

NO CHARGE. A report in the *Boston Globe* said that Mazda is experiencing battery troubles with the Miata. The paper said the car's small batteries discharge very quickly and don't hold



Watch your Miata's battery: They drain quickly up well in storage. And since many Miata owners put their cars away for the winter, they've found big problems come spring because there are no replacement batteries—they're back-ordered. Mazda doesn't use a standard-sized lead-acid battery in the car because, according to the company, the smaller, sealed gel-type battery is lighter and won't rupture in a collision (the batteries are mounted in the rear). But quicker discharges are the downside of this type of battery, especially since the anti-theft system on the car drains it over time if the car isn't used. Mazda said there are batteries in the pipeline from Japan and owners should now have no trouble getting them.



Get 'em while they're hot: Zagato will build only 20 rebodied Ferrari 348s, priced at a cool \$197,500. Powertrain, chassis components remain stock

HEADLINER

Shelby powers Consulier

245 hp boosts 'Challenge' to \$100,000



Consulier challenge backs claim that it's the fastest street-legal car on the market

Carroll Shelby has agreed to provide engines for Consulier Industries' Consulier GTP sports car.

The engine deal may be the first step toward more Shelby involvement in developing future Consulier products, said Consulier president Warren Mosler.

The Shelby-tweaked version of Chrysler's 2.2-liter Turbo III engine will raise the GTP's output to 245 hp and has prompted Mosler to increase his "Consulier Challenge" prize to \$100,000.

"We're confident we have the fastest, most-effective production car there is, bar none, including the F40," Mosler said. "Mr. Shelby's engines will only make us faster." (Mosler may have a point: The Consuliers that finished first, fourth and sixth at the Bridgestone Potenza Supercar Challenge were *not* Shelby-powered.)

Regarded as an ugly duckling by some and a technological wonder by others, the

Consulier Series II GTP weighs 1750 pounds in no-option "sport" trim. It is manufactured from hand-laminated composites and aluminum subframes and suspension pieces. With its current powerplant (a 205-hp 2.2-liter Chrysler), the company claims zero-to-60 in 3.9 seconds with a top speed of 160 mph.

Mosler has been manufacturing a limited number of cars at his factory in Riviera Beach, Fla., since it opened in 1989. The Consulier's unusual styling is largely the result of its frameless design, which requires the body to serve as a primary load-bearing surface. The Shelby-powered Consulier will be called the C-4. Prices will begin at \$62,500.

As noted, Mosler has raised his "challenge" prize from \$25,000 to \$100,000. He will pay any car owner \$100,000 if his EPA/DOT-certified car can lap a road course faster than the Consulier GTP. ■

ZAGATO SPECIAL.

At the other end of the sports car spectrum, Italian coachbuilder Zagato has announced it will build 20 rebodied Ferrari 348s (plus one for the Zagato family). The car comes only in yellow, with grille-less sides and GTO-style air intakes on the rear

fenders. The front end is highlighted by a new bumper with six round headlights in addition to the OEM pop-up units. The body's rear-end

styling features triple circular lights, a small spoiler at the tail end of the engine compartment and a clear glass engine cover. The price? A breathtaking \$197,500, or nearly twice the price of a stock Ferrari 348.

RUSSIAN THINGS.

Fiat announced that it'll buy 30 percent of VAZ (Volzhsky Motor Works), the Soviet Union's biggest carmaker. It will mark the first time that a Western company has purchased a share of a Soviet automaker. The deal is said to involve Fiat-based 1.0- and 1.2-liter models to be manufactured at the VAZ factory located in Togliatti. ▶