



RING FREE GOES RACING – AGAIN

2008 Historic TransAm at Sebring SEBRING INTERNATIONAL SPEEDWAY



HISTORIC



TRANSAM

Sportscar Vintage Racing Association (SVRA) conducts support races in conjunction with the Annual 12 Hours of Sebring. This year the Historic TransAm Group was included in the program. Twenty-nine Historic TransAm cars made the trip from the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance to Sebring for the event.

We decided for originality and left the 289 HiPo engine in the car for the Amelia Island show. Over the winter we had Marcovicci-Wenz Engineering build us a motor with 405hp, 90hp more than the 289 HiPo. The motor meets the Homologation requirements for our car, it is just not an original 1966 289 HiPo.

for an automatic transmission and not a manual. We spent over a half a day to locate a correct one. There was also another problem which was not to surface until later at Sebring. Adding some electrical problems with the motorhome resulted in arriving at Sebring a day late.



Randy Richardson Photo



Ted Wenz, of Marcovicci-Wenz Engineering, made arrangements with Ross Bremer for us to change the engine at his shop in Jacksonville after the Amelia Island show.

The engine change went well until we tried to start the new engine. It took a while to realize we had a starter

Along with the 12 Hour cars, SVRA cars and the Historic TransAM Group cars the paddock was pretty full by the time we arrived. Arriving late, we had to park back in the spectator area.



Besides being so far away from the paddock, we had work to do on the car which prevented us from having the car on display with the rest of the Historic TransAm Cars.



Randy Richardson Photo

Jan missed the first TransAm practice and I missed the Enduro practice and qualifying session. Since I never drove Sebring before and with the amount of cars entered, they did not want me to run the Enduro. They were going to let me run the Sprint race since there were not as many cars in that event. Since Jan also never drove the course before and will have only one practice session with the Historic TransAm Group, we decided he should run the Sprint race to get as much track time as possible before the Historic TransAm Feature.



Randy Richardson Photo

Sister cars united. Jan leads Steve Sorenson thru the turn.

There were only 29 TransAm entries, so Jan did not have so many cars to worry about and could concentrate on learning the track, as well as keeping an eye on the gauges with the new engine.



Randy Richardson Photo

Being an airport course there are no elevation changes. The course is marked with barriers and cones which pretty much all look the same when you first go out. Looking straight ahead the road surface continues and suddenly you notice a series of cones directing you into a turn.



Randy Richardson Photo



Randy Richardson Photo

Shades of SAAC-31, Jan leading that Boss 302!

Due to the length of the course and the amount of cars and classes requiring track time, the practice sessions were only :25 to :30 minutes long. The faster cars were able to complete 10 laps. We only managed 8.



Randy Richardson Photo

When you have never driven the course before and you are also sorting out a new engine, with 90hp more than your previous powerplant, a course like Sebring, with 18 turns and 3.7 miles in length, is not learned in 1, 18 or 28 laps.



Randy Richardson Photo

On the track it pays to know the drivers around you. Having run with the Historic TransAm Group before, they knew Jan and Jan knows them, which makes for very safe and comfortable overtaking situations.

The TransAm practice session went well. Jan was learning the track and all indications were that the engine had good power and was running well. Best time in 8 laps using 6,000rpm was a 3:12.

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After the practice session we noticed a water leak at the thermostat housing. The gasket was replaced and coolant added. We also had to address some front tire rub on the shock tower spring covers.



The SVRA Historic Group Sprint Race took the green flag at 9:10 Friday morning. Jan finished 1st in Class, 31st Overall in the 8 lap event. A McLaren M6B driven by Dave Handy took 1st Overall.



Things were looking promising for the Historic TransAm Feature. Another 6 laps under his belt, Jan was able to bring his lap times down consistently with a best time of 2:51.7 on the last lap of the race using 6000 to 6500rpm with an engine capable of 7500rpm. The water temperature was 180°, oil temperature 220° with a steady 60lbs pressure.



With high hopes, we took the green flag for the Historic TransAm Feature race under cool conditions with overcast skies at 2:00 Friday afternoon.



Before Jan completed the first lap we were in trouble. Although the water temp was still around 180° the oil temperature was on its way past 300°. As soon as Jan dropped down to 5000rpm the oil temp came down to 220°.



Driving by the oil temp gauge, not using more than 5000rpm, he was able to finish the race 2 laps behind the leaders, finishing 21st of 24 starters. Using only 5000rpm, 1000 less than in the practice session and the SVRA race, his best time was a 3:06.



Back in the paddock we discovered we were very low on water. Further investigation found a wet plug and water in #4 cylinder. Porting and age resulted in a hole in #4 intake runner in the head.