

TRENDS

Roving Report

AT LAST, THE INDY ALFA

After missing out on its scheduled debut at the Indianapolis 500, the Alfa Romeo Indy Car finally turned a wheel in anger on the punishing street circuit at Detroit. While driver Roberto Guerrero struggled during qualifying and ended up 22nd on the grid, he managed to take the blood-red March-Alfa 89CE to an impressive 8th-place finish in its maiden outing. It was a bitter-sweet day for the team, though. Two weeks earlier, its chassis designer, Maurice Phillippe, died at age 57.

BILL STAHL



SEE JIMMY RUN

This specially prepared GMC S-15 pickup, powered by an experimental 5-liter V-6, recently set a pair of new FIA world land-speed records on the salt flats at Bonneville. With veteran LSR pilot Don Stringfellow at the wheel, the joltin' Jimmy ran 194.770 mph in the flying mile and 194.843 mph in the flying kilometer. The previous records, 171.110 mph and 171.976 mph, respectively, were established three years ago by the late Al Holbert in a Porsche 928. The S-15 also

devastated the Class E pickup record of 141.381 mph to become the world's fastest truck.

Designed and built by the Advanced Vehicle Engineering team of GM's Truck & Bus Group under the direction of Don Gothard, the S-15 is maintained by Gale Banks Engineering and has a one-off engine underhood prepared by K-tech, Inc. Derived from GM's 4.3-liter Vortec V-6, the fuel-injected powerplant uses a special charge-cooling system to reduce the temperature of the intake air and increase its density. The result: 523 hp at 6800 rpm and 414 lb-ft of torque at 6400 rpm. The GMC Motorsports group also plans to go after several other speed marks in the months ahead, using both this engine and a 4.26-liter variant.



SILVER ARROWS IN TRIUMPHANT COMEBACK!

Just one thing went wrong with Mercedes-Benz' plans for victory at LeMans in 1990: They won this year's 24-hour contest. Directors of the Stuttgart firm and team owner Peter Sauber himself said for months they expected to use the 1989 race—M-B's first official appearance at the Sarthe circuit since the deadly 1957 contest—as a learning event. Instead, the Silver Arrows finished an astonishing 1-2-5, prompting Competition Director Jochen Neerpasch to explain: "We really didn't expect this result. We had never raced the cars for 24 hours before, and we couldn't be sure they'd last that long. We were lucky, of course, but the team deserved to win."

Jean-Louis Schleser put his Sauber-Mercedes 09/89 on

the pole with a record 153.53-mph clocking, but an early spin by co-driver Alain Cudini and a broken rear wing dropped them off the pace and into an ultimate 5th place. In the end, it was the team car driven by Jochen Maas/Manuel Reuter/Stanley Dickens that flashed to victory, five laps ahead of the 2nd-place Mauro Baldi/Kenny Acheson/Gianfranco Brancallini entry. Last year's conquering TWR Jaguars had to settle for 4th and 8th spots, while a privateer Porsche driven by Bob Wollek and Hans Stuck grabbed 3rd. The overall result was a complete justification of Mercedes-Benz' decision to return to top-level motor racing. The only question: Did success come too soon?

—Michael Cotton

