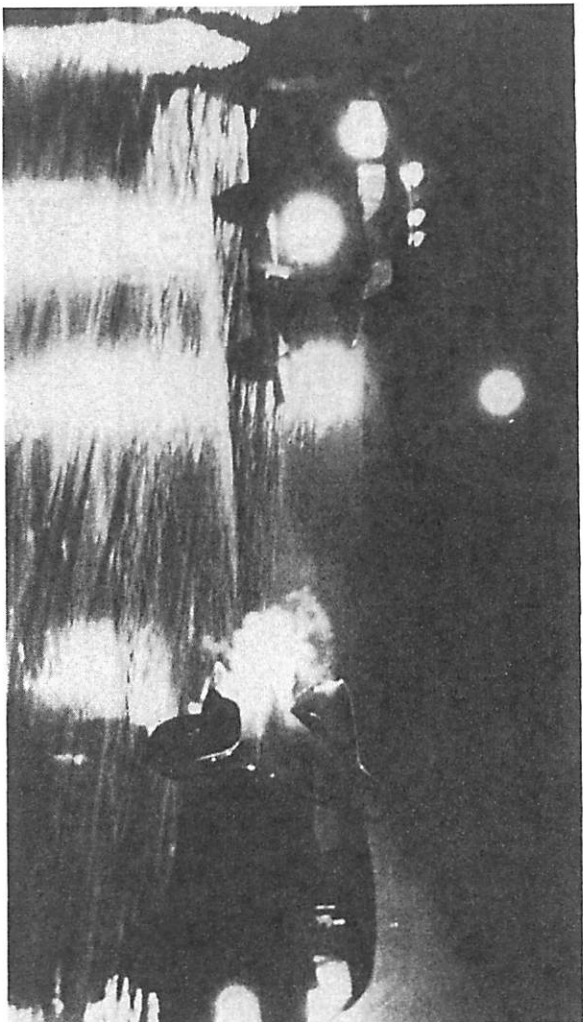


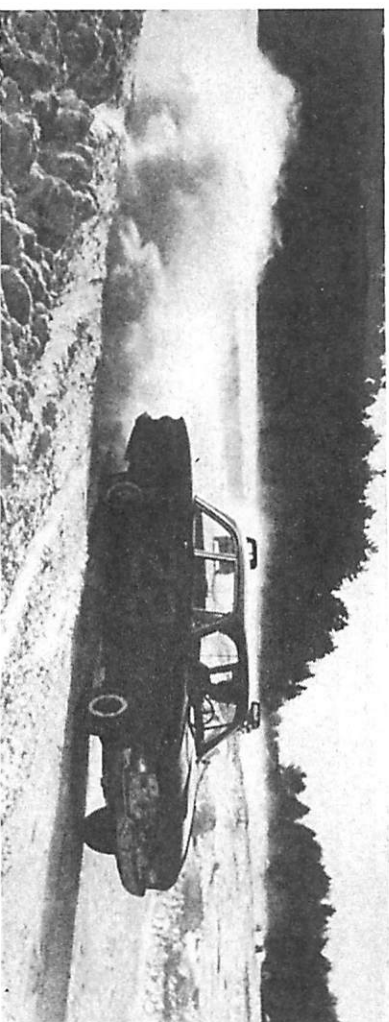
FEB 64

LITTLE LE MANS



MADNESS won't promise a win, but it helps in Naom's "Dark Deepfreeze" race on ice, featuring headlights going away backwards and speeds of 70

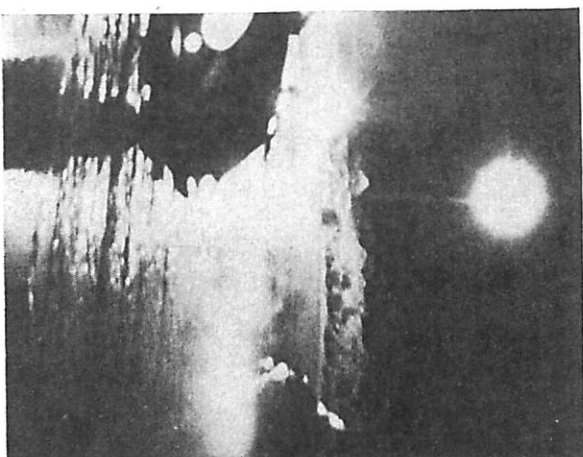
COMPACTS often do as well as more exotic sports cars on the ice. The trick lies in the skill of the man behind the wheel, who knows how to use the extra traction provided by a little snow to stop a slide, as shown here



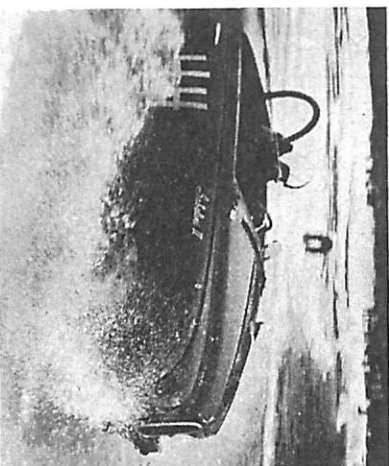
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POPULAR MECHANICS

ON ICE



FREEZING SHOWER bathes car and driver as it plunges through a lake on a lake. In one race, cars collected 200 pounds of ice from spray



FEBRUARY 1964

Road racers take to the slick at 115 m.p.h. without chains on snow tires, in a slithering melee that even features night runs

By Richard F. Dempewolf

WITH A ROAR of open exhausts and whining engines, a motley assortment of sports cars, family sedans and "specials" creeps off the starting mark at a solid one mile per hour.

Practically nothing moves but the drive wheels, and they're about to fly apart.

But within a minute or two, the slithering pack is strung along the straight. The leaders, streaking out at 75 to 100 m.p.h. slide into "S" turns and around bend sideways (and sometimes backwards).

Experts carom off snowbanks to save precious seconds on curves. Some make it. Others slide into long spins. Looping gracefully around and around each other they go walking across the panorama. Most will recover to re-join the race. But a few will be busy "shoveling out" for an hour or two.

It's all in a day's fun for enthusiasts of one of the "hairiest" sports ever devised—automobile racing on ice.

Thrill-seeking nuts have been dropping "Detroit iron" through melt holes in frozen northern lakes from Maine to Minnesota since the turn of the century. But credit for putting the madness on a reasonable, safe, organized basis generally goes to an energetic 32-year-old Easterner with a crew cut, named Franklin "Skip" Miller.

According to Miller, a private pilot and sports car enthusiast, the whole thing started by accident about ten years ago. In winter, when he landed his plane on Naom Lake—a two-mile-long former ice pond at his family's stronghold in Pocono Pines, Pennsylvania—the prop wash would blow snow from large areas of glare ice. "I used to take my car out and skid around on it for fun," he says. "Then some neighbors wanted to try it. We began competing for biggest spin-outs, and in due course wound up racing."

In no time, they were scraping away snow to form a two-and-a-half-mile circuit with two sweeping hairpins, a pair of

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"S" turns and two narrow squeezes, or "chicanes." By 1958 it had become an annual affair run by Miller and his attractive wife, Lorna (who also manages a pair of lively young sons). Under the sponsorship of their Ice Racing Enterprises, Inc., major seasonal events are featured: Sprint Races, a four-hour Grand Prix, a Little LeMans, and a Dark Deepfreeze—"for night racing fans who don't like to see where they've been when they're sliding backwards," explains one champ.

From January deep into March, bad weather permitting, entries pour in for weekend events (at \$10 a head and no cash prizes) from a dozen states including Ohio, Vermont and Virginia. A nice winter Saturday or Sunday may find a hundred contestants on Naomi's ice. Up to 3000 spectators line the lake shore, munching cold hot dogs flavored with mitten wool and stamping to keep warm.

All kinds of people are devotees. One regular fan is an undertaker from Endicott, N. Y., who drives down nearly every week in a hearse. Pits, in the center of the circuit, swarm with convalescent cars waving friendly fenders, and do-it-yourself mechanics wearing ice skates.

A Saab You Wouldn't Know

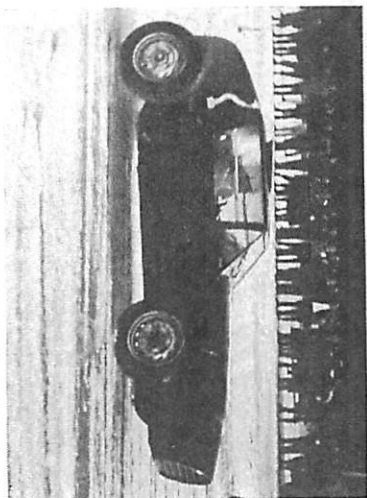
You're likely to find almost any kind of car, from production models to Allison B. Stout's "A. S. Special," on the lake. Stout, a retired engineer, designed the car especially for ice racing. He used the running gear of a Swedish Saab, modifying it to produce a long, low single seater resembling the front end of a wingless jet fighter plane. The three-cylinder engine boasts three carburetors.

Special features include a pair of forked drag brakes that reach down from the rear end to claw the ice and keep the front end up front on the corners. When he uses this device, Stout races by himself. It works too well, so it has been outlawed. But even without it, Al Stout has swept the field enough times to become known as the "Ice King." He holds the track record of 115 m.p.h.

Average lap speeds for the circuit run up to 70 m.p.h., which means that anybody who hopes to be anybody must push at least 75 to 90 on the straights.

Only a raging blizzard or torrential downpour is enough to "call" an ice race. Even at 20 below zero, hardy contestants

(Please turn to page 214)



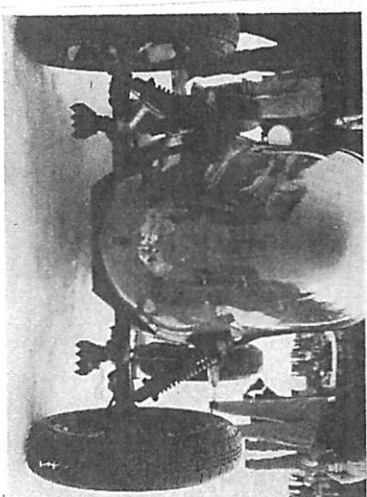
SPECIAL ICE CAR built by retired engineer Al Stout boasts Saab running gear, one-seat cockpit, three carburetors and holds the ice track record of 115



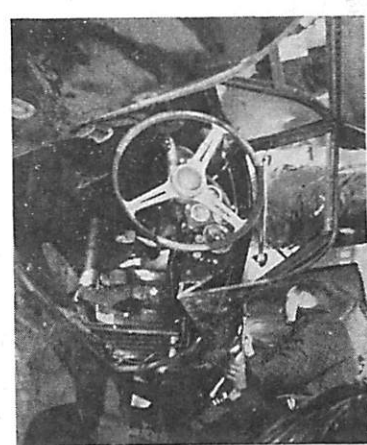
SLUSH and water on the track create freezing spray that coats windshields, so drivers usually wear masks and drive with their heads out the side



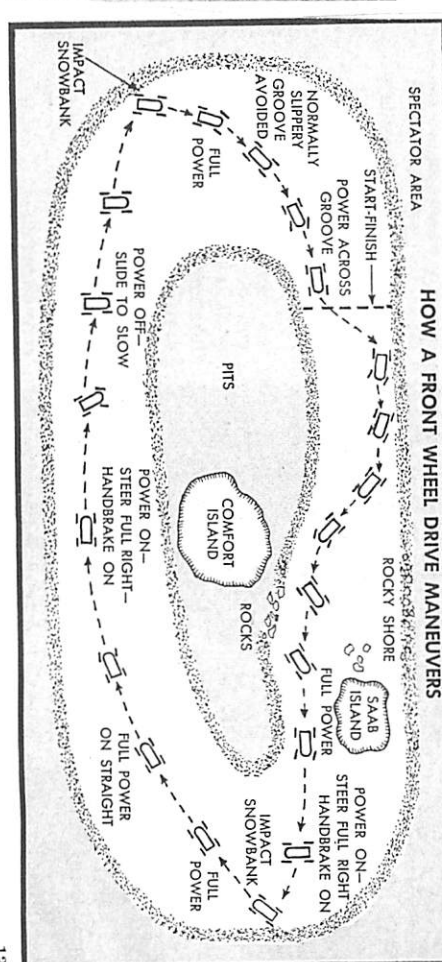
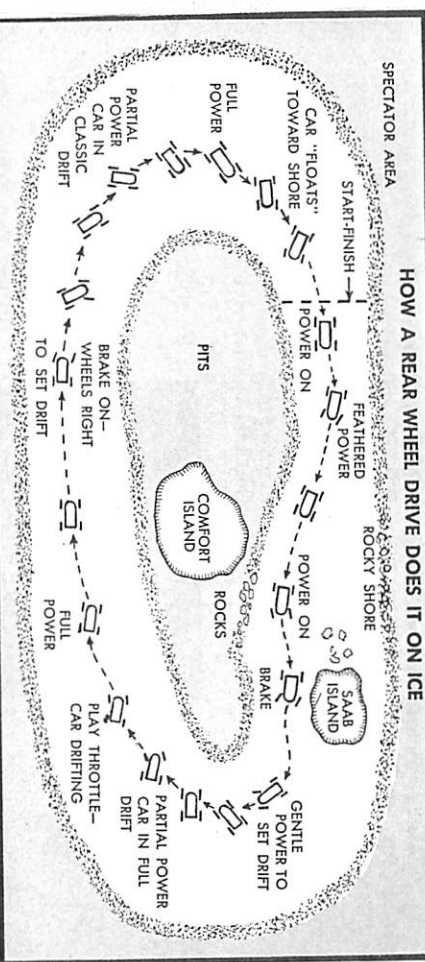
SNOW DIVES result when drivers "overcook" it on the corners and shoot over the snow embankments at trackside. It's the end of the race for this one

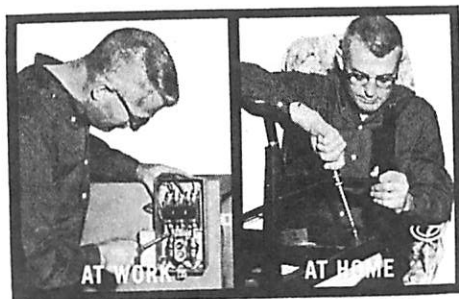


FORKED BRAKES on A.S. Special reach down from rear end to grab the ice, and keep the front end up front on corners. Its use in races is outlawed



THERE'S NO ROOM for anything but business in the A.S. Special's single-seat cockpit. The "pilot" sits practically on the deck, with legs out front





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Little LeMans on Ice

(Continued from page 216)

stretch at 90 m.p.h. plus. A hundred yards from the corner at the end, he tapped the brakes hung out a wagging tail, nudged the wheel—and rolled to a halt.

When glare ice exists, the Saab drivers cheer. These little front-wheel-drive bugs, with a top speed of 75 m.p.h. in production models, can out-perform anything on corners. One island around which the track loops is known as Saab Island, for two reasons: First, the curve is just right to encourage Saab drivers to put in everything they've got and jump to lead positions. Second, since they all try their mightiest, more than a few have overcooked it and wound up in the woods.

Since a normal winter weekend usually offers a variety of conditions on Naomi, however, things pretty much equalize.

Ice Magnifies Virtues and Faults

"You handle a car on ice just as you would on dry pavement—only more so," says George Sanderson, a regular Saab entry with a high record of wins. "Every maneuver is grotesquely exaggerated—like a slow motion movie. Different cars have different virtues and faults—all of them magnified by the ice."

In general, a driver sets up a slide for a corner sooner than he would on a road, and puts in corrections sooner. Sliding can often add half a mile to every lap. "It's like going back to kindergarten," says Sanderson. "You listen and feel, your way. I start into corners shallow and get sideways as soon as possible. I look for pockets of snow or slush to provide resistance and slow my drift. High snowbanks help—you can carom off them. Once you've sliced across a corner to the outside, you turn your wheels gently toward the direction of slide until you feel traction; then dive into the straight."

On ice, a firm, confident hand on the wheel wins more races than a courageous lead foot on the throttle. Consequently, a tiny Volkswagen or Saab may run circles around a field of high-powered monsters.

If glare ice, hard snow, six inches of slush or four inches of water doesn't provide enough challenge, you can also try the same recipe with the added hazard of darkness in Naomi's "Dark Deepfreeze." The night race is wild. "There's nothing crazier than going around a corner and seeing tail lights turn into headlights going away from you," says an enthusiast.

But according to anyone you talk to at this winter clambake, once a man has entered an event at Naomi Lake he's an automobile-racer-on-ice for life. ★★

POPULAR MECHANICS