



SHO TAURUS GOES AUTOMATIC 🏁 F1 IN OZ  
ONCE AND FUTURE VETTES 🏁 INDYCAR '92

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# AutoWeek®

## CORVETTE TURNS





Mercedes-Benz 400E no longer a gas-guzzler

**MERCEDES HOLDING STEADY.**

Mercedes-Benz North America president and CEO Michael Basserman says that despite sullen economic times, the company will meet its sales goal for 1992 of 60,000 cars.

Prices will climb no more than 2 percent across the board at MBNA, Basserman said, with some models actually going down in price due to better gas mileage, which eliminates gas-guzzler taxes.

Both the 400E sedan and 300TE wagon have eliminated gas-guzzler taxes through increased engine efficiency. Basserman also said the company will introduce "at least one new or significantly changed model a year" for the rest of the decade.

The new 300CE cabriolet (AW, Oct. 19) was the first of four new models planned for introduction in the '93 model year. The others are the 500SEC and 600SEC coupes, which debuted at the Detroit show last

**NEWS**

**Longer Rollerskate**

*Just add your own Mazda rotary engine*



Like regular Rollerskate, longer version is a kit, with almost 80 percent already built

Maxton has introduced a stretched version of its original Rollerskate (AW, Dec. 2, '91). The Colorado-based constructor has spliced 5.5 inches of extra space between the wheels with legroom reportedly sufficient for even the tallest drivers. The longer wheelbase also has improved ride, but with little change to the handling and minimal weight increase. Most all other mechanical specifications remain the same, with buyers installing their own Mazda rotary engine.

—Matthew L. Stone

January, and the V12-powered 600SL. All three will be introduced in the next two months.

**IN CHARGE OF BATTERIES.** The

**U.S. Advanced Battery Consortium** (USABC) awarded major contracts to W.R. Grace and Co. and SAFT of America to develop high-energy batteries for electric vehicle use.

The move by the consortium—the cooperative effort of the Big Three automakers, the Department of Energy and the Electric Power Research Institute—should help jump-start development of batteries to make these vehicles more viable.

USABC, which announced the awards in Washington, D.C., hopes to expand the capability and availability of electric vehicles by the mid-1990s and to develop batteries that will be competitive in cost and performance with gas-powered vehicles by the late-'90s.

The consortium wants to complete all design, development and prototype pilot production by 1994, with production beginning by 1997.

**1993 NAVAJO PRICES.** Mazda raised Navajo prices 3.9 percent or \$720. A base Navajo now starts at \$16,595 for a two-wheel-drive DX with five-speed manual, and rises to \$19,995 for a four-wheel-drive LX.

**RECALLS.** Ford is recalling 564,000 1989 and '90 Tauruses and Sables as well as 1991 Explorers for defective seatbelt buckles. Ford has received 126 complaints that the buckles either ▶

**OF INTEREST**

**Rover to build Mini Cabrio**

*Powerplant is shared with Mini-Cooper*



Rover's Mini convertible should be on sale next spring

The popularity of a German-converted, limited-edition Mini Cabriolet sold last summer convinced Rover to begin production next spring along with a new Metro cabriolet.

Powered by the 1.3-liter injected "A" engine also used in the latest Mini-Cooper, the drop-tops will be built at Longbridge, trimmed out in wood and leather with

chrome kickplates, and offered in either red with a red-cloth roof, or blue with a gray top. MSRP is in the \$20,000 range.

Another Mini variant, called "The Italian Job," will capitalize on tie-ins with the movie of the same name in which Minis feature prominently in chase scenes. ■