

Modeling a FORD GT 40 in 1/24 scale

Modifying Fujimi's 1966 Le Mans winners

The Ken Miles – Lloyd Ruby car (No. 98), winner of Daytona in 1966, was an early GT 40 Mk. II. In the same year at Sebring, Dan Gurney's Mk. IIA (No. 2) came close to winning but was disqualified when Gurney tried to push it across the finish line.

BY GREG KOLASA

TIME FLIES: It's hard to believe it was 27 years ago that Ford's GT 40 was dominating the racing scene, winning Le Mans, Sebring, and Daytona in 1966. I longed to return to those wonderful years by modeling the GT 40s.

Fujimi offers the 1966 Le Mans 1-2-3 finish in its 1/24 scale Historic Cars series (kit Nos. 12101, 12102, 12103). Revell repackaged the Fujimi kits and dressed them in 1966 Sebring and Daytona racing trim (kit Nos. 7130 and 7131). Revell dropped the kits after 1990, but you can still find them – and since the markings are simple, you can customize decals to model the same racers.

Because the model cars are made from the same molds, they don't have the differences that made each GT 40 unique. That's a small problem – I'll show you how to build and finish the GT 40 of your choice.

Wheels and tires. The kit's magnesium wheels are realistically plated with a dull aluminum finish. Paint the center section of the wheels flat gray, leave the rim plated, and paint the knockoff spinners metallic gray to set them off from the rest of the wheel.

Here's where the similarities among the cars' wheels end. I spray painted No. 98's wheels gold. After painting a thin blue line around the outside sidewalls, I applied Goodyear decals and finished the sidewalls with Testor Dullcote.

Interior improvements. No fancy color schemes here – almost everything is flat black.

I painted the pedals, trim, switches, and fuel-cell access panels silver. The fire extinguisher is red, and the seats and steering-wheel rim are black semigloss.

It was tedious, but I enhanced the seat ventilation holes by gently drilling each vent hole. This scrapes black paint away from the hole, and the resulting white ring replicates the metal grommets found on the real seats, Fig. 1 (page 86).

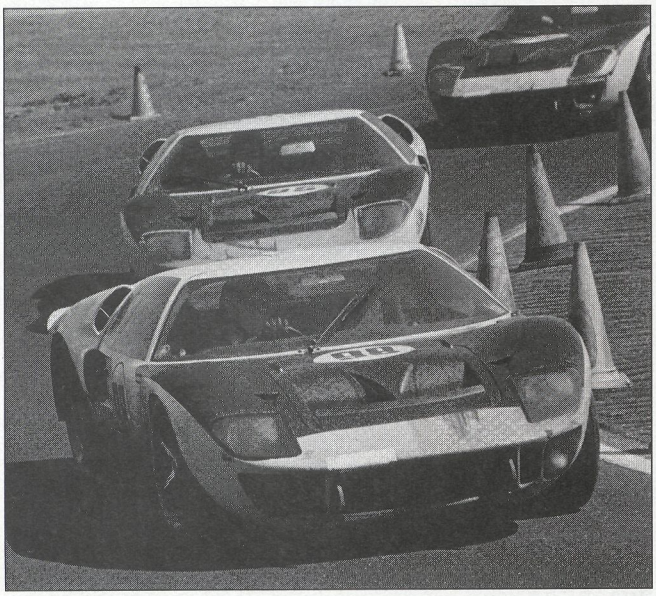
I eliminated two switches from the center console and replaced the speedometer on the far left side with a large ignition cutoff switch, Fig. 1.

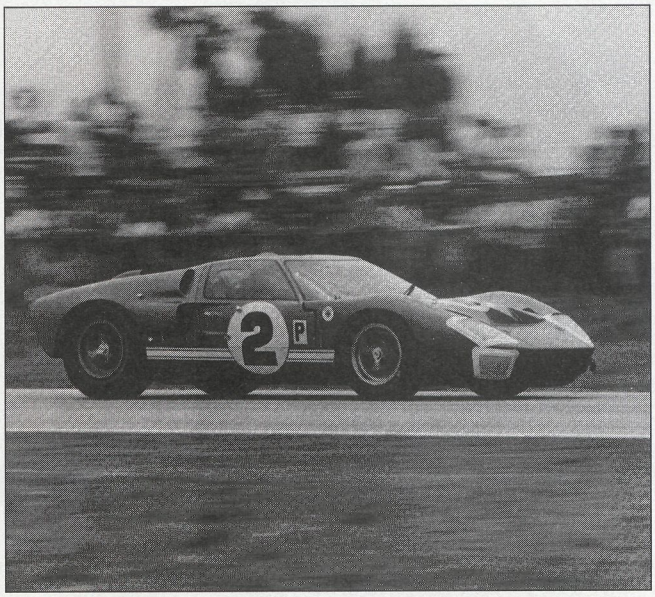
Unlike the kit-supplied steering wheel, Mk. II wheels had a large, padded hub. I chucked a 1/8"-diameter plastic dowel in a drill and ground the end to a slightly convex shape. I sliced off a 1/16" segment, glued it to the steering-wheel hub, and painted it black semigloss, Fig. 1.

At the rear. Le Mans rules required the cars to have room for two people and their luggage. Fujimi's molding included these suitcases as part of the chassis; to model an American racer, we have to remove them, Fig. 2. Cut off the top, then the bottoms of the cases from the belly pan at the aft end of the tab where the rear cross member mounts.

That's the easy part. Unfortunately, the far-rear cross member is molded to the suitcases: Carefully cut away the suitcases, leaving only the cross member. The openings in the cross member must be opened up, too.

Complete the rear-end assembly





Dave Friedman photos courtesy of Ed Sexton, Revell/Monogram.

THE FORD GT 40

From the mid-1950s through 1962 Ferrari dominated the 24-hour Le Mans endurance race. However, in 1962 Henry Ford II announced that Ford Motor Co. wanted to race, and that it was withdrawing from the U.S. Automobile Manufacturer's Association's 1957 self-imposed ban on racing.

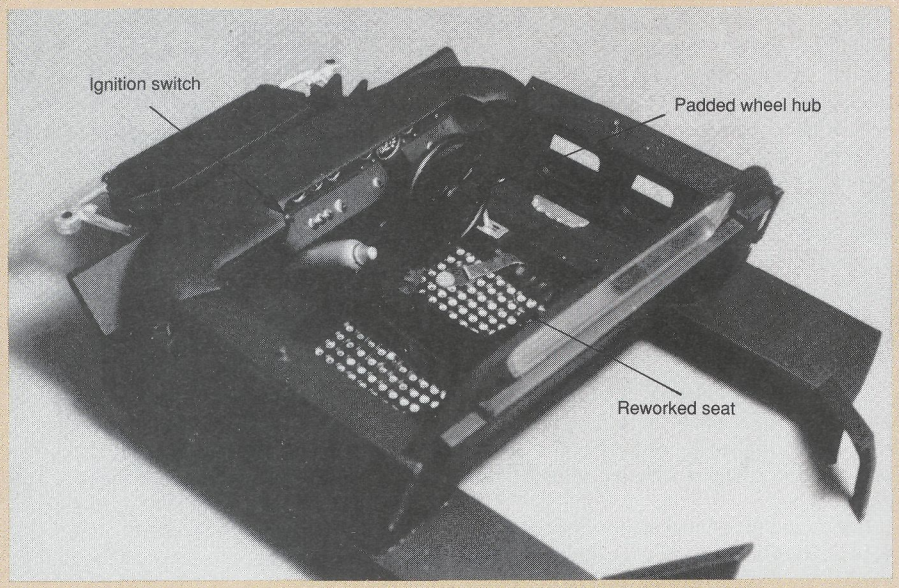
After an unsuccessful bid to buy Ferrari, Ford contracted Englishmen Roy Lunn, Eric Broadley, and John Wyer to accomplish the next-best thing – to beat Ferrari at Le Mans. Broadley's Lola GT provided a starting point for the new British division of Ford, Ford Advanced Vehicles (FAV), in Slough, England. The result of FAV's work was the Ford GT 40, so named because it was 40" tall.

Early prototypes struggled with undependable gearboxes and a disturbing tendency to leave the ground at high speeds. The GT 40 was negatively consistent in 1964 – eight starts netted eight DNFs (Did Not Finish). The designers returned to the drawing board, the builders set up shop near Dearborn, Michigan, and they produced the Mk. II.

With new gearboxes, improved aerodynamics, and 7-liter 427 engines, the Mk. II began to gain on Ferrari. Further refinements resulted in the Mk. IIA – a world-class contender that heralded Ford's new dominance.

In the cars pictured here, No. 98, a Mk. II driven by Ken Miles and Lloyd Ruby, won the 1966 Daytona. And Dan Gurney's Mk. IIA came so close to winning the 1966 Sebring that when the blue No. 2's engine failed he tried to push it across the finish line (he was disqualified). But Ford's greatest victory of 1966 – and the culmination of the Ford GT program – was the 1-2-3 finish at Le Mans, which included the former No. 98, painted light blue and wearing No. 1.

Ironically, both cars were wrecked in a late-night pile-up at the 1967 Le Mans.



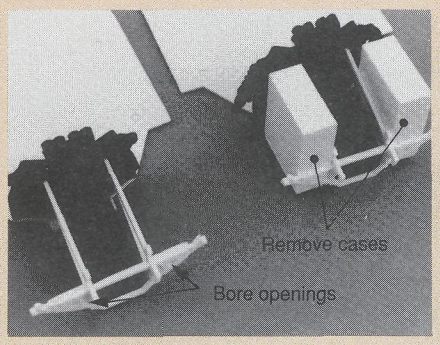
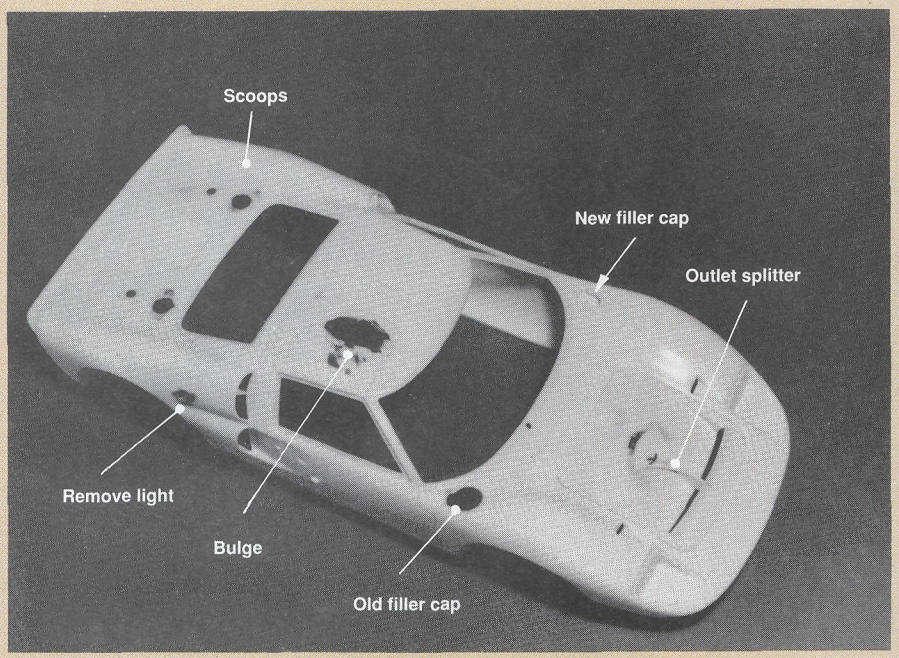


Fig. 2. (Above) They're the rule at Le Mans, but the "suitcases" are excess baggage on American racers.

Fig. 1. (Left) Greg drilled out the vent holes in the seats, rearranged control switches, and padded the steering wheel.



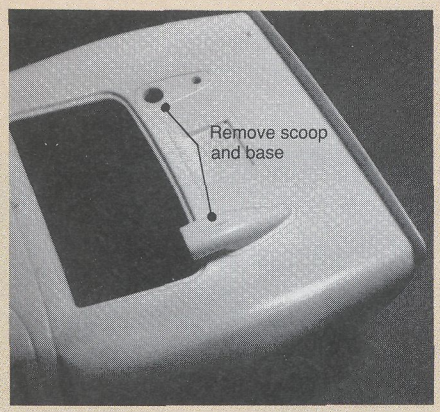


Fig. 3. (Above) The winner of Daytona was an early Mk. II without snorkel scoops.

Fig. 4. (Left) Moving exterior details around leaves gaps; fill holes with putty and sand them smooth. Greg made the radiator outlet splitter from sheet styrene.

according to the instructions, including paint. Minor exceptions to the kit's paint scheme include flat-gray exhaust pipes, and painting front and rear suspension members slightly different shades of silver.

Individualizing No. 98. A few simple modifications will give the cars their true identity.

Car No. 98, driven by Ken Miles and Lloyd Ruby, won the 1966 Daytona race. Later that year Miles was at the wheel of the same car, repainted light blue and wearing No. 1, as it finished second at Le Mans.

Fujimi's molding includes the rear-deck "snorkel" scoops seen on the Le Mans Fords, but at Daytona, No. 98 didn't have these scoops, Fig. 3. Remove them and their bases, fill gaps with epoxy putty, and sand smooth, Fig. 4. Another molding that should be removed from this particular car is the bulge in the roof, designed to give the driver more headroom. Be careful not to damage surrounding details.

The fuel filler cap is on the wrong side. Its location was determined by which side would face the pit crew in a given race; it belongs on the left side of No. 98. I filled the original filler port, drilled a new one in a corresponding location on the left side, and installed a scrap of sheet styrene in the new port for the kit filler cap to rest on, Fig. 4.

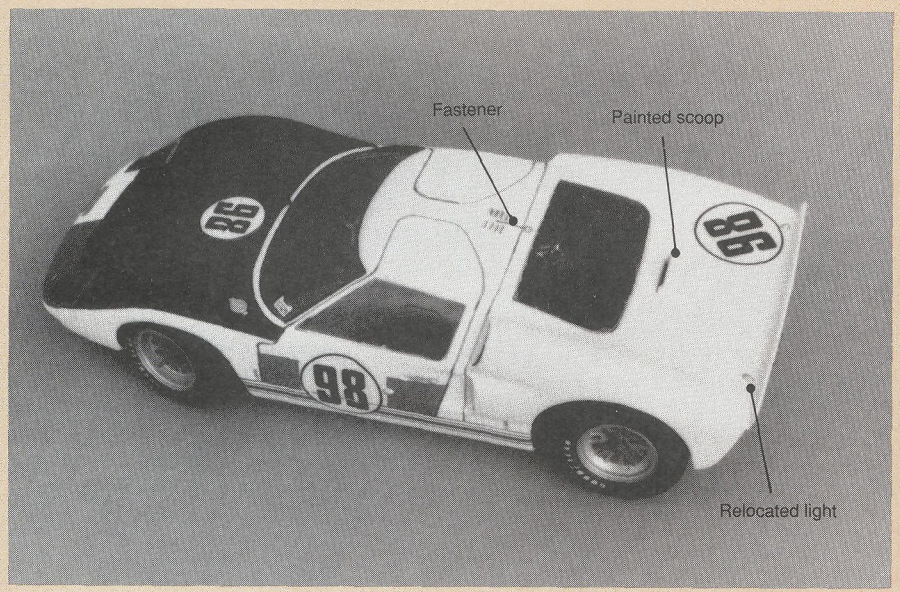
To correct the shape of the radiator outlet splitter, Fig. 4, I built a new one from sheet styrene. I used the kit-supplied divider as a template to get the proper curve. Leave off the photoetched vanes that the kit places at the edges of the hood.

Remove the two molded number-illumination lights located forward of the rear wheel cutout, Fig. 4. Cut carefully: You'll need to reuse them. Install one of these lights on the left side of the rear deck to match the molded one on the right side, Fig. 5.

The kit supplies photoetched hood pins, but early Mk. IIs such as No. 98 had turn-style latches; I made these from sheet styrene. There *is* a hood pin in the center of the rear cowl; I added a fastening wire that runs to a screw located between the roof vents, Fig. 5. The kit provides a clear center scoop for the rear deck; I painted this scoop white.

The upper "shoulder" intakes should be divided horizontally, Fig. 6. I made this divider from sheet styrene.

The jack hooks supplied for the kit's front grille looked too deep to suit me. I



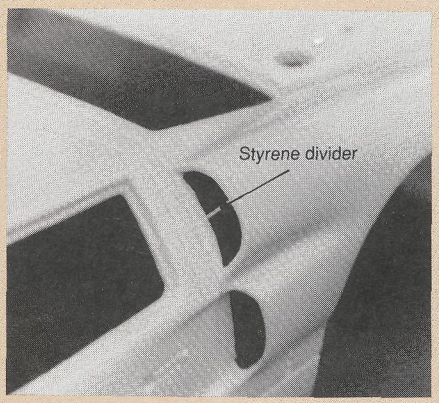
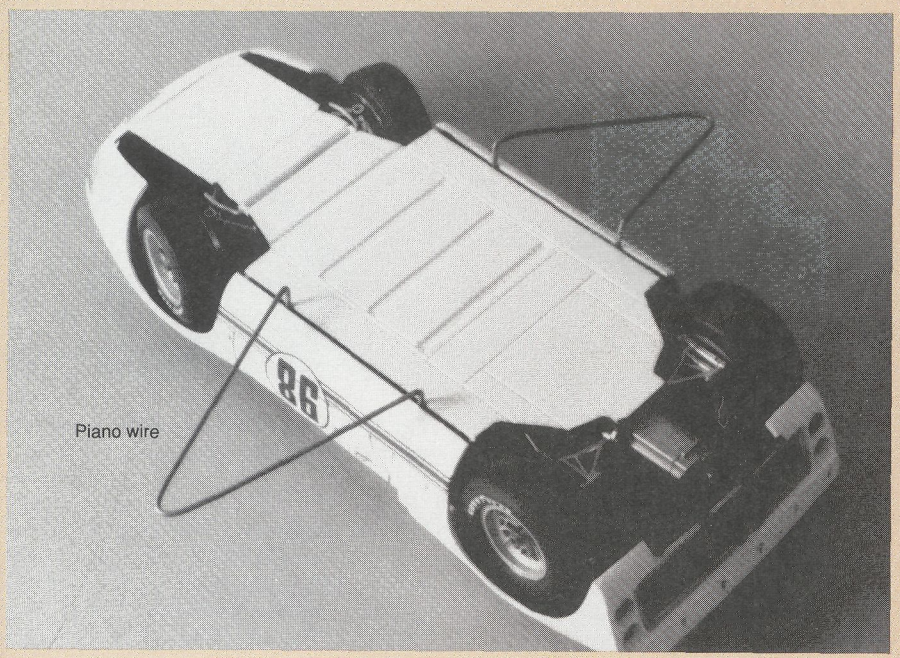


Fig. 6. (Above) Photo research revealed this intake detail. A styrene divider does the trick.

Fig. 5. (Left) Details, details: The kit-supplied rear-deck scoop is clear – paint it.



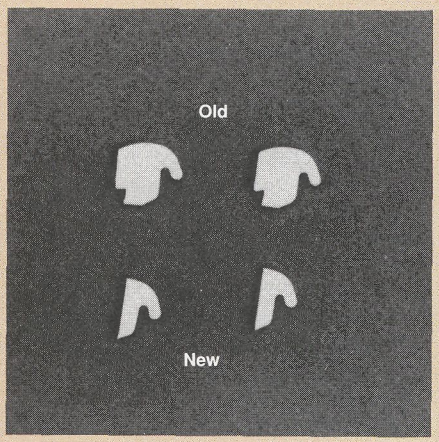


Fig. 7. (Above) The jack hooks didn't look right to Greg; he trimmed them to his taste.

Fig. 8. (Left) Does stretching the body onto the chassis make you nervous? Greg's piano-wire body stretcher helps.

trimmed them to match my photos of the car, Fig. 7.

Before installing the clear headlight covers, paint the inside of the headlight buckets flat black, including the shelves that the covers rest on. While the flat black is out, paint the rest of the inside of the body shell so you won't see unpainted plastic when the car is viewed from a low angle.

The body fits tightly on the chassis – and it's an even tighter fit with my fat fingers in the way! I found a cure for that how-far-can-I-stretch-this-before-it-snaps anxiety: I formed a 6" segment of piano wire into a V, bent the last ½" at a right angle, and used this tool to stretch the lower panels while slipping the body onto the chassis, Fig. 8.

The GT 40 door handles resembled large rocker switches: You depressed the forward edge with your thumb, and the rear section popped out of the body to form a grab handle. However, both cars I was modeling had a loop welded on the driver's door handle to allow quicker operation. I drilled two holes in the handle and made the U-shaped attachment with wire, Fig. 9.

GT 40 Mk. IIA. Revell kit No. 7131 depicts the car that *almost* won Sebring in 1966. The Mk. IIA driven by Dan Gurney and Jerry Grant broke down minutes from the finish. (An open-topped GT 40 driven by Miles and Ruby won.)

As with No. 98, several minor improvements make our No. 2 a better replica. Again, the roof bulge needs to be modified. Instead of the molded teardrop shape, the bulge should be circular, Fig. 9 (page 88). It's easiest to replace the entire molding. You can use any material you like to get the correct shape – I used the nose of a large radar pod from Monogram's 1/72 scale P-82 Twin Mustang. The dome on the real car was pop riveted over the hole in the roof, so there should be a seam where the bulge meets the roof.

On this car, the two carburetor inlets on the engine cover were blanked off. I closed these openings with sheet styrene, painted aluminum, Fig. 10.

Other minor improvements included dividing the shoulder scoops and adding a grab handle on the driver's door, same as on No. 98. Also, I added two more number-identification lights: one on the driver's door, at 11 o'clock on the number; and one on the passenger side number, at 2 o'clock, Fig. 9.

Several details that I changed for No. 98 work for No. 2: The fuel filler cap stays

in the same spot; the snorkel scoops remain; the radiator outlet splitter is the right shape; and the jack hooks on the front are the right size.

As on car No. 98, I painted most of the interior and inside of the body flat black.

Painting. These tips apply to both cars. Painting the back of brake- and parking-light lenses red gives the realistic look of a transparent colored lens. I painted the cowl latches and the screw slots in the tail spoiler silver, then gave them a thin flat-black wash to pick out details. The back of the roof vents are painted dark gray. I outlined the door and cowl seams with India ink.

Both cars were painted with gloss colors (also an accurate color on street versions). I finished with Testor Dullcote: It tones down the shine, enhances the dullness of flat-painted areas, and coats the decals.

Custom decals. The GT 40s were sponsored almost solely by Ford and were devoid of the clutter of trademarks seen on most racers. In fact, the name "Ford" didn't even appear on the cars until later in 1966 at Le Mans. The only exceptions are the Autolite stickers.

Car No. 98 wore fluorescent-red identification patches on the nose and left door. The kit supplies orange decals; I painted red patches instead. This car's rocker-panel stripes were dark blue, but the kit decals were black. I masked and painted the decals before applying them.

The Revell decals were a bit thick. I loaded No. 98's decals with solvent, but

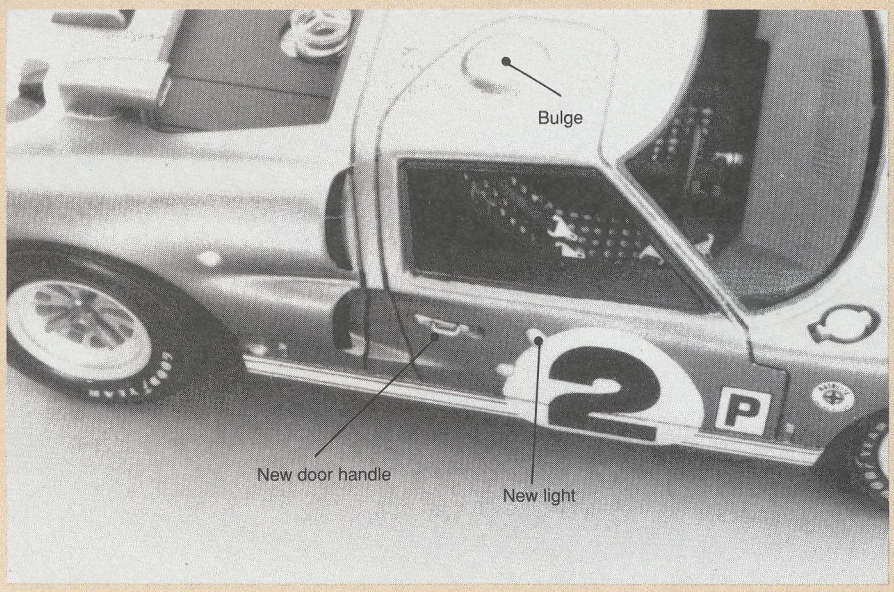


Fig. 9. Now it's Dan Gurney's turn: The roof bulge was added to accommodate drivers that rode tall in the saddle of the 40"-tall Ford.

on No.2 I replaced the white number disks with Super Scale decal trim film, Fig. 11. (A variety of solid-colored sheets is available, allowing you to customize decals to fit any car.) After applying the number disks, I trimmed the numbers from the kit decals and applied them to the disks. I hand painted the small part of the "2" that falls over the rear-deck scoop, Fig. 10.

Final lap. Photos show car No. 2 with protective covers taped over the lights. I got the same look simply by painting the clear covers white and replicating the tape with strips of white decal.

I secured car No. 2's front cowl with the kit-supplied hood pins. I left off the twin vanes on the front hood, same as car No. 98, and painted No. 2's front-cowl hinges bright silver (they're flat black on the other car). Since the number-illumination light was deleted from the left side of the real car, I hand painted a slight blemish to represent a touch-up in that spot, Fig. 10. Finally, I attached wire to the rear-cowl hood pin.

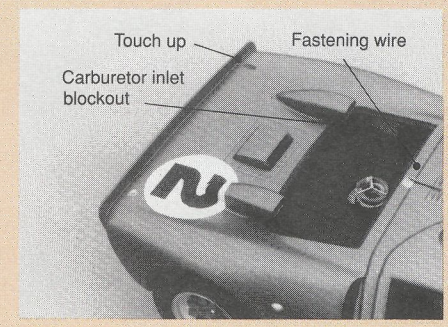


Fig. 10. You know you're a serious modeler when you add somebody else's touch-up!

All in the family. By now you've probably noticed that I have a special place in my heart for all variants of Ford's GT 40. Although the Revell kits are no longer available, Fujimi's three GT 40s give you a good start on modeling these famous Fords. Photo references, innovative decaling, painting – and this article – will help you model your favorites. **FSM**

REFERENCES

- Archibald, Steve, ***Ford GT 40 Sports Cars***, Sapphire Publications, Hemel Hempstead, Hertsfordshire, England, 1984
- Jones, Gordon, and John Allen, ***The Ford That Beat Ferrari: A Racing History of the GT 40***, Kimberly Publishers, London, 1985
- Spain, Ronnie, ***GT 40: An Individual History and Race Record***, Osprey Publishing, London, 1986

SOURCES

- **A + B epoxy putty**: Biggs Co., 612 E. Franklin, El Segundo, CA 90245
- **Sheet styrene**: Evergreen Scale Models, 12808 N. E. 125th Way, Kirkland, WA 98034
- **Decal trim film:** Super Scale International, 2211 Mouton, Carson City, NV 89706

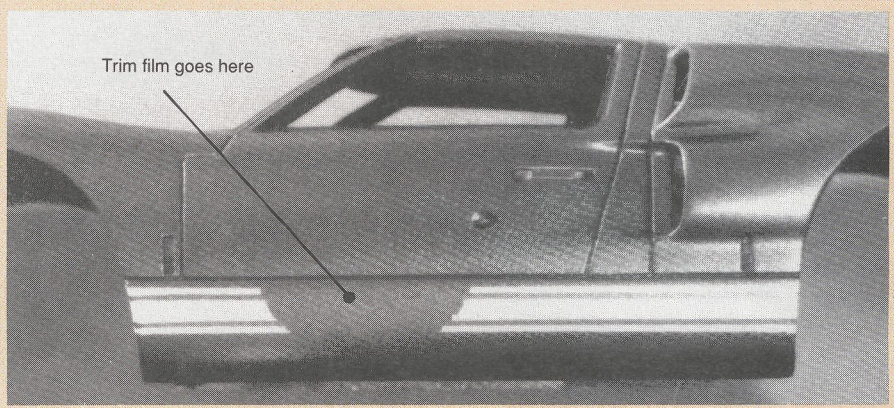


Fig. 11. Greg combined kit decals with Super Scale trim film to make his number disks.