

The \$25,000 Challenge

Consulier creator Warren Mosler has a standing offer to pay \$25,000 to anyone who can drive any U.S.-legal production car around a racetrack faster than one of his Series I GTPs.

What the hell, we reckoned. Might be the chance to get that tennis court for the house after all.

Right away it occurred to us to fly in Ayrton Senna and a Ferrari F40. ("Here's your \$20,000, Ayrton. Okay with you if we just keep the other five grand for setting up the deal?") But we didn't. Instead, we opted for a regular, off-the-floor six-speed 1991 Chevrolet Corvette. Not even a ZR-1 even. And to drive we used not the world champion but two plainclothes *C/D* regulars, technical director Csaba Csere and yours truly.

The idea? Drive each car as fast as possible and look at the watch.

The venue? The beautiful new 1.6-mile handling track at the Chrysler proving grounds in Chelsea, Michigan.

Okay then. May the best car win.



Csaba and I each drove three hot laps in the Corvette. Our times were nearly identical, the best lap of the six being a 1:21.01. The big, 250-hp Vette felt superb on the track, neutral in the corners, stable under braking, and powerful down the straight. It was clearly going to be tough to beat.

I drove the Consulier first. Right away, the GTP showed itself to be a much more difficult car to handle. The steering felt less precise than the Vette's, the pedals were difficult to heel-and-toe, the brakes were anemic, and the chassis was ticklish. Not wanting to risk trashing

the Consulier, I managed only a 1:23.34.

Then Csaba took his turn. He clocked a lap almost 0.8 second quicker than mine. Still, his best time of 1:22.56 was more than 1.5 seconds slower than the Corvette's mark.

Mosler had lots to say when we told him of the outcome. "That GTP you drove was an '88 model; it's been out of the factory for a long time. The brakes undoubtedly

needed to be bled, the tires that were on the car were much harder than the ones we use now, and the suspension was most likely out of alignment. Any properly running Consulier would have had three seconds on that Corvette."

So right now you're asking, did Csaba and I each get to take a \$12,500 vacation courtesy of Consulier Industries? Naw. Seems there are a few "terms" to Mosler's wager. Namely, he gets to pick the track, he gets to supply the Consulier, and he gets to pick his driver.

Okay, Warren. But next time we've got dibs on Mr. Senna. —AS

ature, fuel level, volts, oil pressure, turbo boost, a clock, and an engine-time meter similar to those found in private aircraft. It's an imposing array. While giving a ride to a friend, we asked, "So Howard, how do you like the Consulier?" He blinked, scanned the panel for a minute, then said simply, "We've got good voltage."

More than direct current, of course, a sports car needs direct handling. To that end, chassis man Bob McKee designed a fully independent suspension consisting of coil-over shocks located by upper rocker arms and lower control arms—a layout that would look right at home in a purpose-built race car.

So it's not surprising that the GTP handles like a full-on racing machine. The steering is go-kart direct and superquick—just 2.1 turns lock-to-lock. That's awful quick for a street car. When you turn the wheel, the GTP's chassis darts instantly—the steering isn't progressive, so it's hard to bend the car into a corner smoothly. As a result, the GTP feels nervous on the street.

Certainly the GTP has the grip of a racer. Shod with fifteen-inch General

XP2000V tires mounted on cast-aluminum Fittipaldi wheels, our test car circled the skidpad at 0.89 g. Working the car up there, though, takes a careful right foot. With almost 64 percent of its weight in back, the GTP will wave its tail if you even think of lifting off the throttle at the limit.

As a rule, we don't expect any sports car to offer a pillowy ride. Still, we at first thought the GTP's chassis was overly stiff, with a tendency to crash over potholes and broken pavement. Then Mosler set us straight. "The suspension isn't crashing over the pavement. It just *sounds* like it is because the rigid body shell has a tendency to amplify the noise of road shocks." Oh.

Our test car was a Series I Sport model, which translates roughly as "an early-production stripper." The Sport is the die-hard GTP, the barest, most race-car-like Consulier in the lineup. No radio, no A/C, and—as previously noted—no passenger seat without spending an extra \$250. Current base price for a Series I Sport, with luxury tax: \$51,890. Which makes it only \$16,533 more expensive than a Nissan 300ZX Turbo.

Consulier also sells two other Series I GTPs: the luxurious LX (\$61,790, including air conditioning, power amenities, a stereo, leather seats, and ABS) and the open-air CV (\$65,750).

But Mosler didn't stop with Series I. Recently he's unveiled the lighter and slightly more powerful Series II cars (\$54,750 for the Sport; \$65,750 for the LX), and soon he'll market the \$65,750 Consulier GTP C-4, powered by a 245-horsepower sixteen-valve Chrysler-Shelby Turbo III engine. Mosler is so convinced of the C-4's potential that he's upped his come-and-get-me ante to Publishers Clearing House levels: anyone who can outlap a C-4 using a U.S.-legal production car gets \$100,000.

Despite the Consulier's buy-me-and-you-can-whip-anything lure, few buyers seem willing to take the bait. Since 1988, only about 80 GTPs have rolled out of the 45,000-square-foot factory in Riviera Beach, Florida. Still, Mosler says he's ready to build up to 250 a year as soon as demand blossoms.

Maybe Undershirt is playing the lottery. ●