

IROC racers steering for victory

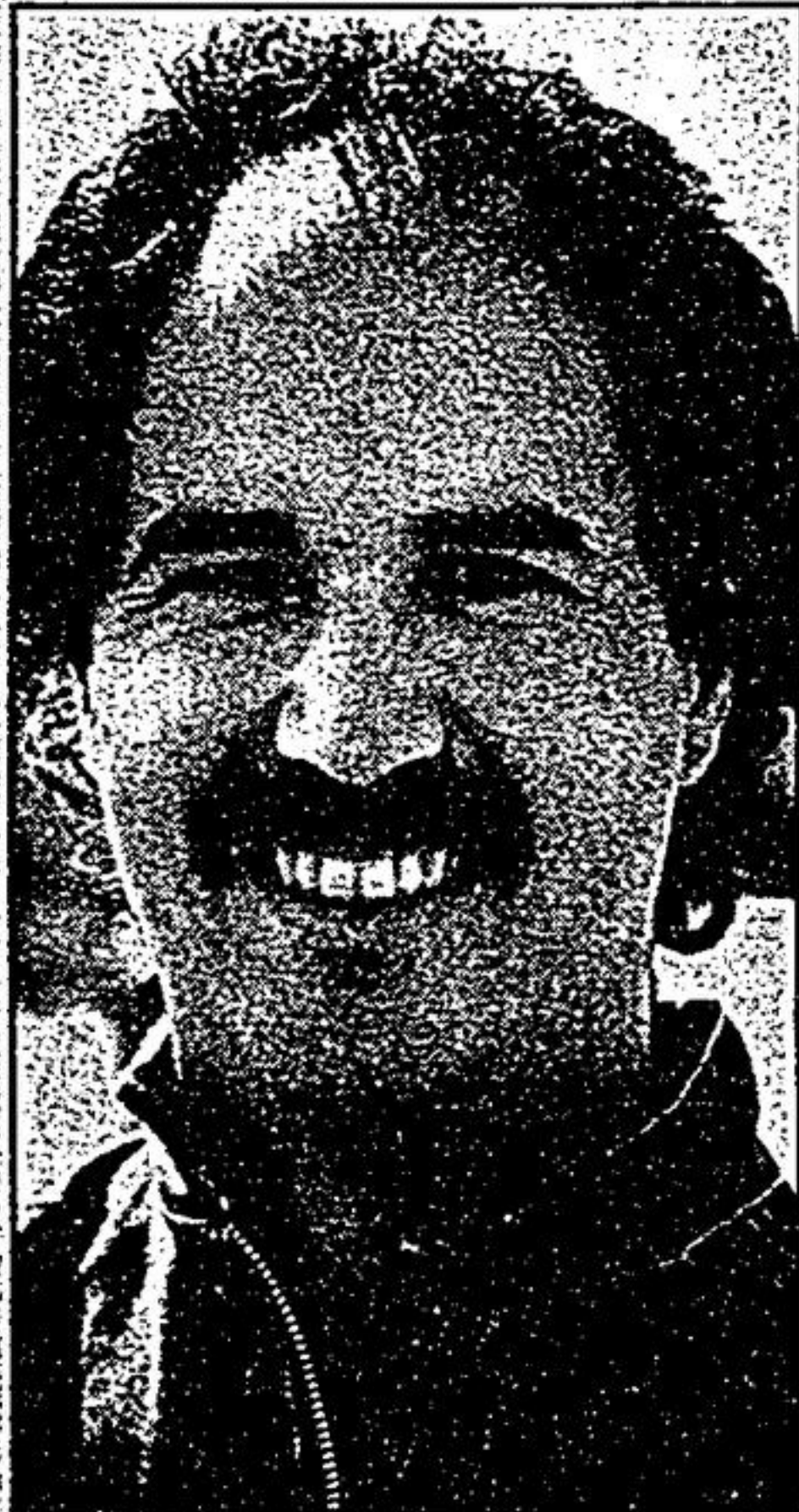
By ED ROGERS
 At 190 kilometres per hour, the turn looms suddenly at the end of Mosport's back stretch. In the driver's seat Unionville's Paul Reynolds' hands are firm on the Camaro IROC's steering wheel — arms bent slightly at the elbows — and holding the car on its precarious line.
 Just as suddenly the car, from Conlin Motors of Markham, is back in fifth gear zooming down the grandstand straightaway.
 "Consistency... and concentration," says Reynolds. That's what it takes to win 15-lap races where each IROC is virtually identical. And the moustached, 29-year-old driver is in a position to speak. He finished in front of a field of 15 IROCs and Firebirds at Monday's Castrol Victoria Day Sprints at Mosport. In doing so, he set a lap

record on the twisting, hilly 2.5 mile track.
 In 5th was Pat Cubellis, the second driver on the Conlin's Racing Team. Cubellis, 30, in his first season in the Player's Challenge series, was third and gaining on second until a wheel bearing hampered the drive.
 The week before the race Cubellis said: "I think my results will be, not fifth or sixth, but midway point."
 But with Monday's result he may have to revise that prediction.
 The Player's Challenge — eight IROC-Z races held at Mosport, Montreal's Grand Prix track and through the streets of Toronto as a feature of the Molson Indy — is only in its second season.
 The first race at Mosport is June 7 with tests and qualifying starting June 5.



Pat Cubellis' car on a practice run at Mosport last week.

— Ed Rogers



Pat Cubellis

Along with Reynolds and Cubellis, the Markham area boasts three more Player's Challenge drivers: Roger Elliot in car No. 3, a three-tone blue IROC; Peter Lockhart in an IROC from Bob Johnston Chev-Olds and Ian Phillips in car 70, who finished second in Monday's Castrol sprints.
 And what goes through a driver's mind on race day?
 On the grid, Reynolds says he waits nervously for the race to begin.
 "The sound, the feeling, the suspense — it just goes right through you," he says.
 "But the change that takes place after the first lap... the aggressiveness that takes over... His voice fades as he searches for words to describe his style of racing, which, by all accounts, is more aggressive than most and tough on the car.
 Cubellis jumps in. "The urge to win takes over," he says, adding that most important to a success-

ful driver is "skill and technique... and money."
 The two drivers bought the \$20,000 cars at a discount from Conlin Motors and sponsors have given cash. Canco Collision of Markham repairs all body damage, and was given work earlier this month when Reynold's car No. 16 was damaged in a three-car collision at a regional race at Mosport.
 The IROCs are ready to race when they come from General Motors but four mechanics at Conlin Motors, on Hwy 7 at Laidlaw Ave., fine tune the suspension to suit each track, modified the exhaust, shaved the Eagle GT tires bare for a flat gripping surface and installed criss-crossing roll bars for safety and sturdiness.
 The experience of the mechanics behind the scenes plays a large part in the success of the car, Reynolds estimates, that 60 per cent of the battle is won by the

mechanics before the car hits the track.
 "They're doing a super job," he says.
 "They work in their spare time and on weekends, come up to practice runs and do an excellent job," concurs Cubellis.
 Race organizers on Monday inverted the starting position of the top six qualifying drivers. Reynolds, clocked fastest, was placed sixth on the grid.
 "I think it helped him," says George Laing, one of the four mechanics. "He never said anything but there was fire in his eyes."
 Working in the background doesn't bother Laing or the other mechanics, Len Doucette, Bruce Twizel and Doug Lamb.
 "As long as the car's running right you feel good. When you see the car finish first you know you've done your job right," says Laing, a 16-year veteran of Conlin Motors.
 "And why give up spare time and spend the hours on the cars? Says Lamb: "It's self-satisfaction, a genuine interest and mostly to prove we can do it."
 Both Reynolds and Cubellis work together and live a block

apart from each other as well as race on the same team. Their close proximity has brought their wives together.
 "Both our wives are trying to get their Masters in shopping," one of them quips.
 Reynolds, 29, the more experienced driver of the two, also has two children aged four and two.
 After racing between 1975 and 1981 he took four years off. He returned last year to race IROCs, (which get their name from an American Camaro race called the International Race Of Champions), and is a favorite in this year's line up of 30-35 cars a race.
 Cubellis, 30, has a four-year-old daughter. It's his second year racing.
 "I've done a lot better this year with the aid of Paul. I think I'm going to advance a lot faster," he says.
 Along with Conlin Motors and Canco Collision, the pair are sponsored by The Markham Economist & Sun, Jane McGivern Real Estate Broker, The Bank of Nova Scotia, Penmans, Performance Improvements, Goodyear Discount Car and Truck Rentals, Trim Line Design and By Design.

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