pads in all—two on your backside, and four on your back—provide tactile feedback for all physical aspects of movement. The pads ride on rails—and each is driven by two powerful servo-motors for a firm, precise movement.

The pads can be adjusted for virtually any human frame-size, from skinny little racer-kids to 330 pound monsters like me. The pads are arranged so as to move one dimensionally, and all of them have simple left/right movement, but the way they combine on both your back and backside creates a sensation of true three-dimensional movement. Sitting in the seat proved to be an entirely enlightening experience: Enlightening because, looking at it, you wouldn't think that the six pads would provide much more than a massage—especially for a guy of my build!

Pat, though, was pretty confident as he set-up me up for my ride in the seat. We fired up rFactor, and I took out the rTrainer for a spin. I headed to Lime Rock Park. If you've ever read my work, you might remember that Lime Rock Park is a track with which I am extremely familiar—despite having never actually raced on it. I

grew up not far from the track, and went to high school less than two miles away. I've spent countless hours there, and walked it many times, so it's a place I know very well indeed. The rTrainer is also a car that has done many laps at Lime Rock Park in my hands, and the two seem to fit together like old friends, the track and the rTrainer greeting one another for what was sure to be more fun than should be made possible by a bunch of electrons pinging around on a hard-drive.

My first impression is hard to nail down; Pat had 'sold' the seat up pretty well before I arrived, and I was perhaps hoping to drive the Holy Grail. I sat in the seat and drove a few easy laps to get the feel of the car, seat, track, and the Fresnel lens that Pat likes to use. Because I wasn't pushing too hard, neither was the seat. That soon changed as I began to really throw the rTrainer around Lime Rock Park.

"The seat also responds in a similarly realistic fashion to different types of cars," Pat says. "A simulated road car with soft suspension gives soft responses in the seat. A formula-type car with a stiff suspension will give harsher responses in the seat. So while a ride in a Miata with the GS-1 will feel fairly tame, jumping in a Formula One car for the first time is a wild experience!"

My first true feel for the power of the seat came as I entered the esses a bit too hot. The left turn got a bit hairy, and as the sim-car pushed left, I was pushed to the right side of my seat. The rears got a little 'squealy', and as they did so, the seat pushed harder and my body English took over. As I slid out of the esses, I suddenly realized—consciously, for the motions had been 'intuitive' as I fought for control—that I was *feeling* sim-racing by the seat of my pants for the very first time.



Discovery made, I was addicted, and just kept driving. As I churned through the laps, I began to relish the feel of every subtle bump, push, and wiggle that the seat was sending me. The more I drove, the more I *felt* the car around me as an almost living extension. I wasn't moving—and neither was the seat—but *you* tell that to my brain!

My brain was in a state of sensory-feel—applying the brakes, engaging the clutch, or that little skating sensation you feel when you have a lock-up—all of it was rolling from the pressure-pads through my skin and muscle to my brain which, in turn, sent impulses to my

feet and hands as to how best to deal with the simulated-car. I felt wheel hop, I felt bumps in the road, I even felt the grass and gravel as I drove off-track for a bit of excavating.

Comfortable now, I decided to test several other cars—everything from the car my league calls the 'migraines' (Meganes), to the BMW Sauber that ISI released with its latest patch earlier this year. Each new car brought new life to the seat of my pants. I could feel everything ... from bumps in the road to wrecks into the wall, the chair was speaking to me in a language of motion—even while I was static. As I said earlier—a truly enlightening experience.

With the hours rolling away, Pat convinced me to try a flight-sim; for this, he removed the wheel and replaced it with a joystick. We took off from my hometown airport in Bloomington, Indiana (39.145 Lat, -86.614 Lon). I'm not a pilot—I only play one in the movies (and I didn't even stay in a Holiday Inn last night)—but I can fly a plane in a simulator. The standard Cessna, Pat informed me, doesn't offer much in the way of aerobatics—however, I proceeded to amaze Pat with loops, rolls, and an occasional flat spin that, Pat duly informed me with a frown, the plane should not be able to perform (maybe flight-sims have a little problem with physics as well!). Throughout all the maneuvers, I could feel the seat telling me what the aircraft was doing. Pitch, yaw, roll, all of it propelled, so to speak, into my mind via my body. When I performed a loop, the seat gave me the feeling that I was going over the top and bottoming out. When I did a roll, it felt like I was falling out of the seat as I went inverted.

Demonstration over, I realized Pat had not been over-selling his gizmo—it really was all that and more. The sense of movement—from a static seat—is an amazing experience, and, what is more, an experience that is sorely needed in simulated-racing.

As for the seat itself, I assume you're thinking something this innovative is probably really complicated in design. And indeed, from the prototype, it appeared to have more gadgets, cables, power supplies and gizmos than Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory. The good news, however, is that this was the prototype. The production seat, now fully realized and ready to roll into production, uses a simple PC-style line cord for power (you can plug in a cord right?) and USB connection ... and that's it. That's it, except for the bit of wizardry (or software to Pat) that needs to be installed in order to get up-and-running—software that Pat wrote and customized for use with his seat.

"The GS-1 software will give the user the ability to adjust the seat responses to handling forces from the simulation," Pat explains. "For instance; you might want to boost the seat response when driving a milder car. In some cases, you may need to reduce the seat response. The first time I tried the rFactor Sprint Car mod on dirt, I had to immediately stop and tone down the seat forces as it was too uncomfortable."

That done, you are now ready to experience the joys of sim-racing—by the seat of your pants! Pat has been working with Ian Bell, too, in order to get his seat software compatible with GTR2, as well as other SimBin-related sims. The seat will bring the immersion level of any sim-racer—or sim-flyer, driver, whatever you like to sim—one step—or is that one seat—closer to the real deal.

"I'm also working with other developers on support for their simulations," Pat adds. "The GS-1 currently supports rFactor, as well as Microsoft Flight Simulator 2004. Racing-sim support is planned for GTR2, NetKar Pro, and Live for Speed, with an estimated availability in March, 2007. Additional flight-sim support for Microsoft Flight Simulator X and X-Plane is planned for January 2007."



If you are serious about your sim-racing, and tired of using the age-old 'if I could feel it, I'd be faster' excuse for being slow, then this baby is for you. I approached the seat with more than a bit of skepticism. I'd done a bit of research into the other players in the field that are five to ten times more expensive than this seat, and thought—not a bad idea, but probably too soon to get that 'feel' right. I can tell you now—I was quite wrong.

Sim-racing has always been about increasing the feedback in order to find performance that mirrors the real-world. First was the change from gamepads and

joysticks to steering wheels, then came Force-Feedback to help you feel the road, next were high-tech sound systems set-up to simulate the 'feel' of vibration and movement, then came the monstrous full-motion simulator seats, with their rocking and swaying action to simulate the forces your body feels in a real car.

Pat Dotson has created a sim-seat that, while simple in its design, provides *actual* feedback from the car as it was meant to feel. All of which is to say—while you sit statically in your seat, driving your super-car on the finest tracks on the planet—you will finally be able to actually 'feel' the car under your pants. The static becomes motion even while your body remains static—a wondrous step-forward in simulation, and I cannot say enough about how authentic the ride is. It just doesn't get more 'real'.

The chair is available in colors Black, Red, Blue, Yellow, and Green. Units will begin shipping in January 2007. Pre-orders may be placed at AUTOSIMSPORT's Sim-Shop.

For inquiries about the UltraForce GS-1, contact Pat Dotson at pdotson@mindspring.com, call UltraForce at U.S.-765-480-8907., or visit www.ultraforcesim.com

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Cheap Thrills?

Duncan 'Jiminee' Smith compares real-world racing to sim-racing—is sim-racing really that much cheaper than running a local series for a year?





There is an unavoidable fact about motor-sport, be it real or virtual—it is expensive. Whenever anybody talks about ‘cheap’ motor-sport, you can bet they’re talking in relative terms; regardless of who is paying the bills, it is costing someone a lot of money to get cars on the racetracks of the world. There is inevitable far more to consider than just the purchase or build price of the car—there is maintenance, repairs, transport, accommodation, tyres, the list just goes on and on, leaving the question—how do you make a small fortune?—with a simple answer: Start with a big one and go motor racing!

Now it would seem—at least it is generally assumed—that one of the great things about sim-racing is the reduced cost. It may not provide for the thrills of the real thing, in terms of butt-squeezing emotion—but it does simulate the real-thing in most other compartments. However, assuming one actually wants to experience the fear and adrenaline of the real-thing, how do the costs compare? Is sim-racing really a cheap way of going racing?

One of my justifications for forking out money to go sim-racing is that it’s cheaper than doing it for real—but is it? Sim-racing, too, has its costs—especially when the big picture is studied—and all those other bills, like broadband internet and computer upgrades, can start to add-up.

To compare, I sat down with John Moore, an amateur racer who competes in Dirt Circuit Racing here in South Australia. As you can see from the pictures, Dirt Circuit is a mix between regular road racing, speedway, and rallycross. John is a self-funded racer who also does the majority of his own race preparations and maintenance, so he is well-suited for this investigation.

Dirt Racing is certainly not big dollar motor-sport, more of a hobby, much like sim-racing is for a lot of us. John’s race-car is a 1978 Holden Torana powered by a 3.3 litre (202c.i.) 6-cylinder engine. Modifications from standard are limited, and mainly centred on improving safety. Holden made thousands of these cars in the 1970s, which explains their popularity in all forms of grass-roots motor-sports across the country. They are also a good combination of size and power, making for a great stock race-car.

John estimates that his car is worth \$2,500* all prepared and ready to race. Being able to do all of that preparation himself obviously saves a considerable amount of money, but it is interesting that the car and a PC capable of running the new sims come out to about the same price. (And, in fact, the PC may—if you’re looking at investing in something top-of-the-line—come out considerably more expensive.)

On top of the cost of the car, some other of John’s expenditures include consumables like good quality tyres (\$320), fuel (\$40 per meeting), and oil (\$60). Dirt Circuit regulations do not require a full fire-proof driver’s suit, but of course you need a helmet (\$300, depending on what value you place on your head), full length overalls (\$50), and a harness to keep yourself strapped in. All this can be used for eight local meetings a year, which require a very reasonable \$16 entry fee.

So far, then, the costs between these two types of racing match up pretty closely, but where Dirt Circuit can start getting much more expensive is by attending other events around the State. John estimates a \$500 bill to travel to a State Title meeting, of which there are two per year—otherwise, he is looking at \$100 to travel to other club level races, of which there are about eight per year.

The other big bills come when it is time to rebuild and repair the car. John told me one of the things he dislikes the most is spending time and money repairing damage caused by other people running into him (a cost that is fortunately missing in sim-racing!). As for his most expensive repair bill, John recently forked-out about a \$1,000 rebuilding his engine.



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Most of us have had a personal computer in our homes for ten years or more now, but even if it's brand new, the family 'hack' is not what a sim-racing enthusiast would choose to go sim-racing in, much the same way that it is not practical to use the family shopping trolley/taxi for racing on the weekends.

So we will be considering this in terms of having a computer that is primarily designed for sim-racing, which means, lots of memory, a hot graphics card or two, and a big flat-screen monitor (and we haven't yet touched on the after-market pedal and wheel sets, nor the cockpits or race-frames or, indeed, the cost of the sims themselves). So how much would a set-up like this cost? Well, just like building a real race-car, the final cost of getting a jacked-up machine worthy of the title 'racing-machine' would be dependent on how much you can do yourself, but if we look at my system, we are looking at about \$2,000 all-in. I did not build it myself, as I don't yet have the skills and prefer the security of a warranty to provide some protection to my investment. This rig comfortably plays rFactor, LFS and GTL at 1280x960, and has proven very reliable. Of course, there is always that urge to upgrade, but with Vista and DX10 coming soon (not to mention the Ageia physics chip), I won't be touching it for a while.

Just for a laugh though, I had a look at the Alienware website to see just how crazy I could go. Their top of the range system, without a monitor or input devices, came to \$7,000, so its obvious that \$10,000 could be spent just on a PC, and that's before it's put into a nice cockpit, along with a Speed 7 BRD wheel, Faster Pedals, surround sound, and what have you—all the stuff of sim-racing dreams!

Back in the real-world, we are looking at \$50 to \$70 a month for an internet connection, while, if we want to be conservative but still serious, the Logitech G25 that was released recently retails for between \$350 and \$500.



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A DFP could be had for about half that, but could end up costing more in the long run as it is unlikely to last as long as the G25 (which really feels like a tank in terms of its construction). To improve my sim-racing experience, I have also bought a solid chair, as I was tired of sliding across the floor on my old office one. I also picked up a headset with microphone and, though not an expensive addition, it has made a big difference: League racing now has a social element to it, as it is much easier to get to know people by listening to them rather than reading words they type. It also helps in building some good-natured rivalry with fellow racers, and is now indispensable. At this stage, I am fortunate enough to be able to expend a considerable amount of time racing. Living in a country town, albeit a big one, there is not an awful-lot-else to do, so I am fairly happy with the value I get from my set-up. Of course, that will change as the years go on, but for now, I average between ten and twenty hours of racing a week.



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I was surprised to see just how closely the costs matched up; I was expecting the real-racing to be much more expensive than it was, in actuality. Of course, the reality is that a computer can be covered, as part of your home and contents insurance package, but John has no such safety net. Should it all go pear-shaped one day, he would have to fund a replacement car himself though, given that the racing takes place on dirt, speeds are kept down, which also reduces the loads placed on the car.

On the day I went to watch John in action, earlier this month, the speeds were way down as it was raining (finally!), and even the most modestly powered four cylinder cars were really struggling for any traction or grip at all.

So why would anyone want to go through all the time preparing a car, travelling around the countryside in it, and repairing it when, for a similar amount of money, you could be sitting in a virtual cockpit where repairs are done with a simple push of the escape key? Well, because its fun! No matter how complex racing sims get, no matter how many of us end up with 301 Motion Simulators, it will never replace the magic of doing something for real and feeling the rush from being on the limit. I have only experienced that for myself at local hire KART tracks, but even in that environment, it was addictive and it would be, I imagine, very difficult to place a price tag on that feeling or, indeed, 'value' it accurately. As much fun and as challenging as sim-racing is, it can never capture that emotion and that adrenalin.

The other great thing about the Dirt Circuit Racing is that it is much more of a family event. John's brother also has a car that he races, and it is not unusual to see the same

surname two or three times in a race. Sim-racing is often a much more individual hobby. If we are lucky, we get to meet people via TeamSpeak and share experiences with them, but most of our interactions with fellow racers occur through email and IMs. Imagine how much fun it would be to do events like Lou's LAN meeting a few times a year! I can see that happening one day—other forms of gaming like RPGs do—so the potential is there, we just need to make it happen because, as much fun as racing is, it becomes even better after being relived over a few drinks, much like people do following a cricket or football match.

So what are some advantages to sim-racing? Well, work and home commitments aside, I can race whenever I like, and in what car and at whatever track I choose. The budget for Dirt Racing may be pretty comparable to sim-racing, but the moment you begin to dream of mightier and faster cars, the prices just begin to sky-rocket—fact is, most of us will never be able to race a Formula One car, or an Aussie V8—much less run a full season. And, I don't have to wait for programmed events to happen, though they are certainly the highlight for me. We also get to compete in a much greater variety of events—just look at the variety of cars and tracks in rFactor to see what I mean—and we are not stuck to the one car and one track our budget allows us to have.

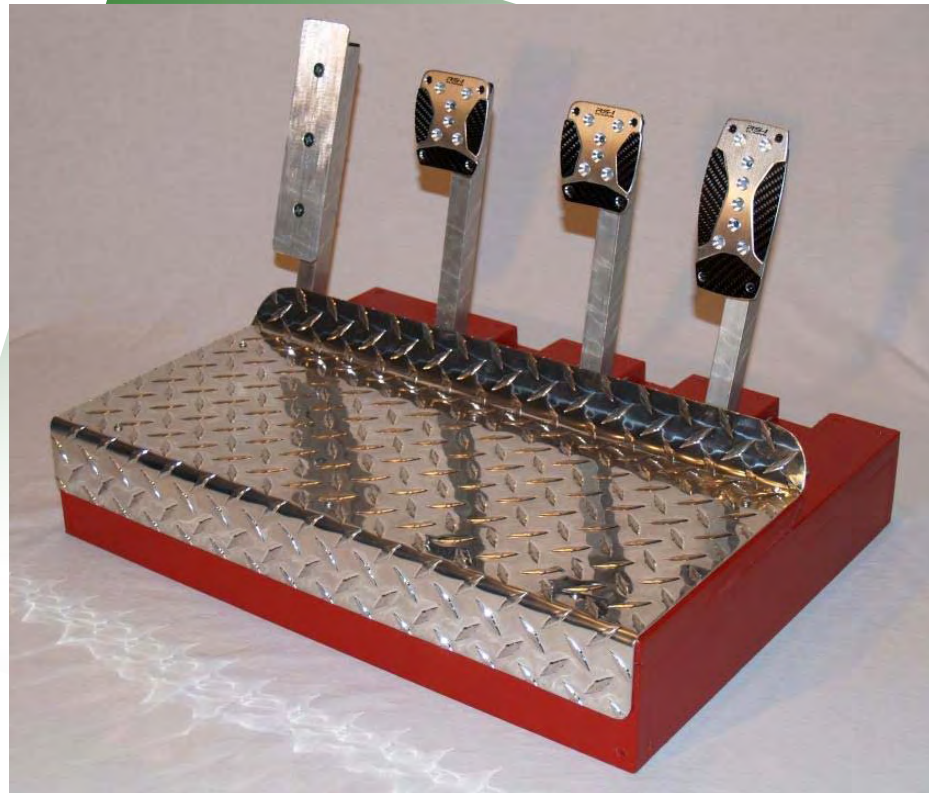
So there are pluses and minuses depending which road you choose. The thrills of doing it for real are greater, but so are the risks, and it really comes down to what suits you better. The main thing is that we are all racers, whatever way we decide to go about it.

**All prices quoted are in Australian Dollars – currently one Aussie Dollar will get you between \$0.75 and \$0.80 US Dollars.*

A Step-By-Step Guide For Your Feet—The CST DIY Pedal Guide

Lou Magyar whips out his tool-box and gets to work on Todd Cannon's DIY pedal guide along with experienced builder, and Cannon Simulation Technologies customer, Bruce Fisher.

Lou Magyar





Have you ever looked down at your three-year old plastic toy-like pedals and thought—what junk, I bet I could build something better than this? And then, an hour or so later, after you've looked at it, did you think—well, maybe it's not that simple after all—where the hell do I start?

I know those thoughts have crossed my mind. What kind of engineer would I be (and no, I don't play one in the movies, I play one in real-life!), after all, if I *didn't* look at something and think that I could do it differently—and usually better—than the designer?

Todd Cannon, of [Cannon Simulation Technologies](#) (CST), went through this very process—and then he went one step further: He actually did something about it. Fed up with his mass-produced pedal-set, Todd sat down, one fine day, and set about designing his own pedals. And since this was his own design, he incorporated all the aspects that he believes have been overlooked by large manufacturers when producing their stock, mass produced pedals. Satisfied with his design, he decided to set the process down on cyber-paper, and sent AUTOSIMSPORT a set of his DIY plans for my perusal. Then, just in case I needed some expert advice, he put me in touch with Bruce Fisher, one of his satisfied clients.



Bruce is fairly new to sim-racing (he's been at it only for a few years now), but what he lacks in experience he has made up for with sheer enthusiasm. He started off by building a [Microsim RaceBase](#)® from DIY plans, and then proceeded to pimp it up with some wicked gear worthy of many a sim-racer's fantasy: A Dolby 5.1 speaker system, nineteen inch widescreen monitor, and a full-on racing seat. Then he decided to take a long look at his Logitech® Driving Force Pro and asked himself whether the pedals really belonged in his state-of-the-art racing unit? When his stock pedal-set began to falter, Bruce decided the answer to that was a definitive no.

So, like any guy worth his salt (the editor of this magazine is excused at this point!), Bruce dismantled the stock pedal-set and began fiddling around in order to see if he could repair them. It didn't take long for Bruce to become rather disappointed by their construction ... and it wasn't long after that—with the things innards in his hand—for him to start thinking—I would have done this differently—and better!

Bruce, like me, is a project junkie. I think it's something about the challenge of starting with a bunch of tools and material and creating something that exists only in the mind. Guys like he and I see something—like building our own pedals—as something to be conquered, an irresistible challenge.

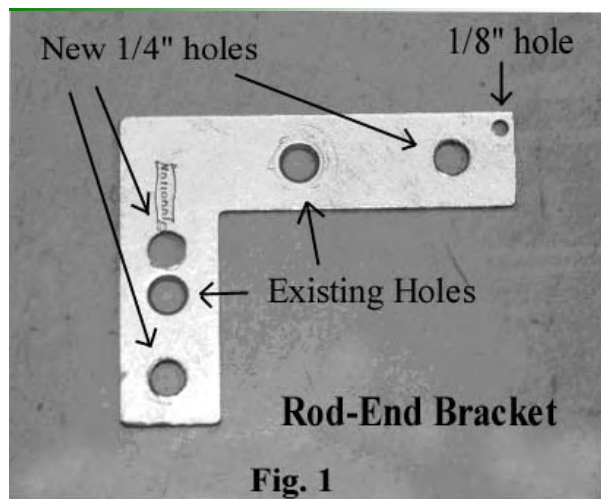


For guys like us, CST has created a set of plans that will assist us in building custom pedal-sets based not around commercial considerations, but, rather, around what we, as sim-racers, actually *want* in our pedal-sets.

In what amounts to a twelve-step plan for project junkies, the plans detail exactly how to set about creating your own custom-made pedal-set. But actually, it's not really a twelve-step plan—there're really only seven steps (that work out as one chapter per step) that will oversee your project—all the way from buying your materials, to constructing your pedal-set.

Unlike most engineers I know, I tend to read instructions and manuals—and I've even been known to ask for directions when I'm lost (but not when I'm lost on the road!). I read through Todd's plans twice for this review in order to obtain a good feel of how things might go, and I turned to Bruce for help with the article because he has actually sat down and built a pedal-set of his own (which he then needed to modify in order to fit into his race cockpit).

The Guide itself, as I said, is broken up into seven chapters, and evolves logically from what materials are needed to how to assemble the pieces to, finally, how to actually construct your very own pedal-set. The final pedal-set, I should add, not only looks great, but performs remarkably well.



Todd begins the Guide by compiling a list of very helpful construction notes, including a recommendation to, 'Read over the Guide before you begin'—which would be a good idea since, if you're reading those words, you probably bought the damn manual!

The Guide, what is more, features plans for not one, but two types of pedal-sets—that is, once you purchase the plans from CST, you get to decide whether you want to build a floor mounted pedal-set, or an overhead mounted pedal-set. Over and above that, the plans can be built with three pedals or two, depending on whether you want to add a clutch (and why wouldn't you?).

Included, also, is a list of recommended tools. Bruce says that the step drills recommended by Todd are definitely worth the money you'll spend to get them. In addition to the tools recommended in the plans, Bruce suggests using a rotary hand tool to assist in certain aspects of the build. There is also an extremely detailed 'parts and material' list. I did a bit of research on the net for some of the parts that aren't typically available at your local 'big box' hardware store, and the cost for them is

quite reasonable. Bruce said he had spent about \$270 total—and that includes the tools he needed to purchase to get the job done. I didn't ask whether they were strictly necessary, of course, since a guy's gotta have his tools, and *any* opportunity to buy tools should always be exploited to the max'!

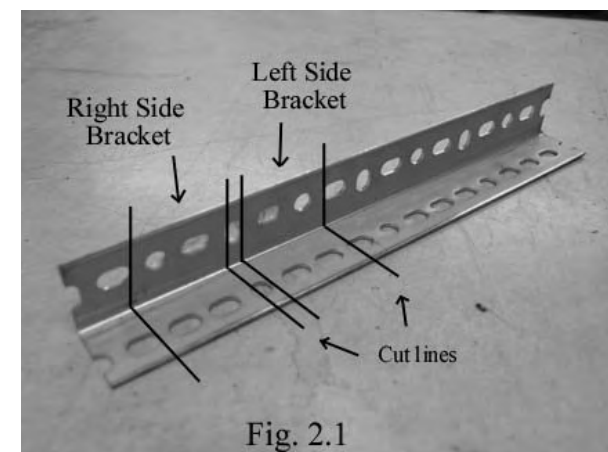
It obviously goes without saying—but I'll say it anyway—that your price may vary since one of the benefits of building your own pedal-set is that you can select the materials you're going to use; titanium pedals, anyone?

Bruce estimates that the materials he used for his pedals cost about \$215. Todd, to make things easier for people who don't want to spend ages investigating the net for the best materials, has even included recommended websites to purchase the harder-to-find products, and scoped out which of the 'big box' hardware stores have the parts you need. And here you begin to understand that this is not some fly-by-night DIY-guide: Todd has thought this thing out, and his Guide provides a thorough rendering of both the practical work, along with the decisions needed *before* construction commences.

Bruce recommends purchasing the parts on an 'as needed' basis. This allows the builder to determine which parts will work, and which will not. Those of us who have undertaken similar projects will immediately understand the importance of this, because there is nothing worse than coming home with hardware that is just not suited for the job at hand. By purchasing the parts as you go (with the exception of the long lead-time parts from web suppliers), you gain build-experience, and can get the right part the first time round.

I read through the chapters, and followed the included—and very detailed—photos to visualize what it would be like to actually build the pedals. Each step is very well documented, and highly specific. I would

imagine that building pedals from these plans would be relatively easy, and Bruce confirms that is the case. If you are detail oriented (*or orientated if you're not American and know that the orient is East!—Ed*), and hate guessing 'what happens next', take a look at this sample from Chapter One of the Guide.



Chapter 1—Hardware Fabrication

§ Refer to figures for each section

§ Rod-end Brackets: Qty. 6 w/ Clutch, 4 w/o Clutch

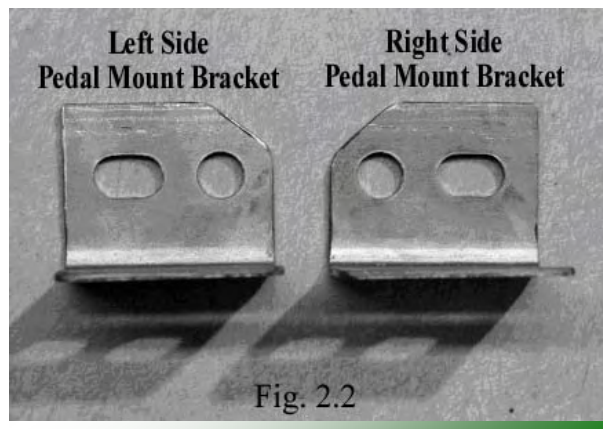
§ Cut 4"x 4"x 3/4" angle brackets to 2 3/8"x 3".

§ Drill centered 1/4" holes at 1" and 2" from the corner of the 2 3/8" side.

§ Drill centered 1/4" hole at 2 1/2" from the corner of the 3" side.

§ Verify that there is an existing hole located at approximately 1 3/8" from the corner of the 3" side. If not, then drill 1/4" a centered hole at this location.

§ Drill a 1/8" hole centered at 1/8" from each edge as shown. You will be using one bracket with this 1/8" hole and one without it for both the throttle and clutch pedal. The brake pedal does not require the 1/8" hole.



For those of you who read this and began scratching your head, fear not, because each step is meticulously detailed by a self-explanatory photograph. Chapter One, Part One—which is copied above—consists of five different tasks that, when completed, will result in finishing all of the metal fabrication for the pedals themselves. There are fifteen photos accompanying the five steps detailed in Chapter One, each carefully chosen to illuminate all the sections in the plans (and their rendition) where trouble may arise. The photos—in both color and black and white—are very clear, and show precisely the outcome of each accompanying step.

Bruce says that build time took approximately twenty hours, with an additional hour to calibrate the unit, as well as adjusting it (the angle of it in the cockpit, the pedal travel, and so forth.) for his personal taste. He spread out the construction over a month of weekends. Having, as I mentioned, taken the time to read the Guide—twice—I think it would be accurate to say that an experienced project-oriented person could easily finish the pedals in the same amount of time.

If you can cut, sand and paint wood, cut, de-burr and drill metal, and know how to use a soldering iron, then you should have no trouble at all following Todd's Guide.

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However, what sets this Guide apart is in the after-sales advice and help you can obtain from CST. If a problem does arise, Todd assures me, CST is there to help. Todd answers all emails personally, and maintains a forum for his customers to discuss build issues, ask questions, and make suggestions for improvement. Bruce told me that there were only two sections where he, "got stuck", and both were resolved with Todd's help in very short order. Todd even sent Bruce a part that he could not locate himself to help solve the problem.

Since Bruce has actually built these pedals, and is now driving with them, I asked him how they felt, and what he liked and disliked about them.

"The Pedals feel awesome and very realistic," Bruce told me. "The throttle feels very good—it's moderately stiff, but doesn't get my leg tired. The clutch is pretty stiff, too, but it feels natural. The brake pedal feels exactly as

you would expect ... the pedal initially moves with relatively easy pressure. Then it stiffens up, and becomes more pressure-oriented than movement oriented. The more I push on the pedal, the more the brakes work, and my foot only moves a little—but the pressure is greater. If I want to ease up on the brakes to prevent a wheel from locking up, I just relax the pressure on the pedal, and it reduces the braking effect. This," he concludes, referring to the mass-produced pedal-sets, "is much more realistic than having to move my foot to relax brake pressure."

Part of the thrill of building the pedal-set, for Bruce, is in knowing that he built the pedals himself, and that he has created something that rivals many of the best, and 'boutique' pedal-sets on the market.

The pedal-set, moreover, being fully adjustable in all respects—height, travel, starting/ending position, and required pressure—allows for total customization. Another great thing about having more realistic pedals, Bruce informed me, is that you no longer need to drive in your socks due to the lack of feel; with a set of slippers or race shoes, you still have enough feel with these pedals to drive very well. So far, Bruce has found nothing to complain about. However, he would have done only one thing differently if he could (and might) do it again—that being to eliminate the 'dead pedal'.

So have the pedals affected Bruce's driving at all? Bruce replies that when he first started out using the pedals, he was definitely slower—the learning curve thing—and it took some time to get accustomed to the new hardware. He was actually in the habit of resting his left foot on the brake (a dirty habit he dragged with him from his plastic pedal days), which resulted in what was effectively an anchoring effect, and that slowed him down until he noticed it on his telemetry reading.

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Now that he's become used to the pedals, however, with acclimation and track time, he says that he, "can't say for certain (and it would require a lot of A/B switching between pedals to accurately determine), but I believe I brake better now than I did before {I began using} these pedals. I can go slightly deeper, and control my wheel lockup better. I've compared the telemetry, and I do brake slightly later than before. I can also 'light' brake *much* better (when I only want to brake thirty-to-seventy percent)—the feel of the pedal makes it much easier to control how much pressure I'm applying."

Overall, Bruce is very satisfied with his creation, and insists that creating a custom-pedal-set without Todd's plans would have been a far different—and far more time-consuming and difficult—experience. They were

a greatly rewarding project, and, Bruce insists, can be built by anyone who likes to build 'stuff'. Todd, too, was a great source of advice and help, and has designed, "a great product".

From the look of the plans, I would tend to agree. If you are in the market for a new set of pedals, or if you're toying with the idea of building your own set, and you aren't afraid to get stuck into a project, then I would highly recommend the DIY Pedal Guide from CST. The Guide, along with Todd's patience and willingness to go the extra mile to make sure you're satisfied with the product, makes this a must-have for all those DIY guys and gals out there who have been procrastinating about building a pedal-set ... there's no time like the present!

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Back Straight

Hyper Active Racing

Ivan Askew spends some time with Malcolm Seakins of Hyper Active Racing, a rare success story in the cut-throat world of commercial sim-racing. So what is the secret to running a successful center? And how did he manage to secure the exclusive rights for the full-range of Microsim Products—and why is he looking for world-wide retailers and distributors? If you're looking to start a budding sim-business, Malcolm may just be your go-to guy!

IvanAskew



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The history of sim-centers makes for depressing reading: The community is strewn with well-intentioned and well run facilities that were, for a myriad of reasons, unable to sustain themselves commercially over a long period. Some, however, have managed to survive, and, of those, perhaps a handful have managed to achieve any kind of commercial success. Last month, AUTOSIMSPORT profiled one of the more glamorous attempts that, sadly, also ended with shut doors along with some fabulous memories.

So it is somewhat of a welcome surprise to learn that in Australia—in Canberra, to be precise—there is a sim-center that has been in business for close to three years, and which remains not only commercially viable, but is positively flourishing: This, indeed, would make it somewhat of a model of how a successful operation should be run.



Since opening the doors to their sim-racing center in 2004, Hyper Active Racing have gone from strength-to-strength, and are now in the enviable position of being the only licensed entity in Australia and New Zealand to manufacture, retail, and distribute the full range of Microsim Racebase Cockpits and Accessories. With this license in hand, they are now actively searching world-wide for retailers and distributors.

Malcolm Seakins, director and owner of Hyper Active Racing, was kind enough to give me some of his thoughts on what it takes to run a successful sim-

racing center—as well as giving us a closer look at why he believes Microsim's cockpits are the leaders in the market.

Malcolm himself was a budding race-driver in his early life, messing about in the real-world of Class Australia, and Stock 100 Go-KARTS; his youthful interest, however, faded as he grew older and was faced with the specter of mounting costs and diminishing time. It was around then that he—like so many sim-racers before and since—found his way into the world of simulation.



Malcolm started sim-racing back in the NASCAR 2 days where, he recalls, he “used to race in leagues that were run offline, and also over a gaming network by the name of Kali—that is, racing over IP which was, back then, simply state of the art for sim-racing, and a real buzz! From there, as the NASCAR Series continued and evolved, so did I, and I even got stuck into slinging clay with DTR, DTR2, and World of Outlaws Sprint Cars. So I guess,” he concludes, “that I have been sim-racing now for some ten years, or close to it. I would say that gives my company and me a fair start in the market of sim-racing.”

In early 2004, Malcolm began looking around to see whether there was an opportunity, commercially, that would enable him to translate his hobby—sim-racing—into a sustainable business venture. He quickly settled on the idea of a race centre. “After making the decision to go into business for myself,” Malcolm takes up the story, “we set about finding a suitable product to use for simulation-racing in a commercial environment.”

Malcolm notes that, with his background in Information Technology, the transition into running a sim-centre was something of a natural progression and, “after some investigation into a few companies, we decided to utilise the products manufactured by Microsim Design—they were the Microsim Racebase Cockpits and Accessories. For the look, value, and

transportability in a simulation-racing cockpit—not to mention price—their product took us in straight away, and hasn’t let us down in design, manufacture, or functionality.”

Decision made, Malcolm purchased six cockpits (they now have seven) and opened up the center. And here, of course, is where he deviates from so many that have come before him ... his center was an immediate success. How did he achieve this?

“The thing that keeps our racers coming back week after week,” Malcolm explains, “is the friendships that have been struck up through simulation-racing at our centre, and the thought of beating one of the talented drivers we have racing here, and racing for something physical that we provide like trophies, free track hours, and other various prizes.”

To draw interest, Hyper Active Racing have opened the center to a variety of novel competitions and races, with the primary focus being targeted on finding unique ways to foster competition that cannot be found in the more sterile world of cyber-online racing. One of these unique competitions that have proven successful is the endurance races.

“The endurance races,” Malcolm explain, “brings {to our clients} another aspect that is missing in online racing, and that is physically doing driver changes in the pits and so forth—out gets the current driver, and in gets his team mate—and they assist each other by getting things set for the incoming driver to commence his stint. We also have endurance racing such as the HAR 500 (Hyper Active Racing 500) that gets raced at Sandown, and also the HAR 1000 (Hyper Active Racing 1000) run at Australia’s famous Mount Panorama Bathurst, and these are both raced in our Aussie V8 Supercars. Both of these endurance races involved at least two drivers per car, and sometimes three.



“We were looking at running a twenty-four-hour race in November this year, too,” he adds, “and this would have involved running the race at two times the time rate over a twelve-hour period to give us the twenty-four-hour time frame required. That has been now shifted back to this first half of 2007, and there is quite a lot of interest in that one, let me tell you.”

Over and above coming up with unique formats to attract sim-racers, Hyper Active Racing is also more than happy to cater to the individual needs of their clients. “We will run any type of league that a group wants to race, and not restrict anyone from racing what they want. This could be from a seven week series racing Renault Gordini League, to a Porsche Carrera Cup Summer Sprint that we’re running over the Christmas period, to a full season of Formula One. Speaking of Formula One, we have a full season that commences on the 25th of December with nineteen rounds to decide the Formula One Champion. The winner of that will take home the glory, along with an Mk2 cockpit plan kit, and also the winner’s trophy. Not bad for doing a hobby you love.”

Another aspect that has contributed to the success of the sim-center, according to Malcolm, is the triple-L of real-estate: Location, location, location. “We found,” he says, “that there was a motor-racing niche in the market in Canberra. We used to host a round of the V8 Supercar Championship but, a few years ago, we lost that due to political decisions, and because of the time of year it was

run. We also no longer have a drag strip or a speedway. We have a couple of Go-KART tracks here, but people that wanted something new, and something to give them their motor-racing adrenaline rush, had nowhere really to go. So I think we have hit the nail on the head. About an hour from here we have Wakefield Park Raceway, which hosts the V8 Supercar Development Series, so that is about as close to V8 Supercar racing we get here now."

This relative drought of real-world motor-sport—in a country that is notoriously fixated by all things motorized—has resulted in an interest in sim-racing, particularly in a setting where guys and gals can get together and not only race, but do so in a social setting.

"At Hyper Active Racing," says Malcolm, "we put an emphasis on a friendly racing environment. Though in saying that," he adds, "the racers that run at our simulation-racing centre don't come down here to run second. They are here to win."

In order to attract further interest, Malcolm retains his links with the sim-racing community, in particular with leagues that wish to take the logical next step in their season—that is, running races together face-to-face, so to speak.

"We have had discussions with one of the websites we sponsor, and in the future are looking at running in their leagues, and also striking up a league where their guys can run with us and have the opportunity to race for trophies that we provide, and not just bragging rights within their league," explains Malcolm. "We are very actively involved in the simulation-racing community, and we currently sponsor two websites, and are in the final stages of a major sponsorship with an online racing team that takes their simulation-racing quite seriously. But then again," he adds, "once you start sim-racing, everyone pretty much takes their racing seriously, and hate to not be competitive!"



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The philosophy for Hyper Active Racing is one of promoting and fostering friendship and competition between racers. For instance, "another added bonus of running in a racing centre is the driver out of the cockpit isn't just sitting there watching a monitor waiting to get back in again; his job is to relay anything he can see that has happened on the track or in the pits back to his team mate. You also find teams talking to each other as to what has happened at other stages during the race, so even though there is fierce competition here, there is also a great sense of 'mateship', as they have the same thing in common."

When Hyper Active Racing first opened their doors, they were more than happy to run practically all available sims: "Software such as NASCAR 2003, GPL, GTR, and GTL. Oh, and I better not forget the popular World of Outlaws Sprint Cars! I have to tell you," adds Malcolm, "that watching drivers' faces and the laughter and intense

racing that goes on while running World of Outlaws Sprint Cars—well, suffice it to say we will never take this software away from our public. They just love finishing of a session with a few races around the clay and letting their hair down having a blast with these powerful winged monsters!"

But as time progressed, it made sense for Malcolm to focus on one sim for all his—and his clients'—racing needs. "With the simulation-racing world welcoming all the fantastic things that are being released with ISI's rFactor, we have decided that we will run this software only. Everything that people want to race is catered for in rFactor, and that option of running a full field of cars is just an added bonus."

Part of the spin-off of running a successful racing-center is that Malcolm can freely advertise the joys of cockpits to his clients: "We encourage people to get the most out of their simulation-racing," Malcolm explains, "and that also means getting away from your computer desk, and into a simulation-racing cockpit, whether it is at home, or at our race centre—if you are lucky enough to live nearby."

Seeing the popularity of the cockpits in the sim-center convinced Malcolm that here was a unique opportunity.

"Microsim Design had seen how passionate we were about simulation-racing," Malcolm says, "and how we operate, and we were offered the opportunity to obtain the only license in Australia and New Zealand to manufacture, retail and distribute the range of Microsim Racebase Cockpits and Accessories. We had no hesitation in acquiring it, as we stand behind the product we have used going on towards two years now in our racing-simulation centre. At times, some over-anxious racers have given the cockpits a very hard work out, and they have stood the test of time, with drivers ranging from ages ten to late fifties, and older! So there is testament that our product is for everyone! They are very light weight, yet extremely tough, and when it comes to simulation-racing, those are two very important things you require in your product."



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Table, Wheel, Pedals, Driver, Suit, and Helmet not included! G-Seat Prototype Shown.

Malcolm believes that, "if you are racing at a computer desk, you are stopping yourself from being as competitive and consistent as you can be. Believe me, I have been there and chased those pedals around under the desk, struggling to keep concentration to where it should be—on the track! Trying to put the pedals back into some normal place so you can reach them again with

your feet, only to hit someone in front of you—we've all been there! With the technology coming out today, why only half-appreciate what you can have in your simulation-racing? Get into a Racebase Cockpit and start making your races count, get those time dropping, and get to the top of the championship points table! Ernest De Angelist did and took out the

2002 World Drivers Championship in a Racebase MK3 Cockpit."

"Our products are now available to anyone, anywhere in the world through [our online store](#)."

Malcolm explains that, "Microsim Design is now looking for retailers and distributors anywhere in the world. Basically," he adds, "they need to contact me, and I

will take things from there. The model is simple: Once other geographical areas get distributors and retailers in various parts of the world, I will drop out of those areas, as they are the sole company that can distribute and retail in those areas once licensed with Microsim. So if you are active in the motor-racing industry, or are involved in simulation racing or the gaming industry, contact [us](#) for further details."

Microsim Design



Microsim Design Pty Ltd has been developing personal simulation cockpits for the home environment since 1994. Their early cockpit prototypes explored a number of concepts—from racing and flight simulation to multi-purpose designs. Microsim has also developed game controllers for both PCs and games consoles as well as developing experimental motion bases.

Microsim's designers are professional engineers with a passion for developing simulation technology, specialising in micro-computer based vehicle simulation. The Microsim talent pool has experience in many areas of design & manufacturing, including; manufacturing technology, mechanical component design, industrial design, machine vision, robotics & motion bases, programming, electronics, the computer entertainment and amusement industries. Revolution



The Racebase concept has revolutionised the way people race at home. The Racebase R6 was born in 1998 to satisfy the growing need for a racing simulation cockpit that can support a wide range of readily-available steering controllers. We had three essential objectives;

Functionality

Racebase cockpits are designed with the player seated comfortably in a racing position. Racebase can be used with PCs, PlayStation, Playstation 2 or any other console which has a steering controller. Support for PC monitors, keyboards & mice is also available.

Style

The sleek flowing lines on the Racebase conjures up emotions of power, speed and control. Racebase cockpits are not designed to look like a car and you won't find useless paraphernalia like wings, mirrors or seat belts. Instead, the Racebase design is an abstracted form that creates its own genre. It's a computer game cockpit and it is equally suited to Rally, F1, Touring Car, Karting or any other form of motorsport simulation.



Cost

Microsim understands the importance of cost. Our designs are carefully optimised for their purpose, resulting in refreshingly simple and efficient mechanisms. That is why our cockpits cost only a few hundred dollars, instead of thousands. Microsim is constantly researching innovations that promise to reduce the cost of our products without compromising style or functionality.

Racebase R6 Mk III

The main design goal of the R6 Mk III was to make the cockpit almost completely adjustable while racing -- or at least while the game is paused -- without having to move from inside the cockpit. We also wanted to make the Mk3 even more configurable, more compatible and easier to use than any previous cockpit.

After 2 years of development, the result was a complete re-design and the introduction of our new patented adjustment mechanism, dramatically improving the ease of adjustment.

The R6 Mk III is also now manufactured by computer-controlled robot routing equipment, providing the very fine tolerances necessary for this new design.



The Mk III can be ordered in a pre-fabricated 'knockdown' form ready for drivers who want to be up and racing within minutes or in a deluxe 'Ready To Race' version featuring a high-quality epoxy 2-pack automotive finish.

Features

- § Steering wheel adjustable for reach & tilt.
- § New anti-lift steering wheel adjustment mechanism.
- § Increased adjustment for even the tallest drivers.
- § Stylish new look.
- § Optimised light weight design.

- § Advanced fastening system that requires no screws, glue or nails.
- § Body-hugging moulded racing seat available as an option.
- § Drive in a real racing position.
- § Improve your lap times.
- § Racebase fits into any car for easy transport.
- § Packs up in seconds for easy storage.
- § Works with PC & console steering wheels.
- § The most cost-effective cockpit solution available anywhere.
- § Monitor Platform, Keyboard & Mouse Station, Subwoofer Plinth and other options also available.

Specifications

Assembled Size:

- § Standard configuration (mm): 600W 500H 1600L.
- § With moulded racing seat option (mm): 600W 500H 1600L.

Storage Footprint:

- § Standard Configuration: 500mm x 500mm.
- § With moulded racing seat option: 600mm x 500mm.
- § Unit Weight (unpainted, excluding controllers)
- § Standard Configuration: 14Kg.
- § With moulded racing seat option: 12Kg.

Driver Accommodation:

- § Minimum Height: 4' 6" (137cm).
- § Maximum Height: 6' 8" (203cm).
- § Assembly Time: 10-15 minutes.

The Pre-Fabricated Mk3 Kit arrives with all hardware included in the package and complete instructions so it's ready to paint in your custom team colours and assemble with no cutting or drilling.

The Ready-to-Race Mk3 Kit arrives with all panels professionally painted with hard-wearing automotive 2-pack epoxy and complete illustrated assembly instructions so you will be up and racing in mere minutes.

[Steve McCormick](#) from [Your Guide to NASCAR Racing](#) gave the MKIII a guide rating of 5/5.

AUTOSIMSPORT

T4

RaúlValenzuela

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Champ Car World Series 2006— Season Finale

Raúl Valenzuela gets behind—and inside—the scenes at Champ Car's final round for AUTOSIMSPORT. Images courtesy of: GP Legacy México and AutoSimSport...



T4 Champ Car World Series 2006—Season Finale

continued

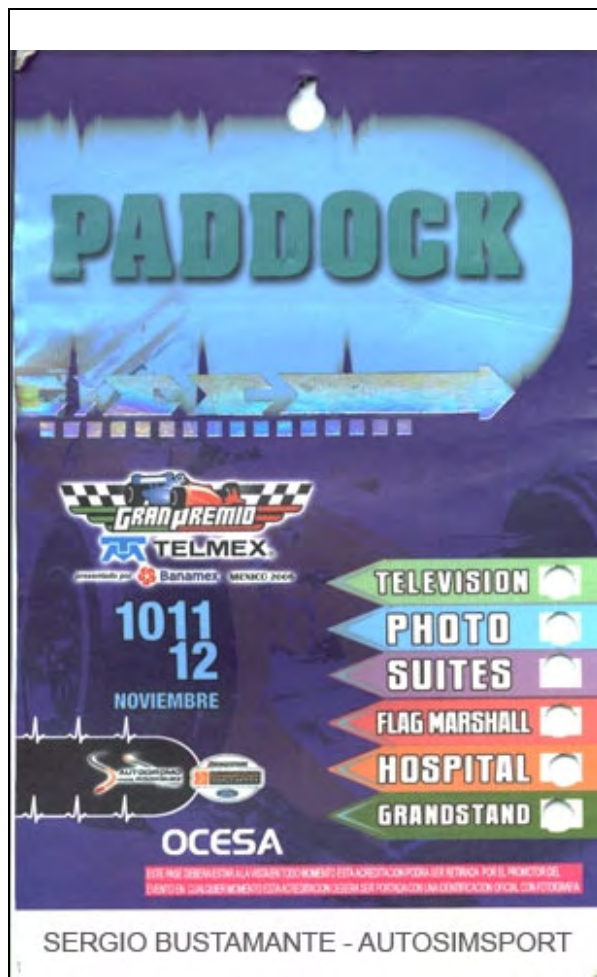


Did someone say rFactor?

AUTOSIMSPORT was present at the season-ending Champ Car race in Mexico, armed with an official press media pass, thanks to Sergio Bustamante and our partners at GPLegacy, and we're proud to bring you an exclusive photo-book of the event.

GPLegacy, too, was present with two adverts at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez; one behind the grandstands of Turn 1, and one right in the suites and interactive pavilion. Bridgestone's massive stand—featuring Formula One racing tyres, as well as promotional items, and active-entertainment such as tyre-changing competitions—also featured three GPLegacy Antartida II race-frames.

GPLegacy also presented its limited edition first-anniversary race-cap, featuring Logitech, rFactor, and the 365 days inscription in black and red caps, to the PitLane Track Marshals who duly wore them throughout the Sunday race.



GPLegacy and AUTOSIMSPORT present as official press media at the event, to bring you exclusive photos from the action.



Who says sim-racing doesn't require muscle?



Bridgestone, Passion for Excellence, and GPLegacy Mexico at the interactive area

T4 Champ Car World Series 2006—Season Finale

continued



GPLegacy Mexico Image, Logitech and our favorite rookie, Andre Almeyda, in paddock



The Panoz Champ Car for 2007 about to hit the track with Roberto Moreno behind the wheel.



Yup, pit-girls ...



GPLegacy Mexico's 365 days cap, all over the pit lane



Minutes before, Moreno wished good luck by GP Legacy



Exclusive look at the first test, in Mexico, of the Mazda Atlantic Series for 2007



Sebastian Bourdais gets up close and personal with AUTOSIMSPORT's man in Mexico—thanks very much to GPLegacy for providing us with these great photos. Notice the cap—the GPLegacy cap was worn by all the track marshals at Sunday's race and was a great boost for both sim-racing, GPLegacy, and rFactor which was heavily featured at the Bridgestone-sponsored sim-racing tent run, as always, with great professionalism by the guys from GPLegacy, led by our 'man' Sergio Bustamante ...



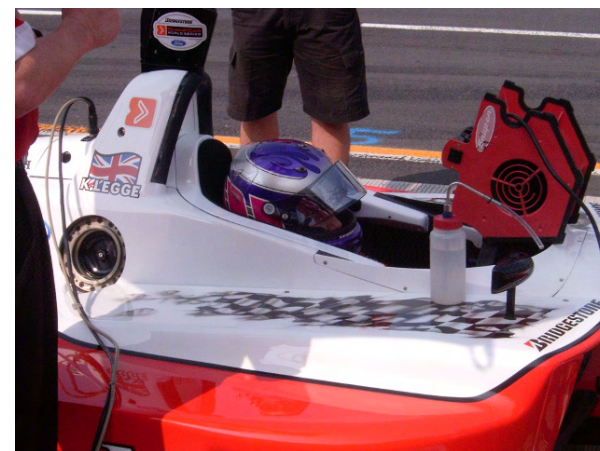
No stranger to Sim Racing, Bruno Junqueira spent some time with GPLegacy's and Autosimsport's coverage



A special picture for GPLegacy Australia's Shaun Field, Brett McCrohan, Beno, and all sim racing Australia.



The Forsythe team featuring the white stripe hard tires in David Martinez car.



Katherine Legge getting ready for her qualifying session in what would be a controversial race for her

T4 Champ Car World Series 2006—Season Finale

continued



Katherine Legge, minutes before the formation laps, with no idea about the shunt that was about to happen to Mexican hero Mario Dominguez after she made contact with him.



Bourdais taking it easy before the start ... can anyone beat this kid?



Bourdais receives the Champ Car Trophy ... once again



Katherine Legge, minutes before the formation laps, with no idea about the shunt that was about to happen to Mexican hero Mario Dominguez after she made contact with him ...



On the grid and, in the background, the clouds that would play havoc with the race ... not that Bourdais cared too much, his final lap pass was another special moment in the career of a very special driver.



End of the race, end of the season, and the teams pack-up ...



AUTOSIMSPORT
Fifth Column

Second Annual
AUTOSIMSPORT
Readers Awards

It's back—your chance to decide what's hot, what's not, and what and who will be nominated Best-in for 2006.

AUTOSIMSPORT



Another year has passed, which can only mean—it's time for the AUTOSIMSPORT Readers Awards! What was your highlight of the year? What thrilled you, what impressed you, who inspired you? This is your chance to let them know—so go vote at our webpage, and we'll announce your selections in January's Issue!

Best Simulation

Old or new, it doesn't much matter because a great sim does not age—ask GPL. So, what is the best simulation money can buy?

The Nominees:

GTR2

netKarPRO

RACE

LiveForSpeed

NASCAR Sim Racing (Electronic Arts)

NASCAR Racing 2003 Season (Papyrus)

Other

Winner 2005: Live For Speed

Best Mod

What would life be without mods? This was a bone of serious contention amongst us—not what life would be without them, but, rather, which to select! We decided we would only nominate six per category which meant that some great mods would not be on the official nominees list? But which ones? rFactor alone has over ten mods that should all be considered best-in category ... and that's to ignore the amazing mods released for NASCAR Racing 2003, and not to mention the incredible work still being done to GPL ... with this in mind, we decided to try and be a little 'creative'! But remember, you can ignore our nominees and vote for 'other'! Also, we hope there won't be too much controversy over one of our selections which will only be released after you read this issue: We are assured, however, that it will be released before Christmas. Many of us here, however, have been beta-testing this mod, and we're pretty sure it warrants its selection here.

The Nominees:

V8Factor—[Team ORSM](#)

GP79—Grand Prix Classics

NAPmod—Anonymous

F1 2005—[CTDP](#)

Data Acquisition Plugin for rFactor—[DanZ](#)

GPL 69 mod—69mod Team

Other

Winner 2005: F3 for rFactor—Laurent "Lo" Evenisse

Most Anticipated Simulation

Many great sims are in the works; some, like iRacing.com's sim, have been in the works for over two years, and others, like Racing Legends, for even longer. So which are you following? Which sim-site do you have bookmarked, and check regularly for updates? Which is the sim that will conquer the community, and bring us all back to racing one sim?

The Nominees:

Unnamed iRacing sim—[iRacing.com](#)

Unnamed Ferrari sim—[Blimey! Games](#)

ARCA RE/MAX Series—[The Sim Factory](#)

Driver's Republic—[Simcito.com](#)

Racing Legends—[West Racing](#)

KartSim—[Primer Interactive](#)

Other

Winner 2005: netKarPRO

Best Sim-Racing Website

Is it the forums? The news? The chit-chat? What brings you back time-and-time again?

The Nominees:

BlackHole Motorsports

The USPits

rFactor Central

RACER

DrivingItalia.net

Race Sim Central

Other

Winner 2005: Race Sim Central

Sim Personality Of The Year

Who contributed the most to sim-racing during 2006? This category was, yet again, one in which we had to cut our personal favorites. Don't see your name on the list? Well, vote for yourself and get your friends to do the same!

The Nominees:

Ian Bell—For creating SimBin, then moving on to form Blimey! Games and securing the biggest license in sim-racing—Ferrari.

Denny Hamlin—For taking every opportunity to pump-up the credibility of sim-racing as a training tool, and for finishing third in that horribly contrived Nextel Cup race!

Stu Griffiths—For showing the big guys what is possible when real passion, dedication and commitment are put into a project. The project in question being Bathurst for rFactor.

Eric Alexander—For RACER, a fantastic concept that brings together the best of pick-up races along with the best in league racing. And the prizes aren't bad either!

Gjon Camaj—For believing there was enough talent in the community to bring the vision of rFactor world to fruition. And being right.

Pete Walsh—For rFactor Central, without which rFactor would not be close to the sim that it is. Without a doubt the most important resource for rFactor.

Winner 2005: Victor van Vlaardingem .

RACER Review: A Year In The Making

Eric Alexander's online racing association for sim-racers has gone from strength-to-strength, and, with the end of a successful year very much on his mind, Eric takes us on a trip down memory lane: the best of RACER 2006.

EricAlexander



It was a little over a year ago that I emailed AUTOSIMSPORT's Jon Denton and Alex Martini about the idea of a big rTrainer Formula Festival named The RacerAlex Cup. Both Jon and Alex were very supportive, and within a week after the first draft email, we had a private forum on AUTOSIMSPORT's website to discuss it.

But this inaugural race was merely the tip of the iceberg. What I really wanted was an online racing association for sim-racing enthusiasts. In my past league experience, I noticed that high numbers of drivers would turn out in the first races—but those members would then trail off as the season dragged on. Many leagues run seasons of ten to fifteen races and, in the end, you had the three guys fighting for the championship, and another three or four die-hards. Seven drivers—while personal and fun—don't make for big thrills in online racing. So my idea was to create a 'league' based more on the overall sim-racing experience.

This meant that, rather than selecting a series and mimicking a season, we'd hold monthly races that would differ (as far as car types and tracks) from month to month. Next part of the equation: Amass a huge pool of drivers to draw from and try to lure twenty to thirty racers each month to enter that month's unique event. The simple philosophy on which the entire idea was tagged was that, for sim-racers that have real-life commitments, they could pick and choose which races to enter based on schedule and personal tastes. Every month, the slate would be wiped clean, and all the drivers would come to the track with one goal—win this event. Afterwards, we 'pack up the gear', get back to real life, and keep an eye on the website for what was coming up next.

Yet another aspect was accountability. We needed somehow to hold drivers accountable, in order to raise the bar. And from that I developed RACER (Regulated Association of Championship Electronic Racing), and created the RACER license. By licensing the drivers, we

had something to take away, and a means of providing entry validation. It's as simple as this: Everyone is welcome to race. But failure to follow the rules or show proper sportsmanship can have you removed from the association.

Bill Brown from GSXN was contacted and I secured a forty-slot rFactor server. In addition, I purchased webspace and a domain, and set out to design the website. It was tough going in the beginning. My html skills had grown rusty and PHP was new to me. Still, I soldiered on and built the site and, before I knew it, 2005 drew to a close and RACER went live. We were racing headlong towards our first official event!

**RacerAlex Cup rTrainer Formula Festival
Birmingham MotorPlex
January 28th - 29th 2006**



The RacerAlex Cup was our first event and was designed to replicate a regional Formula Ford Festival—complete with heat races and a B-main race. This basic underlying concept of building a 'race weekend' would become a staple of RACER's official events. Drivers would spend a fair amount of time preparing for the event, then run multiple races over the entire weekend. By setting up heats, last chance shoot-outs and pre-mains, drivers have a chance to race their way into the main, and overcome a poor showing or incident in the early part of the weekend.

Being our first event, we were in uncharted territory. Would we get a good turn out? Would drivers adhere to the driving code? Would the server support an official race with a large field and where timing and scoring really counts?

In Race Control, I had Gonzo Beaty and Tony Watts with me. Ryan Freeman also joined in to help when he wasn't racing. For us, we were still working out the routine. How do we view the race? How do we communicate with the drivers not on TeamSpeak? How do we identify drivers on the track? All things that would soon enough would become second nature for us in Race Control. But in the first few races, it was defiantly in beta form.

Saturday January 28th

All four Saturday heat races went off without a hitch as the 2006 RACER season kicked off. Over thirty drivers took to the track on the first day's heat races. While some entered drivers 'no-showed', the overall field was large enough to make the event successful.

Ryan Field made history on that Saturday by winning the first RACER heat. Ryan Field took pole position and led all twenty-laps. Jaron Mott chased Field closely but never was able to mount an attempt at overtaking the young driver and came home in second place. Jonas Steffans finished third and rounded out the podium for

the first heat. All three advanced to the main event for the RacerAlex Cup.

Heat 2 was a titanic battle for twenty laps between Eduardo Martinez and Scott Warren. The two drivers ran nose-to-tail the entire race and were never separated by more than a second. Martinez was heavy on his tyres but pulled off the victory. Warren tried hard and came within inches of Martinez' gearbox on several occasions in the two final corners at Birmingham MotorPlex. But in the end, Warren decided second place—and a spot in the main—was better than to risk throwing it away in a failed pass attempt.

The afternoon races saw race winners George Sandman (Heat 3) and Martin Gerdje (Heat 4) put in nice runs to claim the top podium step. Ryan Freeman and Michael 'Thunder Dog' Muldoon finished second in the afternoon heats while Henry Pinasky and Marc Gravett rounded off the podiums.

All these drivers advanced to Sunday's main event, as the first twelve entry spots are set. The entire first day's racing saw only two retirements from accidents.

Sunday January 29th

Day two began at 10:00 a.m. when the Birmingham MotorPlex opens for official practice for all pre-main drivers. This was their last shot at the final eight positions left open in the main event later in the day. Track designer Scott Juliano had finished outside of the top three in his Saturday heat race. This meant he would have to race his way into the main from the B-main. This he did by winning the Sunday B-main from his fifth place starting position in one of the highlights of the weekend.

In the main race, pole-sitter George Sandman and Martin Gjerde went at it for fifty laps. Martin got the hole shot at the start and lead into the first turn. Both ran hard and mistake-free races, with Gjerde edging out Sandman by 7.2 seconds at the checkered flag. Ryan Freeman rounded out the final podium.

The first race was a success. The forum was a buzz with drivers trading stories and recalling their weekend. RACER had been born.

Eric's Race Control moment: "As we advanced into the main event race session, Tony, Gonzo and I watched helplessly as all the cars disappeared on the start grid. Keep in mind: We had yet to host this many cars on the racing server. We waited, breath held tight a few seconds. And right as Ryan Field was typing 'I can't see anyone,' all the cars suddenly reappeared. The red lights lit up, the green was shown and the first annual RacerAlex Cup was underway ... thank God!"

TrackIR Carrera Super Cup Orchard Lake Speedway (roadcourse)



February 25th – 26th 2006

February saw NaturalPoint come on as an event sponsor. The TrackIR Carrera Super Cup race at Orchard Lake Speedway would award a brand new TrackIR 4:PRO to the main event winner. This, combined with the popularity of the Porsche Carrera Cup GT3s, saw a record forty-eight drivers enter the event. Among those were RacerAlex Cup champion Martin Gjerde, and real-life racer David Greco.

RACER officials decided the banking on the Orchard Lake oval would make a standing start risky, so we prepared for our first rolling start event. It was a risky decision, but one thing we never did in 2006 was shy away from risk. RACER was about experiencing all forms and styles of racing. While rolling starts on public servers usually end in chaos, we decided that our drivers were up to the task. And we were right to believe this.

Saturday February 25th

Saturday heat races rolled into the record books ... literally. The rolling starts were extremely exciting to witness. But the final race on Saturday was the Last Chance Shoot-out, where drivers who have failed to advance into either Sunday race get one more shot, was a barn-burner! The LCS rolling start was picture perfect as the drivers took the green. Charlie Bonsall, who started from second place on the grid, went on the run a near flawless race for top honors. Rich Dozier and Enzo Trede finished in second and third places respectively.

The battle for fourth, which was the final position to move drivers into Sunday's race day activities, was heated and three drivers traded places for much of the race. Doyt Cox held on the position with four laps to go in the twenty-lap race. But Bill Creasman grabbed the spot on lap seventeen. On Lap eighteen, Mark Pearce made a diving pass for the place but ran wide on the apex allowing Creasman to regain the spot. Bill held on for two more nerve-racking laps to earn his place in the B-main.

Sunday February 26th

In the Sunday main event, Martin Gjerde defied the odds to claim his second championship in as many events. Gjerde drove a perfect race to beat pole sitter David Greco to the line by just over two seconds. The final ten laps of the race saw Greco close the gap to as little as half a second, but Gjerde held position under great pressure to pull off the win. For doing so, NaturalPoint awarded Gjerde a brand new, state-of-the-art TrackIR 4:PRO head tracking system.

David Greco showed incredible pace all weekend, nailing sub 1 minute and 20 second laps in both days that he ran. He ran a strong race but could not get past the RacerAlex Cup champion after running wide at the race start and losing the lead.

The day had its share of drama from the start. After five earlier weekend races went without a hitch, the main had a minor accident on the pace lap leading up to the rolling start. Scott Juliano tagged the car ahead of Kyle Williams and the resulting incident caused stop and go penalties for at least five drivers including Juliano. The race was allowed to start and this became a hot topic in the post-race debrief. Despite this shaky beginning to the main, drivers got on with the business of tackling the Orchard Lake Road Course with their PCC'05 Porsche GT-3 cup cars. After a grueling day (drivers running the mornings B-main and the main raced for close to six hours) the results were impressive: thirty-two day-two drivers, seventy racing laps, and only three retirements!

Eric's Race Control Moment: *"The start of the main was pure chaos in Race Control! We had Gonzo on the driver's TeamSpeak channel trying to sort out the back of the grid as they rolled around Orchard Lake to take the green flag. By the time he got back to us in the main RC channel, the leaders were flat out on the front straight. That was a tough call to make—not the restart the race. But the one thing I learned is its better to not restart and deal with some of the*

drivers' frustrations, than to restart and risk an altogether different issue being created on the second attempt. After all, there will always be the driver who got away cleanly the first time who ends up getting a poor start on the restart. Because of this, restarts should always be a last resort and only if it impacts a large portion of the starting grid."

rF3 International Sweepstakes

Toban Raceway Park

March 18th – 19th 2006

rF3 International Sweepstakes

March 18 - 19 2006
Toban Raceway Park

March 18th
rF3 Heat Races
11:00am
3:00pm
R-Trainer Qualifier
1:00pm

March 19th
rF3 Main Event
2:00pm
R-Trainer Main Event
12:00noon

rF3 open to all class A and B licensed RACERS. R-Trainer open to all class B and C licensed RACERS. Drivers may only compete in one vehicle class.

featuring
R-Trainer Advanced
support race

AUTOSIMSPORT
Slidin' the Sport into the Sim

Kick off Toban Raceway Parks
2006 season with over
2 million in renovations!

In March, we tried a new approach to an event: We split the drivers into three categories—class A, B, and C. This ranking marked overall skill level and this would be the first of many 2006 events designed to get like-skilled drivers together. The A-class drivers would enter the rF3 race where as C-class drivers and rookies (drivers who didn't compete in the prior two races) would run a separate rTrainer support race. B-class driver could choose between the two races.

Classification was, and is, a laborious task. We had to arrive at a benchmark time, then grade drivers based on their lap times. Ultimately, this method proved too laborious. It is RACER's intention to move towards using RaceCast rRanking in the future. But the concept of this ranking is important to our events where we try to group like-skilled drivers together. Most of the time, raw speed on the track is directly correlated to track time. Understanding that not every sim-racer has the chance to run laps all day, we feel driver classification allows us to effectively switch up the events and competition levels to make it fun for everyone.

Saturday March 18th

On Saturday, twenty of the fastest rF3 RACERS would avoid elimination in two separate heat races to advance to Sunday's main event. Meanwhile fifteen drivers, including eleven rookies, were entered into the rTAdvanced race. The Trainers would hit the track at 1:00pm on Saturday for a twenty-lap qualifier, which set the grid for Sunday's twelve noon support race main event.

TrackIR Carrera Super Cup runner-up David Greco won the first rF3 heat race of the weekend. David led every lap of a race that featured a full-course caution on lap 4. Scott Warren and Rik Zeppelin rounded out the podium in second and third places respectively. The race was a turn of bad luck for the double champion Martin Gjerde. He

was collected in an off when Jonas Steffens spun ahead of him. He retired four laps later with suspension damage.

In the rTrainer qualifier, Michael Hausknecht charged to the front, after starting from fourth on the grid to claim victory. This meant Michael would start the Main rTAdvanced race from pole position Sunday at noon. Jean-Philippe Piaia and pole-sitter Russell Robitaille finished second and third. Robitaille led the race until a fuel issue forced him to pit on lap fifteen.

The support race field, which consisted of eleven rookies, raced hard and clean. All sixteen starters finished in an impressive race that had spectators on their feet. The finishing order for the Saturday qualifier race dictated how the field would line up to start the main event on Sunday.

But we still had the second rF3 heat to run, and George Sandman capped off the first day of racing with a decisive win in the afternoon rF3 heat race. Scott Michaels and Martin Steinmetz would finish second and third. This final rF3 heat race saw two drivers lose connection. Luigi Poma had been chasing DSL issues all day long. His team finally went with a 56K connection but even that failed to see him finish. Charlie Bonsall also had connection issues and he was forced to retire on lap 5.

Sunday March 19th

On Sunday, Sam Michaels won a hard fought race to claim the support race win. Michael Hausknecht, who started from the pole after winning Saturday's qualifier, finished second. Jim Gonzales rounded out the top three by finishing third. The top three were separated by only five seconds at the line after thirty laps.

The race was a thrilling race from start to finish. Michaels worked his way to second place early on in

the race. Following the pitstops, Michaels and Hausknecht re-entered the track together side-by-side. Hausknecht remained in the lead but the two would trade positions five times over the next fourteen laps. Sam Michaels made the race-winning pass on the very last lap of the race.

The rF3 International Sweepstakes had produced some of the best racing so far in 2006. And we hadn't seen anything yet! The main event turned out to be a titanic race between two of the best in the business—George Sandman and David Greco.

Sandman was on a one-stop strategy while Greco elected to stop twice. With ten laps to go, Greco was fifteen seconds behind Sandman, but was averaging two seconds a lap faster. With one lap to go, three seconds separated the two at the start-finish line. Going into the final chicane the two were nose to tail and the lapped car of David Fisher was ahead of Sandman. Coming out of the chicane, it appeared to be anyone's race. Sandman and Greco finished a mere two-tenths of a second apart to a roar of approval from the spectators. This remains the closest finish in RACER history.

Eric's Race Control Moment: "The yellow flag in the first rF3 heat caught us all by surprise. Jonas had slowed on the outside of the track trying to cross over to enter the pitlane. We had the safety car set to the game defaults, but this was enough to bring it out. In RC, we all held our breath and I started writing down who was in what position. The field lined up behind the SC and made a lazy lap or two under yellow. Suddenly the SC peeled off for the pitlane and David Greco stormed off for turn 1. We had survived our first full-course caution."

"But then the final laps of that race was something else. All of us in RC somehow stopped being the race stewards and became racing fans on the edge of our seats!"

2006 Lienz Festival of Speed

Lienz Austria

April 1st – 30th 2006



In April, RACER was honored to partner with Image Space Inc., Scott Juliano, and Logitech to organize what certainly was one of the highlights of the sim-racing year: The 2006 Lienz Festival of Speed. On the line was close to \$1,000.00 in prizes including not one, but two Logitech MOMO racing controllers! The event would be like no other by putting the emphasis on teamwork. Drivers would pair up to enter a 'team car'. Then the drivers would need to share the driving—each racing in two of the four stages. The event ran over five consecutive weeks and had seventy-two teams (over 140 drivers) enter. All drivers were competing through the first week's time trials to be one of the top forty teams to make it into the four proper 'racing stages'.

In order to accommodate teams from around the world, we set-up two 'divisions'. East division would race on Saturday nights while the West division would race

Sunday afternoons. Both divisions would have their points put onto the overall championship scoreboard and the winning team would be the one with the most points following the final stage.

In addition, and to support the team concept, the team car would start a stage from the position they finished to previous stage in. So if a team finished stage 1 in tenth place, their car would line up tenth on the starting grid for stage 2. The pole sitters for the first stage would be determined by the fastest time set in the time trials.

Time Trails

The first week time trails saw forty teams (eighty drivers) advance. Team Binary Racing (Martin Gjerde and Jonas Steffens) set the overall fastest team time and captured the pole position for the West division. AusTeam drivers Garry Cross and Raulan Grajewski took the top honors in the East division and would lead the field on Saturday evening's race.

Stage 1 (Altstadt)

Team Driving Force's Jon Edwards took a very convincing win in the first stage of the East division Lienz Festival of Speed. Jon started from seventh position on the grid and worked his way to the front, leading thirty-four laps on his way to the victory. Pole sitter Garry Cross ran up front leading a race high thirty-five-laps but finished twenty seconds behind Edwards. Third place went to Michael Orth, whose race lap consistency earned Team Matrix an additional six points. Vayline Venoms swept the top nine positions.

Team MooMoo jumped into the overall 2006 Lienz Festival championship lead following Ilka Haapala's sweep of fifty-six points in the West division race. The Flying Finn scored forty points for the win and grabbed another six for lowest average laptime consistency. Team Boletus' Jaakko Mikkonen finished second and netted an additional two points for most positions gained after

starting from fifteenth place on the grid. His wild drifts stunned crowds, as he would literally throw the car into the corners with great amounts of opposite lock. Double champion and pole sitter Martin Gjerde ran strong leading forty-three laps. With 1 lap to go and running in second place, Gjerde ran out of fuel.

Stage 2 (Foothills)

AOR Team Vanquish's Darren Marsh drove a brilliant race to take top honors in the Lienz Festival - East division 2nd stage. Marsh showed great skill and patience in what many considered the most difficult stage of Lienz. After 100 laps, only eight drivers of the nineteen starters were still on the course as 'Pinball Alley' took its usual toll on competitors. It was a thrilling race between two Aussie power squads as Austeam's Raulan Granjewski matched Marsh's pace for the first fifty laps. After Marsh pitted, Granjewski re-took the lead and appeared to be on a race winning strategy before running out of fuel as he coasted down the pitlane.

TransAtlantic Motorsports' Max Angiolucci ran a very intelligent race to finish second followed by BFT-Mortorsport's Jonas Fresenborg in third spot. Fresenborg's run from seventeenth on the starting grid netted the team two additional points for most positions gained.

Black Knight Racing's David Knight kept his head down and came away with a great win for Vayline in the West division. The Rayzors have a distinct edge on this layout and after thirty laps, Rayzors ran one-two. But Knight kept racing hard and was in position to grab the win following Russell Robitalle's Rayzors run-in with 'Pinball Alley'. Stacey Greensall, after starting twelfth, stormed through the field to finish second. And with it he claimed two additional points for most positions gained.

Stage 3 (Grand Prix)

Both drivers and officials experienced a pressure cooker Stage 3 race weekend for the 2006 Lienz

Festival of Speed. Major thunderstorms in the eastern United States proved problematic for online racing. The East division got off to a shaky start when sixty percent of all drivers were having issues connecting to the server. Race Control got help from Australia Online Racing (AoR), and the sessions got underway after an hour and a half delay. The race featured a fantastic battle up front with AoR TEAM Vanquish driver Brett Stone pulling out the victory. AusTeam's Raulan Grajewski once again battled fiercely and eventually came home in second position. Team AUTOSIMSPORT driver and famed Lienz track designer Scott Juliano rounded out the podium in third.

The West division started well as we were back on the RACER server, but continued high volume internet traffic saw pings spike at three separate occasions during the stage. Race officials monitored the situation carefully and the race went the distance—although not free of controversy. Black Knight Racing's David Knight became the first 2006 Lienz repeat winner after taking the checkered flag. The pole-sitter fell back to third following a first lap incident with Alain Nabizada, but both Knight and Nabizada fought their way back to the front and fought hard all race long. Nabizada finished in second place but was angry with race officials about the high pings. The controversy continued well after the race concluded. Team MooMoo's John Brown finished in third position after suffering a last lap accident. At the time he was in second but fell to Nabizada through the village. John however made up for this by collecting the bonus two points for most positions gained.

Stage 4 (24 hours)

Austeam's Garry Cross stormed off the line to take the lead on the first lap. AoR Team Vanquish driver Brett

Stone stuck to second position and held on over the opening laps matching Cross' race pace. As expected, Matrix's Michael Orth and TAM's Brad Mills tore up through the field towards the front. Meanwhile, Driving Force's Jon Edwards (winner East Stage 1) had gotten tangled up and had to pit for repairs dropping him down in the order.

On lap five while leading, Garry Cross tripped up into the armco and ended his race. Brett Stone running second took over the lead and AoR Team Vanquish looked set to rocket away to their first Lienz championship. In second position, Michael Orth kept moving on his charge to the front. Over the next few laps night was approaching and a steady trail of smoke was signaling trouble for Stone. He ground to a halt on lap nine with engine failure. He was classified thirteenth. AoR Team Vanquish had made their mark in the 2006 Lienz Festival - now they had to sit on the pit lane and watch if it would stand up in the championship.

Now Michael Orth found himself leading heading into night. The drivers ran hard through the darkness, and soon the first glimpse of light began to show. Orth had successfully led through the night but Jon Edwards had now worked his way up into second. As the day grew brighter so did the fight for first—Orth and Edwards now a mere ten seconds apart.

Meanwhile back in third, Alex Nicholaidis was seeing the XXXX Beer liveried car of Team AUS's Mark Pearce closing. A few laps later and the fans were treated to two great fights on track for top spots—Nicholaidis vs. Pearce and Orth vs. Edwards. Orth got it wrong with thirty minutes to go in the dreaded 'Pinball Alley', and this allowed Edwards to take the lead. Orth collected it up and maintained second. Pearce meanwhile got around Nicholaidis for the final podium spot. AoR Team Vanquish had clinched the East division title and then had to wait for

the West division to run to see how they did in the overall championship.

West division got kicked things off with a bang—unfortunately. Last Minute Team driver Stacey Greensall was slow getting off the line. By the time the field checked up Kyle Williams was into the back of Pedro Lebre who in turn climbed over the top of Martin Gjerde, collapsing Gjerde's suspension.

Out in front of this, Championship co-leaders Blacknight Racing's Simon Black was leading with Team MooMoo's Ilkka Haapala right on his bumper. The two ran nose-to-tail up into the mountains where the unthinkable occurred. Approaching the scenic overlook, the Flying Finn made contact with Black's Venom. Black used opposite lock to try to collect the lazy 100mph slide but was contacted a second time and spun off the road. The opening lap incident was reviewed by Race Control post-race and ruled to be a racing accident.

Stacey Greensall then picked up second place and paced himself as the race settled down.

On lap 8, Swillburg Racing's Russell Robitaille pulled into the pits with his engine on fire and his Lienz Festival is done and so were the hopes of the Kodi Motorsports division. Shockingly, the 2006 Kodi Rayzor went winless in 2006.

Night fell and Fate Motorsports suffered a massive FPS hit and was forced to pull off the road. Driver Russell Keating waited for dawn and rejoined the race, picking up three spots during the next day's running. Meanwhile out front Ilkka was driving a masterful race and enjoying a 1 minute 30 second advantage over Stacey Greensall in second position. With the exception of his first lap miscue, Haapala's race was near flawless.

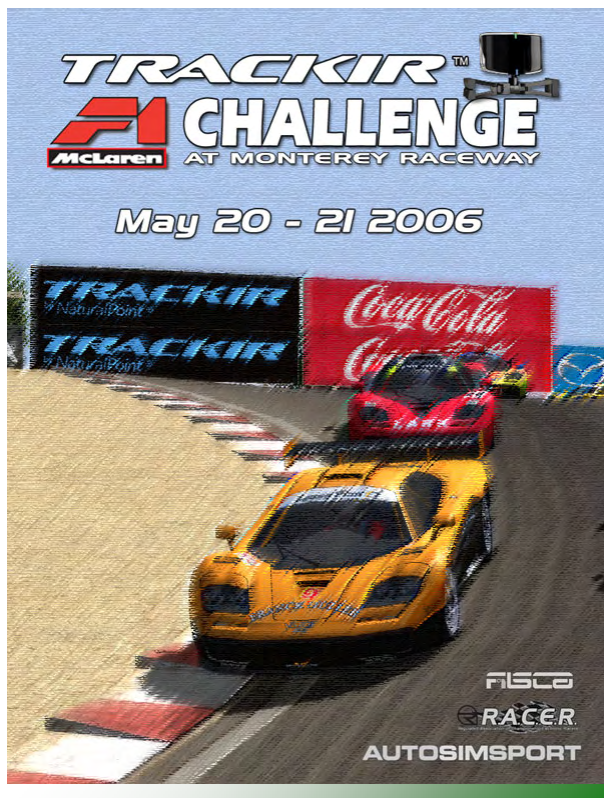
Back in the field, Simon Black had recovered from his first lap off and was in sixth position. The 2006

Championship is now looking very good for Black Knight Racing. In the closing minutes, Black picked off another spot to finish fifth. Elsewhere, Fatboy Racing's Don Frymann was having a great run in third. Also, Theo Gort subbing for Ryan Field has the RP Racing Rayzor up into a very respectable 4th position.

At the line, Ilkka claims victory by a margin of two minutes over Stacey Greensall. But the ultimate victory is for Black Knight racing. Simon Black collected his car and drove for the points they needed to clinch the 2006 Lienz Festival Championship and the pair of Logitech MOMO racing wheels.

Eric's Race Control Moment: *"The night of the storms when we couldn't get the server going, I was thinking it wasn't going to happen. I knew, by the very nature of online racing, we'd eventually get caught out with a technical issue that would prevent us from racing. It's only a matter of time really... just like real racing where shit happens. But I wasn't going to quit without a fight. Lienz was too big and we had sponsorships on the line. AoR's offering to help out and all the competitors willingness to stick it out pleasantly surprised me. An hour and a half later we were actually on the track practicing with all our settings and statistical tools in place. But for me, that's what RACER is all about – organizing and running an online event. Sure, it's easy to reschedule, but for us it should always be a last resort. And it's nice to know others feel the same way."*

"Another special moment for us was the East division 24 hour stage. Aussie Mark Pearce bringing the car home in third was a great accomplishment. We instructed Mark to drive his Vayline Venom, race-torn and ragged, into victory lane for a photo op."



TrackIR McLaren F1 Challenge

Laguna Seca

May 20th – 21st 2006

We had hoped to run an open wheel oval event to pay homage to the Indianapolis 500 run in May. Unfortunately, the highly anticipated rFactor update did not arrive in time so we needed to postpone the 'Bullring 500'. NaturalPoint, who was online to sponsor the Bullring, completely understood and carried their sponsorship into the replacement event—The McLaren F1 Challenge.

The entry list for the TrackIR McLaren Challenge at Monterey Raceway was the largest field to date outside of the Lienz Festival. Fifty-one drivers were to compete for top honors and a TrackIR 4:PRO from NaturalPoint. Among the drivers entered were 2006 Lienz Festival champions David Knight and Simon Black and Team Redline's Greger Huttu and Dom Duhan. The extensive entry list also featured the father and son duo of Charlie Bonsall Jr. and Charlie Bonsall III.

Team Redline was a controversial entry. Team Redline makes no bones about being one of the best established sim-racing team out there. It was an honor to see Greger and Dom's names on the entry list, but we did have our concerns about how the rest of the drivers would respond to the increases level of competition. However as expected, our drivers welcomed the raising of the bar. While Lienz established us as a major promoter of sim-racing, the TrackIR McLaren F1 Challenge was really where the concept began to work as I had envisioned six months earlier.

Drivers would compete Saturday May 20th in a series of heat races. The top four positions from each heat advanced directly into the Sunday A-main. Drivers placed fifth through tenth advanced to Sunday's B-main (and another chance to advance). Finishers eleventh and beyond would come back at 5:00pm on Saturday to compete in the 'Last Chance-Shoot-out' and a final shot for advancement into Sunday's races.

Saturday May 20th

2006 Lienz Champion David Knight picked up at Laguna Seca where he left off in Lienz and won the first heat in the TrackIR McLaren F1 Challenge. Knight was chased home by Arron Maspero who tried to steal the victory in a last lap-last turn pass, but was unable to get by. Coming home in third was Larent Vaisman and rounding out the top four was Sam Michaels. All of these drivers advanced directly to the A-main on Sunday.

Stacey Greensall won the 2nd Heat. Stacey led all twenty laps. Finishing in second was Martin Steinmetz. Scott Warren came home in third and rookie Mike Fertitta finished fourth.

Team Redline's Greger Huttu scored a victory in the third heat of the TrackIR McLaren F1 Challenge. Team Redline teammate Don Duhan came home in second, a mere .107 of a second behind. Frosty StClair finished in third followed by Russell Robitaille. All of the above drivers advanced to the A-main.

Michael Muldoon overcame a season filled with bad luck to claim his first RACER victory in the Last Chance Shoot-out for the TRACKIR McLarenF1 Challenge. Second place was Spadge Fromley followed by Tom Studans in third and Charlie Bonsall Jr. The field for the Sunday's B-main was now set.

Sunday May 21st

The B-main would mark a bit of RACER history: It would be the first time a father and son had raced on the track together. Charlie Bonsall Jr and his son Charlie Bonsall III were both to get behind the wheels of the powerful McLaren F1 LM cars at Laguna Seca.

But it was Ryan Field who led all twenty-five laps in route to the B-main win. Ryan, who started from second place on the grid, got a great start and led from the beginning. Pole winner CJ Hunter finished 6th. Team AUTOSIMSPORT driver Scott Juliano finished second in a great race from his eighth place starting position. Rounding out the podium in third was 2006 Lienz Champion Simon Black.

The top-twelve drivers from the B-main advanced to the A-main. This included 'Last Chance Shoot-out' winner Michael Muldoon and in doing so, 'Thunder Dog' became the first driver in RACER history to run in every single round of a race weekend. He had engine failure in his heat that advanced him into the LCS, which he won. He then advanced to the B-main and by finishing in the top twelve he moved into the A-main!

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During the main event, Team Redline's Greger Huttu put on a stunning display around Laguna Seca to claim the victory in the 2006 TrackIR McLaren F1 Challenge. Greger took pole position with a blindingly quick lap of 1m 14.773 seconds. During the race, only Team Redline teammate Dom Duhan would be a challenge for the win.

Huttu got involved in a minor accident at the famous corkscrew while coming up on slower cars. The incident damaged his McLaren's front splitter and the car began to understeer. Dom Duhan took over the lead and led for twenty-two of the fifty laps. A quick pitstop by Huttu repaired the damage and Greger got back on track and down to business. He passed Duhan as the team pitted for the final time and victory was then his.

Sim-Gear driver Frosty StClair came home in third in his rookie race for RACER.

Eric's Race Control Moment: "Team Redline showed from day one why they were the #1 sim-racing team in the world. The two McLarens were 'unloaded off the transports' in a gorgeous silver paint skin adored with BRD sponsorship and driver decals on the windows. It was a pleasure to see their measured professionalism on and off the track."



**The Protoracer Grand Prix presented by HK.com
Mills Metropark Raceway
June 17th – 18th 2006**

Hudson Kerr was an old league mate, and I was happy to have him come onboard to sponsor the June event—including making the fabulous event poster! For June, we went with the excellent ProtoRacer mod and put them at Mills Metropark Raceway since Hudson had just completed the awesome texture update for the track.

Saturday June 17th

David Greco held off pole sitter Greger Huttu to claim victory in the first of Saturday's heat races. Greco crossed

the line three-tenths of a second ahead of the Team Redline driver. Michael Palladino recovered from connection issues to finish third—a mere four seconds back from the top two. Dmitry Lukanov and Danny Davison finished fourth and fifth respectively. All the top five drivers advanced to Sunday's A-main in the PROTORACER Grand Prix.

Dom Duhan won the second of the three heat races in the PROTORACER Grand Prix at Mills Metro Raceway. Laurent Vaisman finished second and Juan Diego Bar rounded out the podium in third. Michael Hausknecht finished fourth and Mike Fertitta came home fifth marking the top five finishers who will advance into Sunday's A-main event.

SimGear driver Frosty StClair won the third heat race. StClair who finished in second place, was chased to the line by Scott Warren. Pole sitter Theo Gort finished third, followed by Sandeep Banerjee and Gonzo Beaty in fourth and fifth places. All of these drivers advanced to the A-main on Sunday.

Mika Karjalainen won the Last Chance Shoot-out as the sun set on Saturday's racing activities for the PROTORACER Grand Prix.

Sunday June 18th

Technical issues had the server crash following qualifications. Eventually fifteen of the nineteen drivers returned to the server and the grid was manually set. The twenty-five-lap race was then successfully run. Mika Karjalainen made RACER history by becoming the first LCS winner to go on to win the B-main heading for the PROTORACER Grand Prix. Mika led all laps and showed very good race pace. Russell Robitaille and Jonas Steffens finished second and third to round off the podium. Further back, Scott Juliano and Stacey Greensall enjoyed a fantastic battle for fourth place. Juliano eventually took it at the line after the two traded places several times over the closing laps. Don Fryman finished in sixth place. The

top six finishers would advance to the PROTORACER Grand Prix main event.

However, the technical gremlins continued to plague the servers and forced the postponement of the PROTORACER GP A-main event. After close to an hour of discussion, race officials and drivers agreed that running the race next Sunday was the best way to ensure a clean race. The twenty-one car field is set and the drivers will now have a week to focus entirely on the Mills Metro GP track layout and tune their Protons.

Sunday June 26th

Team Redline's Greger Huttu won the week-delayed A-main on Sunday. In doing so, Huttu became only the second driver this year to win back-to-back championships. Greger started from pole and led every lap in a stunning display of driving skill.

Danny Davison and Theo Gort finished second and third respectively. These two, along with Huttu, each received awards from Hudson Kerr.com iMODWARE in the form of a \$50.00 HK.com credit to Greger Huttu, \$25.00 HK.com credit to Danny Davison, and \$10.00 HK.com credit to Theo Gort.

Eric's Race Control Moment: "We had been experiencing some difficulties with the server interface hanging and it finally caught us out. As had become the standard procedure, we had a lengthy discussion with the drivers on options for running the event. As much as we tried to make the run we eventually had to postpone. As we have always said, 'sometimes it even rains on the Indianapolis 500'."

"In other words, like real races have their issues, so do we in the virtual electronic racing world. No ones going to experience 100% reliability. But its how administration deals with the few difficult issues that define the quality of a league. Luckily, our interface issue has since been corrected and we've had very reliable service from our provider and sponsor: GSXN.com."

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July 29-30 2006 **LIMEROCK PARK**

FISCA AUTOSIMSPORT GRACER

TrackIR ZR Challenge

Lime Rock Park

July 29th – 30th 2006

Always trying to push the envelope, RACER moved forward with new ideas in online racing using rFactor. One of the most under-used (and my personal favorite) part of rFactor is the upgrades. So to help spread the fun of this aspect of rFactor, we chose an upgrade-based July event.

So many drivers, quick to jump in the fastest cars, often completely miss out on the thrill of racing lower class cars using upgrades. For example, an Atype Kodi ZR doesn't have to be bare-bones stock to be Atype

classified. You may choose any upgrade as long as your Kodi maintains Atype classification. It important to realize that upgrades themselves are *not* class specific—but rather the culmination of class upgrades. So for example, you can run Ztype tyres and suspension and still maintain Atype classification. But add a gear set transmission (where you can alter the ratios) and you'll bump your car up to Mtype. Or ... drop the suspension down to Mtype (from our Ztype we had above) and then you *can* add the gear set transmission.

It's a great way to build a car ... a lot like the current tuner craze that's ongoing in the real world. As long as you're in Atype classification, all the cars will be closely competitive. Some might be better in the corners while other might be better on the straight. But they all can run roughly the same lap times—give or take a bit. It really makes the preparation fun and the drivers who participated in the TrackIR ZR Challenge loved it!

In addition, we ran two driver classifications: B-class and A-class (we gave the A-class drivers a break). This was a way to allow a few TrackIRs to make their way deeper into the field. Saturday's races would determine the starting grid for Sunday's class race.

Saturday July 29th

Neil Wood started off strong winning the pole position for Sunday's TrackIR ZR-Challenge C-class race. Wood took the lead on lap 1 and led all thirty-five laps in route to victory. Spencer Battersby finished second and pole starter Andre Harksen finished third. Michael Zulehner, driving with a badly cut hand, raced for fifteen laps before pulling into the pits and parking it. Zulehner is going to take it easy and try to race the seventy-lap distance in Sunday's main. Omar Gonzalez finished fourth.

Later in the day, Richard Jones won an electrifying class-C qualifier. Therefore, Jones would start on pole position for the TrackIR ZR-Challenge class-B main on

Sunday. He won by a mere two-tenths of a second over Sheldon Witty. Sheldon applied pressure constantly throughout the thirty-five-lap qualifier but could not quite manage the pass. Sheldon will line up 2nd for Sunday's race. Witty's teammate, Russell Keating finished in third position.

Sunday July 30th

Neil Wood pulled the double and won the main race for class-C RACERs. He also won a new TrackIR 4:PRO from NaturalPoint. Andre Harsen finished second and Michael Zulehner came home in third nursing that injured hand. Omar Gonzalez finished fourth and Spencer Battersby rounded out the top five.

We experienced a failure of the racing server's control interface, which delayed the race by an hour and a half. We eventually ran on RACER admin Scott Warren's personal server. The RACER server was back on line after the Control Panel CPU was restarted by GSXN staff and the B-main session began as the C-main race was winding down to the final laps. You've got to love efficiency at work!

In the B-class race, KR3W RACING's Richard Jones won the ZR-Challenge in a late race dual with Sheldon Witty. Jones moved side-by-side with Witty as the two crossed the line at the white flag with one to go. They went through turn one side by side and Jones edged ahead going into turn two. After the race the two drivers talked of the great race they had just been in. Both admitted to being exhausted. It was another showing of the great caliber of RACERs we have throughout the ranks.

Eric's Race Control Moment: "Even though the ZR Challenge had a disappointing turn out, we ultimately chalked it up to the overall lower numbers in the B and C driver classes vs. the Atype upgrade concept. In fact we plan on doing another upgrade-limited event in 2007."

"We also had the server interface hang (for the last time). Admin Scott Warren was able to accommodate the smaller

C-class field on his server and so we ran an official event for only the second time on a non-RACER server. GSXN, quickly got the server back up and for a while we were stacking events – the C-class drivers were in their closing laps while the B-class drivers were taking to the track for the pre-race warm-up on the main racing server. This type of operation is only available when dedicated admins in Race Control operate and monitor the event. It's one of the things that sets RACER apart from your typical sim-racing league"



Bullring 500

Joesville Speedway

August 18th - 20th 2006

With the 1.150 update for rFactor out, the Bullring 500 was set to roll during the third weekend in August. If you recall, we had intended to run this event in May, but had to postpone it. NaturalPoint was still onboard and come August, thirty-six RACERs were entering the bullring of Joesville Speedway to do battle for more than 700 laps over the race weekend. The small Montana track, named for 'ISI Joe', would feature the tightest pit lane RACER has yet dealt with this season. It promises to make the pit action just as furious as the on track racing! We would also be running the qualifier race under the lights. This was done to replicate the feeling of Saturday night short-track racing that takes place every weekend across the United States.

Three 2006 champions would line up alongside twenty-three other RACERs, as well as a large field of ten rookies. Both ZR-Challenge champs, Richard Jones and Neil Wood would be joining the 2006 rF3 International Sweepstakes champion George Sandman making this the most former champions entered into a RACER event to date.

August 18th

Chris Rainer won the first RACER oval race in dramatic fashion by .150 seconds over runner up Garry Cross. This meant Chris would start from pole in the East division's Bullring 500 presented by NaturalPoint. Sam Michaels drove a brilliant race, fighting back from two laps down to finish third—a mere second behind the leader.

The race did have some controversy. Ryan Fields started from pole and lead comfortable until his late race pit stop dropped him to sixth. The stopped happened under yellow and when he rejoined the line he was at the back end. While under yellow, Field received a stop-and-go penalty for incorrectly lining up. He duly served it, but

was DQ'd for an undefined reason a lap later. Race Control will reinstate Ryan into sixth place on the starting grid for Saturdays Bullring 500.

August 19th

Ryan Field earned his first RACER Championship Saturday night in the Bullring 500. In winning the East division main event, Field receives a TrackIR 4:PRO from NaturalPoint. It was a hard fought race, but luckily Race Control was able to keep the front runners out of timing and scoring problems, which plagued both Bullring Qualifier races.

It was a tough two days at the Montana half-mile track. RACER officials worked overtime to solve oval-based issues. After a few rule revisions, we finally hit on a manageable combination and were able to run the race as it should be run. RACER banned yellow flag pit stops and work together with the teams to sort issues out in real time. It was a massive undertaking.

Later on Saturday, Arron Maspero claimed victory in the West division qualifier and will line up on pole position for the main event. The final race of the three-day weekend runs on Sunday.

Sunday August 20th

NaturalPoint crowned Arron Maspero the West Champion in the Bullring 500. Maspero received a brand new TrackIR 4:PRO from NaturalPoint for leading the field to the checkered flag. Maspero started the race from pole, having won the 200-lap qualifier race Saturday.

Sandeep Banerjee raced Maspero home, collecting fast lap in the process, but fell short by a few seconds at the line. Overall a very strong performance from Banerjee who started from twelfth on the grid.

Maspero's KR3W Racing teammate, Stacey Greensall finished in third. Greensall was challenging for the race lead with fifty laps to go when he and Maspero made contact and the pass attempt failed. Later in the race,

Greensall's right front tire was worn badly and he had to concede the victory to his teammate.

The Bullring 500 was a trying event for both drivers and race officials. The action on the half-mile oval was relentless as Race Control attempted to keep the battle fair. In such a close proximity, tempers flared and drivers were pushed to the breaking point. They don't call it a bullring for nothing.

Eric's Race Control Moment: "The Bullring 500 was the most intense event we held in 2006. When the evening qualifier races ran a bit long, we shortened the main events to 300-laps. It was a tough call, but the very real possibility that the event might last close to four hours left us wanting to maintain an enjoyable race length for the competitors. Full-course cautions made the difference in run-time and there was no way to determine how many cautions we would see. 'Cautions breed cautions' so they say. In truth, the Bullring 500 was really the Bullring 300. But I prefer to add the 200-lap qualifier to the 300-lap main to allow the Bullring 500 to maintain its 500-lap status."



Viperpainter Grand Prix

Spa-Francorchamps

September 2nd -3rd 2006

The Viperpainter Grand Prix was RACERs first mixed-class road race. Drivers of various skilled would compete against like-skilled drivers in identical cars. The top three classes would be racing for a custom car paint skin from James Fritz, aka: Viperpainter at Fritz Motorsport Concepts.

Forty drivers would take to the historic Spa-Francorchamps circuit in for the Viperpainter Grand Prix. Among those, a record five former RACER champions would compete for top honors. Day one would see the individual classes hit the track in a series of single elimination heat races. The top drivers from each heat race would advance into the main on day two where all classes will compete together in the Viperpainter Grand Prix. The main grid would contain twenty-six drivers and be the largest field in RACER history.

Saturday September 2nd

The first day of racing during the Viperpainter Grand Prix weekend showed off a brilliant group of drivers who have assembled at Spa-Francorchamps. Saturday's four heat races went off without a problem and the racing was fantastic all day long. Only two drivers failed to finish their heat race. The shocker of the day was Team Redline's Dom Duhan suffering a mechanical failure on the starting grid of the A-class heat. His Porsche Carrera GT-3's pedals failed to initialize, sidelining one of the weekend's favorites to win.

Team Redlines Greger Huttu still made good for the team by winning the A-class heat. Other winners were Enzo Trede in the B-class Howston H6 GP1s, Paul Messer in the C-class Renault Meganas, and Daron Hume in the rookie Kodi ZR Ztype class.

The rookie field, while small, produced some of the day's greatest racing. Jiminee Smith and Marc Noguera ran a close professional race with Smith taking P2 on the final lap. This class of rookies proved to be quite spectacular.

Sunday September 3rd

Team Redline may have been one driver down, but it only needs Greger Huttu for the victory in Sunday's Viperpainter Grand Prix. Greger led flag-to-flag to claim both the A-class win and the overall championship. Huttu becomes the first triple-champion in RACER history.

Rookie sensation Daron Hume barely missed out on finishing in the top-ten. In his impressive RACER debut, Hume raced the under-powered Kodi ZR Ztype well up into the field. He mixed it up with the Porsches, Howstons, and Renaults all day to claim top Rookie honors.

Nick Simmerer won the B-class and Spencer Battersby put in another consistent drive to win the C-class division.

The endurance race was a grueling two-hour timed event. And what looked to be a set-in-stone podium turned out to be one of the more dramatic finishes of the season. Martin Gjerde and George Sandman raced in second and third place for much of the day. With only minutes to go, Sandman pitted for a splash of fuel, losing third place to Martin Steinmetz. Meanwhile as Greger Huttu approaches the checkered flag, Martin Gjerde, in second place, ran the Porsche's tank dry as he turned down the pit entrance. Sitting helpless, Gjerde watched as Steinmetz passes him for second. But Steinmetz—also running on fumes—peeled off down the pit lane. Riding on the limiter down pitline, Martin is beaten to the S/F line by Sandman by two-tenths of a second! Sandman takes P2, followed by Steinmetz in P3 and Gjerde is flagged in fourth position.

The racing was fantastic all afternoon. Drivers mixed it up consistently, fighting for positions and slicing through

traffic. All in all, a most deserving race driven into the RACER history books.

Eric's Race Control Moment: "Dom Duhan suffered a connection issue that disco'ed him just before his heat race was to begin. We always try to give drivers every opportunity to rejoin, but like a real life event, it's ultimately up to every driver to prepare his car for the race and have it on the grid for the scheduled race start. In the process of rejoining to make the grid, Dom failed to have his pedal initialized. The green light came on and the field stormed by Duhan's stationary Porsche sitting dead-stick on the front row at Spa. For a fleeting moment I juggled the thought of restarting, but it would have set a precedence that we really didn't need. Dom, the consummate professional, understood the circumstances and graciously accepted his fate: he would miss the main."



Historic Formula Festival

Northamptonshire

October 7th – 8th 2006

Saturday October 7th

Julien Dill and Dom Duhan won the first two heats of the Historic Formula Festival presented by NaturalPoint. Julien won Heat 1 in his RACER debut while Team Redline's Duhan won Heat 2. The Historic Formula Festival was comprised by vintage F1 machinery from the likes of Ferrari, Williams, Ligier and Renault. These powerful beasts are more than a handful around the Northamptonshire Silverstone circuit, but the first two heats saw only three retirements.

Heat 1 saw Ilkka Haapala in his first RACER event since the 2006 Lienz Festival. The Flying Finn took pole and led until a GPU failure locked up his system, grinding his race to a sudden stop. Julien Dill took over the lead to win in his first ever RACER event. Ilkka would race his way back in by winning the Last Chance Shoot-out.

Heat 2 had George Sandman out qualifying Dom Duhan only to get a bad start and find himself in fifth by the first turn. Duhan led the twenty-lap heat while Sandman managed to work his way back up to second. David Banta, running in third, ran out of fuel on the last lap and was classified in fifth.

Sunday October 8th

Sunday's support race for the Historic Formula Festival would feature a prize provided by RACER Kevin Going. The ASPWORLDTOUR.COM-1800SKYDIVE-CTDFNF-

AutoSimSport-R.A.C.E.R giveaway would award a brand new—in the box—copy of GTR2 to the winner of the support race! The support race was to be run using advanced trainers on the Northamptonshire rF3 Challenge circuit. The support race was open to any driver who failed to make the Historic F1 main event as well as drivers who had already signed up specifically for the support race.

In the rTrainer support race, Laurent Vaisman won with Daron Hume coming in second. The opening ten laps of the thirty-lap race saw three-wide racing in some parts of the circuit. Paul Messer finished in third in only his third RACER start.

Come time for the main, and Team Redline's Dom Duhan look unbeatable in qualifying, and yet unlikely to win in the closing laps. Dom, who started from pole, got off the line poorly then made a rare mistake on lap 2. Fifty laps later Duhan would capitalize on Ilkka Haapala's sole mistake with only four turns to go and win the Historic Formula Festival.

But the star of the race was the Flying Finn, Ilkka Haapala. Ilkka started third on the grid, got around Dom at the start and stayed on George Sandman's rear wing for the first ten laps. Sandman then made a small mistake and lost the rear accelerating out of Stowe putting Haapala in the lead. The Flying Finn then dominated the event leading all the way to the white flag. The final ten laps, Ilkka had Dom gaining (from seconds seconds back) at a tenth of a second per lap. But still Ilkka drove brilliantly. Both Haapala and Duhan set personal fast laps—lap after lap—during the closing stages of the race. Each driver doing what they needed to do. On the final lap, braking into Abbey, Haapala locked the rears and Dom was around. It was a bittersweet day, but Ilkka came home in second place.

Rookie Julien Dill continued his impressive weekend form by finishing third and rounding out the podium with a solid performance. The weekend came to a close Sunday night as the GSC Skoda Octavias took to the Club circuit in a one-hour timed race. The race was open to all licensed RACERS.

Eric's Race Control Moment: "Of all the cars we've raced, the historic 1979 F1 cars are by far the most difficult to master. We knew going in it was going to be a tough race, but in the end it was one of the years best. It also

marks those rarest of racing moments where it comes down to two drivers, the final laps, and no favoritism. Dom, now 0 for 3 attempts in a main, was suddenly the underdog. Ilkka, who was the underdog heading into the main, had driven every bit the level of the best in the world. It's not often that a race has two winners but this indeed one of them, made all the more impressive by the edgy nature of the cars."



TrackIR RACER Rally 2006

Rally China

October 13th – 22nd 2006

RACER would close out its 2006 season over a two-weekend rally. Drivers, including some with navigators communicating on TeamSpeak, would be competing over four stages on the RallyChina course. This would be the first time RACER has organized a rally and NaturalPoint would award a TrackIR 4:PRO to the driver who completed all stages in the least amount of time.

Drivers would have access to the course for a thirty-minute free practice session prior to the official timed stage. Drivers' course time during practice will dictate the order in which the drivers are to drive their timed lap.

Stages 1 and 2 were run October 13-15th and Stages 3 through 4 would be run October 20-22nd. RallyChina is a grueling 16km course winding around a lake and through mountainous terrain. Stages 1 and 4 were to be run on asphalt while stages 2 and 3 would be on gravel.

The cars were Lienz Festival 4WD machines including the all new 2006 Vayline Rhez. This would be the first time the new Rhez has seen official RACER competition.

This was to be an excellent opportunity to win a TrackIR, made even sweeter by the fact that it's the driver against the course—no chance of getting taken out in a first corner incident. Put your best effort into each stage and see how your accumulated time stacks up against that of your competitors.

Stage 1

Daron Hume ran a blistering 7 minute 20 second lap around the 16km Rally China course on Friday to come away leading the TrackIR RACER Rally after 1 stage completed. Daron, in a 2005 Kodi Rayzor threw caution to the wind as he navigated the paved sections of the difficult stage.

In second place, and a mere nine seconds back, is Stacy Greensall in the all new 2006 Vayline AWD Rhez.

Stacey put the new Rhez through its paces with dramatic four-wheel drifts much to the delight of the onlookers.

Third place was Simon Rigby driving a 2006 Vayline Venom. Just over fifteen seconds covers the top three. With the three chassis' looking to be virtually an even match-up, we headed into back-to-back gravel stages. Stages 2 and 3 were sure to shuffle the order, as a tiny mistake can prove costly with such a narrow gap between drivers.

Stage 2

Simon Rigby beat out Stacey Greensall by four-tenths of a second to claim victory in Stage 2 of the TrackIR RACER Rally. Rigby put his 2006 Venom on the edge for the entire gravel course and won. Greensall moved into first place overall by his two solid performances in the opening 2 stages, even though he has yet to win a stage outright. Still, his controlled drifts were always a hit with the fans.

Stage two saw controllers take a beating. Stage 1 winner Daron Hume was running the new Logitech G25 controller and had to pit several times for recalibration. During his final recalibration, his crew failed to bolt the correct tires onto his car upon returning to the racing server. This proved disastrous, as his car was clearly a handful with racing slicks. This small mistake dropped the overall leader down to fourth in the standings.

Stacey Greensall had calibration issues as well as his wheel would lose center. During Stage 1, Stacey actually had his wheel come loose in the pre-stage practice and in stage two he had to pit to recalibrate on three occasions. Still, his controller held fast long enough for him to take the overall lead.

Teams then had the week off to work on set-up and strategy before running Stages 3 and 4 the following weekend. The entire field was separated by about a minute and a small mistake could be costly for any driver now.

Stage 3

Stage 3 would turn out to be the deciding moment of the rally. Stacey Greensall was leading Rigby by a mere six seconds heading into stage 3. Greensall had just made a practice run of 8 minutes 12 seconds over the 16km reversed gravel stage—arguably the most difficult stage of the entire rally. Stacey looked likely to match that pace in the official timed run when a lapse of concentration ended with his 2006 Rhez launched air born by a rut in the road. Once the Rhez hit down Stacey could not avoid a road sign, which in turn destroyed his car. Simon went on to claim victory in stage 3 turning in an excellent 8m18.511 second lap.

Stage 4

Simon Rigby completed all four stages in the least amount of time to win the overall TrackIR RACER Rally on Sunday October 22nd. Simon, who won stages 2 and 3, received a new TrackIR 4:PRO from NaturalPoint. Simon drove a 2006 Vayline Venom.

Heading into the final stage, Daron Hume gave it all to fight his way back up into second place overall. The stage 4 winner turned a 7m18.414 second lap on the final tarmac stage, but it was not enough to make up for his teams stage 2 tyre mishap. Hume's total time was 27 seconds shy of Rigby's time of 32 minutes 0.396 seconds.

Spencer Battersby finished third overall. Battersby completed all 4 stages in 33 minutes, 2.471 seconds.

Eric's Race Control Moment: *"The TrackIR RACER Rally was really a challenge to put together. We had to contend with how to stage the timed laps. In the first stage, we encountered an issue with the track in that the car's pit was beyond the start/finish timing line. This meant when a driver <ESC> out following the conclusion of his lap, he was instantly transported back around and past the timing line adding an extra lap. This extra lap would ultimately DQ the driver! Luckily, Scott Warren and myself had written down*

the lap time prior to it being stricken from the timing and scoring screen."

"In addition, the calculations for accumulated time was very involved. Still I believe the rally concept is very strong. And while like the TrackIR ZR Challenge - the entries were among the lowest of the season - we will give rally another shot in 2007."

RACER Formula 1 World Sim Championship



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GoGamer.com *Get Your Race On!*

After all the official events were run in 2006, we sat down to organize our first 'mini-season'. We chose CTD's excellent F1 mod, and in traditional RACER fashion, set out to break free from the typical racing league mold. For our F1 season, we 'sold' the ten team 'franchises' to ten principals. In the beginning, the teams were randomly drawn by admins, but for future seasons, the existing F1 teams will be allowed to choose teams based on this season finishing order. So in effect, the teams who finish highest will draw first. What really makes this work is that unlike ninety-nine percent of F1 leagues, we're using the actual car physics. So a Renault is a Renault and a Minardi is ... well, a Minardi.

This effectively captures the essence of F1 while insuring full grids for the entire season. You see, if a driver doesn't perform, he can be sacked and replaced. There's added pressure at the sharp end of the grid as you *know*

you *must* win! There's also plenty of opportunity for rookies to 'show what they've got' in some of the slower cars. Strategy plays a big part, as some drivers go to the grid knowing they can't possibly win. But in this type of league, when a Jordan driver finishes on the podium, for him it's like a win! Not to mention the valuable constructor points he earns the team. Likewise, any team principal who fails to field both cars for a round loses valuable constructor points. And since those points determine which car the team gets next year this is crucial.

So far, we've had thirty-one drivers compete among the ten teams in the opening four rounds. McLaren has won the constructors championship with the final round yet to be run in Japan (it's a five-round mini-season). By the time you read this, we will have crowned our first World Sim Driving Champion, and all the teams and drivers will be posturing for their 2007 F1 options.

RACER plans to run multiple mini-seasons in 2007 including a Megane Trophy championship. Overall, our 2006 season has been more than I possibly could have expected in the beginning. When you add in the weekly 'FRIDAY-NITE FIGHT!' race, we gave our drivers over 150 opportunities to experience quality online racing in 2006. Not to mention our servers we're up basically 24/7 from our drivers to practice on.

Plus, our sponsors awarded close to \$3,000.00 in prizes!

But of course RACER is an association. And by that I mean people. I really enjoy looking through the archives at all the names of drivers who raced in 2006. And the quality of driving was superb! I thank you all for that.

And while thanking people, let me compile a quick list of people who helped throughout the year: ISI's Gjon Camaj and Scott Juliano, AUTOSIMSPORT's Jon Denton and Alex Martini, NaturalPoint's Kevin Fox, FMC's James Fritz, HK.com's Hudson Kerr, FILSCA's Christoph Schirmer,

RACER's Scott Warren (BIG Shout-out!), Tony 'Eagle Eye' Watts, Laurent Vaisman (and all the 'Crash Test Dummies'), Bill Creasman (stuck in the Olive Garden at Spa), Vance Hone, Stacey Greensall, Sam Michaels, Arron Maspero (go GRC!), Ryan Freeman, Gonzo Beaty, Spence & Paul, and BAR-Honda.

See everyone in 2007!.

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

lou.magyar@autosimsport.net

AUTOSIMSPORT

Nascar HEAT

Sprint for the Mod

Magnus Tellbom gets to grips with the Nextel Cup 2006 ... is this the mod that brings HEAT's legacy up-to-date?

Magnus Tellbom

SCORE





Sprint for the Nextel Cup 2006 Review

I almost missed this one ... Even though I surf around most sites in the Nascar Heat community on an almost daily basis to try and catch up on the news, this one was slippery to find ... it went live on the last week of October, not with a bang, but with a modest post saying, 'It's finished, here you go. Painting templates and ZMod files are coming soon'. So I went to the download page to get my copy of the latest Nascar-Style mod for Heat.

The download is only 33.29MB, which is small. Very small. Still, the site must have been overloaded 'cause it took me four tries to make the download stick. First tries were corrupted, and the site wouldn't accept my download manager. Still ... 33.29MB isn't big, so it was no real trouble, and overloaded sites are a common problem with any new mod release these days.

The installation, however, was flawless and took only about half a minute; the installer put everything in its right place, and I had only to start the ModLauncher to be on my way to Atlanta, where I'd decided this mod was going to be tested.



Sadly enough—and as with most mods I've seen by rpm750—there is no custom user interface. This has always troubled me, since I think it adds so much to a mod. The presentation of it all is important, even if it's the stuff under the hood that matters. Oh well ... let's get on to that important stuff.

The mod comes with all the official paints-schemes and some extras to boot. In total, there are forty-eight paints to choose from, divided between three marques—Dodge, Ford, and Chevrolet. The cars look real good and, even though rpm750 claims to be a 'half-ass modeler', I can't find any flaws. The models look very accurate to my eye, and the paints that adorn them are just amazing. Indeed, paints seem to be rpm750's strong side 'cause there are details on those cars which are really jaw-dropping. I've tried to put small decals on cars, and they always come out blurred. But somehow, this guy manages to get it done. *Bravo!*

On the minus side is the cockpits. There is no custom cockpit, but instead he makes use of the original one. Those familiar with HEAT will agree that they're okay cockpits, but with cars like this—that look

the way they do—one would expect to find a brand new, very good looking cockpit. After all, this mod is in the same league as the Nextel Cup '05 mod, and that mod has got cockpits that are an oval racer's wet dream. Indeed, those cockpits are the Gold Standard on which all that have come since must be compared, and the 06 mod, alas, does not meet the standard. It really makes me wish rpm750 would team up with another modder that could handle this stuff.

So, what do we have? Cars that look magnificent on the outside, and not so magnificent on the inside ... but how about the stuff under the hood?

Well, it seems as the original setups that came with Nascar Heat work pretty well, which is hardly surprising I suppose. At least, for a novice like myself, they seemed to do the job. The Atlanta setup provided with the sim lets me take the car around track with a good degree of control. It feels right and it respond right—but is it?

When I check the real times and speeds on this track, set this year by the real Cup Car drivers, I find out that the best average speed on Atlanta was 159.904mph; I compared this with the mod, and found that the mod-cars are reaching a stunning 185mph average, which is more in the line of the 1997 record of 197.478mph (before the restrictor plates?). This means one of two things ... Either the physics are fudged together, or the in-game Atlanta is too short. Well, the in-game Atlanta is, after all, almost seven years old, and sims back then weren't as accurate as today's, but still ... you will have to be your own judge when it comes to this.

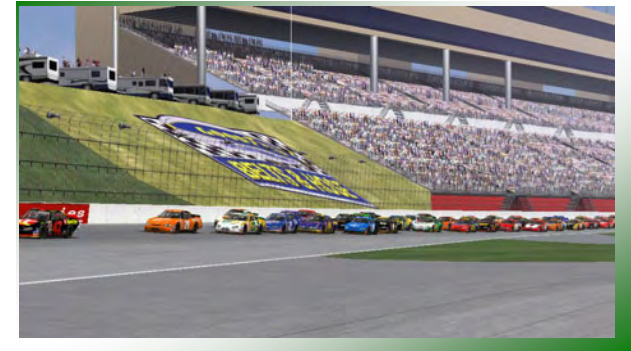
The AI offers a tremendous amount of fun though, and I actually spent over an hour and a half going around Atlanta together with them, trading paint, trying different lines around the track, trying to make a move for the next position. It's at times like this I really enjoy offline play, and I recommend anyone to try this out. Loads of fun for everyone, I promise.



The performance of the mod demands a little something from your machine though ... At 1024by768, with every graphics option turned to max and forty-three cars on track, I get a FPS of sixteen during the start, and an average of twenty-two during the race. I never reach twenty-five frames per second on my three year old AMD 2400+ / 512 RAM / GeForce 5200 128Mb. The good news is that it's still driveable, and I hardly ever notice the lack

of high FPS. Those on low level systems should cut back on the number of cars though, or lower the graphics options to something their machine can handle.

Bottom line, taking away points for custom menus, cockpits and questionable physics, will have to be a 7 out of 10. It's a very fun mod for the offline racer, and I bet it will be as fun for the online racer as well. It is available for download at the [Mod Squad](#):



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 get 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](#).

Sportscar GTS is in Testing Stage!

Most models and graphics for this mod are in place, and the task of creating physics for it has begun. More pictures and info has been released. Keep an eye on the site www.speedsims.net for regular updates on this mod.

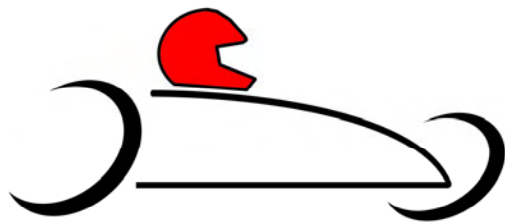
SCORE STCC Season Ended!

The biggest races series in the history of SCORE has come to an end. After no less than twenty-two races, Crash is a worthy winner. For complete results and more, check out www.score.does.it

AUTOSIMSPORT

LatinHeat

GPLegacy.com



LatinHeat

GPLegacy are back after an hiatus that saw them promoting sim-racing around the world

Best Young Driver 2006

Cristyan Elizalde attends Bridgestone's Best Young Driver competition ... Photos and Images courtesy of Bogart Escamilla, Carlos Suarez-Peredo, RAZ

Centro Dinámico Pegaso, in Toluca, México, hosted the prestigious 'Best Young Driver' of 2006 competition in October, sponsored by Bridgestone, Automovil, and BMW. This competition is open to virtually anyone under twenty-six who has access to the internet, and pits them in a strenuous test of their professional driving skills test. Bridgestone featured GPLEgacy Racing Simulators running rFactor as a training-tool, along with Logitech as sponsors: AUTOSIMSPORT was invited to attend.



MCJ drivers await the instructions for the first driving round at Centro Dinámico Pegaso ...



Sim Racing at "Mejor Conductor Joven" with GPLEgacy, Rfactor, Logitech, and Bridgestone... With Autosimsport's coverage!

1,500 drivers were entered into the final draft, and given the opportunity to participate in this prestigious event. Out of the drivers who are selected, over 200 drivers arrived at the beautiful CDP Pegaso track for the weekend's competition which would see the field whittled down even further until only two finalists would do battle for the crown, and the fantastic prize.

BMW and Peugeot provided the cars which were used for a 'crash-course' (pun intended!) on driving skills, including throttle control, slalom, reverse driving, recovery, wet-track driving, apex recognition, and smooth braking.

Bridgestone provided not only the tyres and entertainment for the event, but also sponsored GPLegacy to serve as an off-track practice center to allow the competitors to acquire a bit of driving finesse using rFactor as their sim-tool of choice. GPLegacy selected Phil Wardog's fantastic GP2 mod to be showcased to the drivers at this event, and head-to-head competition was provided by the stock rFactor cars such as the Kodi Zr, and the Hammer.

Over 150 drivers had the opportunity not only to let their hair down and relax from the stress of competing for the prestigious prize, but also to improve their driving skills.

By four p.m., it became apparent that rFactor was the 'name' of the weekend, with practically all the racers having had a chance to run the sim. AUTOSIMSPORT was also introduced to the drivers in order for them to see a little deeper into the core of sim-racing. The drivers also took the opportunity to cheer as their rivals raced the sim while they all waited—with the nerves clearly showing—as the final charts, announcing the finalists who would progress to the finals on Sunday, were released.

At six p.m., among cheering and some tears from the drivers who didn't make cut, the sim-racing continued unabated, with some drivers commenting on how useful a tool the sim was for training purposes.

The field had now been reduced from 150 to twelve finalists who would compete on Sunday.

Sunday was as eventful day both on track and off track. Sim-racing became the center point in the off-track pavilion while the marshals and judges prepared for the day's competition. Bridgestone had given GPLegacy full-access to allow them to create sim-tyres that ran as close as possible to the Bridgestone Potenza and Turanza tyre series.



BMW cars ready, drivers ready, this is the final round, only 2 out of 150 drivers to make it as the best young driver 2006

The competition itself, on-track, would be settled with drivers running on two-way tracks so that there was no possibility of interference during their runs. The clock would become the final judge, and drivers would be penalized for hitting the infamous cones, disqualified for touching the grass, and be penalized for all kinds of precision-driving mistakes. The finals were held with the BMW 5 Series car, a beautiful experience for so many drivers who dream of acquiring such a car someday.

The field was then, yet again, cut until only two drivers remained. Two drivers who would battle side-by-side to win the prestigious 'Best Young Driver—2006' award, and fight to win the top prize, a trip to Europe with all expenses paid.

Rainbow and a small dark cloud over the event :

The final outcome, however, did not come without controversy. While every single race was clearly dominated by a driver named Christian—a young driver who showed a lot of spirit, and who seemed (visually at least) to me, and those spectators standing beside me, to have won the races—we were all a bit surprised and certainly disappointed (the chorus of boos left no-one in any doubt) when the judges 'blamed' Christian's victory on the transponders, and technical difficulties.



: A glorious rainbow, lots of clouds, and a bit of wonderment in the crowd as the finals were repeated over and over again.

From our point of view, every race was clearly won by Christian—and, it seemed, every time he won, his win was discarded by the judges until—when his rival, Edgar, managed to beat Christian by a very small margin, the judges decided they were duly satisfied and without further ado, awarded him the victory.

This was the small black dot over what was otherwise a very clean and fantastic event. Both drivers were really skilled, and despite the controversy, Edgar himself was a deserving winner of the big prize. Our congratulations go to Edgar and Christian, who proved to be real champions both on and off the track. This controversy, whether it was a technical flaw, or anything else, is simply noted from an outsider's point of view, and did very little, ultimately, to damage what was a barn-storming weekend of racing, both real and virtual.

Rally Sports Telcel

By Cristyan Elizalde

Photos Courtesy of GPLegacy Mexico – Bogart Escamilla, Alejandro Zaragoza, Raúl Valenzuela



AUTOSIMSPORT, RFACTORCENTRAL.COM, VRACERS, GHOSTSPEED, featured at this massive 25,000+ people event



Telcel Girls living the welcome to the participants (2,500 overall)

Telcel is a major name in the cell phone industry in Mexico, and has long been involved in promoting sports, extreme sports, and motor-sports, and are the sponsors of fantastic drivers like Carlos Pardo, who in 2007 will be moving to the Grand Am series to replace Luis 'Chapulín' Díaz. Pardo has also been training with GPLegacy using rFactor as a training tool, and was granted an rFactor license at the Fox Sports tenth anniversary in January 2006, courtesy of GPLegacy Mexico, ImageSpace Inc., and Logitech.

INSERT : carlosparido.jpg

The event was held at the *Palacio de los Deportes* (Sports Palace) in Mexico City, just behind Mexico's Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez, the structure that motor-sport people recognize as a landmark to the city with its distinctive copper dome that TV viewers will be familiar with as it peaks behind the world-famous Peraltada Corner.



Minutes before the event start : Telcel-Motorola – GPLegacy stand with 3 Antartida II raceframes ready for the races in rFactor NSCR class

With a massive 30,000 capacity, and making use of the exterior of this structure as well, Telcel sponsored this event along with the presence of massive sponsors and media. Telcel and Motorola have seen the opportunity afforded by sim-racing to motor-racing, and GPLegacy Mexico was invited as an official sponsor of the event. Radio Spots, TV Spots, and on-site announcements of GPLegacy's involvement were much in evidence, alongside extreme sports such as wall climbing, free-style half pipe for roller-bladers, skateboarders, and biking experts.

AutosimSport was present with printed magazines of their October issue which were granted to the top ten teams which finished the Rally Telcel.

NSCR by Imagespace Inc was featured in 5 lap oval races at the Telcel – Motorola – GPLegacy stand, with a wide approval and a stunning 180 participants in 4 hours who enjoyed professional racing through GPLegacy's Antartida raceframes, Logitech's momo wheels, headset, keyboard and mouse.

"WE PASS AND YOU EVEN SEE US!"

Sergio Bustamante sits down with Pedro Rodrigues, Fernie, and Vitor Barret who collectively make-up Ghostspeed.net which continues to evoke the most lively images of sim-racing with their fabulous 3D renders... Photos : Courtesy of Ghostspeed.net, SimRacingPortugal and GPLegacy Portugal
www.ghostspeed.net is the place to go if you need to find a warm and enthusiastic sim-racing team. It is also a great place to visit if you want to see the very prestigious 3D renders that have made the three guys world-famous. Ranging from GPL, to GTR, to GTLegends, to Live For Speed, and all the way to rFactor, Vitor Barreto, Pedro Rodrigues and Fernie not only move fast on the track, but the speed and quality with which they keep up with their intense developments of rFactor are difficult to match. To this day, their drivers' roster is just as impressive as their work. With this in mind, I thought I'd get up close and personal to see what makes them tick.

Sergio Bustamante: Your contributions to sim-racing have been warmly received by the community; there is a lot of work and talent involved, and it would be great to know a bit more about the origin of the whole concept of GhostSpeed.

Vitor Barreto: The origin is a little ambiguous because, although we were focused on multiplayer gaming, our group couldn't properly be named a 'team', but more a group, until we made our internal small leagues. We started with F12002, and a couple of months later, we changed to F1 Challenge. The first time we competed as a team was at our national Grand Prix Legends league ... with a DNF! It would only be in 2005 that we started to compete just as a team in the Sim-Challenge 2005 F1 league. Since then, we spread to other race simulations and leagues. When it comes to the name, it was chosen after a lot of discussion, and a number of common suggestions for a racing team. One of the members suggested ... GhostSpeed—it was a name that sounded good, and it was different, so it stayed until today.

SB: Pedro and Vitor—both of you make quite a team—what can you tell us about the full concept?



Pedro Rodrigues: The real deal—the concept of the real organized team aimed at becoming as professionalized as it could (and successful too, why not?)—began in the summer of last year. First, we started organizing the racing team, and the first divisions were created. I can say it worked out pretty well in fact, since, as a Portuguese team, we competed in the Portuguese championships in different sims, and we won the Drivers' or the Teams' (or both!) championships in all of them in our first seasons. Only later did the other projects—beside the racing

team—come out. I am referring here to the rFactor 3D Scenes website that started when Fernie entered GhostSpeed, and began the public events showcasing the racing-sims we play.

SB: One thing that becomes clear from your website, and your team, is the passion you have for motor-racing—can you explain from where this comes?

Pedro Rodrigues: For me, and also for the founders of the team, the passion came from Formula One, and the whole environment, history, and technology involved in it. From what I remember, my first contact with Formula One was hearing about that great driver in the early 1990s, Ayrton Senna. I was too young at that time (I was born in 1985!), so I don't really remember watching full Formula One races, only some highlights in the news on TV, but Senna's death marked me, and brought me closer to Formula One. But it was only in 1998 that I really woke up to the real Formula One. Since then, I almost never miss a Formula One race. Michael Schumacher started to be my hero back then (I have some posters of him, driving the Ferrari, in my computer room), and Ferrari is my favorite team).

Fernie: I started to get interested in racing because I was already interested in racing sims. I started watching races in order to learn whatever I could and use in the sims. At first, I watched mostly Formula One, and whatever I could get of the WRC (we don't get much coverage here in the U.S.). To this date, those two remain my favorite forms of racing, but they're not all that I follow; I absolutely love sports-cars and MotoGP, and well ... if it has an engine, and can compete, then you will most likely see me paying attention to it! Unlike Pedro, Michael Schumacher wasn't much of a hero to me, I always thought of the drivers of the early years of Grand Prix racing as the most wonderfully skilled people. And amongst all of them, the one driver that I have always admired above all others is Juan Manuel Fangio. I have always thought of him as

being in another dimension when compared to other drivers. Don't get me wrong, I do think that 'ol schumi' is pretty good, and Ferrari is a fantastic team, but somehow, in my mind, those drivers of old gave everything they had in every corner—some of them even gave their life for something that people consider a sport, when you think of the names Fangio, Nuvolari, Clark, Senna, and so many more—you can only think of racing as a passion, or a way of life.

SB: We can only imagine the excitement when you were able to focus that passion into sim-racing—any fond memories you'd like to share?

Pedro Rodrigues: As the passion for Formula One became stronger, so did my passion to race Formula One sims. My first Formula One game—not real a simulation one—was Prost Grand Prix, based on the team of another great driver in Formula One history, Alain Prost. I can only smile when remembering the hours I spent running one hundred percent races in that game! Great times they were, I really enjoyed it a lot, it's very nice to remember it. Anyway, going forward, the first racing-sim I raced was F1 2002, but I didn't really enjoy it since I only had keyboard back then, and it wasn't much fun to race with all those driving aids. But later, when F1 Challenge came out, I started thinking about buying a steering wheel; I was later convinced to do it by a friend of mine (thank you Ru!). It was the best thing I ever did. It was then that I found GhostSpeed, and entered this fantastic team. I started learning a lot with those guys. The thing I enjoyed a lot was winning my first ever online championship race against all the 'aliens' of GhostSpeed at that time. Real fun, and I was really, really happy. It is a fantastic sensation, and since then, the passion for sim-racing is really big, and it only grows more and more.



Fernie: In my case, it may sound strange, but I was interested in driving sims before I was interested in racing itself—but that's not the strange part, though! It started when my sister was learning to drive; she would play a lot of driving games, and of course me being her brother, I tried to compete against her. After a few years, I started seeing races on TV, in part to see if I could learn something that I could use against my sister, and somewhere along the line I somehow just fell in love with racing. I would play or see almost all kinds of racing games or racing series. So yes, I was thrown into racing-sims by my sister; I don't know how many girls are there playing racing games, but they may just inspire some

poor little kid into endless hours of staring into a screen and not letting go of a steering wheel, so keep it up!

SB: Regarding all the 3D work; it's certainly fantastic, and it's helped a lot of sim-racers showcase their work with skins in such a unique way. Could you tell me a little about the history behind the 3D renders?

Pedro Rodrigues: I'm glad to hear it's been well-received in the community—that was our goal! Well, the story of how it began ... let me see ... I started to be curious about the modding capacities of F1 Challenge, and started to learn how things worked. Then I saw what renders were (and they were really amazing!), and I became fascinated by the whole thing. I made my first skin for GhostSpeed Racing Team; from there, I wanted to show it as a render, to try and emulate those gorgeous renders I had seen, so I began experimenting with ZModeler, trying to import F1 Challenge 3D models into it. It didn't work out, and so I quit, but the will stayed!

Later on, when the real deal started (the GhostSpeed Project) with GTR, I discovered how I could do renders of the GhostSpeed GTR cars. In the RSC Forums, I discovered 3DS max, Brazil, and Archeo 3D scenes, and how to work with them, and how to do the renders. So, I started experimenting with things, and started learning 3DS max. Then rFactor came out, and after some time, still no-one had done the same thing for rFactor as Archeo had done for GTR. So I thought: 'why don't I try to do it?' I liked to render my cars; renders are beautiful, and I wanted to do them for my GS rFactor cars. After posting my first 3D scenes in RSC, Fernie appeared, offering help. And so he joined me in that task, and joined the GhostSpeed Project. He had more knowledge in 3DS max than I did, and I started to learn even more from him, and so our scenes became prettier and prettier ... at least, I think so. Thanks a lot Fernie.



Fernie: First of all, thanks for the comments; I still don't understand why people think they're so nice. I look at the scenes and try to imagine how to get them to be better. I had been working for some time with 3DS max and Maya, in part because I like to try to get my hands on just about anything that has to do with computers, and I love video games, so I have always wanted to be involved in the creation process of games—that's why I am currently in college majoring in game design. So because of this, I had some tricks up my sleeve, and was able to try and make some renders. When I contacted Pedro, I was still putting the finishing touches on the H6 Howston, and he liked what he saw. I wanted to start showcasing my work, in part to see what people thought, and so that I could use that to

improve my skills. I still think of all the scenes as work in progress, and hope to become better in order to make them better. Hopefully in the near future, you won't be going to GhostSpeed to download only scenes of the mods that come out for rFactor, but you will see a lot more stuff made by Pedro (who is very talented), and whatever I may have up my sleeve.

SB: As a team, GhostSpeed has had a lot of success: Can you briefly introduce your drivers, and the championships in which they compete?

Pedro Rodrigues: What can I say?! We have some really great drivers in our lineup, and we are always searching for new talent, focusing mainly in Portuguese ones since we are a Portuguese-born team; having said that, we never close the door on great drivers of other nationalities. Some drivers, and each division we race in, are as follows:

In GTR, we have Sérgio Junior and Miguel Lopes that won the Constructors Championship for us in the first GTR Portuguese Championship. We have also participated in the SimChallenge.com GTR league, and in LFGTR, and now we intend to move to GTR2 and participate in the GTR2 World Championship.

In LFS, Gonçalo Cardoso did a very good job winning the first LFS S2 Portuguese Championship, and now he, along with some new talented drivers that were added to the team, will battle for the titles in the second season. We also competed internationally in OLFSL league.

In rFactor, we participated in the rF3 Portuguese Championship, organized by the GhostSpeed members (me and Vitor), and once again we were very successful by conquering both the Drivers'—Algaci Tulio Jr (our Brazilian driver)—and Constructors' Championship. Marco Ribeiro finished third and I finished fifth in a championship that marked my come-back to the driving seat after a long absence, where I won one race. Of course I didn't have the time for practice, neither the speed I had back in the day, but

it was a lot of fun to be back racing again. Anyway, let's continue ...

We achieved another title, this time in Richard Burns Rally (RBR), in the hands of our 'alien' Sérgio Junior after an amazing recovery; after missing the first two rallies, he won all the remaining ones. He won the Portuguese Championship, and the team ended the championship in second, one point behind first place. Rui Almeida also did a great job, winning one rally and finishing the championship in fourth. He was a real champion because he won the fight against health problems he encountered half way through the championship, and came back later to still finish in that position.

Meanwhile, in GTL, our boys were conquering podium after podium, win after win, in international championships like UKGTL and WOSEC. Rui Cunha, Johnny Dee (our American driver), Paulo Ribeiro, and Rui Rodrigues (our Portuguese driver) had great performances, and still do. With them was another great driver, LeH (our German driver). The team enjoyed a lot of success with them, and currently they continue fighting for podiums and wins in Comet, UKGTL, WOSEC, and soon, in the Portuguese Championship.

And finally, our original division, the Formula One drivers, are competing in the Portuguese Championship (also organized by me and Vitor), and have already conquered all three positions on the podium in the first race of the season. João Barbosa, Luis Azinheira, and Bruno Marques achieved that result in that order respectively. Our goal there is to win both titles, the Drivers' and the Constructors'. Beside this, the Formula One division is also preparing for a great come-back to the international championships, next season, like Formula-SimRacing league.

One last note; all the Portuguese Championships mentioned are supported by SimRacingPortugal.net forum, the place where all the Portuguese sim-racers gather.

Valle de Bravo Karting Tenth Anniversary

By Bogart Escamilla—Photos Courtesy of : Cristyan Elizalde, Carlos Suarez-Peredo, Alejandro Zaragoza

Valle de Bravo KARTing track has been through ten years of excellence as one of the top tracks in Mexico. It has been acknowledged as having installations that would match any top-line European KARTing track, and has set a tradition for being one of the most exclusive KARTing Tracks and sport-entertainment spaces in Latin America.

The tenth anniversary featured drivers from several classes, and some of the top KARTing drivers from Mexico. The racetrack is located in Valle de Bravo, which is world-wide famous because of its massive lagoon, the best possible resorts, Rancho Avandaro, and sporting activities in an extreme sports paradise.

The KARTing racetrack is just one part of the story; Valle de Bravo also features a six kilometer airplane strip, with activities ranging from skydiving, ultralights, and radio-control jets.

The KART track features races up to 250cc shifter-KARTs, and it also has a KART rental shop featuring 5 bhp, 8 bhp, 13 bhp, and 15hp KARTs, allowing anyone with an interest in motor-sports to get into these 'noble' machines.

GPLEgacy attended the VIP event for all the track shareholders, sponsors, VIP-drivers, and media. Needless to say, it was a great weekend. GPLEgacy, for the first time, rented a full house with a view of the wilderness to enjoy our. Here are some different pictures from what we're used to, which might provide a different view of sim-racing, since this event pretty much held the same feeling as the one enjoyed by the drivers on the KART races held throughout the weekend. The wilderness, technology, and sports all made for a fantastic event.

We'd like to dedicate this event to the sim-racing community, especially to AUTOSIMSPORT, Ghostspeed, rFactorCentral, and the GPLEgacy Mexico staff who

couldn't be at the event: Eduardo Borrego, Clara McLean, Luis Monroy, Alfonso Mireles, Julio Cesar "Raz" and Jean del Rosal.



GPLEgacy's home for 3 days. Bogart Escamilla, Alejandro Zaragoza, Raúl Valenzuela, Carlos Suarez-Peredo, and Cristyan Elizalde enjoying the house, where we enjoyed catching up in a lap-top computer with the latest issue from Autosimsport which we had missed.



Almost the full GPLEgacy staff, attending the needs of all the people who assisted to the event.



Above: For the first event we were able to enjoy a properly home-made breakfast before the action started at 8:00am. Left: The VIP lounge awaiting the arrival from VIP members of Kartodromo Valle de Bravo



Editorial

Sim-racing exposure and promotion busier than ever in Mexico and Argentina

By GPLegacy's Spanish Editor

We want to thank the full sim-racing community, and all its parties, for making this dream come true; promoting sim-racing is in the best interest of all of us who are hardcore motor-sports fans and sim-racers.

It is very important for us to make this announcement, since, with so many events and activities starting earlier than we had planned, it is easy for misunderstandings to occur along the way. As all of you have seen, promoting sim-racing in a serious way is not a walk in the park; there's a ton of work involved, and it requires a very high investment both in terms of work and cost. GPLegacy is not a company that has been born out of a budget or a business plan—all of us involved with this project are funding it at our own expense, and promoting sim-racing is not a cheap exercise!

This is why we must say—because of rumors that start when there's a long blackout in a community, as has been the case with GPLegacy.com—that we are working hard on completing the promises we have made to our friends and partners in the sim-racing community. Even when it takes a long time, we never stop working, planning, and moving on.

We would like, in particular, to send a big apology for the massive delays to our friends and allies at Armaroli and ASWRC; we are endorsing you one hundred percent, and the plans are under a green light. We assure you that we are moving forward; and our delay was due to the hectic schedule under which we have been working.



Same goes for the full Morrow Design staff, especially to Tago, Priits, Mikk, Koppel, and Nokats who have been so patiently waiting. GTVirus, Sid, Magnus, Timo, Alfonso, Ian, Joe, Hristo, Jeffrey, Jani, Hans, Laurent, Bob, Raymond, everyone who constitutes the heart of GPLegacy's values and principles—planning and executing is not easy, but we're there and moving as fast as possible.

Regarding some issues that have come to our attention, during this blackout, some of the road has not been as pink as people might think.

We need to set in public that there is no relation anymore with GPV (www.granprixvirtual.com), the project we tried to help out with and endorse. GPLegacy is not related anymore, in any way, to AutomovilismoVirtual, and any pictures you might see on their websites regarding any participation in GPLegacy activities from December 2005 to this date are absolutely untrue, and set without consent, and to be regarded as stolen.

We found some of our own pictures 'watermarked' with the GPV logo from our events, and we ask everyone who'd like to help us out, to report any activities where they're exploiting our image and our resumé and abusing the trust and confidence we had given them. Our core values and principles have proven to differ from Mr. Nelson Vergara's and Rodolfo Vazquez's own agenda, and we're not involved with any such projects in any way. We wish them the best of luck with their own enterprises.

Sim-Racing Growth and Evolution

Evolution and growth is a beautiful thing, but it always comes with a cost. Our friends and collaborators at GPLegacy have been paying that price since starting activities on July 2005, with the commitment to put the best possible efforts into the promotion and worthwhile exposure of sim-racing developers, modders, racers, designers, and others actively involved in the sim-racing community.

We take this opportunity to announce the official start of GPLegacy Portugal, and thereby endorsing GhostSpeed.net as part of the GPLegacy group. We also would like to congratulate Pete Walsh and rFactorCentral, with the promise that GPLegacy will continue to endorse and look for all the means possible to help out this fantastic project. Thanks and congratulations, Pete! We hope you're proud of your excellent work! We sure are!

Sergio M. Bustamante

Electronic Game Show

By Julio Cesar "RAZ", Luis Monroy, Sergio M. Bustamante, Photos: Courtesy of Raz, Luis Monroy, Oelli, GPLegacy Mexico

At the LatinGamer 2006 event, the Pan-American World Cyber Games, I finally came to meet Sergio Bustamante in person. Everything was extremely surreal, because I was there to participate in the Pan-American World Cyber Games 2006, and hanging out at the massive World Trade Center's Electronic Game Show, with over 50,000 people attending. I was thrilled to see that there was a real racing-simulator in place, in the very center of the participation pavilion. I immediately suspected it had something to do with GPLegacy and, as it turned out, I was right. This was the perfect opportunity to realize that the warmth I had found on the internet was for real in the real world.

Julio Cesar Salcedo "Raz"

Now we take the opportunity to bring you a short interview with one of Mexico's top Gamers in the motor-sports simulation scenario, Julio Cesar, who we so proudly call our own 'Raz'. He was a believer in GPLegacy ever since we started in 2005, and so it was with great warmth that we met him in person to share in the simple dream called 'Antartida'.

Sergio Bustamante: Raz, you're widely known in LatinGamer as one of the toughest competitors, and you're held in very high esteem—can you tell us a little bit about the way you got started in gaming?

RAZ: My life inside proper gaming competition goes back to five years when I started with a Strategy game called Starcraft: Broodwar, I participated in the World Cyber Games for two years, but without any good results (I sucked).

Finally, in 2004, I shifted towards an arcade racer entitled Need For Speed Underground, where I was able to obtain the National Team's Third Place. Following the Need for Speed saga in 2005, I repeated third place, and in 2006, I came second, which allowed me to participate and represent Mexico in the first Pan-American Competition that the World Cyber Games Committee held. It was a very tough competition, most of the best gamers of the American continent were present, and I finally got a fourth Continental place.

SB: That was a fantastic result. We were able to follow the full weekend of events, and the stress level that everyone could feel was really overwhelming; however, you always were cool and focused, which is a big thing in such a large event. How would you describe the next steps of your racing career as a gamer and now as a sim-racer?

RAZ: Well, I tried several sims, like F1 Challenge, Live For Speed, and finally I found the {most accurate

simulator}: rFactor. The day we met at the Electronic Game Show, and I was able to get a proper feel of the sim, I was stunned. I started participating in your league, managed by Fernando Cortina and in close contact with Astrand, a very good friend of mine who really helped us meet.

SB: As a participant in the Pan-American World Cyber Games, how would you describe what you saw with GPLegacy's spot at the Electronic Game Show?

RAZ: Through all of the time that I was there, I watched people try out the sim, and I {was surprised} by just how many people would wait for their next turn, even going to other stands to try different games on the PlayStation 3 console, the Nintendo Wii, the Xbox 360, but they would always come back to get another dose of GPLegacy's sim-racing experience. I was impressed to see that so many people spent their full time of the Electronic Game Show without going away from the GPLegacy stand. The way the spotter worked, the race direction and the mechanics to let people try sim-racing at its most professional level, even in a short time, had such a special feeling which most people simply couldn't turn their backs on.

SB: I remember there were two points you stressed regarding the wide range of people who tried and came back to try rFactor ...

RAZ: The Electronic Game Show has a very impressive appeal, especially for kids who are just turning into teens, and most of the time adults go along with their kids and endure the odyssey, but this time, GPLegacy provided an activity which was just as enjoyable and challenging for kids as for their parents. GPLegacy promotes its racing simulator {very professionally} with all of the factors—from the raceframe, the Logitech hardware, the distance to the screen, the ergonomic position, and the overall experience through GPLegacy staff—{well thought out}.

SB: Thanks for the compliment—in the end, we are just trying to convey the reality of sim-racing ... any last comments of your personal experience?

RAZ: Well, personally, it was a very pleasant experience, since it wasn't until that moment that I tried a racing-simulator with this degree of quality and realism.

SB: Thanks Julio, it's been a real pleasure, and we'll be a lot more in contact trying to get the concept to even higher grounds and higher standards; with all of your experience in tournaments, directing events at your own business, I'm sure great things will come out from all of us.

The Electronic Game Show Experience also had a very nice feel because, as Julio said in the interview, parents would spend a lot of time racing with us, and it was pretty much—with the experience their kids have in gaming—the only place where they could actually teach or share an experience with their kids or relatives.

There was a kid in particular who spent over five hours with us, and the person who really wanted to be there, and was obviously very proud to see her kid finally get a feel of what a car handles like, was his mother. It was a very nice experience.

We were also treated to the presence of Gran Turismo 4's 2005 World Cyber Games Champion, Luis Monroy, who is now a part of the GPLegacy family. We're proud to announce that the modding positions for the car that he's designed for us—the Antartida C3—will open in January. We will be creating this new brand with the goal of bringing it into the sim-racing world through rFactor. We'll have the images soon and we apologize for the lack of visual material

AUTOSIMSPORT
**Chequered
Flag**

Formula SimRacing

Bruno Marques captures the title ...



WORLD CHAMPION



BRUNO MARQUES

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



The Formula SimRacing 2006 Season is over and the 'World Championship' category sees its sixth different champion in its sixth season: This time it is Bruno Marques from Portugal, racing for the new Diamond Racing Team! Despite missing the first two events this year, Marques showed exceptional speed to beat his closest opponent, and 2004 World Champion Roy Kolbe (Coca-Cola Kiwi Virtual), in thrilling fights on track! After 843 completed laps, Marques had 118 points on his account, more than anyone else. 8 Pole-Positions and 7 season victories underline his outstanding performance.

The Constructors' title in the World Championship went to Roy Kolbe and David Greco from Coca-Cola Kiwi Virtual, in front of Diamond Racing Team and Twister-Racing.

In the two World Series categories, the fights for the crown were equally as gripping. In the end, it was Christian Smirnoff (Faster Than Speed) from Argentina who won the championship in the World Series Ace category, although the opponents from Roaldo Racing were able to come first in the Constructors.

In the World Series Pro category, Faisal Niazi was the happy man in Brazil. With just 2 points advantage over

Wayne White, the Faster Than Speed driver won the championship, although again it was Roaldo Racing to secure the Constructors' title.

For this issue of AutoSimSport I had the chance to catch the new World Champion, Bruno Marques, for an exclusive interview. The Portuguese talks about his season, about his philosophy about racing, he talks about setup exploits, and about where he thinks sim-racing will lead to!

Q: Bruno, congratulations on winning the 2006 FSR World Championship title! Having shown a fantastic performance throughout the season, you really deserved this success. Talk us through the season from your point of view in order for our readers to get an overview of the challenge you faced this year.

BM: First of all, many thanks! This season started a bit late for me as I was only contacted after Melbourne, I had some offers before but none made me interested. So I started a few weeks later than the favourites and it was a big handicap, also because I had to learn the new mod, so it wasn't only the points. Then I had a few problems for Sepang so it was even worse, with 20 points disadvantage already. So I started with a different objective: I wanted to be closer to the Champion at the end of the Championship than the 20 points disadvantage I had before my season started.

In my first race at Imola I did pole and was able to finish second behind the leader of the WC at that time, I had a good pace and I was more confident on my speed after that. Then came Nurburgring. The lowest point for me, where I made a very bad mistake and crashed very early. I realized at that time that any slim chance I had to win the Championship was over, especially if Roy won, I would be 32 points behind him. Fortunately for me he retired as well. From then on I kept on doing my best while being careful to not ruin another race and hoping to see my opponents making mistakes. I also noticed I

was having a lot of problems with the Frames Per Second in every race, lower than my eyes accepted, so I had to buy a new computer. It immediately helped me, not in the practice sessions but in the races where I started driving much faster, because finally I was able to drive at the practice speed. Then Roy had to miss 2 races as well, both I was able to win and more importantly, able to also get in the lead with some important points advantage. I was a bit stronger at that point, so while Roy was faster than me before his problems appeared, his speed advantage was gone when he was back, so I just had to drive as I was doing until he returned. David Greco was very close to us all the time but when we switched to ISI's BMW F1 mod, his pace just disappeared so it was just a "2 man show" for the Drivers Championship. I was able to increase the gap a little bit until Japan, where I just needed two points. So I was extra careful in the race, I could say it was my worst performance all season, except Nurburgring of course. The season finished brilliantly when I and my new team-mate were able to finish with a double, especially after I had to start 18th because I had problems in qualifying.

Q: Your strongest opponent this year, Roy Kolbe, had a few technical problems midseason. Was this the point where you thought: Yes, now I can catch up in the standings, after you'd missed out the first two races of the season?

BM: Yes, definitely. When Roy had to miss those races I had finally my chance to make up for the races I also had to miss, so when he returned we had the same races done. It was also a very important point of the season because that was exactly when I got my new computer, so my performance increased a bit in the races, so I was also able to hold the very nice points advantage I had when Roy returned.

Q: How important was it for you to win the FSR World Championship category, and why?



BM: For myself, it was a pretty nice achievement as I was finally able to win a championship. In every championship I drove, I was a contender but for many reasons I never made a full season so I wasn't able to win. But finally, I made all races I was intended to race and became Champion at the best Championship there is. If I was going to say it whether it was important, well, important on the exact meaning, I wouldn't say it was, because I had a contract signed very long ago already and it changed nothing on my philosophy. But to win the Championship, that is indeed a very nice feeling

Q: Actually, you're still pretty new in SimRacing. How did you get interested in the sport, and when did it all start?

BM: If I was going to say, I am not really new to SimRacing, as I play F1 sims since I am 5 years old, so that's 15 years ago. But to race in Online leagues, yes indeed I am still new as I only started in 2005 in Sim-Challenge. Starting with Offline, I got interested in racing games because my family loved F1 at that time and my brother was always playing this racing games and I wanted to play something too, so I started like this. I play since Indy500, an ancient but formidable game at that time, then GP1, GP2, GP3, GP3-2000, GP4. All these years

without even knowing there were leagues. Then Online it all started with F1-Challenge but I was driving in Amateur leagues with aids and keyboard. I was invited to join a Portuguese Team, GhostSpeed Racing Team. I did a league with them and then I was invited for the Sim-Challenge League. It was a totally new challenge for me and I had no idea how competitive I had to be, to be on the top. I had a full month to practice, adapt myself to driving with steering wheel and no aids. Basically totally different and I also had no one that could help me on the setups and I was pretty much a total newbie. It started very nicely, being just 7 tenths slower than the Pole man but I had to miss 3 races that proved to be crucial at the end of the championship due to many connection problems.

Later on I joined Da Silva Racing and I was able to learn a LOT with them, especially about setups, and I was able to win 7 races in a row. A feat I won't ever forget. Unfortunately, I made about 3 or 4 races less than the Champion, so I wasn't able to win it, just 2nd place, 16 points behind. Then in 2006, I was finally able to win, a year where I really did my best.

Q: How does a top driver like you approach a race weekend? How do you make your setups, how many laps do you practice for each track, how close do you work with your team, and do these things differ from track to track?

BM: After a race I always relax a bit to gain motivation between each races.

I always do the first version of the setup alone without any info from other drivers, then we share info, share setups and the final setup is always a mix. We found that to the best way to setup for us, of course it may be different for everyone.

I usually do 800-1000 laps for each race, but there were some occasions I only did 450 to 550 laps of practice and still was competitive, like on those back to back races

where I was also working, so I had a pretty limited time to practice. Nevertheless I was able to win those races and again at Brazil, 450 to 500 laps and still very fast pace. By the way, those amounts of laps have pit in and out included, so it's not as much as it seems to be. I work very closely with my team, that was another key for my performance. Doing all the work alone would be difficult, so working well with the team is always very important to find extra tenths.

Q: Your team became 2nd in the Constructors' Championship in its debut year, but at the end of the season, with your new teammate Ondrej Kuncman, it seemed to be the best team. I imagine, it is the goal to win the Constructors' Championship in 2007?

BM: Yes, with Ondrej we were finally able to have a competitive and consistent line up.

We want to win both championships next year, although we know it will be very difficult as the season is very long and new opponents will certainly appear. What we know is that we will do our best and then hope for the best results.

Q: rFactor is now since around a little more than one year on the market. How did you feel about that game when it came out first, and do you think it has gone into a good direction until now, both with the Patches released by ISI and with the great deal of work done by the community?

BM: rFactor improved a bit since it first came, especially with the F1 tracks we got later. But it still lacks contents and features and has some nasty bugs I would like to see being sorted out, mainly the slipstream as I noticed a few things I didn't like to see. If we try to overtake a car we immediately lose speed for no reason, if two cars are close side by side, there is a considerable loss of speed for both of cars. Also another weird bug I noticed is that if I slipstream while being very close to the opponent, he also gains speed. Nasty bugs in my opinion that have no reason to exist as this wasn't the case in F1-Challenge. I've

also seen some weird situations in the online races with cars disappearing. Also the fact that we don't have rain removes a lot of what a simulation is supposed to be. Of course I can't only say bad things about this game, it is a very nice mod-base and mod developers do very often amazing piece of work and it's the best game to simulate Formula 1.

Q: Do you prefer rFactor over other racing simulations, like GTR(2), netKar Pro or Live For Speed?

BM: After this season finished, I tried GTR2. A very nice Sim, but I simply prefer F1 to GT cars type. I also tried netKar Pro demo, it has nice features but I didn't like the car's feeling, very floaty even with Force Feedback on maximum. I also tried Live For Speed demo, this is a nice game but there are no leagues for F1 and it still lacks many features, so no chance from me. All in all, rFactor is still better for me.

Q: SimRacing in general is steadily growing. Where do you think it's still lacking, and what is your personal goal of simracing? Is it fun? Professionalism? Making money eventually?

BM: Like the question mentions, I agree that SimRacing is growing all the time. Of course it will always lack what only the real driving offers, which is the gravitational forces inside of a car and some other things. Still, SimRacing will grow to provide us a better simulation. All those 3 questions are what I want from SimRacing, profiting from it, driving in professional leagues and having fun while driving. It's as simple as that. I see sponsors coming to SimRacing, so money will be involved surely.

Q: Of course, more and more leagues are rising out of the ground, new simulations, such as GTR2, are coming up. However, you decided in mid 2006 that you will race again for your team, Diamond Racing, in the FSR World Championship in 2007. Why did you make your decision in favour of Formula SimRacing and in favour of your team so early?



BM: Well, the only league I would race for next year would be FSR as this is simply the best league. Also because Diamond offered me a good contract, which for obvious reasons I won't say a word about, so there are good prospects with securing a place in the best team I know.

Q: Will Ondrej Kuncman be your teammate next year or is that not sure yet?

BM: Yes, Ondrej showed a very fast pace when he drove for us, so it makes all sense that he will be with us next year as we wanted him and he wanted to stay with us, too. He is a great teammate so I am looking forward to see what the results we will bring next year.

Q: The FSR World Championship category doesn't allow any driving aids, whereas a modern real Formula One car

is full of electronical devices to keep it on track. Do you think Formula One has become too easy, or do you even think a league like Formula SimRacing should adopt all the aids the real idols are using?

BM: I am 50% - 50% for this question. It would take some challenge away indeed, but it would also mean that we would get closer to what Formula One is right now, meaning it would be more realistic, easier or not.

Q: A standard question would be, 'what is it that makes you so fast', which is the reason why I don't want to ask you this. Let's turn it around: What are the biggest mistakes of newcomers who're trying to get to the top? What should they concentrate on?

BM: The first mistake some newcomers do is thinking they can be on top right away and then get disappointed

and demotivated when they lose, just because maybe they were called "aliens" in another league. To win in the Formula SimRacing World Championship you have to have all the best qualities. These are basically: Consistency, Speed, Strategy and Knowledge all in one. If you don't have these qualities and potentially a few more, it will be hard to win. I know this for a long time, even before I started to race Online, but to use these qualities is a really difficult thing to do.

Another important thing is, practice as much as you can to know each mod we have to use in whatever league, it makes your life easier and you won't need to practice so much for the races.

Q: In the previous issue of this very magazine, I personally read with high interest the article about the NAP modification for GTR2. It was said that GTR2 is extremely lacking in setup logic. Basically the author says that there are a few standars settings the experienced drivers are using for every track, like soft springs, very hard dampers, high camber and so on. Personally, as a driver, I found out exactly the same, throughout this year, in rFactor. That's no surprise, because both rFactor and GTR2 are based on the same game engine. I will assume that all this is no news for you, but isn't it sad that some realism is taken out of the current top games on the market due to untidy work by the developers?

BM: I also read this article and found it very interesting indeed, unfortunately I am not qualified to say a word about it as I have never driven a real competition car. But yes, concerning many of the setup points he mentions, I am no different to most experienced drivers. But about realism, I honestly have no idea if this is real or not, I'd really like to know.

Q: Back at the times of Grand Prix 4 and Geoff Crammond, people tended to complain about the fact that the developers basically did not care about the inputs of their customers, thus the feedback of the community. Having

my previous question in mind, was it important that, with the release of rFactor, this situation changed by 180 degrees, so that now we all rely more than ever on the work of the community, or do you think this fact could lead to the mentioned untidy work by those who in the end earn the money?

BM: I said earlier that rFactor fails in some parts that only the developers of the game can solve so we also need the work from them. This game heavily needs the mods to be a good game but also if the developers stop doing accurate work, this game won't be as good as it can potentially be as there are some features lacking and some bugs to solve.

Q: It's not my personal intention to criticize the game developers too much, because at the end of the day we do play and enjoy their games, but on the other hand, we all, community and developers, must take care of always keeping things tidy, in order to keep the word 'simulation' at a level that it deserves, because that's what makes SimRacing special: We want to 'sim'-ulate the sport. How is your view on this?

BM: We are very fortunate that ISI keeps talking with the community, helping mod teams to improve the quality this game offers us. Unfortunately ISI doesn't own a license, which means to get real data is very difficult, so it makes it difficult to improve the simulation we already have. Sony is offering us poor games that are a lot worse than any Sim I know for PC. I know that really selected well known mod teams have contact with real teams to get real data but this is a totally different situation in F1 where everything is kept secretly. Anyway, I am pretty confident Simulations will improve and improve every year.

Q: I think that in SimRacing, it is very difficult to really get an idea of who are those fast guys behind the wheels. Obviously, we are no real Formula One and thus we kind of lack some presence in the media. To finish this

interview, it's time to tell the readers of the AutoSimSport magazine a little more about the 'person' Bruno Marques, instead of the 'alien' Bruno Marques (smiles).

BM: Eheh, fair point you made. People who know me, internet or real life, know I am a very friendly person and I'm easy to talk with.

I am studying Mechanical Engineering - Automotive. Very hard stuff of course, wish me luck, I need it! (smiles). By the way, rFactor isn't actually my favourite game, I prefer Final Fantasy, an RPG game, I always love those stories and to replay them!

Thanks Bruno, and good luck for 2007!

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

Armaroli SimRacing WorldCup



The Season is complete, and here are the winners of one of sim-racing's most coveted championships. Featuring custom-designed Armaroli cars, and running a grueling schedule, the [ASRWC](#) remains the Gold-Standard of sim-racing leagues.



- 1st place: NationTeam Italy (200 points)
- 2nd place: NationTeam South Africa (174 points)
- 3rd place: NationTeam Switzerland (168 points)
- 4th place: NationTeam Hungary (157 points)
- 5th place: NationTeam Spain (151 points)
- 6th place: NationTeam Brazil (142 points)
- 7th place: NationTeam Sweden (123 points)
- 8th place: NationTeam Netherlands (120 points)
- 9th place: NationTeam Austria (100 points)
- 10th place: NationTeam France (92 points)

A total of 28 countries scored points in this, the first season.

All members involved in ASRWC also voted for the winners in the following categories.

- Most talented simracer: David Greco (Italy)
- Most talented seatholder: Déthan Rootring (Netherlands)
- Fairest Nation: Netherlands
- Best ASRWC Race: Canada (Montreal)
- Best looking Nation-car: Netherlands

The GRC



Club History

The [GRC](#) was founded on the 11th of September 2005 as a place drivers could casually meet and race. This was not long after rFactor was released I believe(although I was not into on-line racing then). It was founded by Mike 'Drifter' Wrightson. We actually asked Mike about this recently in an interview we did and this was his answer.

"I saw a guy posting on RSC who was involved with setting up (well, reviving) UKLRS. He was posting about driving standards, and we got talking again. I said I could set up a club to provide private racing, and here we are. Sadly, he wasn't able to join us, I guess his job got in the way again."

League History

The GRCL was an idea I had been playing with for a month or so when I finally took the plunge and asked Mike if he would let it run at GRC. I pitched the idea of running a short 6 meeting season that would provide close racing and allow members to compete for a championship.

We ran the first season using the GT2 Rhez and it was a success. We had 24 registered drivers and it did provide close racing. I think we had 10 different race winners in 18 races.

We then had the idea of creating our own mod for season 2. We did this by taking the ZRGP mod, converting it to run RWD/FWD/4WD and changing it to provide close and stable racing.

We promoted it and had a total of 50 registered drivers. The cars proved to be a success, but the rules not so much, at least to start with. We ran a grid system where the points leader started last and last in the points started first. For the first couple of rounds, this actually proved a real problem, and there was a lot of contact. This did improve throughout the season and we were still averaging 20 drivers by the end of the season which is quite a high number compared to many championships that run for that long on-line.

For season 3 we are re-branding the series to the GRC Trophy and adopting new rules using a grid system taken from BTCC. We have always run 3 races in an evening, for this season this will be 3 20 minute races instead of two short heats and a longer final used before.



The Specially Created Mod For GRC's Season

We decided to approach a few mod teams at the end of season 2 to see if we could get permission to use their models in season 3 with our own physics. We thought at the time that we may get 1 or 2 say yes, so asked a large number. It turned out that any team we have actually managed to contact has not said no (at the time of this writing, anyway). We have been overwhelmed at the support, and would like to thank everybody for being so generous with their work.

The final lineup we have decided on is

Eurocup Megane/PCC/BMW M3GTR Cup/Seat Leon Challenge 2006/Alfa 147

We have placed a 210bhp engine in the cars, and given them all roughly the same amount of downforce. The tyres used by each car originated on the ZRGP but have been customized for each model. We have tried to keep the original feeling of each model while making them all competitive with each other.

The Racing Club

A racing club is all about providing private racing for its members. Because of this, racing in a club becomes similar to that of a League, close, fair and clean. Any driver wanting to become a member of the rF-GRC should aim to put good on-track behaviour first and winning second. In this way, we should be able to enjoy regular races that are a lot of fun. The rF-GRC is open to all drivers whether they are beginners or veterans; this should be the perfect place to learn race techniques and behaviour in a more friendly environment than the public servers.

There is no obligation attached to your membership, you can just turn up on a race night and join in, we won't expect you to be there each and every race. In addition to regular racing, we will organise occasional special events to add an extra element to the fun!

Welcome! And have fun out there!

Sim-Challenge.com—The Sim Drivers Challenge—Preseason Preview



The time has come to unleash the monster. Adrenalin is pumping through your veins. Every single thread of your body is in tense. You are concentrating and only wait for just this moment ... green, green green! The beast pinches its broad claws under you into the tarmac, 600bhp are shaking every part of your body. You are led only by your instincts and you have to react in a flash. The beast doesn't forgive anything, the competition is the greatest challenge of your life. You drive on the limit, lap by lap. A couple of slides here, a few missed braking points there, but you have everything under control. The race is long but you master the challenge. The chequered flag goes down and you can already smell the champagne in your car. On the podium the tension falls from you, you enjoy the triumph. You are a sim-racer, a sim-racer in the Sim-Challenge GTR2 World Championship. The Championship of the Champions.

It starts again, the fourth season of the probably most competitive international touring car online racing league. The 2007 season was already desperately anticipated from all sides. Not only because of the switch from GTR to GTR2. The new set of rules didn't change drastically in its main features, the biggest innovation is the introduction of weight handicaps in accordance with the FIA GT guidelines. Furthermore there is an offline qualifying of 2 stints of 8 laps. On the one hand it serves the purpose to determine the starting grid, on the other hand it's a pre-qualifying to define the top 25 drivers of every class (GT and NGT) if more drivers should take part.

More than 80 drivers have registered for the new season at this time (25.11.2006). The races are held over a period of one and a half hours, no driving helps allowed

apart from auto-clutch. Every single lap will be checked and validated by our cheat protection tool, the Sim-Challenge Race Utility. This grants a fair competition and enables us to run the league on the highest possible level. The driver champions of both classes will win a NaturalPoint TrackIR 4 Pro optical head tracker. The first round takes place in Valencia (Spain) on the 9th of December and everyone involved is excited to finally start the season.

The list of the participating teams and drivers reads like a who's who of the sim-racing scene. Among others the team champions of the years 2005 and 2006 Virtual Games.com again registered for the GT class. The reigning GT champion Roland Ehnström (Sweden) is supported by Philipp Hildebrandt (Germany), Joao Vaz (Portugal) and 2005 GT Champion Norbi Kiss (Hungary). Team manager Rogerio Barroso has therefore arguably the most powerful lineup of the championship.

The team Finnmotion around team manager and driver Markus Könönen (Finland) has made a clever move and secured the services of the driving genius and league admin Max Dell'Orco (Italy), one of the hottest candidates for the driver title. If we are talking about fast Finns it has to be mentioned that the legendary Team Redline registered Greger Huttu, perhaps one of the fastest and most successful drivers of the simracing history. Definitely the sensation of the preseason.

Furthermore 2003 Sim-Challenge ETCC World Champion and league admin Dominik Binz (Germany - Cyber Racing), Grand Prix Legends star Luke Mclean (Australia) insider tip on the title, the Sweden armada of team SSR around Patrik Gardewall, the loyal Sim-Challenge veterans Carlo Animo, Cyril Limosino (France - 2005 NGT Champion), Sami Silventoinen (Finland), Ari Nieminen (Finland), Laki Sultan (Macedonia) and much more have entered the GT class.

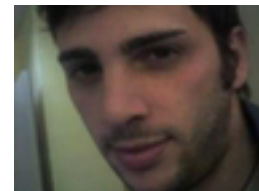
And it continues just as spectacularly in the NGT class. The reigning NGT champion and together with his team mates Evert Blommert and Jan Duijs also reigning team champions, league admin Mark v/d Meulen (Netherlands) will start for Dutch Turtles. Matjaz Plotajs (Ajira Racing) is known for his excellent consistent performances and in a long championship definitely a hot contender. His former team mate and now driver for Cyber Racing, Tom Goodall will as always be a safe bet for some good performances. Then there is Dutch youngster Alex Ott whom last year showed his pace and also just joined the line up for the 06/07 season. And then there is veteran Sim-Challenge competitor Alessandro Maresta, who, if lady luck is on his side for a change, sure will be in the mix of things.

And then there are the new boys on the block, like Corey Melton (HLM) he has raised some eyebrows with quick lap times in testing. Rory King and Martin Steinmetz proved in the pre-season BMW cup that there's enough pace to trouble a few of the more familiar names. And since Team Shark started their pre season work, most other team-managers see them even as one of the main contenders, in both team and driver championship. Add to that list the names of newly OD Racing contracted Dutch driver Albert Priem and Ian Astles (as one off the many British contenders) and you are looking at possible the closest and hard fought NGT title in both driver and team for years.

Altogether the new season promises some hot races in both classes. Don't miss the chance to follow the races live on our website at <http://www.sim-challenge.com/>! But now let's hear what the teams and drivers themselves have to say.

Sim-Challenge.com: *"Welcome to the Sim-Challenge preseason press conference ladies and gentlemen. For the new season we switched from GTR to GTR2. How do you see this change? Do you think it is going to affect your performance in any way?"*

Max Dell'Orco (Finnmotion – Driver GT Class – Sim-Challenge.com Admin):



"Hi Dom, I think that the switch was positive. I like GTR2 a lot, I can feel the car better and finally I can feel the slick tyres!! With GTR there was something so strange, no grip, bad braking. I'm still learning the game

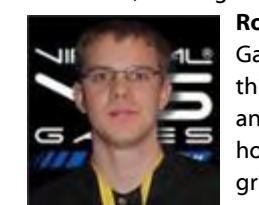
everytime I play it and I'm very pleased about the car behaviour. I can brake until the turn apex as I was doing when racing for real. This gives me a lot of positive feelings, so I think that the switch will only bring benefits to my racing style."

Rogerio Barroso (Virtual-Games.com – Team Manager):



"I have always supported the change to the newest sims, with the exception of NASCAR. So, I see it as a good thing. I believe that GTR2 will remove some of the differences drivers can make. Don't get me wrong,

to be the best will be as hard as ever, but the field will walk closer, so things will be interesting to watch! ;)"



Roland Ehnström (Virtual-

Games.com – Driver GT Class): "I think it's a very logical step to take, and I'm all for it. I really have no idea how this new sim will shuffle the grid, but usually the same drivers will be in the top anyway, regardless

of which sim is used. But probably the races will be even closer this season, and we will see less DNF's, as small mistakes are not punished quite as heavily in GTR2, and the gravel traps now actually slow the car down before you hit the wall..."

Norbi Kiss (Virtual-Games.com – Driver GT Class): “I definitely like it because I think GTR2 is a step forward since 1, and I like it a lot better.”

Philipp Hildebrandt (Virtual-Games.com – Driver GT Class): “That change isn’t surprising, as most leagues will run the newest version of any given sim. The performance of the drivers might get a bit closer in GTR2 as it seems more forgiving in certain aspects of driving. I

don’t think my performance will be affected too much, but who knows, as I haven’t installed GTR2 so far.”

Joao Vaz (Virtual-Games.com – Driver GT Class): “I have to be honest and say that I didn’t dedicate much time to learning the new Sim simply because I didn’t have it. Right now I’m working on it and feel very motivated. I just love it. Much better and improved in many aspects. About my performance I don’t know the answer to that question because I don’t have any benchmarks. I’ve just tested alone. I do believe though that the best drivers will always be the fastest. Change the sims but the grids remain the same.”

Tom Goodall (Cyber Racing – Team Manager – Driver NGT Class): “I think it will make for closer racing. I also believe it will mean less accidents. Which is a good thing”

Dominik Binz (Cyber Racing – Driver GT Class – Sim-Challenge.com Admin): “Of course it was necessary for the league to switch to GTR2. Another season with GTR and all of its flaws wouldn’t have brought us forward. Most of my free time goes into preparing stuff for the league and some other projects so I really don’t have a dedicated opinion on GTR2 yet



although it seems a step forward in every area. As you might know I’m more into open wheelers but I always enjoy to fire up a touring car sim once in a while. From what I can see in my first tests it seems that I’m slower in GTR2 than in other sims. I have to find out why and I’m working hard to solve these problems.”

Dirk Linden (ODracing - Team Manager): “At ODracing we think we can benefit from the switch to GTR2. In the past seasons we suffered from a few weird low speed spins. Low speed behavior was sometimes real unpredictable in GTR. The improvement on this point will surely help our consistency during the season. But then again it will



probably help the other teams as well... Overall reality seems to have increased, and that is good news for all Sim-Challenge testers. After all Sim-Challenge is about making sim-racing as real as possible.”

Matjaz Plotajs (Ajira Racing – Team Manager – Driver NGT Class): “I think GTR2 will provide closer racing and therefore much more excitement from start to finish. GTR was great but it had its limitations regarding physics especially that icy low speed feeling and inability to »survive« a small contact with your opponent. I think GTR2 is a step forward regarding these two elements and after doing some league racing with it I can say it is much more enjoyable in every aspect.”

Sami Silventoinen (Ajira Racing – Driver GT Class): “No.”

Greger Huttu (Team Redline – Driver GT Class): “I didn’t drive in Sim-Challenge in the previous season with GTR, and it’s been quite a long time since I drove that sim so for me it’s a nice, fresh start with GTR2. My performance should be ok, there are some new things to learn of course but I’ve been competitive in most sims so I’m expecting a decent result already from the first race.”

Mark vD Meulen (Durch Turtles – Driver NGT Class – Sim-Challenge.com Admin): “GTR2 might be a little less challenging than its predecessor, but the IMHO improved low speed handling and weight feel, makes the racing closer and more competitive, so it’s OK with me/us.”

Fabrizio Hernandez (Sajan Racing Team – Driver GT Class): “Well I don’t think it will be much different for me, but I’m sure that a lot of drivers will improve and maybe a lot will be slower respect past years. GTR2 needs a more clean driving style than GTR. You can drift yeah, but it brings you nowhere. SimBin did a great job.”

Sim-Challenge.com: “After you read the new rules, what is the thing you are looking forward the most?”

Max Dell’Orco (Finnmotion – Driver GT Class – Sim-Challenge.com Admin): “Well rules are very complete this year with the introduction of weight penalties following the FIA GT rules. I think I’ll work with my teammate also on some strategies according to this point... I mean avoiding to be at Oschersleben with 100kg more :D. I’m very optimistic so.”

Rogério Barroso (Virtual-Games.com – Team Manager): “The new Qualifying Model and the Handicap Weight Regulations.”

Roland Ehnström (Virtual-Games.com – Driver GT Class): “Obviously the handicap weight system will make the season very interesting, but the thing that excites me most is actually the new qualifying system, where pre-qualifying and grid qualifying is combined into only one session. No longer can you just drive a safe lap in pre-qualifying to just get onto the grid, but you have to actually drive a really fast lap, to get a good POSITION on the grid, as the result of pre-qualifying now also decides the grid position for the race. It makes me feel nervous just thinking about it, but it should be fun and will certainly pull out a few surprises!”



Norbi Kiss (Virtual-Games.com – Driver GT Class): "It's the handicap system obviously. Just look at WTCC and FIA GT how tough are those. It's definitely going to keep the races interesting all the time."

Philipp Hildebrandt (Virtual-Games.com – Driver GT Class): "Handicap weights will get interesting I guess. We used that already in our German GTR league with GTR, and it's really challenging to keep up with the guys on lighter cars. Tire wear and fuel usage will be increased too, so it really brings the field closer together. I am still wondering if there will be mandatory pit stops, like last year. But concerning the rule system overall, there won't be much difference to other leagues we raced in."

Joao Vaz (Virtual-Games.com – Driver GT Class): "To race."

Tom Goodall (Cyber Racing – Team Manager – Driver NGT Class): "I am not too bothered. The Schedule is interesting though. I tend to just read rules, accept them for what they are and get on with it :)"

Dominik Binz (Cyber Racing – Driver GT Class – Sim-Challenge.com Admin): "The qualifying should be exciting as well as the weight handicap. We already had that in 2003 with the ETCC Mod and it was great, though it's very hard to accept to be slower than others if you have a heavy car and you know you could go faster. A very psychological game."

Dirk Linden (ODracing - Team Manager): "The rules for the 2007 season seem a logical evolution from the past seasons. Most important improvement is probably the less time consuming starting procedure. Still would be

better if GTR2 made it possible to setup the start grid, but that is something even Sim-Challenge staff can't change."

Matjaz Plotajs (Ajira Racing – Team Manager – Driver NGT Class): "Introducing weight penalties will be an interesting element and that is a bit of an unknown territory for me personally so I'm looking forward to this challenge."

Sami Silventoinen (Ajira Racing – Driver GT Class): "Racing."

Greger Huttu (Team Redline – Driver GT Class): "I'm mostly looking forward to the long 90 minute races since it's been a long time since I drove in a league with such long races. They're going to require intense concentration with the amount of good drivers that will be competing this season. Also the qualifying and race being on separate days is something I haven't really done before. Weight penalties are something I don't really like but it'll be interesting to see how they affect the races and championship."

Mark vD Meulen (Durch Turtles – Driver NGT Class – Sim-Challenge.com Admin): "The new tracks and like last year the fact that you are allowed to drive in your own team livery, makes it look absolutely stunning."

Fabrizio Hernandez (Sajan Racing Team – Driver GT Class): "Rules seem to be really ok with me. Very accurate and I expect to have more luck respect last year... then the track will tell."

Sim-Challenge.com: "What do you expect from the 2007 season for you personally and your team in general?"

Max Dell'Orco (Finnmotion – Driver GT Class – Sim-Challenge.com Admin): "Well I thought this year would have been my year :D There are a lot of fast and awesome drivers, but I'm confident in what I can do and we have a really good test driver (Mikko Saren) who will help us a lot with his great race setups / strategies. So together with Markus and Carlo our aims are high, we want to have fun overall but to win the Title... isn't a bad idea :D"

Rogério Barroso (Virtual-Games.com – Team Manager): "Well, Virtual-Games.com Racing Team has a heavy weight on its shoulders! After all, we took both Titles in 2005 and 2006. My expectations for 2007 is to be able to keep fighting for both Championships, and make it 3 in a row! :D But this year things are going to be harder, not only because of what I think about the game, but also because the level of Sim-Challenge GTR2 2007 will be so high that is almost stupid! :P"

Roland Ehnström (Virtual-Games.com – Driver GT Class): "Well, I felt I started last season somewhat overshadowed by drivers like Max Dell'Orco and Philipp Hildebrandt, but this season as the reigning champion I know everyone will be out there to beat ME. So on one hand I feel a lot more pressure, but on the other hand I also feel I have already proven my point and made a name for myself, so now I can relax a bit and just take the season as it comes. Just like last season I really don't expect to be fighting for the championship - lightning doesn't strike twice in the same place! - but I hope I won't make a fool out of myself at least. As for the team, we won the championship in 2005 and again in 2006, so our goal must surely be to complete the hat-trick. That would be an awesome achievement!"

Norbi Kiss (Virtual-Games.com – Driver GT Class): "Well I certainly expect Virtual-Games to defend its title once again, cause our team simply just rocks, so... As for me, I'm really not sure. In the winter I will have time to prepare the races but as the summer will come and the real life racing seasons are about to start, that will be 1st priority for me. So anyway, I will try my best when I can."

Philipp Hildebrandt (Virtual-Games.com – Driver GT Class): "If I learned something in the past, it is not to expect anything before the season. The first races will tell how competitive each driver will be. I guess I won't be too bad, but I really can't tell how good I will be at the end. But there is no doubt that I want to win, that's why I

am starting in Sim-Challenge. Concerning our team, I think we will have a pretty good chance to defend our past 2 titles. With Roland, Joao and Norbi, we really have some drivers to beat. I think other teams might get some headaches."

Joao Vaz (Virtual-Games.com – Driver GT Class): "I aim high. I'm working to fight for Top 3's all the time. My team will work to get the Drivers championship and the Teams Championship for the 3rd time in a row. We seriously mean business about this."

Tom Goodall (Cyber Racing – Team Manager – Driver NGT Class): "I would like to challenge for the NGT championship personally. I would also like to see Mario and Fred improving themselves and maybe getting a couple of top 5 finishes. As for GT, I would love to see Dom (Binz) take race wins. I believe he expects the same, but I would also like to find a team mate for him to help him with the championship. Of course, winning team championships would be great :)"

Dominik Binz (Cyber Racing – Driver GT Class – Sim-Challenge.com Admin): "I honestly don't expect too much from me in the first races as I have some problems to adapt to GTR2 at the moment. I'll give 110% as always but if it's enough to win races... I doubt it looking at the competition this year. I hope my team mates and I can bring in some solid results."

Dirk Linden (ODracing - Team Manager): "After 2 seasons with a single driver ODracing is proud to announce we signed a new fast driver. Dutchman Albert Priem earned his 'street credibility' in an important Dutch national league. We think he's more than ready to perform on an international podium. Albert Priem will drive for ODracing as first driver. Team manager Dirk Linden will take the second seat. With this line up we think we can go for the team championship. Dirk Linden is not the fastest driver in the field (in fact he considers himself to be a 'gentleman racer' rather than a pro race driver). But

during the past 2 seasons he showed, with a consecutive 8th and 5th position in the final standings, that consistent driving can bring you a long way in the championship. This consistency along with the 'go for the podium' attitude of Albert Priem should bring ODracing success in the championship."

Matjaz Plotajs (Ajira Racing – Team Manager – Driver NGT Class): "My personal target is to fight for a podium in every race which should be much more difficult this season. Then again I'll be very happy just to deliver a stable performance, to finish every race and try to enjoy every moment on track. For the team I'm optimistic as well with Jarkko and Sami hopefully making a step forward from last years performance when they showed a great potential. I think we are able to fight with the top teams and to score some good results."

Sami Silventoinen (Ajira Racing – Driver GT Class): "Winning."

Greger Huttu (Team Redline – Driver GT Class): "I'm expecting a win or two at least! I really just hope that I can do a consistent performance without mistakes and be there in the end fighting for the championship. It's hard to predict what will happen, but I'm sure after the first race things will be clearer. If things don't change, I'll be the only driver in our team this season, so I don't have to care about team orders at least!"

Mark vD Meulen (Durch Turtles – Driver NGT Class – Sim-Challenge.com Admin): "Everything less then last years results would be a massive disappointment :D."

Fabrizio Hernandez (Sajan Racing Team – Driver GT Class): "I expect to do a good championship and my aim is to finish all races. I've a good feeling with my teammate so we're awaiting nice results."

Sim-Challenge.com: "Which driver(s) / team(s) will fight for the titles?"

Max Dell'Orco (Finnmotion – Driver GT Class – Sim-Challenge.com Admin): "If you have a look at the GT line-

up you can see by yourself how hard it will be for all. Roland showed last year a great race pace and strategy, Norbi (although he won't do all races because of his real racing - GOOD LUCK m8!) was the best driver I raced online so far. Maybe sometimes I was faster but we never had contacts in our 90min race length and we sometimes finished within 1 second! Joao Vaz also has great potential overall in race trim / setups. He always setups the car perfectly and is awesomely fast... maybe he is a bit unlucky being often involved in major problems. Greger Huttu, he is well known everywhere and he is a beast. I never saw him racing online so I really don't know how he is, but I'm more than sure that he will be always on top of the grid! Philipp Hildebrandt, Dominik Binz, Markus so... a lot of fast drivers but I'll bet my 10 cents on VG Team for the title."

Rogério Barroso (Virtual-Games.com – Team Manager): "I think it's still early to say. Team wise, from what I could gather, maybe Virtual-Games.com, Finnmotion and ASRG are a little stronger then the rest. If Team Redline has a team mate for Huttu, they will also be natural contenders. In the Drivers, I think it's not even a good idea to start naming people, knowing how many Drivers in the Field can do it! ;)"

Roland Ehnström (Virtual-Games.com – Driver GT Class): "At the time I'm writing this I don't know exactly who are going to race this season, but one thing is certain: MaxD will do everything he can to finally win his own championship. And trust me, when Max goes to the MAX, there is not one driver in the world that can go faster than him! Well, maybe there is one after all: The great Greger Huttu, my old friend from the Grand Prix Legends days. I am absolutely thrilled to hear the news that Greger today registered with Sim-Challenge 2007! This season will be a thriller!"

Philipp Hildebrandt (Virtual-Games.com – Driver GT Class): "Tough to tell at this stage, also looking at the

drivers who made their entries to Sim-Challenge 2007 in the past days. Beside our drivers, we have some strong Swedes like Gardewall, Edin, and the newcomer Hellsten. Then there is the finnish bunch, with Huttu, Rissanen, Mikkonen, Kononen & Hartikainen. Not to mention Max Dell'Orco and guys like McLean. And who knows, who will subscribe next. Better you don't miss to watch the races, it will get very challenging."

Joao Vaz (Virtual-Games.com – Driver GT Class): "I think we have a lot of talent on the roster. I don't think there is an absolute contender but there are a handful of drivers that could get the championship with equal probability. About the teams champ, definitely we are favourites."

Tom Goodall (Cyber Racing – Team Manager – Driver NGT Class): "Cyber Racing, of course :D Also, DH-R with Max and Fabrizio will be tough. So will Alex Demo and I really think Corey Melton will be very strong also. Don't forget Roland either :)"

Dominik Binz (Cyber Racing – Driver GT Class – Sim-Challenge.com Admin): "Really hard to say. There are at least 10 names on my mind who can win the champ without thinking about it. If I'd have to place a bet: my favourites are Max Dell'Orco, Greger Huttu or one of the Virtual Games boys."

Matjaz Plotajs (Ajira Racing – Team Manager – Driver NGT Class): "I think Virtual-Games.com Racing Team is a clear favourite in GT class this year. Driver's championship is another matter though but MaxD is my favourite. I can't speak for NGT as I don't know the teams very well but I think it will be a closer fight for the team championship than in GT class."

Sami Silventoinen (Ajira Racing – Driver GT Class): "All."

Greger Huttu (Team Redline – Driver GT Class): "I think there are at least 10 drivers who can win races, so it's very likely that the championship will be decided right at the end. There are more than a couple of teams with competitive line-ups too, I'd say Finnmotion, Cyber

Racing and Virtual-Games.com are looking strong, possibly with some others."

Mark vD Meulen (Durch Turtles – Driver NGT Class – Sim-Challenge.com Admin): "In the GT class, wow, I mean line up is getting better and better each day, so I'm not putting my money on someone yet, but hope/think that my mate Max does well ;) NGT, lot of new names so we will have to see how that will evolve during the season."

Fabrizio Hernandez (Sajan Racing Team – Driver GT Class): "I hope to be there :D It will be hard since a lot of fast drivers of last year will be there. The GT line-up is incredibly awesome... never saw something similar!! It'll be a great champ I'm sure."

Sim-Challenge.com: "What does make competing in Sim-Challenge.com leagues special?"

Max Dell'Orco (Finnmotion – Driver GT Class – Sim-Challenge.com Admin): "Well... because I'm the creator. Because it's free! Because there are great people sharing the same passion."

Rogério Barroso (Virtual-Games.com – Team Manager): "I think my answer in the previous question says it all... It's simply the best GTR2 League around. If you want the pinnacle of GT competition, this is the place to be!"

Roland Ehnström (Virtual-Games.com – Driver GT Class): "The competition! No GT racing league in the world comes close to attracting the driving talent of Sim-Challenge, it's as simple as that."

Norbi Kiss (Virtual-Games.com – Driver GT Class): "Like Roland said the competition, definitely. I've never seen so much great drivers in one place."

Philipp Hildebrandt (Virtual-Games.com – Driver GT Class): "Check the line-up, if you don't find the answer, go find another hobby. This is big boys racing!"

Joao Vaz (Virtual-Games.com – Driver GT Class): "I don't know what it is. I just have to do it :P."

Tom Goodall (Cyber Racing – Team Manager – Driver NGT Class): "The top quality of drivers all the way down

the field, also the friendly attitude and professionalism of everyone involved. Plus a chance of winning prizes."

Dominik Binz (Cyber Racing – Driver GT Class – Sim-Challenge.com Admin): "This question should be answered by others :) What I can say is that we all give our very best to bring you the most intense online racing league you can imagine."

Dirk Linden (ODracing – Team Manager): "ODracing is very excited to race in the Sim-Challenge.com championship for the third season in a row. At ODracing we're into serious racing, and that's exactly what you get at Sim-Challenge."

Matjaz Plotajs (Ajira Racing – Team Manager – Driver NGT Class): "Great competition and opportunity to drive against some of the best drivers in the world of simracing, friendly community and most of all people who run this league... Max, Mark, Dom, very nice chaps, always willing to listen and improve this competition."

Sami Silventoinen (Ajira Racing – Driver GT Class): "Nothing."

Greger Huttu (Team Redline – Driver GT Class): "This is my first season so at the moment I simply have to say, the level of competition!"

Mark vD Meulen (Durch Turtles – Driver NGT Class – Sim-Challenge.com Admin): "Close, competitive, hard en fair racing en did I mention FUN yet, so I'm really looking forward to the upcoming season."

Fabrizio Hernandez (Sajan Racing Team – Driver GT Class): "Well the fact to compete with the best drivers around, the organization is very professional and this thanks to my friend Max who, since I know him (20 years), has 1 and only 1 passion..."

We want to thank all for reading this far, we hope you enjoyed this article as much as we enjoyed composing it. Hail to the car designers of the participating teams for creating first class simracing art. Here you can find some examples of extraordinary designing talent.

Chequered Flag

continued



Sajan Racing Team Ferrari 550



Dutch Turtles Porsche GT3-RSR



GhostSpeed Porsche GT3-RSR



GhostSpeed Ferrari 550 Maranello



Maddog Racing TVR



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New Year's Enduro

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All rFactor racers are invited to the New Year's 6 Hr. Enduro presented by R.A.C.E.R. at the Glen To enter you must be a R.A.C.E.R. licensed driver. More Details at www.rf-racer.com and www.freewebs.com/r8man Hurry as there are only a limited number of spots in each class! 4 classes-40 cars-80 drivers-only 6 hrs to win!

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