


# MOTOR TREND

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**The Steam Car Speed Legend**

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## THE SUPREME SPORTS CAR . . . . . SUPERCHARGED OFFY-CISITALIA MAY BE WORLD'S FASTEST 91-IN. MACHINE

by Richard H. Rusk

ALTHOUGH THE Offenhauser-Cisitalia has never been given an official name it probably deserves, more than any other, the name Pesco Special, for it was through the painstaking efforts of the Borg-Warner Corporation, Pesco Products Division, that this car began to realize the dream of all those who labored long and hard to make it the outstanding under-1500 cc machine in this country.

The objective of the Offenhauser-Cisitalia was to see what could be done with the specific limitation of an engine under 1500 cc. This is a standard road racing category. Limitations, such as those imposed on Indianapolis cars and other American track cars, test ingenuity and mechanical skill far more than a "sky's the limit" rule.

With this limitation the only thing was

to find the finest small chassis obtainable in the world. The Cisitalia was a natural selection. The car was designed from scratch postwar by Dr. Porsche of German Auto Union and Mercedes-Benz fame. There was and is nothing as supremely successful in this size category as the Cisitalia. It has a tubular chassis. The wheelbase to tread ratio and its low center of gravity give it almost unbelievable cornering abilities. It utilizes magnesium extensively in the wire wheels, brake drums and other parts of the unsprung weight. This unsprung lightness glues it to the road and gives the car extreme flexibility.

One advantage too often overlooked in sports car design is small size. The smaller, the less wind resistance, and the lighter, the less load for the engine to haul. The frontal area too is held to a minimum, and although the advantage of low frontal area is well known in aircraft and guided missile design, it is not so well recognized in sports car design. The brakes are superb and the Cisitalia comes equipped with body by Pinin Farina, than which there is none finer nor more beautiful in its simplicity.

It did not take long to decide to employ the Meyer-Drake Offy engine, to all intents and purposes the *only* American racing engine. It is not surprising to hear that a track race is won by an Offy. It is news indeed in an important meet when anything else wins. This success holds true in midget racing, 220 cu. in. racing and at Indianapolis.

This engine has only four cylinders, and the fewer there are the more rugged each piston and assembly are and the fewer are the parts to get out of order. The principal advantage of the leading European sports car engine—the Ferrari—is that its 12 cylinders give it enormous piston area in relation to its total displacement, and 12 cylinders mean smoothness. But the Ferrari is complicated, and the Offy is not. Those brought up in the Mercedes-Benz and Bugatti traditions know the tremendous advantages of simplicity, provided a simple engine will do the job, as the Offy will.

No fewer than 4000 hours of labor went into installation of the engine and attendant jobs. The Offy is a power plant meant for but one purpose: track racing. It was never intended for idling at 500 rpm. It came equipped with Riley carburetors which are able to coax more rpm out of the engines than any other carburetors. But they will not perform efficiently under 40 mph. They do not need to. No track races utilize speeds of under 40 or those low speeds encountered in road

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MAKING THE most of every inch, both inside the engine and out, the fantastic Cisitalia-Offy pulls better than 160 bhp from a mere 91 ins.

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