

NINCO®

World Cup Super GT

In slot car racing circles, 1/32 is considered to be the international “hobby” standard because four of the major manufacturers produce exceptionally detailed cars and accessories for both their standard analog (two cars on a track) race sets and digital racing systems for up to eight cars on the track.

Model Rectifier Corporation (MRC) is the official U.S. importer and distrib-

utor of the NINCO brand, manufactured in Barcelona, Spain. NINCO created the World Cup Super GT, an international event in which national slot car champions from all over the world race against each other. MRC is deeply involved.

Brand loyalty amongst slot car drivers is just as strong as it is with RC cars. Minute adjustments to the cars — gearing, suspension and overall setup — change the performance and handling. To grow the hobby and promote the NINCO brand, MRC’s marketing team set out to get hobbyists and dealers to “Think Red” and “Race The Red Triangle.”

Hobby Merchandiser felt that dealers would like to know more about this international effort, so we interviewed “NINCO Bob” Lewen. Bob heads the NINCO slot racing division at MRC.



NINCO World Cup 2007 final races were held in Stuttgart Germany.

Regional races are held at tracks across the U.S. MRC 2008 Team USA race ran at Sling Shot Speedway in Georgia.



Hobby Merchandiser: Hey, Bob. It’s nice to speak with you. What can you tell *Hobby Merchandiser’s* readers about the NINCO World Cup Super GT?

Bob Lewen: Hi, Jeff. The NINCO World Cup Super GT is now in its fourth year. It’s an international championship race organized by NINCO, one of the major slot car product manufacturers worldwide. Competitors in the various regional events race with the most popular and highest performance NINCO 1/32-scale slot cars. The regional events lead to national team selections that decide each country’s team. These teams eventually race in the annual NINCO World Cup grand final for the world championship.

Any country that wishes to participate in the NINCO World Cup gets to organize its own preliminary championship. Any driver from that country is invited to take part, and teams must have three drivers. This year’s grand final in Europe saw a total of 16 international teams.

HM: Where was that?

BL: The 2005 race was in Barcelona, Spain. Next was Verona, Italy, in 2006. Last year’s NINCO World Cup was Stuttgart, Germany, and this year’s race ran at the home of Formula 1 in Silverstone, England.

HM: What is the championship format?

BL: The NINCO World Cup is a six-hour endurance race. The rules are strict, and only specified NINCO cars and parts are allowed. The race organizer in each country decides the championship format, and all cars must race without the assistance of magnets or additional weight.

HM: What does the track look like?

BL: Silverstone was a mirrored, 150-foot, 16-lane technical circuit. The circuit design varies each year for the utmost challenge to the drivers.



NINCO World Cup 2007 finals in Stuttgart Germany ran on an exotic, high-speed 16-lane road course circuit.

HM: And the Cars?

BL: Each year, a special car is selected by NINCO as the Cup Car, and that car is raced by every team in the final. The Toyota Supra and Honda NSX were raced in Barcelona. The Mosler MT 900 R was the choice in Verona, with the Porsche 997 getting the honor in Stuttgart. The NINCO Acura LMP 2 was the Cup Car for 2008.

HM: What about NINCO races in the USA?

BL: MRC felt that the growth of NINCO in the USA would increase public awareness of the slot car hobby. We began an aggressive campaign with published NINCO race rules, and holding preliminary races at select U.S. hobby shops. MRC provided trophies, prizes and other promotional materials. The regional race winners were asked to come to our national race to select Team USA.

The buzz about our regional races was overwhelming; consumers and store owners were talking. NINCO and no-magnet racing became regular weekly events at hobby shops and tracks around the country. The 2008 Team Selection race ran on a specially designed, six-lane NINCO circuit at Sling Shot Speedway.

HM: What was the Grand Prize?

BL: To complement the recognition and the spectacular trophies, MRC provided free airfare, free hotel accommodations, free race cars and parts, and free USA Team uniforms for the 2008 trip to England.

HM: What are the store benefits?

BL: This is a terrific race series for the consumer, and shop owners around the country are now being asked for the latest NINCO cars, motors, tires and Prorace EVO racing components. These races have contributed to the steady and continued growth of NINCO products nationwide. Racers enthusiastically recommend NINCO cars and sets.

NINCO quality is high and MRC's customer support is legendary. We created NINCO online forums to interact directly with consumers, provide authoritative reference and factual information about the products. Many hobby shop owners also participate, and are steadily realizing the benefits of profiting with MRC and NINCO. These guys are putting NINCO on their shelves like never before.

HM: So how did this year's program go?

BL: Using e-mail, the Net and even a newsletter direct from NINCO to all USA NINCO Club members, slot car racers from all over the USA were invited to compete in the two-day team selection endurance race, which decided the three racers who traveled to England as MRC's 2008 Team USA.

Prior to the team selection final contest in Georgia,

regional races were held at 132 Slot Car Raceway (WA), Al's Hobby Shop (IL), Fast Lane Slotcars & Raceways (OH), Main Line Hobbies (PA), Mid South Hobbies (TN), Mr. Model Car /Chan Design (CA), NJ Nostalgia Hobbies (NJ), Professor Motor (Lightning Speedway) (MI), The Race Place (FL) and Scale Auto Racing (TX).

HM: How did the World Cup competition finally play out in Silverstone, England?

BL: One, two, three were Spain, Italy and Portugal, with MRC Team USA taking

fourth out of 16 teams. Team USA missed the podium by only two laps out of 1400. It was an incredible race — the closest and most exciting yet. NINCO officials were elated about the performance, friendliness, courtesy and helpfulness shown by our team, and Team USA's Mark Azaragga received the award for fastest lap. Fifth through 16th-place teams were Belgium, Netherlands, Argentina, Germany, Switzerland, France, UK, UK Wild Card 2, Sweden, UK Wild Card, Hellas/Greece and Andorra.



Fourth place went to Mark Azaragga, Kurt Moser and Jason Stanley, MRC's Team USA.

HM: What's in store for 2009?

BL: MRC sets the slot car bar very high for support of our customers' hobby. With today's advancements and exceptional product reliability, new and existing hobby stores have been setting up NINCO tracks as part of their slot racing income generator, either as demonstration layouts, as race courses or both.

The Acura cars proved to be spectacular, and the Acura Patron and Lowe's versions are selling very well for dealers. In fact, stores are

already requesting signup information for next year's events.

If your readers want to know more about everything NINCO, ask them to call me at 732-225-2100, extension 218. MRC is confident, and we're looking forward to the continued growth of our NINCO dealer network, and overall expansion of the hobby on this side of the pond. **HM**