

Review

Team Redline's GTP mod for NASCAR Racing 2003 Season

by Jens "McGonigle" Lindblad

Introduction



With a professionalism and attention to detail that would become some commercially established developers, **Team Redline** released their long awaited and highly anticipated mod for Papyrus' **NASCAR Racing 2003 Season**.

The same day the mod was released, we saw the emergence of a web site, as well as a **forum** dedicated entirely to the mod. Users with questions or initial problems were answered quickly, and problem reports were used as input to further improve the mod.

At the same time VROC 3 was available for download. This utility supports GTP multiplayer and is hopefully going to be the future for on-line racing, not only for NASCAR Racing 2003 Season and it's mods, but also, if plans hold up, in future versions GPL and it's mods. As the GTP mod

features a changed exe, it is not compatible with the Sierra servers that are usually where on-line racers meet. Combining all multiplayer activities into one program is a great idea because I'm the non-technical type who prefers to go one place instead of three or more, to go on-line for some multiplayer action.

Before even downloading and installing the mod, the overall completeness of the whole package, the care and the thought that had clearly been put into this release was very much in evidence and demanded huge respect. Remember that it's a free download and people have spent a great deal of their spare-time making this happen.

Due to unfortunate circumstances the mod was recalled after being available for some 24 hours. The re-release some weeks later was as a version superior to the initial version, apparently the data being used had been corroborated and refined, and the second time round the mod had also been slimmed down a couple of hundred megabytes, removing some car-liveries and tracks because it was felt that someone might potentially get into legal difficulties. Thank goodness we got the mod, I believe that First Racing was helpful towards Team Redline in solving the issues, and I can't begin to believe how intense the stress must have been for Team Redline, as they were faced with those difficulties. The temptation to call it quits must have been there, but fortunately they persevered and I can only urge you to download the GTP mod if you own a copy of NASCAR Racing 2003 Season; The mod is simply that good, IMO it's the best mod to date for NR 2003.

Team Redline's GTP mod requires NASCAR Racing 2003 Season by Papyrus to run, but apart from that, it comes across as a new sim using the NR 2003 engine as a host. We'll see just how much has changed, and how much is left of the original NASCAR Racing 2003 Season.

The GTP mod features 4 GTP cars from the eighties and early nineties, each car has its own individual physics. Known in the mod as chassis' A, B, C and D you could call them Toyota, Jaguar, Mercedes and Nissan. But we won't do that. 😊 With a multitude of brilliant skins that you can download from the net, just look [here](#), to complement the 4 basic skins that come with the mod, you can have so many different GTP- and IMSA- style cars from the mid-eighties to the early nineties represented in this mod, that no one could ask for more.

Included in the mod are new sounds, as well as the Infineon and Watkins Glen tracks, with track.ini's to match the GTP cars. Team Redline have included daytime / nighttime tracks, as well as nighttime transitions between sessions, working headlights of course, and a glance-utility that lets the viewpoint follow the direction of the front wheels (I admit I'm not smart enough to get this to work though — but using TrackIR I now have a better option!). The team has also included a new launcher that works as a front end to adjust and tweak numerous settings, some of which were previously only available to the user by editing ini files in notepad.

Installation

Read through the release and installation notes carefully because the installation differs from what we have become accustomed to with previous mods for NR 2003. This one does not reside as a sub-folder in the series directory. And don't forget that your NASCAR Racing 2003 Season should be patched to version 1.2.0.1

The best thing to do is to copy your existing NR 2003 folder to a different place on your harddisk and then extract the GTP mod to that copy. That way your current install should be

As mentioned the mod comes with the Watkins Glen and Infineon racetracks in day and night configuration, but how about adding tracks like:

- Spa_TR
- Sebring
- Nurburgring 1970
- Daytona Road Course
- Project Wildfire's Mosport
- Le Mans
- Add your favorite track

You should also add the daytime version of Le Mans by Sylvain Glapa (download it from [here](#)) and extract it to the Redline GTP\TrackD folder, if you haven't already downloaded it ages ago!

On the Team Redline forum you can download proper GTP track.ini's for Le Mans, and many other tracks that you would like to try the GTP-cars on.



Sounds

The mod also features all new Spotter sounds and I really like the new sounds. They are easy to understand and hear and add to the immersion.

The in car sounds for each car are hardcoded to the car selected. As the engines rarely rev higher than 8000 rpm's and were built to last at least 4-6 hours for the shorter races, and up to as long as 24 hours for the Le Mans and 12 hours at Sebring, you'll not hear screaming engines but rather reliable and confidence-inspiring deep growls. These in car sounds are a great help

in judging the speed you are traveling at. On my system they do seem a bit too well-behaved though. I would have liked something a little meaner and mechanical sounding.

Listening to the exterior sounds I am transported back to countless happy and exciting hours in front of the television back when these cars raced in Le Mans. Imo these sounds are spot on and I can't think of anything that would make them better or more convincing.

I Love the Nighttime...

... I love to boogie... erm, I mean I love to *race!*

Team Redline have raised the bar in so many areas and in terms of racing at nighttime they have also delivered some goodies:

- Working nighttime headlights in the cockpit and outside in all views
- Night time compatible lights and special FX and lit cockpits
- New night time track method with changing sky conditions at each session change
- Ability to run almost any NR2003 track at night with a small patch provided by Team Redline.
- Ability, as previously mentioned to run any NR2003 track in day with a small patch.

From comments by real life endurance racers we hear them describing how they, when racing in the dark rely heavily on their knowledge of the track and an inner timekeeping to know when to brake, turn and accelerate. This is the same in the GTP mod. If you are not very familiar with the track you will find it extremely challenging to be as fast at night as you (hopefully) are at daytime.



The headlights illuminate some of the track ahead of you but you really need to drive faster than the light can illuminate the road ahead, so reaction time and good foresight becomes imperative as you will probably experience an information overflow, trying to make out when and exactly where the next braking area or turn-in is.

The Driving Experience

Finally I come to the heart of the matter, the most important question about this mod. How does it drive?

Well, I can't help but thinking of a film-clip I saw once: Derek Bell drives a Porsche 956 around the Nordschleiffe commenting to the camera and viewers, on the various sections of that long, classic circuit. Coming out of the right-hander and going under Adenauer Bridge he is passed by Jackie Ickx as they race towards the famous compression known as the Fuchsröhre (fox-hole). Derek calmly says something to the effect of; *"Oh, there's Jackie Ickx. Better let him through as he's on his qualifying run"*.



When I drive the GTP cars I feel that they move and react in accordance with the impression I got from watching in-car from Derek Bell's Porsche: They are

agile and well balanced, and driving at 7 or 8 tenths of my limited ability is not that big a drama.

When I try to drive at 10, or even 11 tenths, things do become a little more difficult though! This is where I notice that the correct line into corners is absolutely vital in order to maintain speed. Coming out of the tighter turns I can feel and hear the rear-wheels fighting for grip, especially on the bumpy Sebring track that I brought into my install of the mod, because there is so much power and torque here that if I'm careless with the throttle, I have to be very quick indeed to save it from a sideways moment.

Sebring's bumpiness is a fact I am beginning to reappraise after taking my GTP car there. Going into the braking-zones in the bumpy areas there the car wiggles, twitches and bumps up and down. This is brilliant fun and once again I can't help thinking about real life drivers taking their racing cars to race for 12 hours on such a bumpy racetrack. Shake, rattle and roll!



The big physics debate these days centers around the question; do cars slide at all, and when they loose grip are they then recoverable or not?

Aerodynamically advanced cars. i.e. cars with ground-effect, and modern, ultra-sticky tires are reportedly no good sliding when they loose grip.

When the suction effect of an aerodynamically efficient underbody is suddenly lost, a car cannot take corners at the same high speeds that it can with a the vacuum effect intact. Also modern tires have a very narrow slip-angle which means that if they are overdriven, say by entering a corner too fast, they will suddenly and violently loose grip. But what if you keep close to the limit and only exceeds the limit slightly?

In his book, "My Story", Alex Zanardi surprisingly says that the Formula 1 cars he drove felt more slippery-slidey than the Champ Cars he was used to, and I've seen some footage where Alan Jones recovers from a huge slide in his Williams anno 1980, the quintessential ground-effect Formula 1 car.

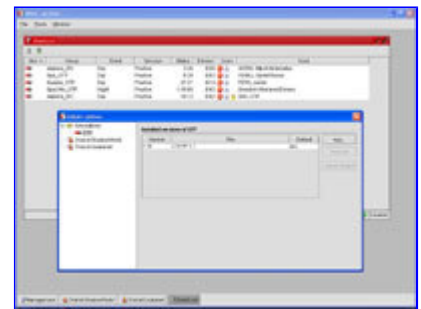
If you watch Formula 1 in 2005, look carefully at Alonso, Montoya, and some of the other aggressive drivers, or look for cars that are struggling to go fast enough, and I'll wager you a beer that if you look carefully, you'll see some pretty neat slides.

Sliding is not doing anything beneficial in terms of improving your lap times or saving your tires, but IMO even modern Formula 1 cars can slide, especially if they are being overdriven, not setup properly, or are proving a bit of a handful for their drivers. What's more, slides that occur when the drivers are only exceeding the limits slightly, are recoverable. I find this to be the case in the GTP mod. If you are massively overdriving you'll leave the track no question about it. But if you are only slightly over the limit of adhesion you can correct and gather up your car, the lap time will suffer as will your tires, but you won't understeer helplessly off the track and into the gravel trap.

The slip-angle in GTP is very noticeable smaller than in the Trans-Am mods and coupled with the very powerful and lighter GTP cars, the result is truly impressive. What is neat about the GTP mod and the excellence of it's host; NASCAR Racing 2003 Season, is that you get a very good sense of what the car is about to do. Remember that us poor racesimmers only get perhaps 10% of the sensory input that the real life drivers get, so somehow a simulation must also attempt to convey some information that we would otherwise get through seat-of-the-pants only.

Multiplayer

Drawing on the strengths of the Papyrus multiplayer code which is still one of the best, the GTP mod offers very solid and enjoyable multiplayer action. The mod cannot be raced on the Sierra servers since it is a modification of the original sim, and the future of the Sierra servers seems uncertain as well, with EA now owning the NASCAR license. This is where VROC 3 enters. VROC is short for Virtual Racers Online Connection, and it is a racesearch- and matching utility that has served the GPL community for years with very great success.



Currently VROC 3 only supports the GTP mod but it is very much hoped that in future all Papyrus based sims and mods will be supported. That seems to be the longer term goal.

VROC 3 is in early Alpha but it works very well already. Be advised that the first time installation and automatic configuration of VROC 3 can be very lengthy, your computer hasn't locked up or anything, it just takes some time to download all the bits and pieces as everything is being dealt with by Java. That means that you'll never have to worry about having an out-of-date VROC. It will automatically update everytime you start the application.



Damage

The mod promises full damage through all LOD's containing falling debris, removed quarterpanels and other parts.

I found it difficult to damage the cars. Wings are easily eschewed by the bump and grind of racing, but to remove quarterpanels it seems to require a good 3/4 head-on hit by another car. Crashing on your own does not seem to damage the car visually, although it is a good way to kill your engine.

The engine still pours out smoke from the front. This is not a criticism, merely an observation. After all it's the racing that's the important thing.



AI

The AI has performances to match the cars. One item that was improved considerably for the re-release of this mod was the AI, and that was a welcome tweak because on the add-on tracks they weren't very good in release 1.

There is no offline championship though. Perhaps it will be added in a future update?

The Naughty Question: GTP or Virtua LM. Which is Best?

First of all, it's great that we now have two choices of sims depicting these cars and ultimately it's up to everyone for him/herself to decide which is the preferred mod, but let me try to

highlight a few of my impressions:

- Multiplayer: GTP, due to the NR 2003 heritage.
- Ease of installation: VLM.
- Variety of cars included in mod: VLM.
- Variety of tracks included in mod: VLM.
- Total number of add-on tracks for mod: Slight advantage to GTP.
- Physics: Even. If you prefer the NR2003 engine you'll probably prefer GTP, if you prefer the F1C engine you'll probably prefer VLM.
- Graphics: Even. Same reason as above.

What it boils down to then is that despite Virtua LM and GTP building on entirely different engines, I believe that I can feel the same basic car physics at work in both mods, and to me that indicates that they both use the same basic data and assumptions for feeding their respective physics engine. Despite Virtua LM having the F1 C-feel to it, and GTP the NR 2003 feel, both mods are very different yet very alike at the same time. You better try them both!

Reviewer's System Specs

- Intel Pentium 4 2.53GHz CPU
- 512MB RAM
- 128MB Geforce FX5900XT / NVIDIA drivers v61.36
- AC97 onboard sound
- DirectX Version 9.0c
- Windows XP Home with SP1
- Logitech Driving Force Pro