

Road America, at Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin, is one of the finest road racing plants in the country. Its outstanding success is the result of careful planning, hard work and loyal support by the spectators.

"ALL IS NOT GOLD..."—

The Other Side of the Track

—Article by Clif Tuft. Photos courtesy of Road America.

Many a road course has been built during the cocktail hour and, if the party continues, by midnight money is rolling to the bank in barrels! Such get-togethers are fun and necessary. However, a road course venture is serious business, and you will need the loyal support of many. Furthermore, better save some of the cocktails; you will want them later, perhaps during construction when you run into rocks the size of a full-grown Ferrari, or when your creditors take on that quiet look and you feel you may be ready for the "last walk."

Let's begin with the design. It's only reasonable that the course should reflect the type of terrain in your area, for, as we know, some sections of the

United States are flat, while others are hilly. The acreage involved and the length of track depend pretty much upon the size of the pocketbook. From two to five miles is generally considered a major circuit. It takes about 4,000 feet of straightaway to register speeds of .145 miles per hour. Depending upon the length of track, you will need somewhere between 200 and 600 acres. The cost of property and construction will run between \$200,000 and \$500,000, without frills. The purchase of the property outright is advantageous if a mortgage loan is required. It is obvious that a good network of public highways greatly enhances spectator support of sports car racing.

Perhaps the most important thing

about a road course is that it presents its own individual challenge. Another big factor is the realization that you are not building a speedway. For speed events high-bank ovals, ocean beaches and salt flats are the proper answer. We believe that in true road racing the normal driving hazards encountered on the public highway are sufficient, because these hazards become a much greater risk at racing speed. Of course, sound engineering and safety for both participant and spectator must receive prime consideration.

Usually the interim between design and construction will be used for soliciting funds or selling stock. Naturally, you will use the blue print of your layout to prove to the prospects that you



Prior to all the glamour and excitement . . . lots of trees, stones and just plain rolling fields.

Many hours of planning and hard work—not to mention money—were expended to even get to the clearing stage.



are really going to build something. Don't try to sell the "gravy train." However, we are confident that in the not too distant future road racing will take its place as a major American sport, and both course owners and the car owners will be a happier lot.

Let's dig into the construction. And before we are in too deeply, please note: *There is no substitute for good construction and a qualified engineer to see that you get it.* Now is the time that the physical merit of your design will prove its value. Let's hope that your estimates of yardage to be moved and the type of sub-soil and sub-grade are reasonably accurate, for when that big "Cat" and scraper take the first "mouthful," you'll know you're in business. Present-day dirt moving is a fast operation, and corrections and alterations can prove most expensive. Many times you will wonder how you could have forgotten so many things at the all-night discussions that have preceded these maneuvers.

Some features in the construction of a road course differ from highway building. You will want shallow ditches off the shoulders for safety of the driver, and escape ways at the end of fast runs. If your course is primarily designed for the sports car and the Grand Prix car—both with a low center of gravity—turns should be reasonably flat so that the cornering ability of both car

and driver can function. The sub-grade should be well compacted and have good drainage; this is essential in the northern part of our country, where winter frost is a problem.

We recommend that the final surface of black top be a hot mix. This type, while more expensive than the cold mix, does prevent a softening or "bleeding" on a hot race day, and can easily save the driver from disaster.

While construction is under way, some of your group will still be soliciting funds or selling stock, and when you begin sharing headaches with each other you'll no doubt think: "The day we got this idea is the day we should have gone fishing; all this crazy fuss about 'a road to nowhere!'" Besides, you will be pestered by the sports car owners, who are eager to try out even the first 500 feet of grading; but you had better come up with a smile, for they may be paying customers at your first event. A book could be written about road course construction . . . suppose we knock it off here!

Come Race Day! By this time course management is in such a state of silent destruction that even psychiatric treatment would only add fuel to the fire. Why? Well, it all began months ago when your race date was reserved on the National calendar. Don't worry about the SCCA — they will do their part—but you will have to keep in con-

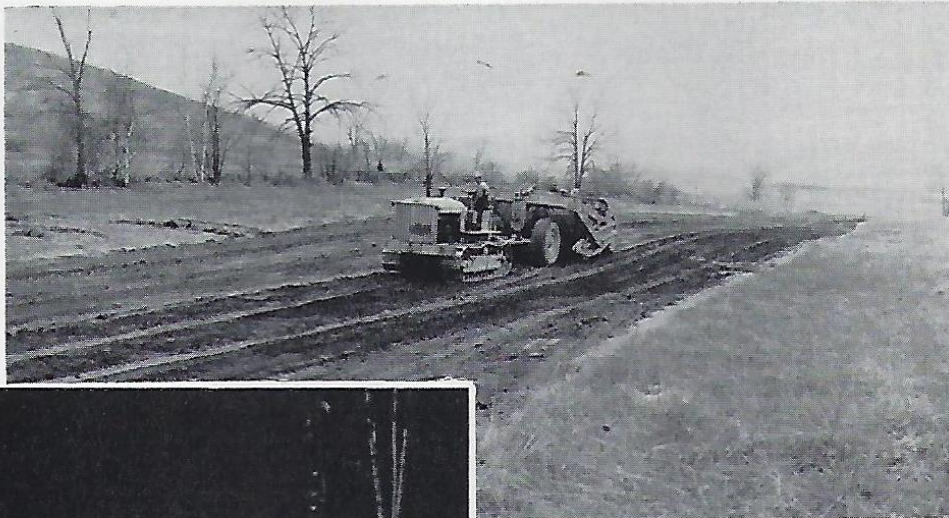
stant touch. Now, back to your end of it.

It is advisable that many of the details be put in responsible hands. However, a "Trail Boss" is necessary, as in any normal business. First, and all important, is to place your race dates in the hands of the press throughout the country. Is the press vital in this road racing business? We'll give it to you straight—*without them, you're dead!*

During the late winter there are numerous other matters that must be considered and taken care of. First, the build up of the souvenir program, with its sale of advertising, its pictures of past events and other activities, its editorial comment—this book is a project all by itself. Then the printing of pamphlets, posters and folders for distribution among enthusiasts and potential spectators throughout the country; the answering of many inquiries regarding race dates, so people can plan their vacations; setting up a budget for pre-race advertising: newspaper, television, radio; the printing of tickets, passes and press credentials for each event.

In the meantime, in early spring there will always be maintenance on the course, with some improvements each year. You will be surprised how an area of 500 or 600 acres can accumulate fallen trees, broken limbs, heavy brush, washouts, broken fences, broken utility wires, etc., during the

Careful preparation of the roadbed is essential if the surface is to be rugged and require a minimum of maintenance.



If all goes well—planning, money, construction, etc.—the day comes when a sight like this excites the enthusiast!

course of one winter. If frost has been severe the roadway itself will suffer, and must be repaired. All these items reduce your budget long before you get into actual race expense.

We have saved the best till last. . . . "The Three Glorious Weeks" prior to a race, otherwise known as the period of frustration! Are the entry blanks in the mail? . . . check with SCCA. . . . need these entries for press releases. About eight or ten releases go out immediately prior to each event. There may be 1,200 dailies on the list. If 20% reach print you are lucky, and it *must* be news. The telephone rings, and it keeps up day and night. Some days the office is a madhouse, with the mimeograph, the folding machine and the addressograph all going full blast.

A workman walks in . . . the communication phones are out of order. You get someone to run it down. You find that a nesting robin left an almost invisible wire hanging on the line. Employees are cleaning up the area . . . last minute touches, a dab of paint here and there . . . the lawn is being cut, all 300 acres of it. The tractor breaks down . . . you begin to worry . . . it looks like rain.

Advance press credentials must be mailed with the passes. The man has yet to be born who doesn't feel he qualifies for a pass. Every time you

issue one you think of all the bills, not on the horizon but immediately before you on your desk. You are going to be out on a limb for better than \$20,000 of immediate expenditure. In your mind you add seasonal expense, property taxes, maintenance, office expense—but let's get back to work.

Is all the insurance taken care of? Sure there are regulations, but will everyone be covered? It means that you will have a liability policy, an accident policy, workmen's compensation, and perhaps a certificate of insurance from some groups. Better order the ambulances, the fire trucks, the wreckers; and give them the hour they must be in position.

It is necessary to have a meeting with the concessionaires and suppliers. It is surprising how efficient these civic organizations become after a few events. Take a bank president, wrap him up in a white apron, and he is a most agreeable person; but I doubt that you'll find him so the following morning if you try to negotiate a loan!

Your publicity man wants more information on entries, so you call the SCCA boys; you find that they are coming in pretty good and, for a moment, you relax. These SCCA committees hold meeting after meeting, setting up the races and planning their operation. The committee that handles entries will

have them classified, typed and mailed to you about five days before the races. You take the entry list to the printer and have enough stuffers made to fill the race programs. The complete book must be ready for sale in about two and one-half days. This is the fastest deal in the entire setup.

In the meantime, the telephone keeps on ringing—some chap lost his entry blank, will you fly him one? And although reservations are handled by the Chamber of Commerce, some fellow in New York wants a special room with plenty of private baths, and hopes you can help.

The office is wild again, so you go out for a breath of fresh air, meet a farmer friend—a solid citizen—ask the time of day, and he says: "Yup, it's awfully dry, we sure need rain." This simple remark can really set you up, and the butterflies in your innards take about ten extra laps. Back to work. . . . another press release is rolling out, advance tickets are being sold, a couple of your directors walk in and ask the only questions you still can't answer—it reminds you, should have another meeting with the executive committee. Perhaps you can sneak out for a touch of instant whiskey, but the telephone rings again. This time it's from the plant. The parking roads are dusty and need treatment. You call the treatment

people, but all you get is the answering service.

The radio and television ads are now going full blast, so you try to monitor some of it, but all you get is bebop and polkas . . . what a business!! But then a fellow walks in from a nearby state, a first arrival; says he has been listening to your ads on the car radio, that they sound good. Wants a bumper sticker; also tells you it's going to rain, but not until after the races.

Better meet again with the people who handle crowd control, parking and ticket sales. To do a competent job on a large course, 130 people are employed for this phase.

Another phone call to SCCA . . . entries are really pouring in . . . last press release is in the mail . . . office is quieting down. Better make a tour of the layout. Garage is ready for tech inspection, field office is cleaned up, corner equipment is ready: extinguishers, fire-proof suits, flags, pry bars, oil-dry, umbrellas and water jugs.

Have to check the whole area. Everything looks green . . . grass is cut, weeds are cut, snow fences are up, parking roads are treated, communication phones are working, public address system is functioning and ready for the announcer . . . pagoda is all set for the scoring team. The track has been swept from start to finish . . . workmen are beginning to smile.

Looks like you might be ready for a road race, but the superintendent tells you: "There were five deer on Corner 5 this morning." Back to the phone, and call the Conservation Commission . . . those doggone deer! Well—maybe they do belong . . . and where can you find greater accelerating without a gear box?

Everybody is beginning to smile . . . race officials, medics, drivers and crews are rolling into town (they will take over tomorrow) . . . it's wonderful to greet these old friends, and watch them greet each other. After dinner you shave, slip on a sports coat, drop into the office and you are "just another country squire."

Here at Road America and Elkhart Lake, we have been blessed with great cooperation and assistance from the SCCA—with special emphasis on the Chicago Region — plus loyal support from our own community and many friends throughout the country. Without this volunteer effort, the chances of a road course here would have been nil; and we would have *had* to spend more time with a trout rod and a shot gun!