

INSIDE: 2004 NORTH AMERICAN RACE CALENDAR

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FormulaCar

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PREVIEW



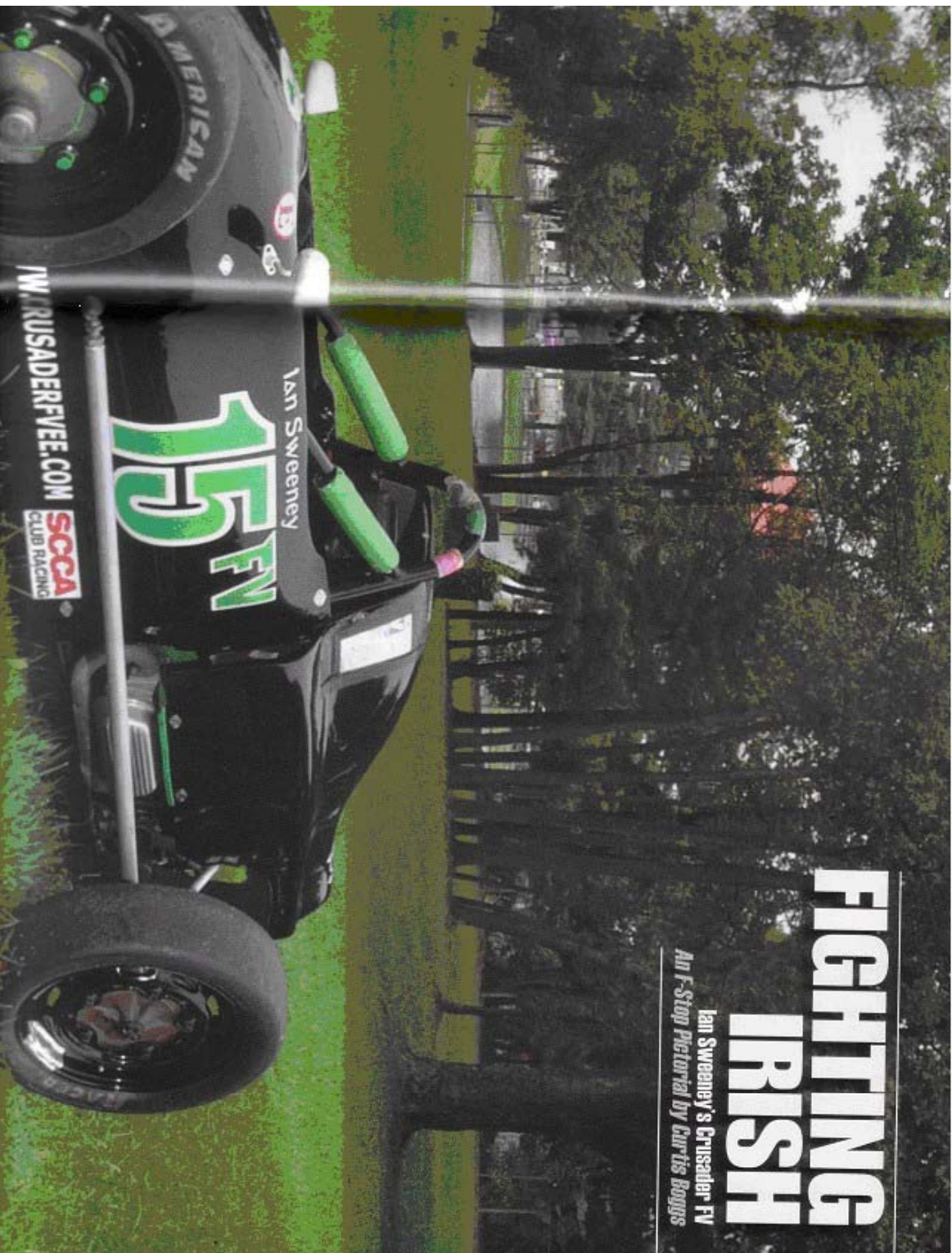
**Racing:
Formula Ford
Fantasy Camp**

**F-Stop:
Ian Sweeney's
Crusader FV**

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FIGHTING IRISH

Ian Sweeney's Crusader TV
An F-Stop Pictorial by Curt's Bojys



F-Stop

In the SCCA, the Valvoline Runoffs at Mid-Ohio is the big one. Upon securing an invitation to the annual national championship event after a season dedicated to race attendance and consistent performance, the sport's top drivers trek in from all over the country to take their shot at running against the absolute best. The Formula Vee class drew the largest grid of the six open wheel classes on the docket this past September and the racing, as always, was incredibly tight. Running mid-pack in his first trip to the prestigious event was a Californian who had traveled over 2500 miles during a two and a half day pilgrimage to Lexington. Accompanied by his brother Conor, Ian Sweeney had hauled his 1994 Crusader all the way from San Francisco to compete at Mid-Ohio and upon seeing his black Vee, I knew that it was destined for inclusion in a future F-Stop.

Having moved from his native Ireland in 2001 to be with his future wife Susanne – whom he met during a business trip to America – Sweeney has now become a fixture in the FV paddock of the SCCA's Northern Pacific Region. The 30-year-old started racing sedans in Ireland in the early 90s before moving into Formula Vee in 2000 aboard an Irish-made Leystone. His departure for the United States in '01 was accompanied by his love for racing and it wasn't long before he picked up a used – and slightly 'tatty' – Crusader Formula Vee. It was, in fact, the same car that shows so well on these pages. The car was not a kit but was instead built by Crusader's Chuck Tatum himself in 1994. Sweeney quickly became friends with Tatum and his son Blake and he has been able to work directly with the father-son duo, offering his car as a center for R&D.

In late 2002, Sweeney was running second in the Western States Championship when a Formula Ford spun in front of the FV pack, collecting four cars. The Crusader was heavily damaged and needed serious work. The car was rebuilt in just seven weeks – torn down to the frame during that period – so that it could make the '03 season opener in Phoenix in January. Back on track, Sweeney ran in his region throughout the year and earned his Runoffs invitation thanks to incredible consistency, taking third overall in the NorPac FV points. Prepping for Mid-Ohio, Sweeney had the engine rebuilt by Ron Chuck. He also went to work rebuilding the front beam, and for a little extra, he bolted on Blake Tatum's new-design rear bodywork. The new package is sleeker and narrower and required some cooling system layout adjustments to make everything work.

The car that Sweeney loaded into his trailer bound for the Runoffs is a beautiful piece that features an Alfano data acquisition system among its bolt-on components. Sweeney was quick to point out the unique design features of the Crusader, primarily the master cylinder positioning that has the unit bolted between the driver's legs. This placement, which differs from the traditional positioning ahead of the front beam, allows the car's steering box to move it to the front, giving the car improved steering geometry.

After a 5000-mile round trip to Ohio that resulted in an impressive top 15 finish, Sweeney proceeded to cash in on his experience by winning this year's Western State Championship, the same race at which he wrecked the Crusader just a year ago. The event was tagged at the West Coast's 40th anniversary of the Formula Vee and, for the young transplanted Irishman, it was a well-deserved and very sweet triumph.

FCM

Ian Sweeney's Crusader FV

Chassis:	Crusader FV	Weight:	1025 lb. (with driver)
Suspension:	Zero Roll	Tires:	American Racer
Shocks:	Front – Carrera	Wheelbase:	83.5"
	Rear – Fox	Front Track:	51.7"
Ride Height:	2"	Rear Track:	50"
Wheels:	Stock VW	Engine:	Ron Chuck VW
Brakes:	Stock VW	Horsepower:	65 hp
	Shoes: CarboTech	Gearbox:	Four-speed

