

PROVING A POINT

The Consulier \$100,000 Challenge proves without question that professional race car drivers are faster than almost all amateurs

By Mark Vaughn

In the battle of apples vs. oranges, it's always best if you own the produce cart. At least that's what was proven in the "Consulier \$100,000 Challenge" Dec. 8 at Sebring, an event won by (surprise!) a Consulier.

You remember Consulier, don't you? The ugly but very fast fiberglass cars made in Riviera Beach, Fla.?

Consulier Automotive's main claim to fame always has been that it makes the fastest production car you can legally drive on the streets of the U.S.A. It backed that up first with a \$25,000, then a \$100,000 guarantee. Anyone who could go faster was theoretically entitled to a check for the above amount from Consulier Automotive president Warren Mosler.

Mosler started Consulier Automotive in 1985 after having made a sizeable fortune selling securities. The ex-SCCA Runoffs driver (in a Volkswagen GTi) says he wasn't looking to make a profit off the Consulier. He had other goals for it.

"I wanted to show that with composite construction you could make a car that was light enough and powerful enough to beat anything else you could drive on the street," Mosler said.

The problem would be proving it. Consulier could have done it in the IMSA/Bridgestone Potenza Supercar series last season. The series pits nearly stock production sports and GT cars against one another on a variety of road courses. Consulier looked to do well. So well (winning two of the first four events) that weight penalties were assessed against it while competitors were allowed to toss weight out. It finished second to Porsche.

As Mosler says, the low weight of the Consulier's fiberglass monocoque is its greatest advantage. With 224 hp from the new Turbo III engine moving only 1800 pounds of car, there is nary another production vehicle that comes close in terms of hp-to-weight ratio. On paper it sure looks fastest.

But when Consulier says "fastest" it means lap times around very specific road courses where most Consulier testing goes



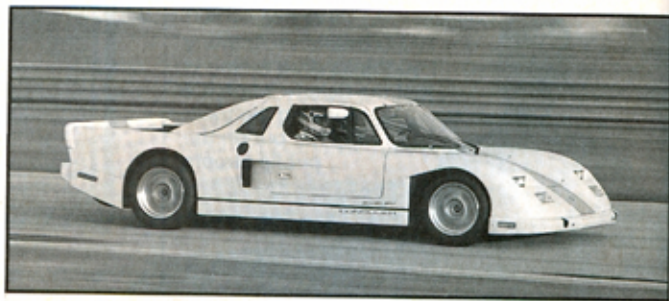
on. And against a professional driver in a one-off "production" Consulier. And Challenge organizers didn't necessarily go out of their way to get anything but tomato-can amateurs driving the "challenge" cars. And, most importantly, Consulier Automotive controls all the rules.

So yes, Virginia, this was a publicity stunt.

None of the five official "Challengers" Consulier was able to line up seemed capable of getting anywhere near the 100 grand due to physical limits of the car or the tires; the skill of the driver or the interpretation of the rules. But more on that later.

Consulier's entry was driven by Chet Phillip, a professional driver fresh from a fourth-place finish in the Supercar series behind the wheel of another Consulier.

At the Challenge, Phillip drove the only Consulier GTP Sport yet made that is fitted with the "Street Racer Package," a new, more powerful version of the standard Consulier duckling.



The Street Racer Package includes the following modifications: a Carroll Shelby tuned 16-valve head for the stock Chrysler 2.2-liter turbocharged four (boosting hp from 200 to 224), remote adjustable shocks, electronic boost control, on-board fire-suppression system, special seats, seat harness and graphics. All of which sounds suspiciously like a race car, not a production vehicle.

But a Consulier spokesman says there are two more such cars "under construction." Which adds another word to "fastest" on the list of definitions that can be argued until the cows come home: "production."

The first paragraph of the rules states that the \$100,000 would be awarded "to any