

# WHY E.C.R.A.?

## The Electric Car Racing Association by 'Mac' Kennaugh

During recent months some of the newer slot racing enthusiasts will no doubt have seen quite a lot about E.C.R.A. and the new Slot Organisation, and some have undoubtedly wondered what it is all about. To explain the situation it is necessary to go back a few years to the beginnings of electric car racing.

The first established method used a raised rail to guide the cars and for one side of the car contact. The club most active in the development of this idea was Southport, and they produced a set of standards which were ultimately accepted by all clubs engaged in this form of racing. Later on, with the development of slot, Laurie Cranshaw, well known in the model car world, took up the idea which had been put forward in the editorial columns of 'Model Maker' and made proposals for rules to govern both rail and slot racing, and formed a loose organisation known as the 'Electric Car Racing Association.' This body has no membership fees, committee elected or indeed officials of any sort. If you were prepared to accept the rules you were 'in.' From time to time alterations to rules were suggested and put to all enthusiasts via the pages of M.M. and if general approval was forthcoming these became part of the rules or 'Charter.'

Why was this done? There are several reasons, but two are of great importance. The first was to lay down standards for track and cars. In the case of the track it is essential that a track is so designed that a car from a club using a different method of track construction will run without modification on that circuit. The standards accepted meant that cars could become interchangeable, and inter-club events run without the visitors having to alter them. Early races of this sort were often a shambles, with the home team's cars running (more or less) well, and visitors often frantically trying to get them to run at all. Today only minor adjustments are the most needed to have a dice. Similarly with the cars, standards of scale, etc., helped the growth of inter-club competition.

The second reason, and possibly the most important, was that accepted standards meant that manufacturers had, for the first time, a realistic pointer to club and enthusiasts' requirements. At first, two and in some cases three scales were popular—1/32nd, 1/24th and 1/40th, with odd deviants such as 1/27th and 1/43rd. Manufacturers tended to produce items for two or three of the protagonists, with the result that no one was ever satisfied. Now most of the specialist firms are producing for the standard 1/32nd size with a 1/24th 'concession,' mainly for the American market where this scale is very popular. This means we all have an excellent range of first-class products to choose from, and if the earlier enthusiasts had not laid down rules we would most certainly not be

in such a well supplied position.

Thus even a very elastic organisation as E.C.R.A. is it has played a major part in shaping model car racing.

Now for the present and future.

The 'brains' of E.C.R.A. are mostly rail fans, and these clubs have had a well organised and close-knit set-up for a considerable time. It is, therefore, apparent that to date E.C.R.A.'s primary interests have been vested in the rail clubs. Now, however, slot has become interested in organisation on a scale never possible among the few rail clubs, and clubs have been contacted all over the country to set up regional organisations and form a national executive to bring the interests of all slot racing clubs together with benefits to all.

Let us suppose you are a member of a small group of enthusiasts racing your cars on a track in one member's spare room. How can any national organisation possibly be of benefit to you?

The first and most apparent way is to put you in touch with other enthusiasts nearby. This will open the way to expansion of your group and possibly end up in the formation of a strong club with a fair size track. You have no suitable premises? Well the national set-up may be able to put you on the right lines to get some. No, not through another form of estate agency, but there are ways of obtaining help from the local authorities, and as the E.C.R.A. organisation will know of these ways you too can find out. Further afield there will be other clubs in fairly easy travelling distance who will be happy to arrange inter-club meetings, indeed the regional committee will be responsible for getting such events going. This will give you the chance of seeing what others are doing, and racing on different tracks. From experience I can say that such an interchange improves your cars and driving beyond anything you could have imagined. Often someone has solved the very problem you are getting nowhere with, and a quiet natter in a corner and you have the answer to try yourself.

Finally, take the example of the model aircraft boys. They have long had a national organisation, and taken part in major national and international competitions. How do you like the idea of an expenses paid visit to, say, New York, to compete in the world championship finals? A pipe dream perhaps, but if the E.C.R.A. slot organisation gets a good start with support from ALL clubs both large and small it could be reality in the near future.

You don't need to be an expert, just keen, so lend your support to those who are working hard to help all the slot enthusiasts everywhere.

This article is from the November 1963 issue of "Model Roads and Racing" magazine. Its author, Mac Kennaugh was from Lemington Spa club. He was a participant in some of the meetings which developed ECRA into the more formally organised association that ran the first slot racing Nationals in 1964..