VOLKSWAGEN MOTORSPORTS

VICTORY

VW Sport

ben@EuroPartsinc.com

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FIRESTONE FIREHAWK ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

Volkswagen Takes Second Manufacturer's Title

It took only eight events in a 10-race season for Volkswagen to clinch its second consecutive Manufacturers Championship in the Touring Division of the IMSA Firestone Firehawk Endurance series.

The Volkswagen GTI 16V also earned its second Firehawk "Car of the Year" title for the series' most successful car, including those in the Grand Sports and Sports Divisions. The GTI beat 47 eligible models of cars made by 20 American, Japanese and European manufacturers for the honor.

The GTI was undefeated in the Touring Division until Round 8, a three-hour race at Watkins Glen, N.Y. In fact, it took seven races before a non-VW even broke the top three.

The Firehawk series, nicknamed by IMSA as the "War on Wheels," is an extremely competitive battle between brands. Fuel economy, handling, weight, driver ability and just plain luck are all factors in the races which last from three to 24 hours. To balance the competition a bit, all must use shaved "spec" Firestone radial street tires.

The top place finishers in the Touring Division Driver's Championship were, not surprisingly, Volkswagen pilots. Leading the pack with 138 points was Paul Hacker, a name synonymous with VW racing success. He and brother Karl, who earned 118 points and fourth place in the standings, won the first two races at Sebring and Road Atlanta. Both brothers are professional racers from New York State.

Tied for second place in the standings with 130 points each were David Rosenblum of Langhorne, Pa., and Alistair Oag of Sinclairville, N.Y. The duo drove their Valvoline/Inner City Youth (ICY) Racing GTI to a record-setting four consecutive victories, including the grueling 24 hours of Watkins Glen held in June.

ICY Racing was founded by Rosenblum, a recovering drug addict and alcoholic. The team is unique in that the pit crew is made up of teenagers from tough North Philadelphia. Rosenblum's goal is to keep them from the horror of substance-dependence by building their self-esteem and sense of responsibility.

Oag is no newcomer to the victory circle. He was the 1987 SCCA Escort Endurance series' SSB co-champion and the 1986 Volkswagen Cup champion. He is also a respected professional machinist and contributes considerable technical expertise to his pit crew's education.

It took seven rounds but Al Salerno, the 1987 Touring Division Driver's Champion, finally broke the powerful momentum of the "Hacker Express" and ICY Racing to win Round 7 at Lime Rock on Labor Day. With 104 points, Salerno finished fifth in the Driver's Championship.

The Volkswagen GTI 16V features a 1.8-liter dual overhead cam and five-speed transmission. The fuel-injected engine delivers 123 horsepower and has a top test track speed of 124 miles per hour.

►

Four consecutive victories earned Alistair Oag and Dave Rosenblum second place in the Firehawk Touring Division Championship.

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1988 VALVOLINE CHAMPIONSHIP FOR BOSCH/V

Ken Murillo Takes Title

The SCCA Valvoline Championship for Bosch/Volkswagen Super Vee series has been promoting its drivers to racing's major leagues since the series' inception 18 years ago, and the Class of '88 will be no exception.

At the top of the class is rookie sensation Ken Murillo. The 23-year-old clinched the championship at the penultimate Super Vee race held at Pennsylvania International Raceway. Despite a shoestring budget, he put his indisputable natural talent to the test to bring home three victories—including his first-ever Super Vee race. Murillo is the first rookie to win the Super Vee championship since Al Unser, Jr. accomplished the feat in 1981.

With the title locked up, Murillo went on to break Scott Atchinson's record for most points in a season (189) set in 1987. Murillo earned 194 championship points, never finishing below sixth in 13 rounds. His secret for success: "I only know how to drive one way—as fast as the car will go."

Although Murillo took the title before the last race, it wasn't without a fight. The 13 rounds found six different drivers in the winner's circle and exciting action all through the field. Six drivers scored 100 or more points, a first in Super Vee history.

A real battle ensued for the second, third and fourth places between E.J. Lenzi, Paul Radisich and Bernard Jourdain.

It was a frustrating season for the tenacious Lenzi. The 26-year-old Chicagoan drove his distinctive Turtle Wax Ralt RT-5 to five runner-up finishes in 13 rounds. In Detroit, Lenzi's lap times were consistently faster than previous standards, and he would have been in the winner's circle had anyone other than Radisich—who is a master of tight street courses—been the pole-sitter. Lenzi wrapped up the season at St. Petersburg with one more bridesmaid finish in the final standings.

Finishing third and giving everyone a run for their money was Bernard Jourdain and his brand new Cimarron Racing Ralt RT-5. The Belgian-born Mexican National overtook pole-sitter Radisich on lap 50 of the 80-lap inaugural Grand Prix of Dallas race to score his first Super Vee victory. Proving it wasn't a fluke, Jourdain closed the season with a win at the St. Petersburg finale.

Radisich hails from New Zealand and brought considerable international experience to Super Vee. Radisich showed up at Long Beach, Round 2, to capture the pole and a flag-to-flag victory. He then pulled off a mid-season hat trick (victories at Detroit, Niagara Falls and Cleveland) to finish fourth in the final standings.

Robert Groff of Northridge, Calif., had a pair of impressive victories, both at Wisconsin tracks, and three pole positions to his credit. The 1987 "Rookie of the Year" took his career-first Super Vee victory at the "Milwaukee Mile" with an average speed of 124 mph (less than one mph slower than the CART race average speed set at Milwaukee the same day). Groff followed up at Road America with another pole and flag-to-flag win. He took his third pole at Pennsylvania International Raceway and held on to the lead for 45 laps before surrendering to engine problems in the 60-lap race.

The aggressive Smith brothers, Mark and Mike, each took his maiden Super Vee victory in 1988. The older brother, Mike, did it first at the "Night Before the 500" at Indianapolis Raceway Park, where his average speed of 112.54 mph was over 26 mph faster than the previous IRP standard. Mark brought home his own trophy at the Meadowlands after maneuvering his way around crashes that wiped out no less than five front-runners, including his brother. College students off the track, the Smiths swapped sixth and seventh place in the standings for most of the season.

►
Murillo on his way to the championship as a rookie.

ben@EuroPartsinc.com

VOLKSWAGEN SUPER VEE

◄
Lenzi owned second place in the championship with five second place finishes during the year.

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Four first place finishes and some bad luck gave a talented Radisich fourth place in the championship.

►
Jourdain was a constant threat, always running in the top positions.

There have been many impressive performances that weren't rewarded with the No. 1 spot. Stuart Crow, Roberto Quintanilla, Chris Smith (no relation to Mark and Mike), Steve Wulff, Jim Ward, John Brooks and many others showed considerable promise and will probably return to fill the top positions in the 1989 Super Vee series.

You can bet success in Super Vee makes a difference to these young men's careers. At Road America in September, every champion since 1981 except one was entered in the CART Indy Car Race: Al Unser Jr. (1981), Michael Andretti (1982), Ed Pimm (1983), Arie Luyendyk (1984), Didier Theys (1986) and Scott Atchison (1987). Missing was the 1985 champion, Ken Johnson.

Besides the opportunity to showcase themselves before racing's top teams, media and fans, many Indy Car-hopefuls turn to Super Vee for their training because the cars are so alike. Super Vees look just like their bigger brothers, boasting the same ground effects technology and front and rear wings. Although the Super Vee's 190+ horsepower, fuel-injected, four-cylinder Volkswagen engines aren't as potent as those in Indy Cars, the young talent in the Super Vee cockpits aren't willing to back off the pedal a bit.

Remember the names of these young Valvoline Championship for Bosch/Volkswagen Super Vee competitors. There's a good chance they'll be tomorrow's Indy Car or Formula 1 stars.

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VW RALLYIST RACES TO THE CLOUDS AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT

When Zebulon Pike first saw Pikes Peak, the 14,110 ft. mountain which now bears his name, he swore the summit would never be conquered by man. Zeb obviously never imagined that one day there would be Volkswagen GTIs.

For the second consecutive year, veteran rallyist Guy Light drove a Volkswagen GTI 16V to record-breaking speeds in the Standard Production Rally class of the Pikes Peak Auto Hillclimb.

At the '88 race held in July, the 66th running of the "Race to the Clouds," Light overcame freezing rain, hail, 156 torturous turns (with no guard rails!), and a vertical climb of 4,700 feet to reach the summit in only 15 minutes, 5.15 seconds—shattering his own record by 13.82 seconds.

Today's cars have more power and improved safety equipment since the original Pikes Peak Hillclimb in 1916. Entered in that race were Barney Oldfield, Eddie Rickenbacker, and Frank Schwinn of bicycle fame. The race format, however, has not changed from the original and Mother Nature remains as unpredictable as ever.

The Hillclimb is now an annual event. One day each summer, the mountain, which is run by the National Park Service, is closed off to the tourists and turned over to be conquered by competitors from all over the world. It is the second oldest automobile race in America.

Guy Light, 43, has been a rally competitor for over a decade and drove his GTI 16V to the 1987 SCCA PRO Rally Production Class championship. He owns and operates Light Performance Works in Midland, Mich., and prepares the winning Volkswagens he drives.

Light's efforts are sponsored by Volkswagen United States, Valvoline, Bosch, BBS, Bilstein, Recaro and Blaupunkt.

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Guy Light negotiates 156 turns in a vertical climb of 4,700 feet in 15 minutes, 5.15 seconds to win his class at Pikes Peak and shatter his own record by 13.82 seconds.

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FAX (313) 288-4412
ben@EuroParts.inc.com