

Homestead Reflections



If there were any doubts about Anthony Lazzaro's abilities as an open-wheel racer, the season-opener at Homestead dispelled them. Insiders will tell you that Lazzaro is the real thing. His win wasn't a fluke and it wasn't an accident. Actually, it resembled more of what his career has always been until last year—he checkedered flag after another. If you're a gambling addict,

Standing Start

KOOL/Toyota Atlantic
by James Hyneman

don't bet against him.

Lost in the hoopla was Memo Gidley. Homestead was his inaugural Atlantic venture, and perhaps his past racing experience makes his runner-up showing less of a surprise. However, what Gidley brings to the circus is an uncanny track sense which can't be measured by finishes alone. He's a star on the rise with one big advantage over all the other guns. Gidley runs with Lynx Racing and team manager Steve Cameron definitely has a clue about how to win. You can check it out with Patrick Carpentier if you don't believe me.

Is Tony Ave the come-back kid or what? He's like the postal service motto of neither rain, nor snow, nor (you know the rest) will stop him. Here is another driver who didn't get the message that "no money" means "no success." He won at Homestead in '96 in only his third career Atlantic outing. He dabbled with bad luck at Long Beach, Nazareth and Milwaukee, but took fifth at Montreal. Then he suffered a painful accident in the June Sprints* at Road America and spent the rest of 1996 with doctors and physical therapists. Well, he's back! This time at Homestead, he started 13th and finished 11th. Not bad for a guy who wasn't suppose to be in a car yet. So much for the experts. Hooray for the human spirit!

Student outduels teacher is one way to look at the second- and third-place finishers at Homestead. Case Montgomery, who finished third, revealed at the post-race press conference that runner-up Gidley was once a student of his at the Russell School at Laguna Seca. Did Case teach him too well?

KOOL has got to be the most media-friendly sponsor in racing today. This bodes well for the future of Atlantic since KOOL has already bonded well with Toyota, TRD, Player's, and Yokohama. What KOOL brings to the party is unchallenged in sports today. The KOOL Reporter's Club is a monument to doing things right—but in deed rather than gab. For those of you who are unaware, KOOL provides motor coaches for professional media that have com-



Anthony Lazzaro won convincingly at Homestead.

puters, printers, phone lines, modems, uplink for photos, and even a shower—especially helpful when the end of the day seems more like the end of the world. This isn't status quo. KOOL sets the standard.

Swift's CART win at Homestead is a good indicator that the new Swift Atlantic chassis due for the '98 season will exceed expectations. For those of you stuck in a NASCAR coma, Swift's Indy Car chassis claimed highest honors in its first PPG CART race. Did anybody notice that the driver of that Swift CART car, Michael Andretti, is an Atlantic graduate? It's either a casual coincidence or I'm name-dropping again.

Cheers are in order for Atlantic Timing & Scoring chief Bill Skibbe. The opening race of any season has its down days and then it gets worse. Changes to OMEGA timing by CART in concert with the usual first race gremlins could have been a formidable mountain for a less skilled T&S boss. Things ran as smoothly as was humanly and heavenly possible. I guess the best way to describe it is, if "Skibbe" were taken out of the equation, the answer would be disaster. Great job, Bill!

Long Beach marks the 14th year of Atlantic racing through the downtown Shoreline district but for Californian Joe Sposato, it will be his 100th career Atlantic race. Way to go, Joe! That's some serious entry fees.

ESPN2 is again broadcasting the series in prime time on Saturday, tape delayed one-week after the event. There are also several re-broadcasts. Here are the air dates for the one-hour shows; please check your local listings for the times in your area: Long Beach—April 19, 22; Nazareth—May 3, 6; Milwaukee—June 7, 9, 13; Montreal—June 21, 24, 27; Cleveland—July 19, Aug. 11, 14; Toronto—July 26, 28, 31; Trois-Rivières—Aug. 9, 11, 13; Mid-Ohio—Aug. 16, 18, 21; Road America—Aug. 24, 25, 29; Vancouver—Sept. 7, 8, 11; Monterey—Sept. 14, 15, 19. There will also be a season review Oct. 5, with repeats Oct. 6 and 7. ■

Changes and Rumors



ACRL Action

American City Racing
League by Roger Diez

Cup car owner John Della Penna is slated to drive for San Jose, possibly in Lucas' car. S2000 drivers Joe Casanova and Dennis Reed are slated to run a limited schedule with San Jose. The biggest surprise (and hardest blow) to the team is the departure of Jeff Glenn, who scored a pole and a win in 1996.

At press time, Glenn had all but signed to a new, all-Carbir-chassis team. "The deal is about 99 percent sure, and we should have it signed, sealed and delivered in a few more days," Glenn told me by phone. Glenn will team with newcomer Mark Newhouse, running under the Team Beverly Hills banner and sponsored by Oilex, Bank of the West and KJWL Radio. Glenn is currently running the only Carbir chassis in S2000 configuration, but five more tubs are being built up and are scheduled for completion in late May. Newhouse will probably run Glenn's Swift chassis for the first two races, switching to the Carbir for the Portland Rose Cup. An S2000 Carbir may also be added later in the season, with no driver named as yet.

Team Fresno is not only shifting some personnel, but is also upgrading equipment from S2000 Ford SOHC engines to move into the Cosworth-powered SS2000 class. Team leader John Ostlund purchased last year's driver championship-winning car, Bob Schader's Lola. New teammate Steve Romak purchased the ex-Buddy Dold Team Santa Barbara Lola, and the team has copied bits from the Schader Lola to use on this car as well. In his first outing in the Lola, Ostlund was only about 1.5sec off last season's pole time at Sears Point. The bright green Team Fresno cars, with sponsorship from Paul Everett's RV Superstore, Blackbeard's Family Fun Center, Wolco Business Systems, Alistar and KJWL may surprise some people. Frank Arnold will round out the team in an S2000 car.

One team that isn't changing much is Team Las Vegas, runner-up for the team title in '96.

Chris Ronson, Leo Sismani and Peter Zarcades will be back, "going after the Team Championship aggressively," according to Ronson. The team is also looking for an S2000 driver to join the group.

Defending Team Champion San Diego will add 28-year racing veteran Bob Young to returning teammates Margie Smith-Haas (1994 Drivers' Champion) and Ian Wood. Young has scored 10 Formula and Sports Racing championships, and should be a valuable addition to the team. At press time, defending champion Bob Schader's plans for ACRL were not firm.

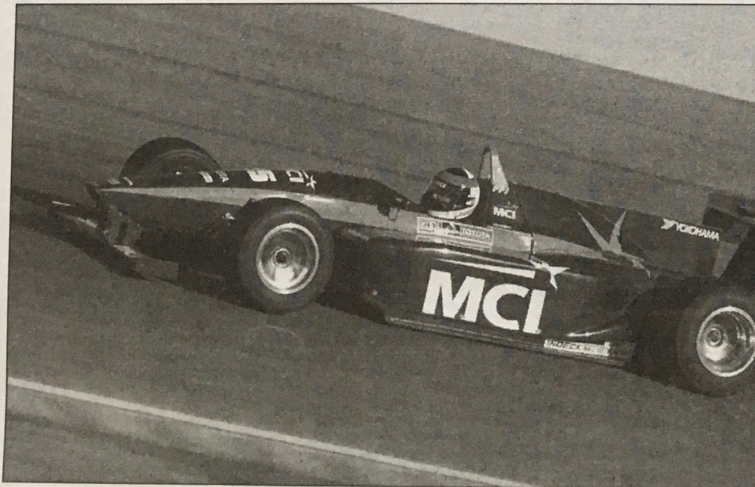
Driver points runner-up Rick Lee will again head Team Reno, and will be joined by Gary Hewett and Edd Ozard. At press time Lee was in England testing the new Van Diemen chassis at the Snetterton track. The Van Diemen has reportedly been completely redesigned after an unsatisfactory 1995 debut. Lee was Team Reno's solo entry last year, which put them far behind in team points.

One of the most exciting aspects of the upcoming season is the addition of new venues. The League will run on the streets of Vancouver as a support race for the CART PPG Cup Indy cars in August. "This will probably be the best exposure we could get," enthused Series Administrator Margie Smith-Haas. The ACRL will also support the Trans-Am race at Pikes Peak International, their first stop at that facility. A race is slated for the new Cal Club track at Buttonwillow in September, just prior to the Reno Grand Prix finale. Television contracts have yet to be finalized, but are expected to garner as much exposure as last year's.

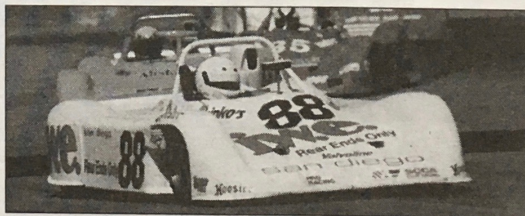
For 1997, ACRL has two sponsors returning, Hoosier Tires and Daeco Racing Gasoline. Hoosier is providing a new rear spec tire for 1997, with an improved tread profile designed to improve cornering stability. The tires should be ready well in advance of the first race (Portland, May 3-4), giving drivers a chance to do some testing with the new rubber. Daeco Unleaded 101 will again be the "spec" fuel for all ACRL races.

The ACRL is a series with a wider variety of age and experience than many other professional series. It has been part of the training ground for stars like Jimmy Vasser and Richie Hearn. Celebrities like Craig T. Nelson, and skiers Phil and Steve Mahre have participated. ACRL graduates can be found in Trans-Am, Indy Cars, Indy Lights and other upper levels of motorsport. At the same time, there are drivers who have been with the series since its inception, and have no aspirations to go any higher in the sport.

If you have the opportunity, catch an ACRL race on the tube; or, better yet, come out and see one in person. The cars are quick, evenly matched and skillfully driven. You just may get to "discover" one of the next big stars in motorsports, learning his craft in the ACRL. ■



Leo Parente (ABOVE) and teammate Jeret Schroder had trouble in Florida, with Parente 20th and Schroeder 19th.



(LEFT) Ian Wood could be a favorite in the S2000 class. (BELOW) Jeff Glenn will be driving the new Carbir chassis in ACRL competition for Team Beverly Hills.

