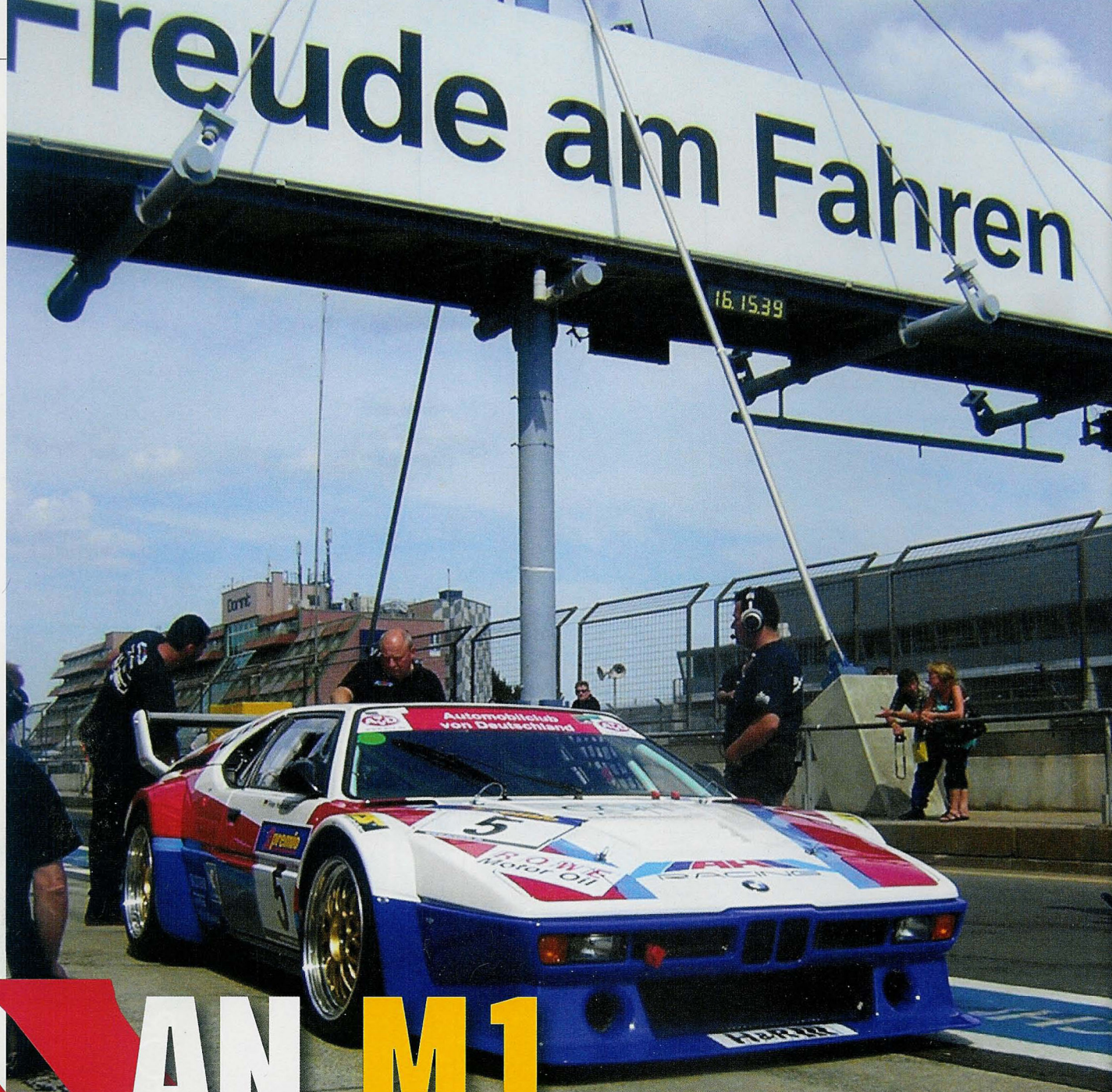


DECEMBER 2010

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AN M1 FOR THE RING

BY PETER GH SEBALD AND BOB ROEMER

AT THE NÜRBURGRING HISTORIC RACES, THIS "ONE" IS FOR THE FANS.

Peter and Achim Heinrich, father and son, operate one of the top BMW historic racing teams in Europe. Their home track is Germany's Nürburgring, and the team—AH-Racing, based in Aachen—fields two of the most successful BMW race cars ever: an E30 M3 and an E24 635CSi.

Despite all that, Peter felt there was something missing. "Although we frequently drive in the same race, we should be driving the same car," he said.

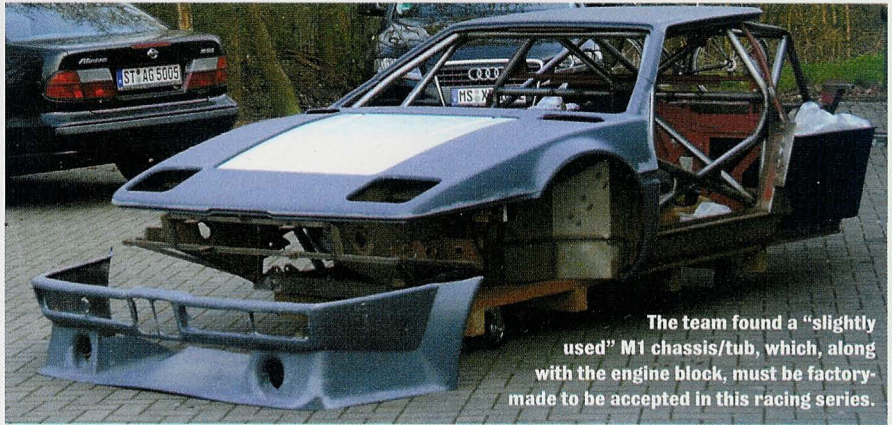
"He's right," agreed Achim. "It would be a real team effort—and we can find out who is really the fastest in family."

Finding enough races for a season was easy. Since 1977, the Nürburgring Long-Distance Championship (VLN *Langstreckenmeisterschaft* Nürburgring) produces ten endurance races on the Nürburgring of sufficient length—typically four to six hours—to require multiple drivers. Unfortunately for

amateurs, the series has become the haunt of factory-entered cars driven by professionals.

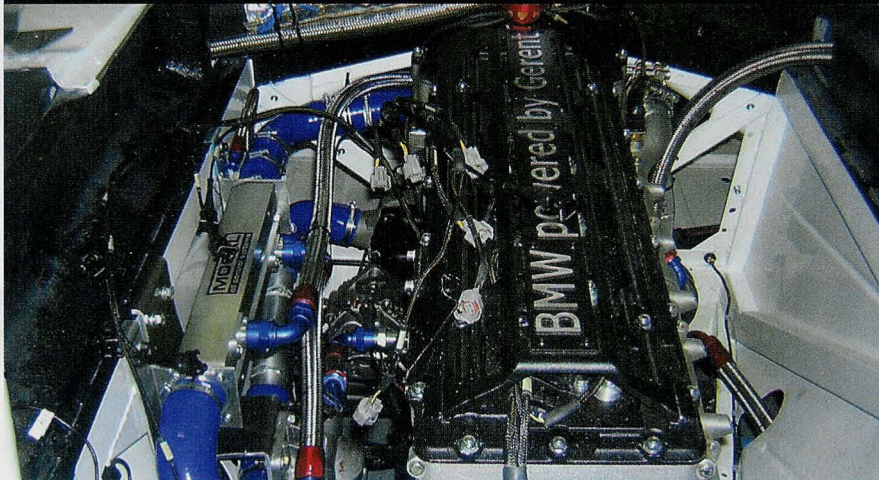
There is, however, a historic-vehicle category with interesting regulations which stipulate that the car's body and engine block must be from the factory—in other words, no replicas. After that, it's an open formula, as was the original Canadian-American Challenge Cup run in the 1960s and '70s.

True to their BMW roots, AH-Racing decided on a BMW M1, but with prices for the mid-engine coupes, built from 1978 to 1981, soaring in the collector-car world, they decided they would have to build a new M1. American hot-rodders and

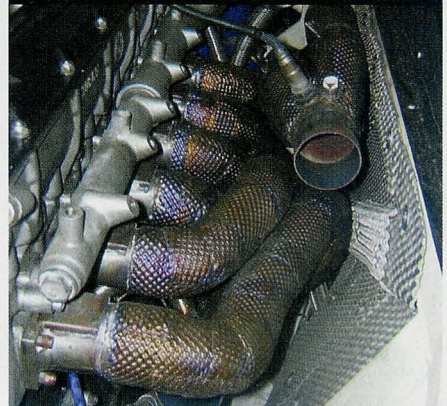


The team found a "slightly used" M1 chassis/tub, which, along with the engine block, must be factory-made to be accepted in this racing series.

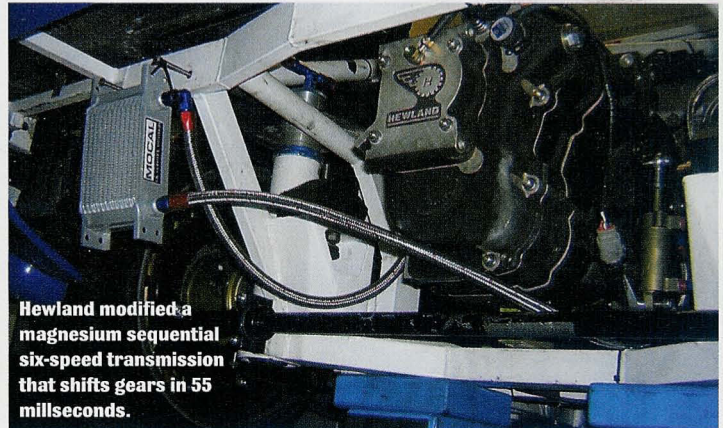
The original M88 six-cylinder engine was equipped with mechanical fuel injection. Gerent Racing Technology replaced it with an electronic fuel-injection system to improve power and efficiency.



Old M1 bugaboos include vibration and overheating; precious time was spent replacing parts and improving reliability. In the early days, this exhaust header broke several times from vibrations.



Suspension-system manufacturer Bilstein sent an engineer to help the team build a cockpit-adjustable suspension system.



Hewland modified a magnesium sequential six-speed transmission that shifts gears in 55 milliseconds.

collector-car auctioneers would call their M1 a "resto-mod," a car true to its classic character on the outside, but absolutely state-of-the-art on the inside.

That's when the elder Heinrich contacted Peter GH Sebald, a long-time friend. Sebald, author of *M3: 17,970 Emotions*, the definitive book on the E30 M3, has many contacts in the automobile industry, making him the perfect marketing manager for the project. The team located a chassis from a wrecked M1 and purchased an engine block from BMW. Uli Gerent, proprietor of Gerent Racing Technologies in northern Germany, was commissioned



AH-Racing installs race telemetry.

to build the engine, including replacing the stock mechanical fuel-injection system with an electronic unit.

Suspension giant Bilstein dispatched an engineer to help the team design an adjustable suspension. TRW designed,

fabricated, and fitted a six-piston braking system with race-calibrated ABS, and Yokohama provided a supply of tires.

With help from English gearbox manufacturer Hewland, the team adapted a magnesium sequential six-speed transmission, similar to those used on current Indy cars, providing 55-millisecond gear changes. This year the team installed an up-to-date telemetry system.

Sensing a developing groundswell of enthusiasm for the team and its project, the German car-buff and racing media increased their coverage of the championship. A 30-year-old car was injecting some much-needed variety into a race series that had become a monotonous



The AH-Racing M1 leads a gaggle of BMWs on the Nürburgring's Grand Prix circuit.



Fully restored and reinvigorated, the M1's first race was at the Nürburgring in April 2009. Here a crew member makes adjustments after a practice session on that weekend.

MORE INFO

www.ah-racing.de
www.gerent-motorsport.de
www.vln.de



Peter and Achim Heinrich won the Historic class in their fourth Nürburgring Long-Distance Championship race. The gold wreaths are much-coveted symbols of victory at the world's most exacting race track.

parade of Porsche GT3s, Audi R8s, and Corvette GT3s.

There were BMW people, active and retired, who were more than a little interested in the progress of the project. Sebald kept BMW Motorsport icons Raimund Kupferschmid, the M1 project leader, and engine designer Paul Rosche—nicknamed “Camshaft Paul” by the European motorsports press—in the loop. “Everyone had fun,” Sebald says, grinning.

The M1's inaugural race was April, 2009. During the pre-race pit-lane walk-about, hundreds of fans crowded into the AH-Racing pit to see what was fast becoming the most popular car on the premises.

“You guys are crazy for what you've built,” an appreciative fan yelled, “but we love it!” ♦