

NOV 20 1963 *Brykholder*

Outshine Trains

Demand Climbs for Auto Racing Sets

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Toy auto racing sets are big again this year. Their popularity, which began less than five years ago, has increased to the point where they now surpass electric trains, according to one manufacturer of both toys.

A. C. Gilbert Jr., president of Toy Manufacturers of the U.S.A Inc., attributes the change to the fact that children today can more easily identify with cars that they see daily than with trains.

An outgrowth of the auto racing layout this year is a new harness racing set that pits two horse-drawn sulkies against each other in an electronic race on a track that's complete down to a plastic fence.

Auto layouts are increasingly elaborate, with new accessories added often.

A feature of one auto racing set is based on a trick performed at regular stock car events. In it, the miniature racing car jumps a gap from a ramp to the opposite lane of the roadway. Previously the cars simply changed lanes on the straight-away.

Depending on how much is spent on them, the car layouts can vary from ovals to figure eights with crossroads, to an intricate maze of road lanes.

All electrically powered, the sets usually contain cars, roadways, speed controls and power equipment. They can be enlarged by adding accessories

such as grandstands, towers, lap counters and timers, an official on his stand, a road service truck and other stock cars.

One manufacturer offers a railway-highway crossing as an

accessory that enables owners to incorporate an electric train layout into the car racing setup.

These auto racing sets can be operated by children from about eight years old on.