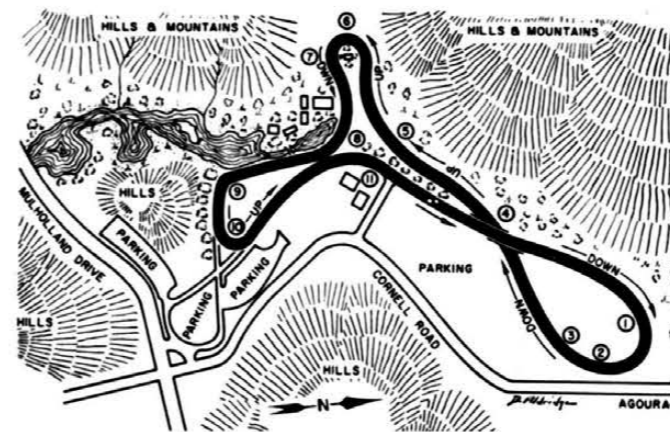




opener at **PARAMOUNT RANCH**

BY JIM MOURNING

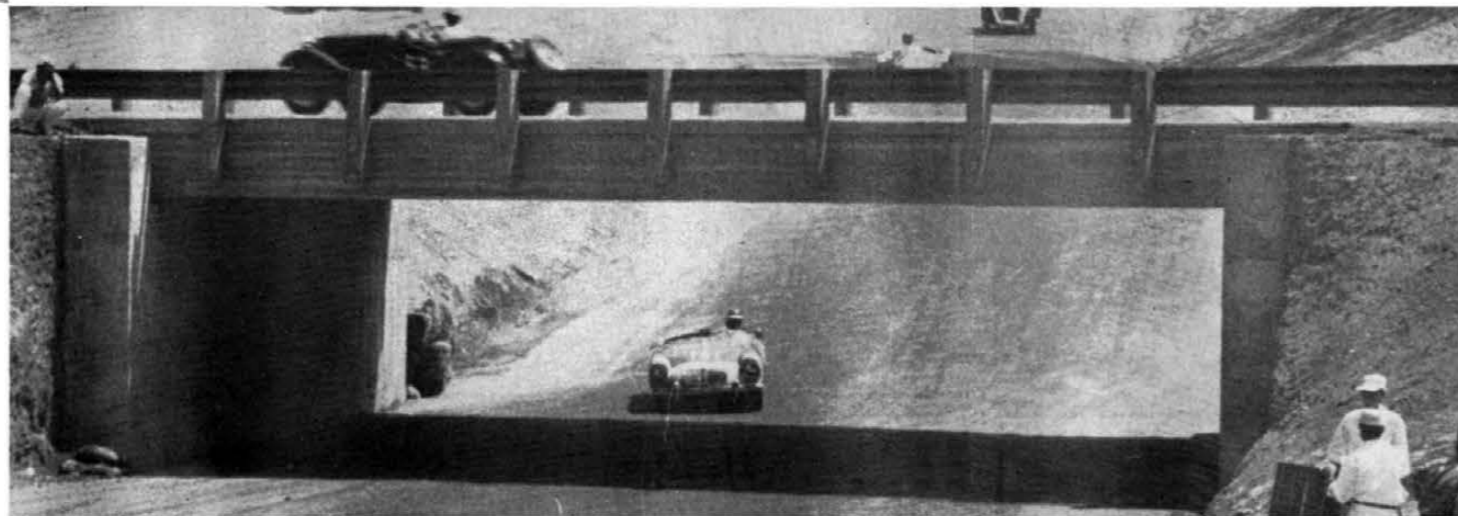


Map of Paramount Ranch shows it to be basically a mishapen 8 winding into some tight hairpin turns in its Southern end. Road needs no chicanes.

Sure that someone had mislaid turn five, Frank Nichols tries to part hay in search for it.

Coming under bridge is Mel Curland in MGA—no oil pressure—no finish. The drop out of turn 3 is so abrupt, faster cars left ground with all fours.

Photographs by Bob Rolofson



LOWER LEFT: Leroy Wise roughs up a hay bale with his DKW to make it behave. LOWER RIGHT: A mixed group of mounts find their way around turn five.

WHILE asserted sponsors and would-be sponsors of dream tracks from San Francisco to San Diego restricted themselves to conversation, were bogged down in delays or became entangled in red tape, a group of Los Angeles business men completed plans for a permanent road racing site with all the fanfare usually reserved for a nefarious cloak and dagger operation.

And not without reason. Like the boy who shouted wolf once too often, local promoters had hardened the public to claims of and for new road racing circuits. Consequently, when the California Sports Car Club announced they would hold a race on a new track just outside Los Angeles, a large segment of the local press raised a cynical eyebrow, noted that not an inch of asphalt had been laid and promptly went back to tossing harpoons at whatever was irritating them most at the moment.

But this reaction had been expected. Just 27 days later, contractors had turned a grassy field in the hills above Agoura, California into a road racing circuit. Site was the Paramount Ranch, whose western town set has seen many a celluloid cowboy in the past.

When the new circuit made its debut, several past and

present holders of FIA paper were on hand, as were many who are familiar with the European scene. The general consensus was that the Paramount track is the equal of any club circuit in Europe and is most directly comparable to Brands Hatch in England.

But whatever the circuit is, it is not a thing to inspire unrestrained joy in the hearts of drivers of big-bore machinery. Most of the corners are sharp enough to discourage heavier handling vehicles and a wide assortment of unpleasant places are available to those who don't quite make it around them.

Roughly speaking, the layout resembles a well used figure 8, its outstanding feature being an overpass-underpass arrangement where the track intersects. It is approximately 2 miles long and has a 300 front straight, which strictly speaking, is the only straight on the course. And there isn't a single really level stretch to be found: the elevation variance being 35 feet between the highest and the lowest points, while the course widths ranges from 34 feet on the straightaway to 55-65 feet on the 11 turns, all of which are banked to varying degrees. From their vantage points on surrounding hills, spectators can see up to 90 percent of the circuit.

Although the course, as a whole, is undoubtedly the trickiest and most challenging yet offered to West Coast pilots, experience proved that the two toughest turns were number 5 — a sharp climbing right at the end of a relatively short but rapid straight, and number 8 — a sweeping right around the end of a barn and alongside a small lake.

Even though no one really doubted the sincerity of club officials when they carefully detailed the dangers of the new circuit, two sports cars rolled down the embankment into the lake and a Formula III car made an exciting if not graceful trip into the gully on the outside of turn five — spelling it out in capitals for all concerned. None of the drivers were injured seriously enough to require hospitalization.

Despite a field composed almost exclusively of local talent, the inaugural event, which was restricted to senior drivers, provided much of the interest for the 20,000 spectators — mostly in the form of individual performances and a vigorous if not enlightening hassle over use of the black flag.

If one man could be said to have dominated the week-

end, that man was 26 year-old Richie Ginther, in the Competition Motors Porsche Spyder. Ironically, with Ken Miles arriving too late from his record-breaking tour of Bonneville to enter, Jack McAfee fresh from his successful assault on eastern circuits, was all but handed top honors in the small-bore class before the car even left the starting grid. Ginther was mentally assigned the task of following the tail lights on the John Edgar owned-Porsche Spyder, driven by McAfee, as he has with Miles' Spyder during the past season.

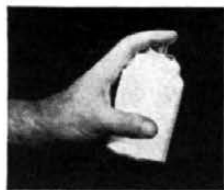
But on Saturday, Ginther got out in front and managed to keep his tailpipes just out of McAfee's reach for the entire ten laps, finishing a half-second ahead. On Sunday, the throttle linkage on McAfee's mount snapped and Ginther breezed to a 57 second win over Frank Monise in a Lotus Climax. To make his weekend complete, Ginther returned in the big car battle and grabbed third overall.

Dr. William Eschrich's Porsche-Lotus, John McLaughlin in a Lotus Climax and Dr. Troy McHenry's Porsche Spyder followed in that order in Sunday's hour-long go for under 1500 cc cars.

(Continued on page 66)

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Paramount Ranch

(Continued from page 31)

The tussle for top spot in the over 1500 cc category was between Harrison Evans' Monza Ferrari and the Buick-powered Morgenson Special, which was driven by Eric Hauser after his previous mount had been barred from further competition because of handling characteristics that were considered somewhat less than adequate.

Hauser immediately took out in front, but held it for only twenty minutes before Evans moved into a lead that wasn't threatened until the final minutes of the hour-long race. Despite closing ground rapidly, Hauser was unable to overhaul the Ferrari and Evans shattered a nearly perfect record for unsuccessful, if enthusiastic, endeavor by finishing two seconds ahead. Ginther was third, followed by Bill Krause and Harold Erb in D. Jaguars.

On Saturday, Hauser had rolled to a win without serious contention from the Ferrari—finishing three seconds ahead of Krause and 26 seconds ahead of Evans, who trailed in third.

For all the fine weather, interesting races and financially profitable attendance, the week-end finished on something of a sour note as a heated debate flared up when Ed Kretz (whose vigorous driving techniques have been forged by 30 years of automobile and motorcycle racing) and Rudy Cleye (an almost proverbial winner in the production races) were black flagged for erratic driving in Sunday's main event.

Actually, the verbal pyrotechnics weren't set off by these instances alone, but were the culmination of what many considered a period of under-worked judgments and over-worked black flags that resulted when the club attempted to make a useful job out of the previously meaningless and usually honorary title of race judge.

No official announcement has been forthcoming concerning the handling of these cases, but statements of officials involved indicate that the charges were dismissed and that improvements in the judging set-up are now under consideration.

One more sports car race is slated for the Paramount site before the year's end, and future events will be limited to three a year. The only other competition meets even being considered at the moment are a brace of races for the stock cars.

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