

## Penske Perfect Formula Models' 2002 Indy 500 Winner by Wayne E. Moyer

Roger Penske is easily the most astute - and most successful - businessman in American automobile racing. His Penske Racing teams had more Indianapolis 500 wins than any other entrant and he was a founding member of Championship Auto Racing Teams (CART). When Tony George's new Indy Racing League (IRL) began sanctioning open-wheel races in 1996, Penske was very critical of the IRL teams, drivers, and racing. But it immediately became obvious that while Cart had the "big names" in American racing, the IRL had the Indianapolis 500 race. That single race got more television and newspaper coverage (read sponsorship money!) than all of the rest of the races each year, especially outside of the "diehard" racing fans.

In 2001 Penske swallowed his words, bought some IRL-spec Dallara chassis, fitted them with the much re-badged Ilmor V-8 (Penske was a partner in Ilmor) now carrying the Oldsmobile logo, and entered the Indy 500. Helio Castroneves, officially a "rookie" won the race in the Penske Marlboro Dallara-Oldsmobile treating the 500 fans to a fence-climbing exhibition. Recognizing a good thing, at the end of the season Penske resigned his position on the CART board and announced that Penske Racing would participate in the IRL full-time in 2002.

The Penske team fielded a pair of Dallaras, with the Ilmor V-8 now carrying the Chevrolet nameplate (GM understood the value of publicity, too) for Castroneves and teammate Gil de Ferran for 2002. That Indy 500 remains one of the closest - and most controversial - finishes at the 2.5 mile oval. With de Ferran running 3rd and Castroneves in 6th when Shekter crashed, the Penske team split the odds, calling de Ferran into the pits and leaving Castroneves on the track, hoping to run the remaining 42 laps on the fuel he had left. That strategy went by the boards when de Ferran's #6 shed an improperly fastened wheel

after the stop. After taking the lead on lap 177, Castroneves was forced into fuel conservation mode, with Paul Tracy gaining on every lap. Three quarters of the way through Lap 198, Tracy was preparing to make his pass when the yellow caution lights illuminated for a crash behind them. Castroneves says that when the yellow light on his steering wheel came on, he was leading and backed off. Tracy insisted that when the trackside caution lights came on, he was ahead. Depending on which TV camera angle you saw, both arguments looked valid and since the two light systems are operated independently by different IRL officials, it's certainly possible that both drivers were correct. Race Stewards called Castroneves the winner and when Tracy's team filed a protest, Tony George made it moot by ruling that the Stewards' decision couldn't be protested. Helio Castroneves and Penske racing were a perfect 2 for 2 in the Indianapolis 500.

Any Indy 500 fan is well aware that 1/43 scale models of post-1980 Indianapolis winners are few and far between. Fortunately, Formula Models is hard at work filling that big gap with high quality multi-media kits and factory-built models. Their kit (FOR027) builds either the winning #3 car or de Ferran's #6. It consists of just 1 resin casting, a smooth, clean, and well detailed body. There are 37 white-metal parts, all equally well cast, four chromed outer wheel halves, 4 rubber tires, 97 photo-etched pieces (many of which aren't used for this kit) and enough miscellaneous bits to push the parts count to almost 150. Don't panic yet; everything is well engineered and all parts fit well, making it easier to build than you'd think at first look.

There's a double-sided instruction sheet with one large exploded view, numbered drawings of the photo-etched trees, and some useful building instructions. A second sheet has three colour photos of the built model, but they're colour cop-



Wayne's completed model built from Formula Models' kit FOR027

ies and everything on the rear of the car blends together. One of the first things I noticed was that the instructions say de Ferran's car was #3 at the top and #6 in the "alternative versions" box. "Road & Track" photos confirm that de Ferran was #6, the #3 car is the winner!

Preparing the body took almost no time; just a couple of feed tags on the inside and small mould lines inside the cockpit and on the lower edge. I had to do a little filing on the baseplate to get it to fit up inside the body; don't forget that the baseplate and body will get several coats of paint so it should be a loose fit to start. I made up sub-assemblies like the rear wing and the rear air deflectors (don't forget to add the p.e. part 31 there) before priming, but I departed from the kit instructions and didn't glue the front wings in place since they would make masking the nose difficult. Castings were virtually perfect-- one coat of primer, block-sanded with 3200-grit cloth, and everything was ready to paint.

That brings up the first problem. Formula provides a decal for the front fluorescent stripe and tells you to mix a paint to match for the rear of the car and rear wing. That obviously works for the factory, where they have control of the decal inks and the paint, but trying to do that over here, with the paints available on this side of the Atlantic, seemed to have little chance of success. After painting everything gloss white, I applied the front decal and gave the body a couple of coats of clear gloss. I then masked the rear section, measuring carefully to keep the width of the white section constant.



When that was done, I masked outside of the red nose decal, and then sprayed the front stripe, rear body, rear wing, air deflectors, and front wing endplates with some "Marlboro Red" fluorescent paint I've been hoarding for years. I think Tamiya TS-36 Fluorescent Red would work, too. The result was a front stripe and rear body that were the same colour, and agreed with those "Road & Track" photos, too.



There are lots of decals, and I spread the application over several

sessions. A couple of "repeat" decals are provided on a second small sheet; I couldn't see any difference from those on the larger sheet, but I used them anyway. All decals went on easily and conformed well, but the fluorescent red did bleed through the white rear wing decal. If I were to build another model, I'd mask that section of the wing off before spraying the red.

I'd drilled out all the mounting holes, per the instructions, before priming the parts, and then opened them up again after painting - including the clear top coat. Follow the instructions and everything goes together very well, but with one "gotcha" again. The right rear upper A-arm (part 53) didn't fit right. That's when I discovered another "part 53" on its own small p.e. tree. The correct narrower part is on the right here.



As mentioned, it's difficult to tell exactly where everything goes in the colour photos of the finished model or the exploded view. I simply matched the mounting pins to the holes I'd drilled to determine what went where but hopefully this photo will make things a bit more clear.



Either I got lucky or the kit is very well engineered - my money is on the latter, knowing the problems I usually have with open-wheel models - but not only did everything fits well, all four wheels sat square and touched the ground with no tweaking. And the rear wing fits square and true, too! By the way, gluing all the parts (except the "Gurney Flap") together before priming gave me a very sturdy rear wing and I simply brush-painted the struts semi-gloss black after all the decal work was completed.

My finished model matches the photos I've found very well and its dimensions check out to 1/43 scale just as accurately. I wouldn't recommend this one to an absolute novice, but the fine engineering and excellent castings should allow anyone with a few less complex kits to build an attractive and very accurate model of Helio Castroneves' "Penske Perfect" 2002 Indy 500 winner.

