

TABLE TOP GRAND PRIX

Others can have their electric trains — here is SCI's nomination for the ultimate in what the enthusiast would like under the Christmas tree.

by Bob Coogan

A pair of scale Maseratis race the #2 course. Each car has separate throttle control. Unless slowed for corners, cars will leave the track in startlingly realistic manner.



WHILE browsing through Polk's Hobby Shop the other day, I happened to see a figure-eight shaped road-course laid out on a table. On inquiring, I was blandly told that the course was for "racing little cars." I then asked, "What kind of cars?" "How big are they?" "Can they really be raced?" "Do they look like real cars?" "Can I see them now?"

The salesman, to whom I addressed these questions, was by this time cowering behind a stack of A-4 Mechano sets. He pointed to the rear of the store and just managed to choke out the words, "Mr. Rose!" I released my grip on his thorax, and moved catlike toward the back of the store, where I duly found Mr. Rose. After repeating all the aforementioned questions, Mr. Rose patted me on my bald spot and told me to get up off my knees, and that he would show me the whole affair, and maybe, if I were a good boy, he'd let me play with them for a while.

The cars turned out to be wonderful scale models of Maseratis and Ferraris that run two at a time on a variety of courses, and must be controlled either by two people or one who is extremely ambidextrous. It really lends itself to competition.

The course is made of semi-flexible plastic tile-like slabs that have two grooves, one for each car. Each groove is lined with two strips of metal for the electrical pick-up. The top of these metal strips is flush with the road-bed to facilitate spinning and other realistic hi-jinks. The amazing thing about the cars is the guide wheel, which is hidden away just about where the gearbox is found on a real car. The guide wheel runs within a free-turning horizontal ring allowing the car to spin or drift, and the car is not coupled to the track in any way. It merely serves to pick up the current for the nylon-housed rear-mounted motor, and acts as a pivot point for drifts and slides . . . unless you get too lead-footed with the power.

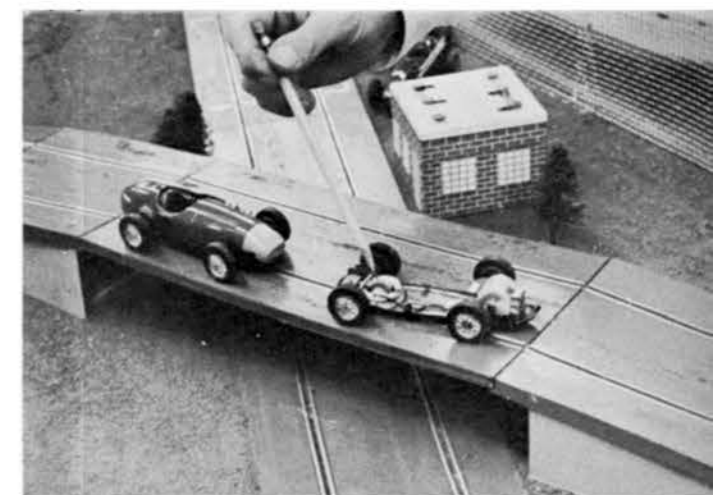
The cars race around at unbelievable scale speeds. The speed is controlled by two buttons, one for each car, that are blipped off and on to slow the cars for the corners and accelerate around them and down the straights. This is necessary, for if you hold the button full-on the car will go straight off the course. If you hold the button on too far into the corner, the car will start around and then do a big hairy spin. The button must be feathered properly so that the car will take the corner in a beautiful power slide. Another point to watch is coming out of the corners, because a constant application of power will cause over-run, and result in a spin. In order to win a race, one must exercise great skill and discretion in the use of the throttle-button, which also uses the drag of the motor as a brake.

SCI's Editor, John Christy, hove on the scene about the time I was discovering all these intriguing aspects of table-top GP. His reaction was immediate, the first question being: "Can you make it go quicker?" A few questions in the proper places produced a resounding yea. The cars are set for 12 volts but they're tested for 18, giving a safety factor of six volts that can be shaved as far as one has courage to go. An electrified nitro so to speak. Another item bearing improvement is tires — one can groove the hard rubber and inlay rubber bands which are much softer and "stickier," to take any extra power. At this point Tech Editor Wilder discovered that ballast weights could be moved around for changes in weight distribution. In short, the possibilities are endless . . . and to say more would be giving away the speed secrets of the already-enlightened.

The course on which we tested these cars was a figure-eight with slightly-banked turns and a cross-over bridge. The cross-over in the course makes a lap the same distance for both cars, whereas, on an oval course, the inside car would have a shorter distance to go. Even the figure-eight course needs a little handicapping, as the car on the inside before the bridge is at a slight disadvantage, owing to the fact that



Car on outside during curves has advantage as fence holds it on the course. White-nosed Maserati, though still in lead, is about to spin



Twelve volt electric motor propells car and is brake when power is turned off. SCI test drivers kept cars on track at 100 scale mph.

SCALEXTRIC GRAND PRIX MASERATI

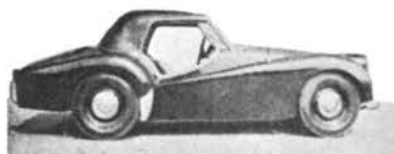
Length	5.9 in.
Width	1.2 in.
Height, without driver	1.4 in.
Height, with driver	2.0 in.
Ground clearance	0.1 in.
Weight, dry	5.0 oz.
Weight, as tested	5.2 oz.
Wheelbase	3.2 in.
Front tread	2.1 in.
Rear tread	2.3 in.
Front suspension	Center pivot axle
Rear suspension	Unsprung
Final drive	Right rear wheel only

the outside car in either turn has a fence to hold it on the course so it can negotiate the turn at full throttle. The inside car cannot, and arrives at the bridge upgrade at a slightly slower speed. The figure-eight course, (set #2), is approximately two-hundred inches to the lap, with overall dimensions of seven feet three inches by two feet five inches.

I had the good fortune to be able to try two types of chassis on this course, both with scaled-down Maserati bodies. The first type has a locked rear-end, no longer in production, with very hard rubber driving wheels. The second and newer-type chassis has only the right-rear wheel driving, and

(Continued on page 58)

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Mercedes 300SL

(Continued from page 57)

position. When the top and windows are up, wind noise is satisfyingly low.

The back window is only medium-sized, so the car comes with an outside mirror complete with a "Dagmar" front — just like a racing car, and quite justifiable for the speeds this car can reach.

The increase in price over the coupe (\$10,970 vs \$8,135) is pretty steep; but it's in about the same proportion as the improvement in fun. The roadster, despite its size and power, is a fun car. It can be "played" around a corner in a manner, and at speeds quite unbecoming to the coupe or many other sports cars. The small loss in acceleration, if not completely overcome with the 9.5 c.r. engine, can certainly be made up for by ordering the 4.11 gears — shift points then become 35, 60, and 85 and top speed according to the factory drops to "only" 129 mph.

Our summary — a sure fire classic of today.

Stephen F. Wilder

**Table Top
Grand Prix**

(Continued from page 29)

the wheel is made of softer rubber. The fastest lap possible with the locked rear-end car was approximately 70 scale mph, while the fastest lap was 96.5 scale mph for the new type car, owing to the bite coming out of the corners and climbing the bridge upgrade. I am told that speeds of 160 scale mph are possible with a ten foot straight.

Also available are a 2.5 G.P. Ferrari, an Austin Healey Sport, and a 2/4 Aston Martin is now being prepared. For the tests, the power was supplied by a 1 1/2 amp twelve-volt DC model railroad transformer. However, the power supply that comes with this Scalextric set is in the form of three Ever-ready #126 batteries enclosed in a sturdy simulated brick house, the type that may be found on several British circuits. I am told by a representative of Scalextric that the cars perform just as well on these batteries.

At the present time four sets are available. Each includes two cars, drivers, track, batteries, fences, wire and lubricating oil. However, one may purchase enough extra track to lay out a fairly close replica of any existing circuit in the world. I am told that in a month or so it will be possible to get special track that will fit on the inside and on the outside of the existing track so one may run three or four cars abreast.

Set #3 has a section of flat cross-over track like an ordinary cross-street, which should prove to be a great place for "gyromous shunts." The fences at the turns afford all the crowd-safety you will need.

(Continued on page 59)

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Table Top Grand Prix

(Continued from page 58)

For the enthusiast who wishes to construct a permanent course set-up there are a myriad of landscaping possibilities from the model railroad kingdom: trees, shrubs, landing strips, bridges, tunnels, pits, and soldiers (which, slightly altered, will do for pit-crews). The track layouts may be modeled after existing courses, or you can dream up your own. A semi-permanent layout can be built on a few large sheets of plywood, that can easily be stored, altho' just to hook the track together and race can afford a great deal of fun. Especially if you, and several of your friends, own your own private cars.

I'm on my way back to Polk's now. Last night I went disguised as Sophie Tucker, but after three laps, they recognized me and gave me the black flag. You see, the I.T.C.R.A. (International Toy Car Racing Association) has banned me for unsportsmanlike conduct. They claim I did, by cunning and with malice aforethought, rub the rear wheels of an opponent's car with chicken fat, and they also found out that I lied about my age when I applied for my competition license. I told them I was only twelve, so Bob Coogan has been banned from I.T.C.R.A. racing for a whole year.

Maybe tonight they'll let Bob Coogan...

Elkart Lake

By Cumberland & Mott

(Continued from page 31)

Shelby (in the Class D Maser) stormed into the lead. Hill (in the Class C Ferrari) contented himself with dogging Hansgens' tail fin for a while before moving into second. (Walt soon began a series of pit stops—radiator hoses, etc. — which ended in his retirement after 19 laps.)

Crawford insisted he wanted to play with the big boys and dashed off in the Porsche RS to give them fits. The D type of John Gordon Bennett/Charlie Wallace, the Mercedes of O'Shea/Thompson and the 3.5 Ferrari of Honest John Kilborn/Deacon Howard Hively (aided by pit signs such as "I Love You") began shifting through to join the front runners. And there they stayed throughout, finally finishing 4th, 5th & 6th respectively.

Twenty-six laps had elapsed, about an hour in time, when Phil Hill assumed the lead. Shelby, aided and abetted by an Allard that managed to get in everyone's way all day, had taken the escape road at station twelve. Hill was never headed, or even pushed, the rest of the day. (Shelby took the same escape road under similar conditions later in the day). And so it was Hill, Shelby and Crawford from that moment on.

Last year, when the comedy team of Kilborn and Hively won the six hour race (Continued on page 60)

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