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# AUTOMOBILSPORT

RACING | HISTORY | PASSION

## *Formula 1* WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

LAUDA VS PROST · NEWCOMERS SENNA AND BELLOF



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# MINIGRID

## WITH A TIE AND COLLAR VELASOR – LEGENDS FROM THE EARLY ERA OF MOTORSPORT

Michael Niemas started out making models when he was seven years old. He's since turned his hobby into his profession, with Niemas Racecars in business since 2009. In his latest column, he takes an in-depth look at the first model built by Barcelona-based manufacturer Velasor: a 1:32 slot car miniature of the 1922 Austro-Daimler Sascha.



In my years involved in automotive model building and slot racing, I've had the privilege of marvelling over many exceptional models from renowned manufacturers and modellers around the world. In static models the function of the technical components is usually very simple, given the model is ultimately intended for purely illustrative purposes. With slot cars, on the other hand, model-specific functions are often totally omitted to create space in the chassis. Performance is the name of the game. Also, when there is a crash, it frequently results in cosmetic and technical damage.

With all of this in mind, it was a dream to see a ready-to-race small-batch model of the 1922 Austro-Daimler Sascha from new manufacturer Velasor come on the market back in 2019.

Based in Barcelona, Velasor is made up of an experienced team of model builders with a strong passion for motor racing. Founder Ramón Cubiró had toyed with the idea of starting a company for many years before deciding to go for it in 2017. The fruits of his labour were then realised in the autumn of 2018.

The entire team had set itself the goal of recreating the glorious, innovative motor racing legends of the early 20th century. And they didn't just want the models to look good, but to also include all the little technical details which the visionary engineers of yesteryear built in at the time. Given that Barcelona is an epicentre for slot car racing and Ramón Cubiró is an active competitor, Velasor quickly made the decision to produce these authentic replicas as small-batch, functional models.

After extensive research, they decided to start with the 1922 Austro-Daimler Sascha – a historically important car designed by none other than Ferdinand Porsche. The design embodied all of Porsche's fundamental ideas: compact, light, progressive and not overly expensive. Moreover, Velasor elected to use a 1:32 scale, the most common slot car size, rather than the 1:24 scale which is almost twice as big – a design choice that is both admirable and remarkable.



**TOP** Ramón Cubiró's Velasor office in Barcelona is a nostalgic wonderland, with lots of technical literature and classic tools. When a good idea pops into the boss's head, it is immediately sketched and turned into a prototype.

**BOTTOM** The figurines that go into the cars are ornate and hand-painted. A single artist is responsible for that job, and can highlight details such as the drape of the clothing and the expressions on the drivers' faces.

**LEFT** Fully functional slot car versions of Count Alexander von Kolowrat's Austro-Daimler Sascha from the Semmering hillclimb in 1922 and the Sasha driven by Alfred Neubauer at the Targa Florio in 1922, painted in Italian red as a nod to the Sicilians. You can see the braid that powers the cars.



To achieve their ambitious goals, professional model makers undertake a significant amount of research for each of their projects. Books and original designs are used in that process. When possible the actual car is looked over, photographed and measured. Every relevant component is studied in detail in order to better assess how it can be reproduced later on. The latest 3D technology is combined with traditional manufacturing methods for the build itself, with the aim of getting the best possible result.

With their first model, Velasor have set a lofty standard indeed. The Austro-Daimler Sascha, which is available in various versions from the Targa Florio and other hillclimb and racing events, is definitely a milestone in small-batch model making. Velasor are particularly proud of the fact that the first Sascha prototype they made went to the 'Ferdinand Porsche Erlebnisswelten' museum near Salzburg and was admired with great pleasure by Ernst Piëch, Porsche's grandson.

Having studied the historic race car, and having completed a handful of testing laps with the model on a permanent Carrera track, my verdict is that the Catalans have splendidly succeeded in capturing the personality of the Austro-Daimler Sascha in this 11 centimetre-long miniature version.

Driving a slot car isn't all about speed, but about the visual enjoyment and the complex interplay of the technology as well. You can't help but get carried away with the nostalgic charm and let your mind drift off to a different time.

**TOP RIGHT** Each model is meticulously assembled in the hands of experienced model builders. Only one unit comes off the production line each day.

**BOTTOM RIGHT** There's no doubt that this is an engineering art form. Each model consists of 230 components made of wood, leather, resin and various metals.

**LEFT** The presentation of the models is wonderful. They come sitting on either a wooden display or a contemporary diorama, along with a small booklet and an instruction manual in several languages. Complete with the beautiful outer packaging, it makes for an excellent first impression.

The 1:32-scale model is made up of more than 230 parts made from wood, leather, resin and a number of different metals, which blend so well that the slot car technology is almost invisible. The many technical gimmicks, such as working leaf springs, latches, hinges, leather straps, crank, hood, fan, tool bag and more, make the models unique on the current market.

The team's production scale at the moment is one hand-built model per day. To take the realism a step further, you can buy the cars either in standard or race-weathered versions. As good as the standard look is, the well-researched dirtied variants are, for my taste, much more appealing.

The models come on an attractive wooden display along with a brochure brimming with information about the real racing car, an individual certificate and a manual. Overall, it makes for a terrific package. You can also buy all of the cars from a particular race together, which is truly remarkable.

So, if you would like to buy an icon from the early days of motorsport as a tiny technical masterpiece, this is a great choice. The design and the craftsmanship are truly first-rate. 🏁

