

HOLY TOLEDO!

2009 ROAR GAS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP , TOLEDO, USA

BY MIKE MYERS



The Toledo track had a good flowing layout, and a long straightaway

RRCI STATESIDE

Because of the increasing number of participants at National Championships several years ago, the ROAR on-road Fuel Nationals were split into two separate nationals, one for 1/10 scale sedan cars, and one for 1/8 cars. However, because of the poor economy, ROAR felt that attendance in 2009 would be very low, so the races were combined into one large National Championship for both classes, to be held in Toledo, Ohio, and hosted by the Toledo 1/8 Racers Club at their permanent track. Despite ROAR's predictions, there was a huge turnout with 115 1/8 scale drivers signed up, (87 open, 28 Masters) and 102 drivers for 1/10 sedan. Toledo was within driving distance of most of the entrants, making the trip less expensive than if they had to fly and it resulted in a very packed schedule, with 21 heats per round, making each round about 3 1/2 hours long.

The Toledo track uses boards that move when hit by a car to minimise breakage, and this year the club constructed several steel frame structures to pit under which combined with numerous tents, meant there was lots of room for pitting. Many drivers showed up with motor homes or fancy trailers, which were a comfy environment for the week as the weather was in the low 80's, with blue skies and a nice breeze – perfect racing weather, which lasted the full week of racing.



Above: Paul Lemieux – a study in concentration

Below: Paul Lemieux dominated the 1/10 A-Main; here he takes a line a little too close!



As per ROAR rules, the race was run by 'qualifying points', meaning each of the six qualifying rounds are scored separately. So if the track was fast or slow it doesn't matter – every round is equally important regardless of track conditions; the best two rounds are added together to get that driver's score. With six rounds of qualifying, there's plenty of time to put in two good rounds but for those who are still struggling there are bump ups in the finals, allowing them to advance up to the final even if they qualified poorly.

The start of each qualifier was based on the 'flagless start' system first developed by the Toledo club, otherwise known as a rolling start to allow the cars to spread themselves out around the track for the start, and when the countdown reaches zero the first car over the line starts the race clock. As long as the other cars go over the start/finish line before the first car to cross the line completes a full lap, they will be on their own clock, and get the full time for qualifying. This system saves time, is easy on the drivers, and if the cars spread out as they should, there aren't any of the dreaded first turn pileups.

QUALIFYING

Late Thursday afternoon and the full day Friday was devoted to qualifying, after which the heats were shuffled based on the drivers single best qualifier to put the guys together with others of equal ability. Two more qualifiers were run after the seeding, and part of another, which was completed Saturday morning before the rest of the qualifiers are run.

Almost the full day Saturday was devoted to qualifying. The rest of the heats from round #4 were run first, and we then ran two more full rounds, to complete the scheduled six rounds of qualifying. This was followed by a long break while the finals were set-up.



Above: Mike Swauger ran away with the 1/8 Open A-Main
Right: Inside masterclass Eli Ezrow's winning Sheperd

TOP QUALIFIERS

SEDAN: PAUL LEMIEUX

MASTERS: ELI EZROW

OPEN: RALPH BURCH JR.

FINALS

The finals were run using the IFMAR 'ladder' system, with the racers divided between odd and even in a double-sided Christmas tree. The top eight drivers were placed directly into the 1/8 scale finals (Open and Masters), and the top ten drivers into the Sedan final. The rest of the racers were arranged in qualifying order. The two bump-ups from each lower Final would bring the next higher final up to the allowed maximum, after which the two fastest drivers from each semi-final advanced into the main Final.

The bump up system did help out many better drivers who had qualified poorly, but able to advance through the lower finals to the best of their ability (or until their car broke). Those who made it through to the main final were truly the best of the best. The event was run at express train speed, staying on schedule no matter what. Still, with 21 finals, Sunday was a very long day.

SEDAN A-MAIN

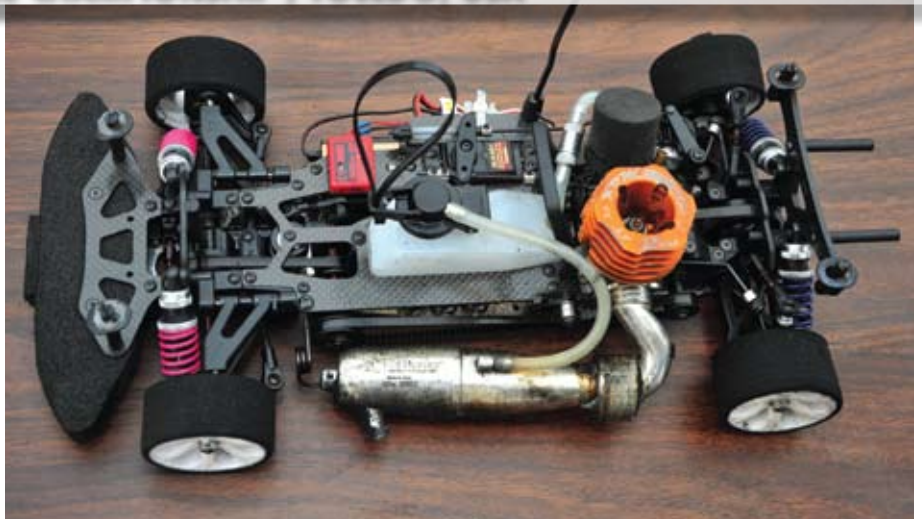
The first championship final was the 1/10 Sedan Final, a one-hour race. Bobby Flack (on his home track) had a flameout as the race started, dropping him back to dead last. There was lots of great racing in this event but one car stood out from all the rest – Paul Lemieux was pretty



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Right: 1/10 Class winner Paul Lemieux's winning Xray NT1
Below: Mike Swauger, trying to break in his new tyres without losing the lead to Paolo Morganti



Left: Eli Ezrow, TQ and winner, 1/8 Masters
Right: Paul Lemieux, TQ and winner, 1/10 Scale



Above: The Toledo club relaxing after the race with their award trophy

nearly flawless for the entire hour, continually building up his lead and nobody else could stay with him so the race was on for second and third. Andy Power was the first to drop out, after 51 laps. Diatta Collymore lasted until lap 69. DJ Apolaro was out on lap 82, with Roniel Regalado lasting until lap 94. Uriah Murman had problems and dropped out on lap 150. As the race continued Paul, Josh, Ralph, and Bobby were up at the front, with Josh and Ralph fighting over second place for the longest time.

As the race came to an end, Paul had a three lap lead over the field, followed by Josh who had built up a 14 second lead over Ralph. They were followed by Bobby (who had worked his way up near the front after the flameout at the start), Scotty Gray, Chris Doseck, Vincent Jackson, Tommy DeSantis, Paolo Morganti, Uriah Murman, Roniel, DJ, Diatta, and Andy. It's interesting that nine of the fourteen cars were the Xray NT1. But for Josh who finished in second place with his new Shepherd, Xray certainly dominated the 1/10 class!

MASTERS A-MAIN

The Masters Final was a great race to watch, and a study in racing styles. TQ Eli Ezrow grabbed the lead at the start, and never looked back. At the recent Great Lakes Challenge race, Eli was taken out by a broken drive belt, but he had no such problems at this event and looked unbeatable. Some drivers suffered from board problems, whereby the boards were stronger than their cars, and soon found themselves on the sidelines.

Brent Gottfried dropped out on lap 26. Bill Walth lasted a bit longer, dropping out on lap 44. Skip Starkey, the winner of the Great Lakes Challenge the month before, followed the same strategy he usually does, which is to run at a pace that's fast enough to win, and let the 'faster' guys go on ahead until they break or crash. This time it only worked well enough to get Skip a second place, as Eli never slowed.

Results were Eli, Joaquin DeSoto, Skip, Rick Davis, Harryu Hanonouchi, Paul Becattini, Kevin Hutchinson, Randy Ramsey, OV Opheim, Greg Esser, Bill, and Brent. Eli had dominated the event with a Shepherd, while the rest of the cars were divided between five Kyoshos, four Mugens, one Serpent, and one Motonica.

OPEN A-MAIN

The final race of the event was the 1/8 Open Final, twelve cars tackling a grueling one-hour event, and many of them had what it takes to take home a win. As the race developed, it was very different from



Above: Mike Swauger and his pit crew after the race



Above: Team Serpent

what we had seen in qualifying. TQ Ralph Burch couldn't run with the fastest guys. Paolo Morganti looked just as good (or better) than he had during qualifying, and put on a great race, eventually finishing in second place. Most eyes were on Mike Swauger though, who completely out-did himself. Although he stopped for fuel more frequently, Mike was absolutely ballistic on the track, grabbing the lead at the beginning, and soon lapping the field. Mike came in mid-way through the race for a tyre change, and lost most (but not all of) his lead. He then came in twice for tuning adjustments, allowing Paolo to close in.

For several laps after the tyre change, Mike seemed to be struggling to maintain the lead and his pace, with the car tipping up on two wheels due to the 'big' tyres, which hadn't yet come up to temperature. Mike seemed to struggle with his car for several laps, with the announcer telling everyone we now had a real race, but once the tires were up to speed,



Above: Team Mugen

As the race came to the end, Mike was literally right on Paolo's rear bumper, and Mike then pulled up alongside Paolo as if to lap him. Paolo slowed down to let him pass but Mike also slowed; he had already showed he could have gone on by, but in a great display of sportsmanship, Mike put his car on 'cruise mode' and simply followed Paolo around the track for the remaining few laps. It's no wonder Mike finished second at the recent IFMAR World Championships in Switzerland as he simply out-classed every other competitor at this event!

Results were Mike, Paolo, Paul Cicarello, Scott Kimbrow, Aaron Buran, Sal DiFazio, Josh Cyrul, Ralph Burch, DJ Apolaro, Steve Rossi, Joel Johnson, and Brian Berry. Mugen placed five cars in the Final, and took home the win. There were also four Kyoshos, two Serpents, and one Shepherd.

With competition completed, it was time to hand out awards after a very, very long week and those who stayed after it had all finished just relaxed, and discussed the 'who, what, and when' of the race. It was a fascinating race to attend!!

Thanks need to go out to all the drivers competing at the event, to the ROAR guys who came out to run the event, and to the members of the Toledo One Eighth Racers who do so much to promote on-road gas racing. There's a ton of work behind the scenes at a major event, and these guys do it as often as possible, with lots of club races between the 'bigger' events. Along with the Ft. Myers guys who put on the Winternats, Toledo puts on one of the biggest races in the country each year, the Great Lakes Challenge, held

big', and the main goal is for all racers to have fun and enjoy themselves – with the race fee being only \$40.

If you like what you've seen and read about Toledo, make your plans early for next August! At the time this is being written, the site has not yet been selected for the 2010 ROAR 1/8 Nationals; check the ROAR website www.roarracing.com to find out where that race will be held. **RCi**

Below: Mike Swauger's winning Mugen



Results Table: 1/8th Open

FINISH	QUAL	NAME	CHASSIS	ENGINE	FUEL	NITRO %	PIPE	TYRES
1	5	Mike Swauger	Mugen	Novarossi	Mugen	25	Novarossi	Enneti
2	3	Paolo Morganti	Serpent	Max	Xceed	25	Max	Xceed
3	4	Paul Cicarello	Mugen	Max	Byrons	16	Max	Enneti
4	2	Scott Kimbrow	Kyosho	Novarossi	Tornado	N/A	Novarossi	Jaco
5	10	Aaron Buran	Kyosho	Max	Tornado	25	Max	Kyosho

Results Table: Masters

FINISH	QUAL	NAME	CHASSIS	ENGINE	FUEL	NITRO %	PIPE	TYRES
1	1	Eli Ezrow	Shepherd	Max	Rocket Science	20	Max	BSR
2	5	Joaquin DeSoto SR.	Serpent	Novarossi	Tornado	25	Novarossi	Matrix
3	2	Skip Starkey	Mugen	Max	Blue Thunder	20	Max	Jaco
4	3	Rick Davis	Kyosho	Novarossi	Tornado	25	Novarossi	Kyosho
5	6	Harry Hananouchi	Mugen	JP	Byrons	25	JP	Enneti

Results Table: 1/10th Sedan

FINISH	QUAL	NAME	CHASSIS	ENGINE	FUEL	NITRO %	PIPE	TYRES
1	1	Paul Lemieux	Xray	Max	Trinity	25	Max	Jaco
2	4	Josh Cyrul	Shepherd	Novarossi	Tornado	16	Novarossi	Matrix
3	2	Ralph Burch	Xray	Max	Byrons	16	Max	Jaco
4	3	Bobby Flack	Xray	Murnan Mod RBM3	Byrons	N/A	Max	Jaco
5	8	Scotty Gray	Xray	Murnan Mod	J-Tech	10	RB	Twister