



Just about anything goes in combine races, the latest farm "sport" in France.

SOUPED-UP ENGINES MAKE FOR EXCITING SPECTACLE

French Farmers Take To Combine Racing

FARM SHOW reader Eric De Vos of Serazereux, France, recently sent us photos of a popular new "sport" that's catching on fast with French farmers.

De Vos organized the first combine race in 1984 by telling people he'd seen the idea in the U.S. He really hadn't heard of such a thing before but people figured if it was being done in the U.S., there must be something to it, and the idea took off. Since then he's conducted over 100 races, entertaining thousands of spectators.

The combines are equipped with rollbars and drivers wear seat belts, helmets, and sometimes even uniforms. The engines are "souped up" for added power so spinouts, tipovers, and exhaust smoke belching from blown-up engines are not uncommon. Noise from the combines is part of the fun so the muffler is removed. Maximum speed is up to 30 mph.

Here are a few of the official racing rules as explained by De Vos.

The L-shaped track has a narrow 3-ft. high earthen berm running through the middle of it, creating two 190-ft. long tracks. The racers go down one side of the berm, turn 180 degrees at the end, and come back. The track starts out at 60 ft. wide but narrows to 50 ft. as it approaches the 180-degree turn and narrows down to 40 ft. at the finish line. Berms are also set up at all track corners to keep drivers from making too wide a turn. Spectators are kept at least 60 ft. back from the track.

The drivers make three short test laps to determine their order on the starting line. For the actual race the combines are divided into two classes depending on whether they have 4- or 6-cyl. engines. Combines in each

class make two rounds, then all combines from both classes race together on the third round.

During the race, almost anything is permitted - drivers can try to push other combines out of the way but can't purposely try to tip them over on their sides. If a combine does tip over the drivers just go around it.

The combine has to have its original header and reel but the divider, sicklebar, and auger have to be removed. The unloading auger and all threshing mechanisms can be removed, but the elevator has to stay. The engine must be original. It's alright to use alcohol, diesel fuel, gas, propane, kerosene, or water in order to "soup up" the engine, but nitroglycerine or oxygen additives can't be used. The engine can be lowered behind the front wheels, but if it is moved sheet metal must be added in order to preserve the original look of the machine. No lateral protection is permitted around the front wheels. The fuel tank has to be moved into the grain tank and can contain only enough fuel to make one round at a time.

The gas throttle, whether lever or pedal-operated, has to be spring-loaded so it will automatically return to idle. The drivetrain can be widened for maximum stability. The rollbar has to be made from 2 1/2-in. dia. steel tubing and must be fixed at four points. The seat and seat belt also have to be in a fixed position. If the driver sits on the side of the combine he must be protected by sheet metal. It's best to remove every unnecessary command lever and anything that's hydraulic-operated.

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Drivers inspecting a race machine. More than 1,000 races have been held so far.

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A few of Legried's Deere dealer caps from every state, including name, town, and state of the dealer it came from.

FARMER THINKS HE'S NUMBER ONE

World's Biggest Cap Collection Tops 24,000

He's not in the Guinness Book of Records yet, but Buckley Legried is cautiously optimistic that, after 17 years, he's amassed the world's largest cap collection.

"I've got 24,000 now," says Legried, 58, Frost, Minn. "Another collector in Indiana with 17,000 caps currently holds the world's title. I want to get 3,000 to 4,000 more caps to make sure I'm way out in front before I make too much of it. My three goals in life are to own the world's largest cap collection, make the Guinness Book of Records, then to start a cap museum right here in Blue Earth, Minn."

If the museum becomes a reality, it'll have to be a pretty fair-sized building. It takes a 10 by 30-ft. wall in Legried's garage just to display 1,000 of his caps.

Legried's collection includes a complete set of Deere dealer caps from each of the 50 states. The caps are special because each one contains the specific dealer name, town, and state, and it took Legried about a year and a-half to complete the collection, working mostly over the phone.

"The Deere dealer in Alaska covers the entire state and didn't have exactly what I was looking for," Legried notes. "But he had 20 or 30 made up and sent one to me free of charge, as do a lot of people when they learn



This cap sporting six peacocks made from pearls and beads is the most unusual in Legried's collection.

what I'm shooting for."

Now, Legried wants to collect a Deere dealer cap from every province in Canada. He's also considering starting such a collection from Mexico.

Of all the caps in his collection, the most unusual is one made in Bangladesh. It's decorated with tiny pearls and beads sewn into the shape of peacocks. Six of the birds adorn the cap which makes it fairly heavy, Legried notes.

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