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Under The Hood

Next month we'll be back with *Tech-notes*, but for this month, here are some observations on Nassau Speed Week and some of the more interesting cars, what was new about them, and in some cases, what sort of problems they ran into.

Nassau and its Speed Week are justly famous for their splendid climate and party atmosphere; what many do not realize is that these attract not only some of the finest drivers in the world but also some of the newest and fastest racing machinery to race over one of the toughest, chassis-bending, tire-scrubbing airport circuits ever found.

The Moss-Levy Aston-Martin is the second of these DBR2/370s to be built, and with the new three-liter limit, probably the last. First run at Silverstone, Salvadori drove this one in the finest race of his career, beating Scott-Brown (Lister-Jaguar) after a nip and tuck battle in which they ended up as joint lap-record holders. Its second race at Nassau was less fortunate. What will become of the two cars now is problematical.

Comparison with the DBR1/300 (SCL, Dec. '57) is interesting, as the earlier, smaller car seems somewhat more advanced. Though using a space frame and a trailing arm front suspension with some R1 parts, the R2's engine, gearbox, and rear suspension are simpler in conception, leading us to think that the R2 is more of a rolling test-bed than a serious racing proposition. The engine is an inline 6 with seven mains and chain-driven twin cams atop the fourteen stud head. The valves appear to lay at 90° to one another and the single distributor is driven straight off the tail end of the exhaust cam. Three Weber 50DCO3's with an air box lie on the R.H. side. Opposite a pair of three branch manifolds exit the gasses into twin pipes.

The gearbox, mounted on the bell housing, has five forward speeds; fourth is direct and fifth is an overdrive ratio. The deDion rear axle is like the DB3's, using a sliding block for lateral location instead of the Watts linkage of the R1. Tires are 6.50 x 16 front and 7.00 rear. Reg Parnell figured on Stirling doing the feature on one set, and with a 56 US gallon tank this would have eliminated the mid-race pit stop, providing an interesting thought on "what-might-have-happened", as the R2's lap times were not much slower than the fastest of the opposition.

Scuderia Buell brought several interesting cars along under the management of Hans Tanner. These included Gregory's 4.7 Maserati ("When in doubt, bore it out"), a 3.5 V-12 Ferrari for Joakim Bonnier, and a 2.0 Testa Rossa for Olivier Gendebien. Temple Buell offered the 3.5 to Moss, but then it was pointed out that

the deVroom 3.5's gearing enabled it to reach 7200 rpm in fourth down the longest straight while Temple's could only show 6500. This is why Buell, who has entered sports cars for Masten at six major races since last year's Nassau, ended up with four leading contenders on the starting line. Rumor has it that he may take over the Maserati racing *equipe* for Formula 1 events. Blue and white Masers would be a pretty sight, wouldn't they?



The two 3.5's are both 290 Mille Miglia dating back to the 1956 season. Bonnier's was driven by Phil Hill in that year, winning the G.P. of Sweden, while the Moss mount (the first Ferrari he has ever driven in competition anywhere — an omen of plans for '58 perhaps) is the car in which Castellotti won the '56 Mille Miglia (hence its name). Fitted with dual ignition, the engine is very much like the 250 G.T. Europa with single cams per bank and three twin-choke Webers. The Saturday night clue to which car Stirling would drive — rumored to be Bonnier's — was the sight of Luigi Chinetti himself changing the centrally located accelerator pedal on deVroom's car to the right, a special point with Moss. The job was accomplished between one and six-thirty A.M.!



Phil Hill brought along Tilp's 4.1 Ferrari with which he and Peter Collins won at Caracas. Phil describes it as a "cultured" 3.8 V-12, which is another way of admitting that someone's enlarged it. Like the 3.8, it's got three Solex quads and two cams per head. Two distributors, bevel-driven at the rear of each intake cam, spark the twin-plug ignition system.

Its deDion axle, sprung by a high transverse leaf spring, is located by a sliding



block and pairs of trailing radius rods. The combined gearbox-differential has a very complicated casing, the forward gearbox portion splitting longitudinally on the countershaft centerline, while the rear breaks horizontally to permit removal of the ring gear. An integral oil pump is fitted in the nose, just behind the splined 2° U-joint. The shifting box is on the left side near the front. The whole unit is very complex (so is its installation), with the unhappy result that it must be entirely removed from the car to change ratios. The big Masers have a drop gear set just behind the clutch which makes such jobs much simpler; although in the case of Gregory's 4.7, a series of changes at the past few races had driven them, even with their extensive selection of gears, up a numerical blind alley that required gear swapping through the entire drive train.

Ferrari drivers usually refer to gear ratio set-ups by the speed reached in top gear at 7000 rpm. At Caracas, 170 gears were used in the 4.1. Preparatory to Nassau, 155 gears were installed, but after Thursday's practice, 142 cogs were installed.

The 1500 class was dominated by Porsche, as usual, but interesting threats were present in the form of one each Cooper and Lotus with the twin-cam 1500 cc Climax engines whose cylinder heads are from the 2½ liter V-8 that Coventry Climax displayed at Earls Court several years ago. Reventlow's Cooper had two twin-choke Webers while Jim Hall's Lotus carried the new twin-choke S.U. carbs. The latter seemed to be giving a bit of trouble by loading up at low speeds. This Lotus uses a twin-plate clutch and the "BMC" series (MGA, etc.) gearbox rather than the smaller "A" series units of the 1100 cc. cars. The upper rear radius rods are altered and, the engine being dry sump, there is an oil tank in the right rear corner, balancing the weight of the battery. Like the Elite, the cowl carries two fuel tanks and the i.f.s. is right off the F-2 car. So are the cast alloy wheels. Ignition problems put it out of Sunday's 100-miler.



Johnny von Neuman appeared with his trusty 2.5 Testa Rossa and a fascinating new 3.0 V-12 based on the T.R. and the 250 G.T. It looks to be the factory's team sports-racing car for 1958, but more about that next month when we preview Sebring, our number one sports car race.

Stephen F. Wilder

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