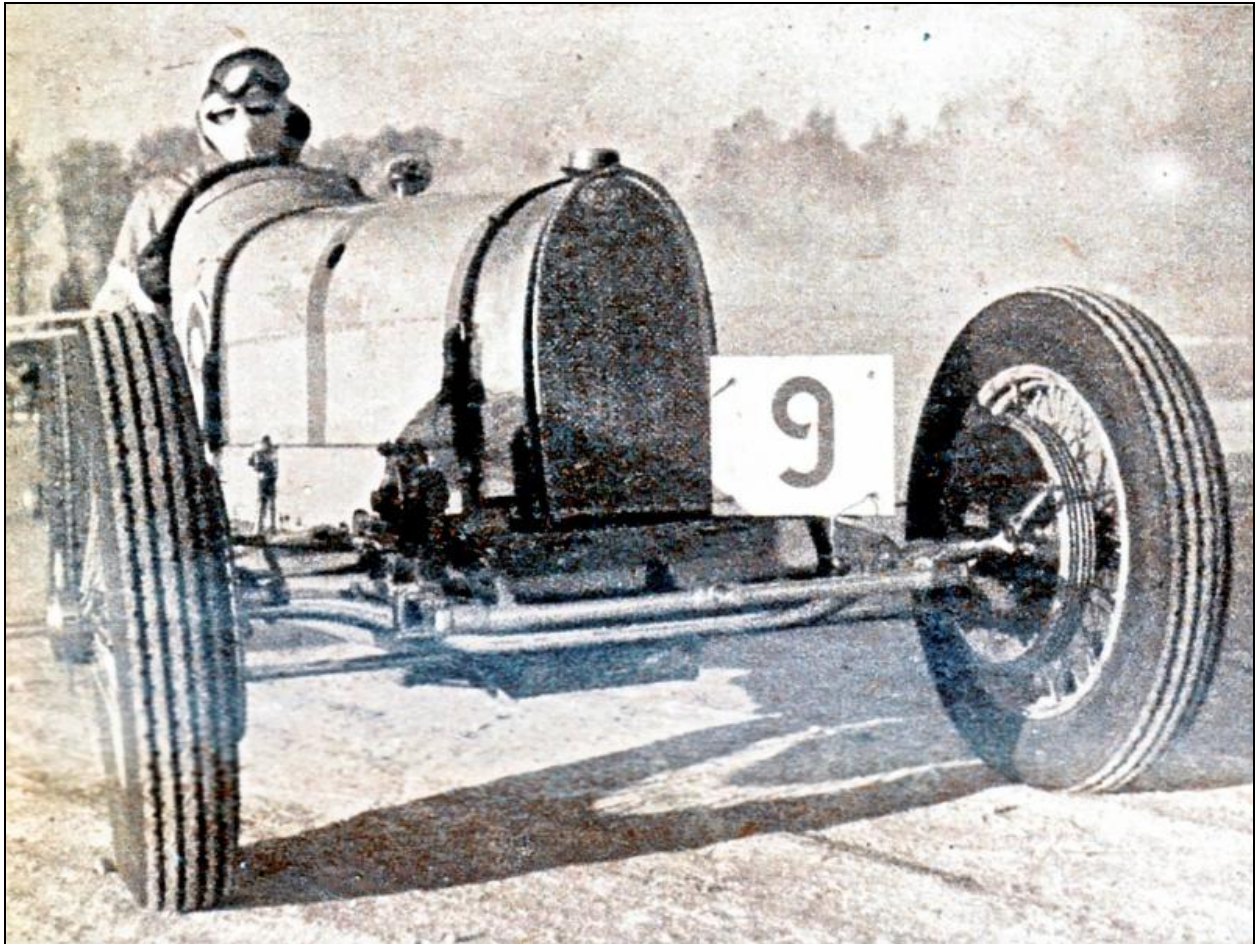




THE BUGATTI CELEBRATION AT THE CHÂTEAU ST. JEAN



A Bugatti racing on the ice in Sweden – the driver clad to ward off winter's harsh chill.

Part 4: The Isloppet is Revealed

Many of the drivers of the Grande Épreuve had only just begun to mull over the risks of racing on ice. They knew that some among them had already been racing upon the frozen ice tracks, yielding at least some small advantage from the experience. Yet they also knew that after a short practice, it was likely that they too would learn how to race atop the slick surfaces of the frozen lakes and rivers. Even **Sebi Orsi**, whose



demeanor was one who seemed born of the sun and beaches, seemed to shrug off the challenges – they trusted their driving instincts and skill implicitly.

Once atop the pavilion, **Madeleine Lindén** addressed the drivers and guests with confidence.

“Thank you for the wonderful party, Ettore,” she began. “The food, the companionship, and the welcome you have shown us all are truly magnificent. In the spirit of another sort of competition, I must invite you all to a party after the upcoming race in Sweden, where you shall enjoy the finest foods and events in our northern region of Norbottens Län, from whence I come.”

The racers began to wonder just what sort of food might be found in northern Sweden, yet they could not spend much time contemplating that thought. Both **Pedro Gomes** and **Sebi Orsi** seemed to lean forward toward the Swedish lady, like two wolves competing for her attention, but she paid them no heed.

“Let me therefore introduce to you the Isloppet race and I invite you all to the circuit,” she continued. “First, I shall give you some insight into the test you will soon face. The circuit will be run at Laxforsen, a small town aside a river that is well-known for its salmon – and hopefully, not its Salmson,” she added, making note of the Frenchman’s car with a subtle reference to a whispered concern that with the late Spring, some cars might fall through the ice which had been less fragile in the deep winter.

“For those who have driven the ice,” she went on, “there will be no surprises. But for those whose only experience is in the south, I would offer that the experience will be thrilling. Acceleration is slower and yet once the car is truly going, it cannot often be stopped so easily. You must think ahead, selecting your gears not for the instant requirement, but thinking to what comes next.

“Many will spin out at the corners and a few may collide with the snow banks that line the sides of the course. Yet I will also make note of this for you – the circuit at Laxforsen is not entirely upon the ice – half of it runs through a narrow lane that pass between the pine trees, curving and twisting so tightly that only two cars can barely manage to pass. That portion of the track that is on the ice, by comparison, is wider than any track you’ve ever driven. Three laps will be driven.

“I know that for many of you, the experience of Scandinavia will be something new. So I promise you this – the farthest northern reaches of my country are cold, but the people have warm hearts. Many will come to Laxforsen to see La Grande Épreuve. You will not be disappointed, though I suggest that you dress warmly.”



She nodded toward the table to her right where most of the Scandinavian drivers were sitting. A few nodded back toward her in an informal greeting, thinking of the heavy fur coats and face masks they wore to prevent frostbite. At 100 mph, the wind into the open cockpit of a racer whipped savagely at any exposed skin, like an icy hurricane.

“I look forward to a wonderful time and seeing you all in a good race – let us make it a clean race lead by the best traditions of sportsmanship from our nations.” Her reference to the terrible events and fires at the pit lane in Nice was not lost among the drivers assembled.

She smiled and continued, “And I would add that there is a story of a Swedish customer who once complained to Monsieur Bugatti that his car would not start in the cold weather of the north. Ah, Monsieur Bugatti replied, my cars deserve garages, preferably heated garages.... So now you know, I am a Bugatti fan. Thank you!”

She stepped down, but not before Ettore stood and mounted the pavilion. Two men walked up from behind and took hold of the velvet coverings behind him. The moment of the unveiling had arrived.

Part 5: The Revelation

“Many of you have wondered just what this mystery is that I will reveal today!” **Ettore Bugatti** began. He gestured broadly, ever the showman and clearly in his element as one of the world’s top car manufacturers.

The drivers and guests leaned forward, wondering what was to come.

“Two years ago, I envisioned a new type of car, made of an exotic metal alloy. What was but a dream became a reality at the hands of Jean Bugatti. He has crafted a wonder of engineering that is the lightest, most aerodynamic car of our age! The alloy metal I speak of is none other than Elektron!”

Some of the drivers gasped, knowing full well that the magnesium alloy was incredibly light, very strong, but also nearly impossible to weld. As well, it was extraordinarily brittle.

They wondered – How could it be done? How could a car be crafted of such an exotic metal? It was so easy to burn if the welding torch was turned too high. It would be difficult to bend and shape the panels without cracking. Yet if it could be done.... The



possibilities were intriguing, not simply for car engineering but for aircraft and much more.



Suddenly the waiters reappeared. They handed out small cards to each of the guests and drivers. A photo showed a strikingly beautiful shape – a car design like no other they had ever seen....

The body was unmistakably Bugatti, yet it also seemed strangely alien. Its symmetry heralded a new style in automotive design – and they wondered what new technologies must be offered.

Along the centerline of the car, a metal ridge spanned the top of the passenger compartment. From the photo, they could barely make out that the Elektron was not welded, but rather riveted together – it was an ingenious solution to the difficult nature of the metal. Yet how had they shaped the curves so smoothly? Surely the metal could not have allowed such fine handiwork?

Ettore Bugatti turned slowly. “As you will see, a photo does not do the car justice.... So now I introduce to you, the **Aérolithe!**”

Ettore’s two attendants pulled swiftly on the corners of the heavy velvet to reveal....

“*Mon Dieu!*” someone screamed.

Underneath was not the car that they had expected to see, but rather a roughly shaped set of scrap boards obviously hastily nailed together. Where the windshield would have been had it been a real car, a message was scrawled crudely upon the raw wooden board in what appeared to be blood:

“The last bells have rung. Death stalks the ice.”

Beneath the car, a larger circle of blood pooled. Carefully, one of the attendants leaned over to look within. He recoiled in horror from what he saw laid out inside and bumped the side of the wooden contraption, causing a lifeless hand to fall out.



“It’s **Jean Paul Clermont!**” the man stammered. Inside was the body of the Bugatti factory’s own designer.

Aristide glanced quickly around the tables – noting that many of the other drivers were doing the same. The other guests seemed fixated upon the scene before them.

Ettore’s miracle car was missing, but more importantly, yet another murder had taken place. One by one, the drivers met each others’ stare – and one by one, they judged each other and wondered silently.

Why another death? And for whom was the message intended? And what did it mean?

Who was responsible? And might one of them be the next to perish?

Then **Godeschalk Hegkman**, the German driver, stood slowly. His size and physique drew everyone’s attention. He spoke in a loud, calm voice. “It would seem that there will be no unvanishing. Success and excellence breed jealousy, I believe. There is but one step from envy to hate. Even these very races of Honorable Gentlemen, this has no place!”

Hegkman pulled his sheathed sword from his belt, yet did not draw the blade. Instead, he slammed it down on the table for emphasis. His eyes darted around the tables. A dark scowl lined his forehead. His lips curved upward to reveal his teeth, almost menacingly.

He paused for emphasis. Then he said softly, “Macht Nichts....” Everyone understood that meant he would drive the next race as a professional – without fear. He clicked his heels together lightly, just enough to make a crisp tap. Carefully, he lifted his sword and then, with the other hand, he reached up and adjusted his monocle, peering again, face-by-face at each of the assembled guests.

“I bid you auf Wiedersehen.”

He turned and limped toward a waiting silver-white Mercedes SSLK. None had seen or heard the car drive up. The driver seemed to be waiting for him, as if summoned according to plan. With a final flourish to adjust his sword, Hegkman slid sideways into the car, his limp still evident from the previous race’s accident. Hegkman commanded the driver in German to go – at once. A few of the drivers recognized the figure at the wheel – it was none other than the Italian industrialist, **Sr. Carmena-Motta**, who they recalled from Algiers and from **Sebi Orsi’s** goat barbecue.

Ettore Bugatti and the rest of the Bugatti staff appeared extraordinarily distressed. Selecting his words carefully, Ettore offered, “I ask that each of you depart, s’il vous



plaît. Your test in Sweden calls – and it is clear that we have much to do here, so I bid you all a good night....” He turned, “Jean, have Bertrand call the Gendarmes.”

Ettore walked briskly toward the Château Saint Jean as the guests began to filter toward the waiting cars that now drifted in quietly through the gate and onto the driveway. Within a few minutes, a new silence set over the factory and Château as the last guests had gone. A cold wind blew in, heralding the upcoming race in Sweden. All knew now with a certainty that this next race was going to be like no other.

Victor Hugo (Belgium) gains an additional Engine WP to add to his car set-up based on assistance gained from his discussions with Marcus Wagner.

Similarly, from his engagement with Marcus Wagner, Pedro Gomes (Portugal) is offered a shipment of specialty American racing tires that will add an additional Tire WP to his car set-up.

From the Norwegian Ambassador, Teide “Volcán” Sorolla-Ledaal (Norway) employs the latest in ice racing tire design, temporarily adding 2 Tire WPs to his car set-up – which counts for this race only.

Petrus de Salvion Bernardus of Switzerland receives the assistance of the British industrialist and cigar aficionado, Mr. Rhys Kingsford-Smatter, who had brought a radical racing engineer over from England. The modification pertains to the transmission and is daring and risky – befitting of Kingsford-Smatter’s little known gambling addiction. Henceforth, the Swiss car may attempt to skip a gear upward – such as shifting from 2nd gear to 4th gear – but each time he must chance the roll a d20 and consult the following table:

Die Roll	Result
1-2	Successful, no WP used
3-10	Successful, use 1 Gearbox WP
11-14	Unsuccessful, use 1 Gearbox WP
15-18	Unsuccessful, use 2 Gearbox WP
19-20	Gearbox Explodes; Car Crashes



All drivers who race Bugattis may elect to adopt the brake-wheel modification made available by the Bugatti factory. If you do accept the modification, at any and all pit stops, you will refresh both the Tire WP and the Brake WP whenever the tires are changed. The cost, however, is the loss of 1 Road Handling WP and 1 Car Body WP, both of which shall be immediately deducted from your car.



The Bugatti Factory, hidden behind the trees in Molsheim, a short distance from the Château Saint Jean.