

# The Alternative Line

by Joe Holzer

for Publication in CNY-PCA Redline Report

Copyright 2001 im@holzerent.com

Dear Porsche Pushers;

I am again in Europe – early June 01. I've just spent five very pleasant days in Weis Austria testing a big power transformer, and now am writing from Poppi Italy where I've just witnessed the Montreal F1 race. I'm sure I won't be the first to tell you it was a classic battle of brothers, with the younger Ralf Schumacher having clearly outclassed his championship-leading brother Michael.

This was even more interesting to watch than normally might be expected, because I was in Ferrari land, and the owner of the Pizza shop where I watched and ate dinner is a fan himself (he went so far as to give me a glass of Ferrari red wine as he remembered I was last there for the F1 race from Indy last September). One could perhaps be forgiven for wondering what made him remember me, since the area is not exactly on the tourist maps. But I was honored to receive such a gesture.

Although Mika Hakkinen was third behind Michael, he was never a factor, and only reached that point through attrition, especially of David Coulthard. F1 can seriously change luck in a hurry, but I'll bet Ron Dennis at McLaren is a little nervous right now. And with the soap opera of Adrian Newey's attempted hijack from him by Jaguar, no doubt using Ford money, I suspect he sees "ship-rats" all around. Which is also preposterous. That Williams -BMW has suddenly had success is more evident of how tough this stuff really is than anything else. But it would also be true to suggest that Juan Montoya has had more "impact" on F1 than he wanted – he took out Michael's teammate Baricello, who was the class of the field up to that point, and had looked to overtake Michael easily until he spun, which put him back with Mr. Montoya.

What all this suggests is really two things which Porsche has long espoused – on any given day almost anyone can win, but the championship and endurance wins are a matter of consistency and preparation. There are plenty of people who wonder why anyone would pay Michael the reported \$30 Million he commands. But you have only to watch the faces of the mechanics who sweat to make his car as good as possible. Because if they can get him close, they know he will eventually bring them the title. And that is MOTIVATION.

New subject; have you ever wondered what it might be like to drive a 24 hour race? I think I might have a clue – SCARY! I wrote a few articles back about the fun drive between Poppi and Florence over the Appenines. But that was in the daylight. Try driving it at night. Even when you are fresh, overdriving your lights can get pretty hairy. But those guys at Le Mans will be doing so in two weeks EVERY LAP for about eight hours! And speaking of which, Porsche lost a true Ambassador when Bob Wollecek was killed on his bicycle earlier this spring. With the deaths of Michele Alboreto and Dale Earnheart, the sport of motor racing has been very expensive of late. I only hope that the carnage does not result in mindless knee-jerk attempts to stop competition, but instead to understand what causes the death and injury, and seek to design means to reduce the risks. The Wollecek tragedy shows the frustration, though; here was a man who looked at death repeatedly in what is perceived as a dangerous sport, and he was killed while riding a bike he was pedalling. How safe are our kids? Like the shirt says, "I remember when sex was safe and racing was dangerous". If only driving safety were as simple as a condom.

Which brings me to my last subject for this issue; when do YOU feel safe and when do you feel threatened? That issue came home to me as I drove over now familiar (though certainly not known like a track) roads from Florence to where I am as I write this. Since my first drive here was in September last year, I had not seen the vast incompetence of the "touristas". NOTHING can compare with arriving around a curve to find a moron looking at scenery as he drives into your lane on a blind twisty bit, and your options are exclusively to fly out into the same scenery or smash into him. Later, once off the popular Renaissance Route, I came upon a big truck followed by three cars, the third of which I'd had a pleasant dice with for the past five twisty miles. After three sections wherein it became obvious that none of the other three were going to pass each other, to say nothing of the truck, I was able to observe the uphill approach to the twisty bit we were following down, and realized there would be no one coming for a sufficient distance to get by the truck and all cars in one pass, provided I started before the truck had begun the right turn ahead. So they all braked, and he swung wide as expected, while I watched BENEATH him for any signs of missed oncoming traffic. I certainly suspect that the other cars' drivers were convinced I was a lunatic as I arrived off his left rear quarter as he started to bring the cab back online in his lane, and I passed at full tilt before stabbing the binders for the left turn I had been watching for opposing traffic. On one level such a move is absurd, but on another it is the ultimate in cool. If I survive, as you can tell was the case, I put the truck behind me and continue to have fun, but if wrong, it could be deadly. Nothing in life is so clearly risk/reward obvious.

But that is the point; the difference between being controlled by the truck and your surroundings, and controlling them, is KNOWLEDGE. Any of the other three could have made the same analysis, but DIDN'T. So am I crazy like a fox, or simply crazy? Drop me a line, and let me know WHY you think so, whatever your answer. im@holzerent.com