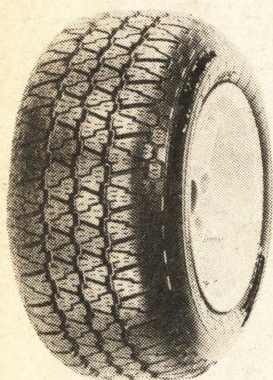


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Echo Roberson photos

## Keke's finally No. 1

Rosberg's career endures years of poor equipment and a bad rap

By Peter Windsor

Keke Rosberg bought a new plane before his Championship weekend at Vegas—but not in anticipation of winning the world title. The purchase, says Rosberg, was "scheduled"—just as the Grand Prix dates are "scheduled" or the completion of an interstate is "scheduled."

Hannu Mikkola, the Finnish rally driver, remembers a young Rosberg talking about "schedules" when he was racing Formula Vees—or "Wees" in Rosberg-speak. In those days, in the early 1970s, Rosberg's schedules concerned the rate at which he would win his first Grand Prix and then the World Championship. "As I recall," said Hannu, "the 'schedule' got a little behind. But he made it . . ."

The man is dazzling in his approach, in his self-confidence. He walks with his feet outwards, Stewart-style, but he would loathe the comparison. When Rosberg was on the fringe of Formula One, kicking hard to stay above water, Stewart spoke to the famous Can-Am entrant, Carl Haas, and suggested that Haas would be making a mistake if he hired Keke Rosberg. Nothing personal; Stewart genuinely believed that Rosberg was too hard on a car, that Haas needed a driver with more . . . refinement.

Has Rosberg ever spoken to Stewart about the incident? "Not really," he says. "But I did have a bit of a go at him once in the *Daily Express*. To be honest, I'm not bothered about it now . . ." Stewart, predictably, has not changed course. In Austria this year, during a late-night visit to the Williams garage, he was unequivocal in his assessment of Rosberg's ability: "Yes, he's very quick. But there's no need to be as harsh as he is on a car. He hasn't changed at all. I still believe the real art is to be quick and smooth. Keke is quick."

Above all, Rosberg is an individual in a very cliquey sport. He begs comparison with no one. His parents—Lars and Lea Rosberg—were enthusiastic rally drivers in the mid-1950s, but Keke was the Finn who



preferred racing to rallying. He started in karts, then progressed to Wees, and then to Super Wees. If you wanted to race Super Wees at the top level you needed to be in Germany—so to Germany Rosberg went. Leo Kinnunen fought a language barrier throughout his career. Rosberg was speaking fluent Finnish, German and English by the time he was 22.

He quickly made an impression, showing speed at the Nurburgring which astounded the tough German establishment. After winning races for the Kaimann works team in 1974, he showed his perception by persuading the commercial manager of a large German carpet manufacturer to join him for 1975. Ortwin Podlech had met Keke in 1974 and after a fraught season of race management had decided to retire to commercial business. But Rosberg was impressed by Podlech's honesty and intelligence. He pleaded with him to manage his racing effort—and Podlech has remained with Rosberg ever since. Today, he works exclusively for Rosberg through a company named Euro-Promotions Inc., registered in Panama City, Panama, and Ortwin describes himself on his business card as the company's "European Representative." Rosberg, presumably, is the company's "world-wide" representative . . .

Late in 1975 the top American Super Vee entrant, Fred Opert, began hearing news of this Finnish guy who was cleaning up in Europe. "I invited Keke out for a race at Watkins Glen but the engine wasn't up to much and he didn't figure." Actually, the results show that one "K.K. Ross" of Upper Saddle River, N.J. (Opert's address) finished sixth at the wheel of his Tui. The following year Opert ran Rosberg at Estoril in his Formula Two Chevron-Hart and the driver, in Opert's words, was "brilliant." "He'd never seen the place before, he'd been getting nowhere in the car he'd been driving until then (the Toj-BMW) and then suddenly he qualifies third behind Arnoux and Ribiero. I couldn't believe it."

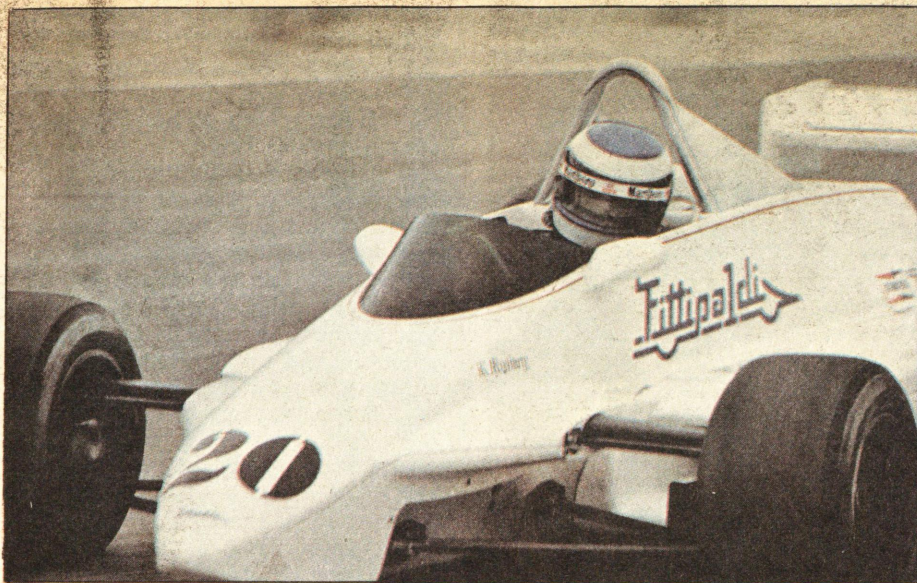
Another to be impressed was Britain's John Thornburn, who gave Keke some test drives in the Alan McKechnie Formula 5000 Lola. Thornburn, who went on to discover Nigel Mansell, was vividly taken with Rosberg's car control and instant speed. He tried to find a regular seat for the Finn but his efforts were thwarted by a lack of funds.

The years 1977-1981 were for Rosberg proof of three things. First, he was willing to drive anything anywhere, no matter what the "schedule." Second, he showed a propensity to earn money. Third, his career progressed on a gently rising curve, quite the opposite of your Alain Prosts or even your Gilles Villeneuves.

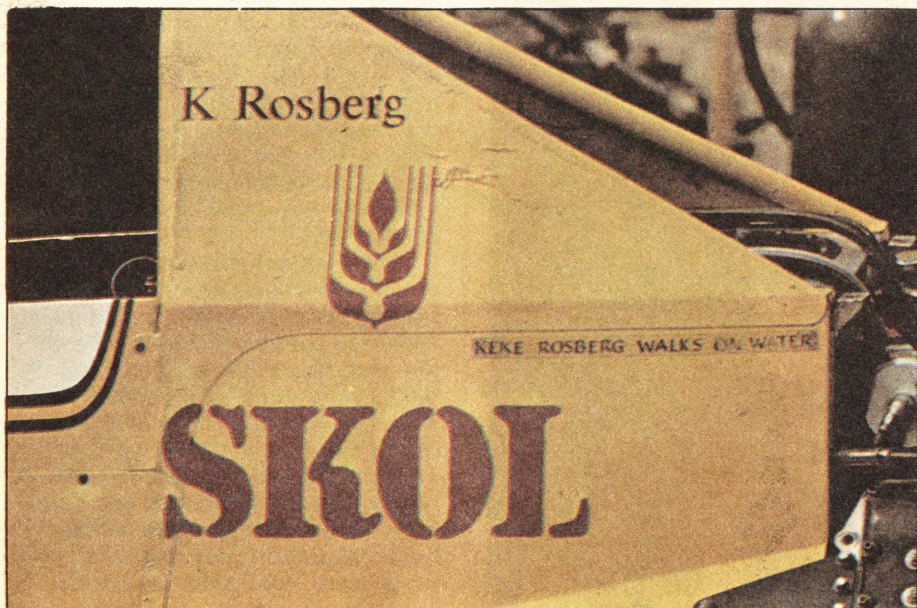
They went something like this:

1977: Having suitably impressed Fred Opert, Rosberg agreed to drive for him in Europe (Formula Two) and Canada (Formula Atlantic). He finished third at the Nurburgring in his Chevron-Hart, beating Didier Pironi and Rene Arnoux, and won from the pole at Enna. A fourth at Estoril and a second at Donington left him an excellent sixth overall in the European F2 Championship. Commuting regularly to North America isn't the easiest thing for regular travelers, let alone racing drivers, but it didn't show on Rosberg. Producing some of the all-time classic duels, Rosberg and Gilles Villeneuve fought ferociously in the Canadian series, Keke finishing





Rosberg struggled seemingly forever with the uncompetitive Fittipaldi (above); despite his poor results, Rosberg developed a following of believers, as the sign on his car would indicate (below).



second to the Canadian at Edmonton with barely a wheel rim or a piece of bodywork untouched. He also won at Westwood and placed second at Gimli to finish fourth overall in the series.

1978: While Villeneuve was driving for Ferrari and men like Didier Pironi were having their first view of F1, Rosberg . . . was holding his own. He gained his Formula One chance with Theodore, which ran him in its Tauranac-designed car in South Africa. Rosberg made a good start, to hold 16th place on the first lap, but his race ended in retirement. Two weeks later he did what few have done before him: He won his second Formula One race. Thriving in the wet conditions—moving Opert to say that “Keke has never lost a race in the rain—never!”—Rosberg won the non-championship *Daily Express* International Trophy race at Silverstone. With that, his career should have been made. It wasn’t. He consolidated his Theodore drive, sure enough, but at Long Beach, Monaco, Zolder and Spain, Rosberg failed to qualify. An incident at Long Beach summed up the disasters:

Carlos Reutemann, who was to win the Grand Prix on Sunday, watched pre-qualifying from the pit wall, head turned towards the exit of the last corner. After a few minutes he was calling to anyone who was around him to come and watch Rosberg’s antics in the Theodore. Keke would slide into view with the power on in second gear, opposite lock applied, left rear wheel skimming the outside wall. “Fantastic car control,” said Reutemann. “The guy is quick.” Learning later that Rosberg had not

made the cut, Reutemann rejoined: “That just shows you how bad the Theodore is . . .”

By mid-season, Theodore had decided to temporarily withdraw and Rosberg had earned a drive in the second Penske-based ATS chassis. Again he illustrated his talent by qualifying at Anderstorp and Ricard and holding fifth place at Brands Hatch before a suspension failure late in the race. The Theodore team reappeared at Hockenheim with a 1977 Wolf chassis, and Rosberg instantly responded by qualifying comfortably and then finishing 10th in Austria. He completed his first F1 season by driving the ATS in North America and qualifying 15th at Watkins Glen.

Between all this, Rosberg squeezed in a number of Formula Two and Atlantic races. Again driving for Opert, Rosberg won at Donington and finished second at Hockenheim and the Nurburgring while in America he scored three wins to take second place in the series. Simultaneously, Alan Jones was making his name in the new Saudia Williams team and was winning the Can-Am Championship with the Carl Haas Lola.

1979: This was the year when Rosberg’s obvious talent should have been rewarded with a good drive at Brabham, Lotus or Tyrrell. But there were no real vacancies in Formula One and Rosberg was not about to buy himself a drive. On the contrary, he had begun to live by the dictum that he should be paid to drive. He began to dress smartly, to attract some personal sponsorship. He nearly earned the Haas Can-Am drive but opted, thanks to Haas’ last-minute decision to run Jacky Ickx, to drive

for the Spyder team. The money was reasonable and the car was Lola-based. Rosberg’s ability would take care of the rest. It did—to the extent that Rosberg won the opening round of the series, beating the much-vaunted Ickx. Victory had never been sweeter. Rosberg went on to finish third at Charlotte, to set fastest lap at Mosport and to win at Watkins Glen.

Rosberg continued to do a lot right in Formula Two, where he was invited to stand in for Derek Daly at Hockenheim. Daly, a works March driver, was racing an Ensign at Long Beach on the same day and must have smiled ruefully when he heard the results from Germany on Sunday night. Rosberg won, going away . . . When a similar date clash arose a few weeks later, Rosberg set alight his beloved Nurburgring. He took pole position with a staggering time of 7 minutes 6.9 seconds. The lap would have put him on the front row of the grid for the 1976 German Grand Prix!

Rosberg’s career took something of an upturn in mid-summer when James Hunt decided to retire from racing. Wolf knew Rosberg from his drives with its old car in 1978 and Rosberg,

*Rosberg’s career had bought him a villa in Ibeza and residency in Monte Carlo but not the success he deserved.*

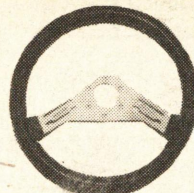
relieved, knew that Wolf had only recently won a Grand Prix. He was paid well—and he even persuaded Wolf that he should continue to race in the Can-Am. The F1 car proved unreliable, but Keke at least shone at Zandvoort, where he retired from fourth place just before half distance. At Watkins Glen, Rosberg signed a three-year contract with Wolf, happy at last that he could spend the winter in the knowledge that he had a competitive Formula One drive. A few days later, Walter Wolf announced his withdrawal from racing and the team, struggling to survive, bought out the equally lame Fittipaldi concern.

1980: Rosberg’s fully-paid, fully-successful Wolf-Fittipaldi deal was anything but. His retainer was met—but the cars were nothing like as well-financed as they had been two years before. He finished a superb third in his first race, in Argentina, but from there things deteriorated, spiced with the occasional verbal remark from teammate Emerson Fittipaldi, who didn’t like getting beaten. Rosberg qualified sixth at Montreal and figured well in some late-season Can-Am races but otherwise the season was a write-off. Rosberg’s career had bought him a villa in Ibeza, residency in Monte Carlo—but none of the success he deserved. And there were still two more Fittipaldi years ahead of him . . .

1981: The Fittipaldi team ran two revised chassis in 1981, with Emerson splitting his time between management and sponsorship and Brazilian Chico Serra driving the second car. Rosberg again began the year well by qualifying comfortably in the mid-field, but as the season wore on so the team’s resources wore out. By Zandvoort Rosberg was aware of plans to put him in the second McLaren for 1982—Marlboro had been his longest personal sponsor—but they were well apart when Niki Lauda

*Continued on Page 34*

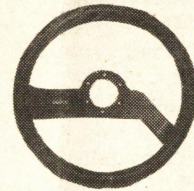
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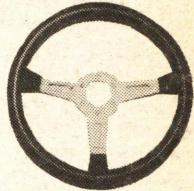
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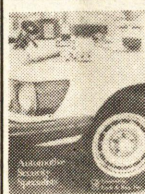
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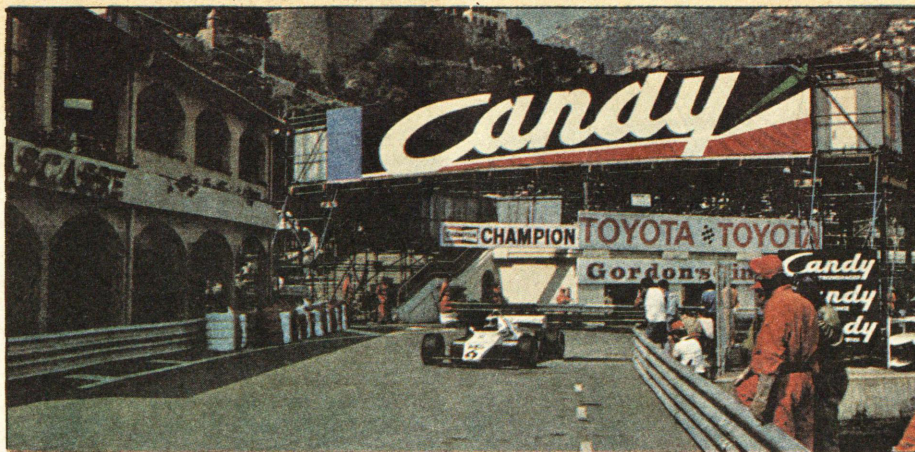


# Rosberg

Continued from Page 33

confirmed his intention to return to racing. Rosberg left the paddock at Monza, his Fittipaldi again too slow to be qualified, with an interest in nothing and no one.

"It does get to you after a while, driving an uncompetitive car." Rosberg is talking on the eve of the Las Vegas GP in the quiet of the Williams compound. The German journalist, Yorn Pugmeister, is avidly taking down notes. "It's not that you stop believing in yourself or anything like that. But in the end it kills your motivation, you become negative towards your job. And, if it goes too far, it can prevent you having



Rosberg's only truly bad race in '82 was at Monaco.

confidence in your future. What you have to do is put your head down and remain convinced that the system

works. You have to believe that if you are good enough you'll make it in the end. Look at Chico Serra, for instance.

He qualified nearer to me in the Fittipaldi team than Derek Daly did in the Williams. I really rate Chico—but at the moment he hasn't got a chance. He just has to keep on believing in the system, like I did."

Pugmeister asks at what point Rosberg knew he was capable of winning the World Championship—asks him when he realized it had been the Fittipaldi that was slow, and not the driver. Rosberg looks at him in astonishment and replies, "I never thought it was me that was slow. I suppose from the first time I tested the Williams at Ricard I knew I was going to be okay. Williams told me that I was only testing things on the car, that I didn't have to prove anything—you know, all the usual things—but I knew that this was my big chance. I had had a terrible year with the Fittipaldi, I'm home in California and suddenly the phone rings and its Williams asking me to test their car at Ricard. I flew straight back to Europe and immediately I felt at home. At the factory I expected all the guys to be a bit cold towards me, because they had been working with the likes of Jones and Reutemann, but they weren't that at all. They all seemed really keen to make me feel at home and that gave me a lot of confidence.

"Then, when I matched the times of Jones and Reutemann, everything fell into place. A racing car is a racing car. They are all difficult to drive on the limit. The Williams didn't feel particularly good—but it had much more grip than the Fittipaldi; that was the difference."

In other words, Rosberg has always been quick; all he has lacked have been the cars. "In my opinion Keke has a phenomenal natural talent," says Opert. "If I had to pinpoint a weakness I would say that his gear-changing is not as good as the other aspects of his ability, but that's a bit like saying that Borg's forehand is not as good as his backhand. Keke used to be hard on cars, but he has improved a lot, which is something I don't think many people credit him for. He is *much* easier on tires than he used to be, and he's obviously a much better test driver."

By the end of that first Ricard test, Keke's preoccupations were of the good kind: How would he get out of his Wolf contract; how much would Frank Williams pay him? The answer to the first turned out to be "with ease." Fittipaldi had never given Keke a car equal to his ability, and it would have been churlish for them to stand in his way now. The answer to the second was "as little as possible like most team owners." Rosberg had been racing for too long to put a good retainer before a good car, and he did not argue when Williams mentioned a figure in the region of \$180,000. Shrewdly, Williams extended the contract in July 1982, long before Rosberg could renegotiate a World Champion's retainer. Even so, Rosberg will now earn probably four times as much as he used to from Williams—and his new retainer, in turn, will probably account for only about a third of his tax-free earnings in 1983.

The journalist went on to ask Rosberg about his season with Williams. What were his good and bad races? "The only real mistake I made this year was at Monaco," he says definitely. "I was following de Cesaris and I clipped the curb at the chicane. That was all there was to it. Stupid." Did Dijon please you? Pugmeister probes. "Not really," says

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Keke Rosberg's father, Lars (right), was an avid rallyist and is shown below competing in the 1955 Monte Carlo Rally.



the driver. "After trying for so long it somehow didn't fill me with joy to win a Grand Prix. I suppose I knew that the Championship was now in view. That was what I thought about after Dijon."

Rosberg brushes aside suggestions that he was fortunate to win the championship, that he benefitted from the bad luck—and accidents—of others. His philosophy, and you can see why after so many years in the wilderness, is that championships are there to be won, not lost. Of course, Gilles' accident was a tragedy, and, of course, Pironi was very unlucky. But does anyone dare say that Rosberg did not deserve to win? As he succinctly puts it, "My aunt would be my uncle if she was biologically equipped."

What Rosberg doesn't say, when publicly analyzing his season, is that he was a very successful early-lap driver. He made mistakes, yes, but he was always there after lap two or three, ready to take advantage of the Williams' proven speed and reliability. There is an art to this, and it is usually crucial in winning a Championship. The next year, history shows, the reigning Champion is never so lucky, or careful or whatever it is that keeps him on the island.

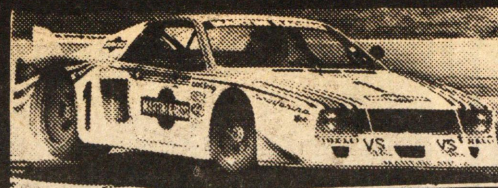
Also hidden are the traumas surrounding the Williams development program. By Brazil, by the time he was damaging the Williams on a curb because of a suspension set-up that Jonathan Palmer had tested in England, Rosberg was vowing that he and only he would test the car for a race. And that included Carlos Reutemann. By Zolder he was stepping out of the ballasted Williams FW08 and describing the car with a four-letter expletive that would make the engineers' blood boil. "A Williams is never S---," Patrick Head would say in rage. "It may understeer or it may oversteer and it may lack grip. But the one thing it isn't is S---."

Rosberg matured—became aware of his world standing—as the year progressed. Before South Africa he was an innocent, sucked into the drivers' strike because he'd never before been in a strong enough position to make a stand. A few weeks later he was rebelling from the drivers' union, arguing with Niki Lauda and pleasing the establishment at Williams. Then, by August, he was

signing a Niki Lauda-composed petition to make the cars safer. Despite a second confrontation at Ricard (over an incident in practice, when Lauda slowed down in front of Rosberg when the latter was on a quick lap; Lauda explained that he didn't think anyone was stupid enough to think that they could get a tow from Niki Lauda . . .) Lauda was to say later in the year that Rosberg would make a good World Champion. "He has changed a lot, even in the last few months. He cares more about safety; he is less pushy."

By the end of the season, Rosberg admitted, he was exhausted—both physically and mentally. His physical training became more serious as his points total grew. He took up running—something he has always loathed—and he went to bed earlier. Frank Williams also tried to persuade Rosberg to give up smoking—but Keke still smokes (as do Lauda, Elio de Angelis and Chico Serra) and he still crams as much into a single day as most drivers do into a week. He and Ortwin take weekend binges to Scandinavia to tap every conceivable sponsor, from general interest magazines to spoiler manufacturers, and rarely do they come home with anything less than they expected. Rosberg isn't your Jody Scheckter, then, when it comes to tennis or "Superstars" training. It was Rosberg's weakish forehead, indeed, together with his desire to wear a glove for tennis (to protect his gear-change blisters) which led the Williams team to suggest mid-season that its driver wasn't strong enough. His results have shown that they were wrong.

You can say, then, that Rosberg has been around for a long time and that he has finally got his just reward—or you can reason, successfully, that Rosberg won the World Championship in his first proper Formula One season. If he is this good now, what will he be like when he becomes *used* to driving for a top team? The one thing Rosberg isn't likely to do is slow down; that is as likely as a sandstorm in Finland. He can only change, hone a talent that was great from the start and which—until 1982—was unnoticed for too long. Early retirement? At present, it is not on the "schedule."



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195/60HR15	— \$ 95
205/60VR15	— \$109

#### DUNLOP SP STEELMAX 70

Blackwall	
185/70HR13	— \$ 55
195/70HR14	— \$ 62
205/70HR14	— \$ 65
185/70HR15	— \$ 65
Raised White Letter	
175/70HR13	— \$ 55
185/70HR13	— \$ 59
185/70HR14	— \$ 66
195/70HR14	— \$ 69

#### FIRESTONE HPR

195/60 R14 Blen	
BW	— \$ 49
RWL	— \$ 55

#### GOOD YEAR Eagle ST

185/70R13	— \$ 56
195/70R13	— \$ 58
205/60R13	— \$ 59
195/70R14	— \$ 65
215/70R14	— \$ 70
225/70R14	— \$ 72
235/60R14	— \$ 73
245/60R14	— \$ 75
225/70R15	— \$ 73
235/70R15	— \$ 77
245/60R15	— \$ 77
255/60R15	— \$ 81
275/60R15	— \$ 87

#### Eagle GT

195/60R14	— \$101
215/60R14	— \$113
215/65R15	— \$113
255/60R15	— \$128

#### Eagle NCT

205/60R13	— \$ 97
215/60R13	— \$ 99
185/70R14	— \$ 96
195/70R14	— \$104
235/60R14	— \$115
245/60R14	— \$120
185/70R15	— \$103
215/60R15	— \$111
245/60R15	— \$124
255/60R15	— \$133
265/60R15	— \$145

#### F.E.T. & UPS INCLUDED



#### ATS

☆ SPECIAL ☆  
15x5.5 — \$105

4- ATS 15x5.5	
with 195/50VR15	Fulda Y2000 \$795
with 195/50VR15	Phoenix 3011 \$850
ATS 15x7 Black - Polished Face	
for VW - Audi - BMW 2002	— \$115



#### EXCLUSIVE IMPORTER

VW-AUDI 13 x 6	
Gold-Silver-White \$69	
w/Polished Face \$75	
VW-AUDI Wheel and Tire Package	
4-13x6 ARC Painted with 4-175/70HR13	
(Phoenix 3011 design) — \$399	



MERCEDES "OE" STYLE  
14 x 6 \$85  
14 x 6.5 89  
180TR390 125  
Lugs & Caps Included



WEDS Turbo Wheels

+1 for DATSUN TOYOTA  
+1, +2 for BMW 320i MAZDA BX 7

BMW 320i — MAZDA EUROPEAN I

4-13x6 WEDS S.G/S, B/S w/4-205/60HR13 Y2000	\$ 675
4-14x6 with 195/60HR14 Fulda Y2000	\$760
4-15x6 with 195/50VR15 Phoenix 3011	\$925



#### FONDMETAL

Honda, BMW 320i/2002, Renault

Fondmetal 13x5.5, 4 x 100	
2 piece modular, European production, gold center - silver rim	\$ 65
4-13x5.5 with 4-175/70HR13	
Semperit (Phoenix 3011 design) — \$399	
with 4-185/70HR13	
Semperit (Phoenix 3011 design) — \$419	



Alfa Mustang, Porsche 924 - 4 bolt

D140 14x6, 2 piece modular, gold Center- silver rim, \$89

4 with 185/70HR14 Semperit (Phoenix 3011 design) \$625

#### RONAL-VIAL



14x6 Gold-Polished V2 for VW-Audi — \$115

#### ENKEI



ENKEI 10 13 x 5.5 GOLD/POLISHED VW AUDI HONDA \$ 75

ENKEI 50 13 x 5.5 GOLD/POLISHED VW AUDI HONDA BMW 320i

Tire and wheel Package	
4-13x5.5 Enkei 10 with 205/60HR13 Fulda Y2000	— \$595
4-13x5.5 Enkei 50 with 205/60HR13 Fulda Y2000	— \$595
4-ENKEI 50 14x6 with 195/60HR14 Phoenix 3011, Pirelli P6, European NCT, or Dunlop D3	— \$775

#### rial



14x6 Gold-Silver +1 for VW — \$ 89

15x6 G/S or Silver for BMW 320i +2 — \$ 99

15x7 G/S or Silver for BMW 320i +2 \$109

Wheel and Tire Packages

4-14x6 Gold-Silver for VW with 195/60HR14 Fulda Y2000 or Firestone 660	— \$579
with 185/60VR14 3011	— \$549
4-15x6 Gold-Silver or Silver for BMW 320i with 195/50VR15 Phoenix 3011, Fulda Y2000 or Euro NCT,	— \$849

Mounting, computer balancing, and Shipping All Included!