



**A COURSE TO TEST WORLD'S DRIVERS**— The path of next year's Long Beach Grand Prix. Formula 1 cars are expected to hit 165 m.p.h.

# Long Beach Races for International Image

## Hopes Grand Prix to Be Held There Will Boost Stature

BY JERRY RULHOW  
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Can a city that only two years ago banned electric cars from downtown sidewalks find fame and fortune as the site of an international auto race?

Long Beach thinks so, and is counting on the International Grand Prix next March to bring about a change in image the city has long sought through other means.

In recent years the beach city spent at least \$60 million to buy the Queen Mary and turn it into a hotel and tourist attraction. It developed the most prosperous harbor on the West Coast. Millions of dollars are being pumped into downtown redevelopment. A \$50 million auditorium and convention center are under construction.

But reputations die slowly and to much of the world, Long Beach is still "Iowa West," where Leisure World residents go to retire, where a Sunday concert in the park (by the nation's only full-time municipal band) is big-time entertainment.

Even adopting "The International City" as its official slogan hasn't done much to convince the world that Long Beach is a metropolis to be reckoned with.

What is needed, city fathers agree, is something dramatic, international in flavor, that will focus worldwide attention on Long Beach as an excit-



**PROMOTER**—Christopher Pook, with Shoreline Drive, part of Long Beach's Grand Prix course, and the Queen Mary in background.  
Times photo by Jerry Rulhow

ing place to spend a vacation or hold a convention (after all, San Diego has done it, even without the Queen Mary).

Enter Christopher Pook and company with the Long Beach Grand

Prix, intended to turn Long Beach into the Monte Carlo of the West.

Ever hear of Emerson Fittipaldi of Brazil, Niki Lauda of Austria, Jody Schecketer of South Africa, Ronnie Peterson of Sweden, Jean-Pierre Jarier of France, Clay Reggazzoni of Switzerland, Carlos Reutemann of Argentina or Lella Lombardi of Italy?

These are the all-stars of auto racing, and they have already signed up for the Long Beach race. Pook is confident that close to 100,000 racing buffs will turn out for the Long Beach Grand Prix in March.

Even the shakedown race—a Formula 5000 event scheduled to test the two-mile course through downtown Long Beach on Sept. 28—has attracted entries from such noted drivers as Mario Andretti, Al and Bobby Unser, Johnny Rutherford, Danny Ongais, Jackie Oliver, Gary Gabelich, Brian Redman and Warwick Brown, and is expected to draw

an attendance of 70,000. Pook said: "Sanctioned by the Fédération Internationale de L'Automobile (FIA), the Formula 1 race is one of 16 in the world. Others are held in Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, Belgium, Monte Carlo, Spain, France, Italy, Germany, Holland, England, Sweden, Austria, Canada and Watkins Glen, N.Y."

The Grand Prix West will make the United States the only nation with two such races, and it will be one of only two such races in the world run on city streets rather than a race track. The other is at Monte Carlo.

The course begins on Ocean Blvd., near the intersection of Long Beach Blvd., goes east to Linden Ave., takes a hard right turn toward Shoreline Drive, then goes northeast on Shoreline.

At Shoreline and Alamitos Ave. a hairpin turn heads back down the opposite side of Shoreline along the beach to another hairpin turn that will bring the cars to Pine Ave. A sharp left on Pine will take them up a hill to Ocean Blvd. for another right turn to the start-finish line.

Pook said it will be a relatively slow course, but cars will still hit 165 miles per hour on the straightaway, with an expected average speed of 93 miles per hour.

Formula 1 cars are single-seat, open-cockpit and open-wheel vehicles with rear engines and a maximum engine size of 3 liters. They burn gasoline and have a five-speed gear box. Formula 5000 cars, racing in September, are bigger, but slower.

"The idea is to test the car and driver over a circuit encompassing all that would be met in street driving," Pook said.

"Drivers are truly remarkable and must memorize the course in advance. They're like computers. They can't see half of the turns until they're there, and then must program legs and arms to brake, downshift and make the turn while their mind is already working on the next turn."

But just how was the Long Beach Grand Prix born and what will be its impact on the "International City"?

Pook, 34, who was born and educated in England but spent most of his youth in Spain where he raced as an amateur, directs the operation from a penthouse office atop the 600 Ocean Blvd. Building, commanding a view of the race course and the nearby Queen Mary.