

1989-98 911



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Snap Shot

At Rennsport Reunion IV, too much of a good thing was just right.

STORY BY TED WEST

It was the morning after. I sat with my best old friends at the Beach Club in Pebble Beach, gazing out at a chrome and blue sea. Beyond Pt. Lobos, British Racing Green mountains thrust into cloudless sky. Another clear case of God showing off.

Yet this numbingly perfect view — for once — left me curiously unmoved. After three full days at Rennsport Reunion IV, watching hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of RS Spyders and 962Cs and 917Ks and 935 K3s get their tails wrung, then finding out what happens next, Pebble Beach was just more humdrum perfection. And compared to the perfectly limitless epicurean extravaganza of Rennsport, the view from the Beach Club was a ham sandwich.

Porsche Parade

We gawked out the Porsche shuttle bus (a Ford van) Friday morning on the way to Laguna Seca. We were the slowest salmon in the spawning run. All around us, gleaming street Porsches darted by, completing a pass. We kept on shuttle-bussing,

But it was good to be reminded why we'd all come. Porsches are for "getting there," in style... *fast*. Every time I start mine, the ball of my right foot tingles, needing to bear down.

The streaming 911s — with an occasional pristine 356 — confirmed what I'd always believed: Like race cars, Porsches are genetically rear-engined. Until a bright gold 928S flew by. Okay, maybe not just rear-engined, but certainly with two doors and a low center of gravity. Then a midnight-blue Panamera whooshed by.

Fine.

They've got any number of doors, with an engine in front, middle, or rear, but they're all low to the ground. Then a black Cayenne S lurked by....

Porsches are anything they want to be, as long as they're a Porsche — and not a shuttle bus. We veered into two-lane Highway 68 towards Laguna, the Porsches merging seamlessly like pumpkin seeds lining up to go down a drain. Brand loyalty at Rennsport Reunion — it's a complicated thing.

PHOTO RANDY WELLS



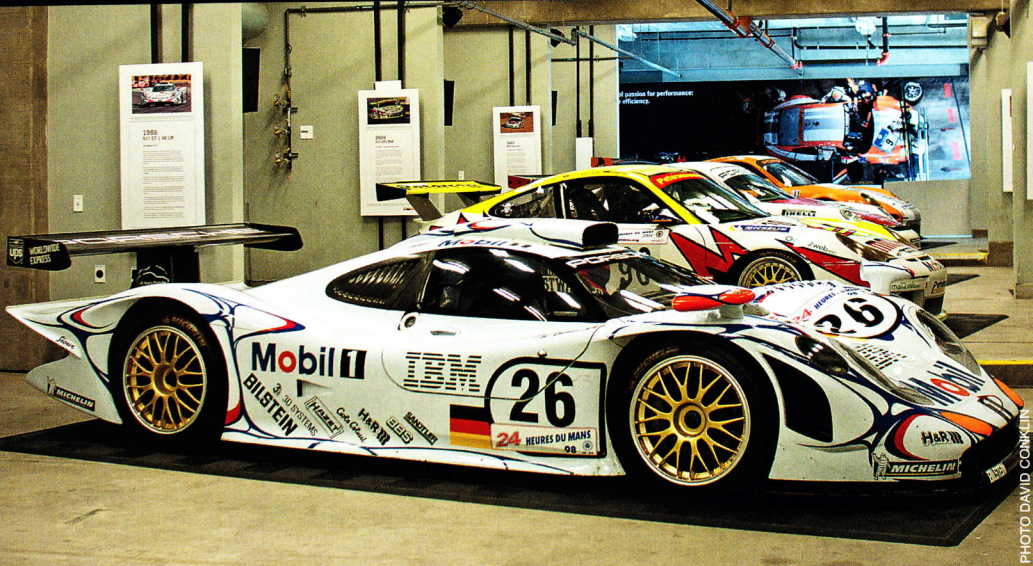


PHOTO DAVID CONIKLIN



PHOTO DAMON LOWMEYER



PHOTO HAL THOMAS



PHOTO JEFF THOMAS

Carbon-fiber-tubed, mid-engined 911 GT1 won Le Mans in 1998 (top left). Strolling through the Porsche Park, Derek Bell signs his autograph for an admirer (top right). Type 901 #18 was the first 911 to ever win a race (above left). Hundreds of Porsches grace the race track grounds (above right).

The Porsche Bowl

Laguna Seca is a ginormous salad bowl. The track skirts around its inner edge, making zany ground loops here and there, before racing right out over the bowl's lip, then sluicing down the "Corkscrew" back into the salad. Laguna's name means "dry lake," a lie. Today it boasts a permanent, very wet lake. The first time I came, I saw Stirling Moss win a race — without a clutch. That day, we parked our cars right at the bottom of the lake.

The big hill behind the paddock today has corn-row after corn-row of neatly parked Porsches. On the mesa across from the paddock are more corn-rows of Porsches — with an occasional Chevy pickup. (Life isn't perfect.) Taking in this glittering universe of Porsches, it's as if the world has finally made the turning I always

expected — to a place where all cars are interesting, all cars are worth driving.

Along the lake is a long double file of pointy white tents. It looks like the All-England Medieval Jousting Tournament, each tent sheltering a different knight. But no. This teeming sideshow is where you buy cheap t-shirts, expensive bottled water, bratwurst (with or without heartburn), and beautiful racing books by people like Pete Lyons — and even me.

The multitudes browse and wander, dropping fives and tens as they go.

King's Row

In Laguna's row of recently added FIA garages is a lineup of 911 racing royalty. Arranged chronologically, they're parked on the diagonal, fighters on a flight deck. Last is today's 911 GT3 R Hybrid 2.0. Next

come the half-mad 911 deviations and hallucinations — a GT1, belly hunkered down like an alligator eyeing a lamb. Next come the 935s — fatuous cartoons — then earlier 911s, looking very like, um, earlier 911s. But the last 911 is singular, a callow little 1964 Type 901.

Black, with the racing number 18, it wears a "Daytona Continental 24: Passed" tech sticker. Oh?

One of the first two 911s in the U.S., it was a demo car at Brumos Porsche. (Where else?) Then, in 1965, Atlanta Volkswagen dealer and racer Jack Ryan bought it to race in the 1966 Daytona 24 Hours. Ah, but when #18 arrived at Daytona, Huschke von Hanstein, Porsche racing czar, objected violently. It wasn't ready to race for 24 grueling hours — it would be a blot on Porsche's name!



PHOTO RANDY WELLS



PHOTO BOB CHAPMAN

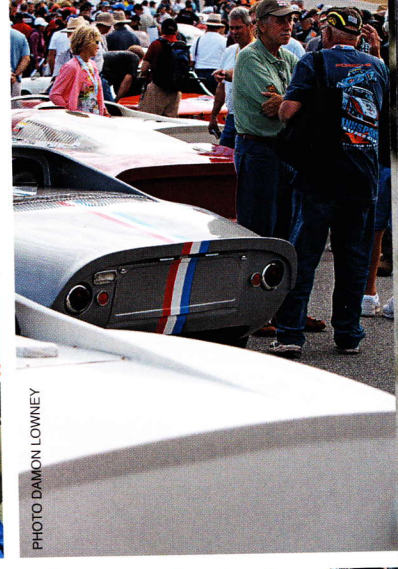


PHOTO DAMON LOWNEY



PHOTO DAMON LOWNEY

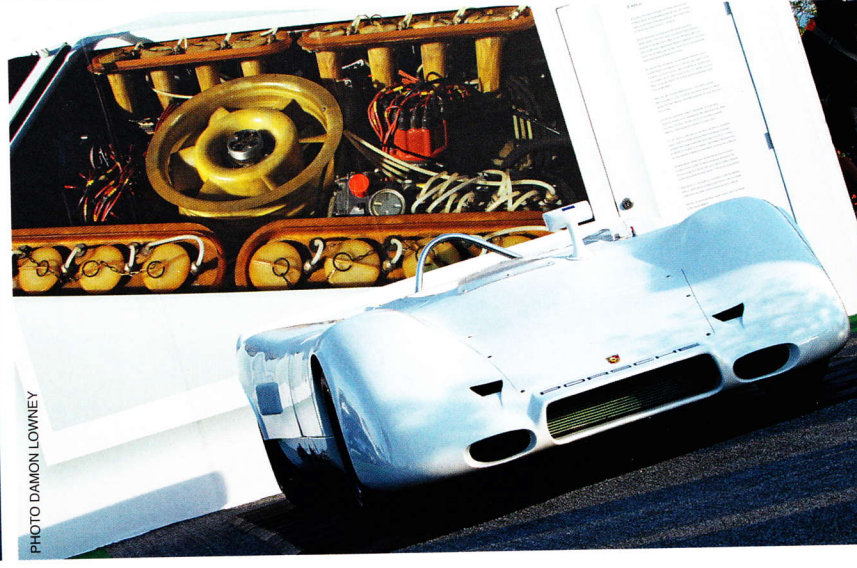


PHOTO DAMON LOWNEY

Porsche designer Thorsten Klein next to the 918 RSR (top left). Current Porsche factory drivers lined up for photos, with American Patrick Long on the far right (top middle). Concours on Pit Lane (top right). 991 made its American debut at Rennsport (above left). 917-027 and its flat-16 engine (above right).

Ryan was equally adamant. He owned the car. He could do with it anything he wanted, such as race it for 24 hours.

Ryan took the green flag. Twelve hours in, he and co-drivers Bill Bencker and Linley Coleman led GT2000, the little 901 not missing a beat. Von Hanstein, smiling now, offered Ryan Porsche's full support. The little black car won the GT2000 category, completing 548 laps — 122 more than the second-place MGB. #18 was the first 911 in the world to win a race!

White Elephant

The paddock's Porsche Park was shoulder to shoulder. First, there were massive legendary-driver autograph sessions. Then there was the unveiling of the all-new Type 991 911. If that wasn't enough, bathtub-sized steins of beer were on sale.

Porsche Park had another attraction — chassis 917-027. When the unbeatable 917K was excluded from the World Manufacturer's Championship for 1972, its goal became winning the unlimited North American Can-Am. To make Can-Am-sized power, Porsche had to either turbocharge its five-liter F.I.A. flat twelve or expand the already large engine's capacity.

Chassis 917-027, the all-white Can-Am Spyder in Porsche Park, is absolutely gargantuan. Circumnavigating it, you'd best bring sensible shoes. Its engine weighs 760 pounds, has 16 cylinders(!), displaces 7.2 liters, and makes 880 horsepower! Forty years later, it still raises the heart rate — even when it's still.

In the end, Zuffenhausen preferred a turbocharged flat twelve. Smaller and lighter, it made 950 horsepower in 1972

and 1,200 horses in 1973. But Porsche hero-driver Mark Donohue, never satisfied, wanted to turbocharge the 16. Estimated output: 2,000 horsepower!

Driver's Meeting

Englishman Richard Attwood looks you straight in the eye — always with the hint of a smile. You'd like him. Trim, fit, the 1970 Le Mans winner looks like he could do it all over again. One of Porsche's greatest drivers, he was the first, with co-driver Hans Herrmann, to win Le Mans overall for Porsche.

But it was ridiculous, he scoffs.

"Our car was so bloody slow," he says. "We should never have won — it was more a matter of all the others losing. We had a 4.5 instead of the five-liter and a four-speed instead of the five-speed. And

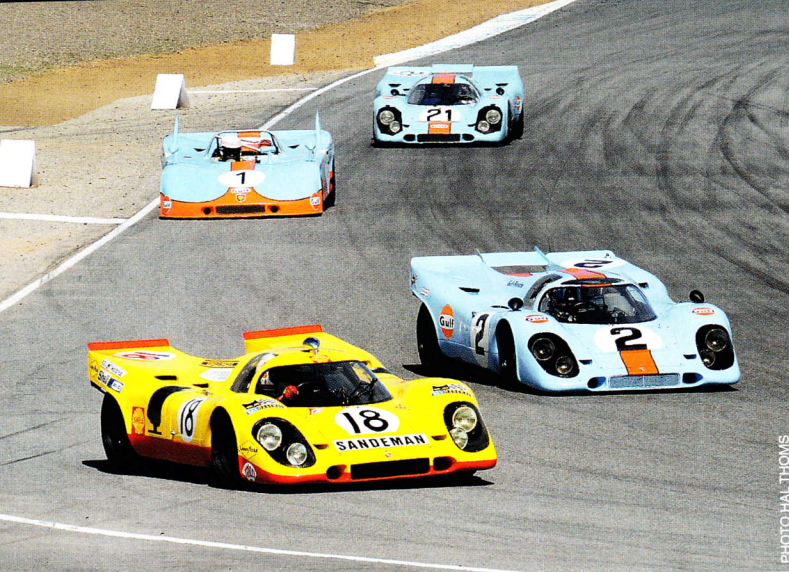


PHOTO HAL THOMAS



PHOTO HAL THOMAS



PHOTO DAMON LOWMEY



PHOTO HAL THOMAS

917Ks sandwich a 908/3 driven by Brian Redman (top left). 1974 Carrera flown in from Australia just for Rennsport mixes it up with 935s and RSRs (top right). Speedy Mark Hotchkis (above left) races the purple Wynn's 962 (above right), using its straightline speed to stay ahead of several modern RS Spyders.

Porsche forbade us using first gear, so at Mulsanne Corner and Arnage, which are extremely slow, we chugged out lap after lap waiting for the engine to pull."

Attwood came out of the era with a 917 of his own, sold recently for a tidy sum. He smirks. "I always said my 917 would be my pension — and so it was."

But what of those risky days? He nods matter-of-factly. "It was a lethal thing to be doing, of course, we all knew that. But it was just a part of the landscape. We'd been through a war, hundreds and hundreds of thousands killed. It didn't seem that unusual."

The Right Crowd, and Very Crowded

Everyone's here — Derek Bell, Hurley

Haywood, Tony Adamowicz, Dennis Aase, Chip Robinson, David Donohue, Patrick Long, Rudi Lins, Dick Barbour, George Follmer, Jürgen Barth, Vern Schuppan, Jo Buzzetta, Stefan Johansson, James Weaver, Elliot Forbes-Robinson, Bruce Leven, David Murry, Norbert Singer, Alwin Springer, Timo Bernhard, Sascha Maassen ...and on and on.

In a press-room interview, David Donohue, Mark's son, speaks about racing older Porsches. "The main differences in old cars like my dad's 917/30 is, you have to read the dials and gauges! No simple warning lights like now — and no sequential gears. They're much harder to drive, and more dangerous. You couldn't drive them as rough as we do today."

Porsche veteran shoe Chip Robinson chimes in: "When the cars started having more downforce and wider tires, conditioning became more important. I used to run 60 miles a week." Current factory driver Patrick Long puts it all in perspective: "The bigger the steering wheel and the smaller the tires, the more fun I have." Donohue and Robinson nod immediately.

Heroes and Legends

David Piper, brilliant British privateer racer, owns the oldest single-owner 917, his since 1970. That year, he was deeply involved in the movie *Le Mans*. Instead of wrecking priceless 917s, he says, the movie crashed radio-controlled Lola T70 chassis with 917 bodies. If you look closely, the pale-blue Gulf 917 bodies tear away from



PHOTO: HAL THOMAS



PHOTO: BOB CHAPMAN



PHOTO: RANDY WELLS



PHOTO: BOB CHAPMAN

Dyson 962 on a creative line through the Corkscrew (top left). Brian Redman in a 718 RSK Spyder (top right). Porsches of all types parade around the track, giving rides to some lucky passengers (above left). Cayman Interseries racers respect motorsport roots with famous paint jobs (above right).

monocoque Lola chassis. The 917 chassis was a tubular spaceframe.

Piper's eye twinkles. "And the radio-control crashes constantly went wrong. Again and again, McQueen sent me to the phones to buy more Lolas." Piper drove in the movie as well, suffering a very real mishap: He lost a leg. Today, he gets around with a cane and a slight limp, feeling chipper, thank you very kindly.

Shuttle Diplomacy

On the shuttle bus to the hotel, I sit next to Vic Elford, British ex-postman and bravest of the brave. From 1969 through 1971 at Le Mans, he drove down the Mulsanne Straight at 248 mph.

Think about that. 1970. 248 mph.

I mention the Targa Florio. Vic had

taken two of my friends around the 44-mile circuit in an Alfa Berlina, calling out the hundreds and hundreds of turns three corners in advance! It still seems impossible. I said only he and Gerard Larrousse (both former rallyists with photographic memories) knew the Targa Florio route that well.

"You had to," says Vic. "It was the only way!" I nod, then ask, "By the way, how is Larrousse these days?" Vic smiles. "See for yourself — he's sitting right behind you!"

Bob Carlson

On December 18, 2008, Porsche Cars North America — and all of us who knew him — lost Bob Carlson. He'd been at Porsche 24 years, rising to media director in 1991. But he was more — Porsche's

face...gently, imperturbably enthusiastic about everything Porsche.

Bob invented Rennsport Reunion and saw it through its first three rounds. At Rennsport Reunion IV, his name came up again and again. He is sorely missed. He and I had a running joke. He would do his spot-on, hysterically funny imitation of Mario Andretti complaining that there was debris on the back straight. No matter how I resisted, I fell down in the dirt laughing.

Saturday morning — aboard the shuttle again — I talk with an attractive, very sweet woman. When we arrive at the track, she says her name is Debbie Carlson. Bob's wife. She'd nursed him through his years of battling cancer. That night, Porsche gives her a special watch honor-



A Mercedes-Benz factory race car transporter on display with a 906 (right). For more event coverage, be sure to visit www.excellence-mag.com/of-note.

ing Bob's memory. Amidst racing's legends, she was Guest of Honor.

Central Accounting

Over 300 race cars came to Rennsport, plus untold thousands of street Porsches. It was a stupendous undertaking for the owners, for Porsche, and for the group that ran things, led by racer Bruce Canepa.

So how'd it go?

Detlev von Platen, president of PCNA, seemed to speak practically every time three or four Porsche owners gathered. His speeches all said the same thing — this is incredible, this is unbelievable... *and* an ideal showcase for the brand-new 991. The legions at Rennsport were exactly the people he wanted to see the new car first. The bad news: von Platen had a meeting in Stuttgart first thing Monday morning. It was like prying an abalone off a rock, it was said, getting him to leave for the airport.

Canepa says that about 45,000 people attended. A blockbuster. And von Platen is determined to bring the next Rennsport back to Laguna. *Huzzah*.

Weissach Cup

What you want? We got it. You like 550s and RSKs and Abarth Carreras? Got 'em. You like 904s, 911T/Rs, and 914-6 GTs? PCA Club racers and Caymans and Porsche Cup racers? Got 'em plenty. Sitcherself down, we're about to start.

That's no carnie spiel — at Rennsport, it was real! Notch-window Pre-As to RS Spyders. Porsche racing history unfolded class by class, era by era. The Weissach Cup was for "plastic" Porsches — pure racing 906s through 910s, the brutally

quick 908/3, and turbo and naturally-aspirated 917s. Delish.

The 908/3s were driven by fast privateer Phil Daignepond (who, alas, dropped out early) and the brilliant Brian Redman. George Follmer was in his 1972 917/10 Can-Am car (but ignition problems made him a DNS).

This left speedy Bruce Canepa, Dutch master driver Gijs van Lennep, and Chris McAllister in three fine 917Ks. Canepa led off the start, but, lap for lap, Redman, Canepa, and van Lennep shuffled the deck like riverboat gamblers. Halfway through, unbeknownst to the others, Canepa dropped out, leaving Redman, van Lennep, and McAllister roaring. The sound of them rowing through the gears, pure racket trailing in their wakes, was beyond beautiful.

Near the end, van Lennep saw a blurry Gulf 917 in his mirrors. Thinking it was Canepa, who was faster, he let the car by — only to realize it was McAllister. No worries. McAllister deserved his second, with Redman ahead and van Lennep behind. Delighted to win, as ever, Redman smiled his cherubic smile — despite the hell of shattered limbs, an incinerated face, and temporary blindness he'd suffered during his long, perilous career.

Carrera Trophy

A mad tango of RSRs, 934s, and 935s lined up, Canepa's 935 next to Johannes van Overbeek's ex-Bob Akin Coca-Cola 935. The grid rolled forward in a tantrum, Canepa nipping van Overbeek at the green flag. They swapped places violently, registering 143 mph on the Start/Finish radar — fastest all day. Then both

had contact with slower cars and dropped out. Rusty French's black Sky Sands 935 stepped in and led to the finish.

Far back, in 19th on the grid, was Ranson Webster's pink 935 K3. While van Overbeek and Canepa led, Webster made it look like all the rest were in reverse. He passed one, two, sometimes three cars at a time. By the checkered flag, he'd passed 15 cars to finish fourth! Afterwards, he looked as if he'd won Monaco — which is just as it should be.

Stuttgart Cup

It was vintage IMSA times two — a 24-car grid of 956s, 962s, and RS Spyders. We crouched behind our chairs for the start. Three RS Spyders led. Of course. But in their midst — in front of two of them — was the prettiest Moby Grape-colored Wynn's 962, crashing the party.

Upholding the RS Spyders' honor was masterful Didier Theys, in the lead. But young Mark Hotchkis' intercontinental ballistic grape 962 was giving the other two Spyders ulcers, while the other 962s were strung out miles behind. RS pilots Christian Zugel and the ubiquitous Bruce Canepa hissed and snapped at Hotchkis, passing, then being repassed. Finally, after ten raucous laps, Hotchkis' tires went off, and he settled for fourth behind Theys, Zugel, and Canepa.

In the paddock, Hotchkis was beside himself. "They were old tires — we just didn't have the grip, and we couldn't brake with the RSs. But we had some power. Man, it was *great!* I've never, ever been that close to RS Spyders — except maybe through the fence at Long Beach."

Indeed. ♣

700 HORSES AND FOUR ON THE FLOOR

Rennsport Reunion IV—as seen from
behind the wheel of The Last 935.

STORY BY JOHANNES VAN OVERBEEK
PHOTOS BY BOB CHAPMAN UNLESS NOTED

Rounding Turn 11 on Sunday afternoon, there's nothing but clear track ahead. Pole position is the best place to start a race, and I'm feeling confident. We've been fastest every session and qualified three seconds faster than the next-fastest 935. "The race is just a formality at this point," I say to myself.

Staring at the flagger, I begin to slowly unleash all 700 of this 1984 Fabcar 935/84's horses. Glancing in my righthand mirror, I see Bruce Canepa's factory 1979 935 lagging back. Not wanting to get black-flagged for jumping the start, I back off the throttle. Side by side when the green flag finally flies, we bury the accelerator pedals into our respective floorboards.

The next thing I see is Bruce's pristine 935 sail by on full boost. The race is on.

All Rennsport Reunions are happenings. Or so I've heard. I've only been to one other, the third one at Daytona in 2007. That one was an eye-opening collection of Porsche people and cars, and this one is no different.

The drumbeat leading up to RRIV was loud and rapid. Rumors of record ticket sales and sold-out hotels hit a fevered pitch as it drew closer. With all the hype of "new," "rare," and "never seen," I was half expecting to see Jimmy Hoffa and Elvis wandering the paddock.

Ultimately, though, Rennsport is a big car show with vintage "races" mixed in—a great way for fans to see and hear rare racing Porsches in their natural habitat. I think of vintage races as loud car shows and have loved spectating and participat-

ing in them for 20 years. In fact, my first time driving a real car on a real race track was at a vintage event in my father's 914-6 at Sears Point in the early 1990s.

Since then, I've participated in countless races in the American Le Mans Series and at Le Mans itself, which has given me a spectrum of four-wheeled competitive experiences ranging from low-risk driving in vintage events to a *lot* of calculated risks in pro racing. I like both, but the pro racing attitude is far more challenging. Every driver acts like a high-paid assign, which, figuratively speaking, is what they are.

Watching the five-minute board being waved before first practice on Friday, I decide to take the approach I use while riding my bicycle: Act as if you're invisible. If I make no assumptions about people seeing me, I'll keep myself, and others, safe.

Sitting at the back of the grid, I can see 49 cars in front of me. "Cars" isn't accurate. I see 48 racing 911s plus a 944 for good measure. 50 cars is a lot of cars at Laguna Seca, especially considering the disparity in speed between a Carrera RSR 2.8 with 300 hp (or a 944) and a 935 with 700+.

The 935 I'm sitting in is familiar to me. I tested it against a 934 here at Laguna Seca last year for an article with George Follmer (*Excellence* April 2011), and had fun chasing Dekon Monzas until the four-speed gearbox started making funny noises. The car went back to Jerry Woods Enterprises for a transmission rebuild, and here we are again. If there's one thing about this car's owner, Jim Edwards, it's this: He likes to see his Porsche race cars get used.

van Overbeek navigates The Last 935 through the Corkscrew (top, right). Bruce Canepa in the #12 935 took the lead early in the race (below, left). Two turbos can be seen at the rear (below, right).



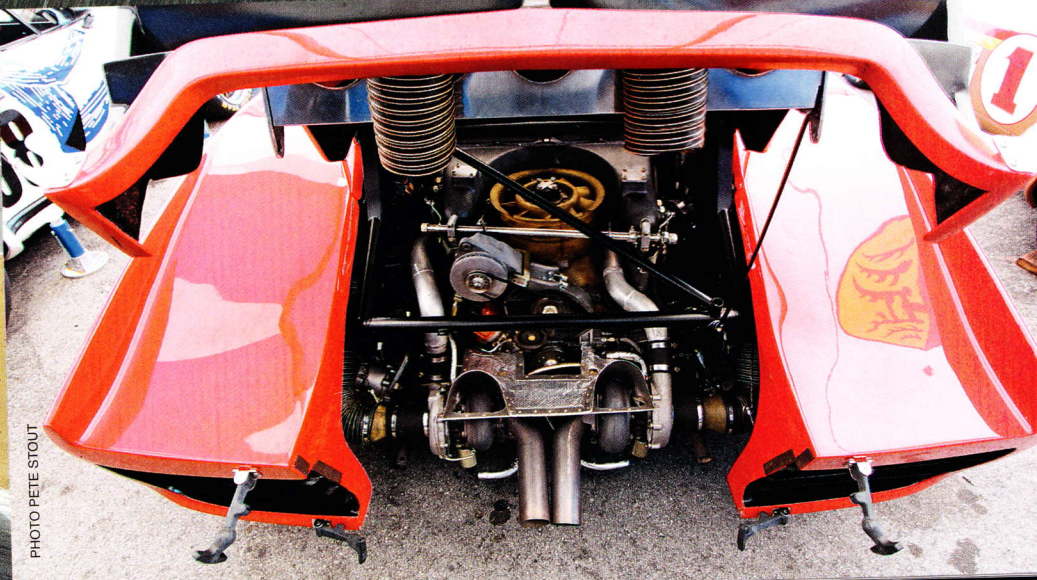


PHOTO HAL THOMAS

PHOTO PETE STOUT



PHOTO: H. THOIS



PHOTO: DAVID CONKLIN



When Group 4 gets the signal to head out, I find first-gear engagement a bit stiff with the still-cold gearbox. It takes the gear, though, so I join the 20,000-hp rollout. My next challenge: The 10-mph, 180° lefthand corner leading onto pit lane with a first gear good for 60 mph and a locked differential.

High-power race cars tend to use “lockers,” or “spools,” because they’re simple, light, and allow for great traction under power and in straight-line braking. A locked diff is great at high speeds, but it’s a nightmare at low speeds because the inside and outside wheels spin together — making it hard to get the car to turn. That and tight pit walls add up to one very nervous pilot in the fire-breathing #05 Coca-Cola 935.

As Group 4 enters the track and our first practice session, I review my objectives: 1) feel the car out, 2) make sure the rebuilt gearbox is working properly, and 3) get a feel for the traffic I’ll be running in.

It’s still cool in the early morning hours, and I’m on year-old slicks with 700 hp! To put some heat into the rear tires, I stand on

the track, with all the nervousness you get with sudden forward weight transfer.

My third objective is also achieved. Some drivers pay close attention and are easy to work with. Some don’t, but at least they stick to the racing line, which makes them predictable. A few are scary: They lack spacial awareness, don’t know the line, and generally act in an unpredictable manner. Apparently, driving competence isn’t a prerequisite to owning a rare race car.

Heading off track and into the paddock, the sheer number of spectators is shocking, and it’s only Friday! Negotiating the paddock without running people over is no easy task with a 60-mph first gear. Neither is finding our transporter truck.

Then I see Andy Smith and Chisolm Billingsley, who are crewing for Edwards this weekend, waving at me. As I climb out of the car, I let Ike Smith know that it’s jumping out of fourth gear. Like the experienced crew chief he is — having worked with Carl Haas and having all the great

mushroomed. But, after looking at every piece, Jerry declares the gearbox perfect. There’s no internal cause. *Hmm.*

After a day of non-stop talking, I find myself looking forward to a quiet evening. I want to sit by myself, read a book, and have a good meal — since I missed lunch and barely ate breakfast. Sitting at the bar, I soon find myself engaged in a very pleasant conversation with somebody who was clearly in the area for Rennsport. Looking around the bar, this phenomenon of Rennsporters meeting for the first time seems quite common — and this is only one of hundreds of restaurants in the area.

As we talk, we realize we’re in the same run group, and he’s driving a 1974 3.0-liter RSR. When I introduce myself, my new friends says, “Hi, I’m Steve Schmidt.” I bid him good night and tell him I’d look for him on track the next day.

It’s Saturday morning and, looking out my hotel window, I can’t see much. It’s fog, a rare sight on the Monterey Peninsula in the fall. It usually burns off by 10:00 AM, but our qualifying session is slated for early morning. Arriving at a foggy track, I suspect qualifying will be canceled. If you can’t see between flag stations, it’s normally grounds for a delay. An hour later, I’m in the 935. “I can’t believe they’re letting us out!” I murmur into my helmet.

I know the fog will wreak havoc on the minds of my competitors. The combination of poor visibility and the prospect of wet sections at the top of the hill will slow everyone down. Under the best circumstances, I’ll get only a lap or two without traffic. In these conditions, it may be less.

Getting heat in the tires in these conditions is critical. If the tires are hot and it’s damp in a section or two, the car is predictable — provided there’s no standing water. If you come across a damp section on cold slicks, it might be disastrous. The 935’s turbo power, spool, and rear weight bias make it easy to force heat into the rear tires, but it’s harder to warm the fronts.

By the third lap, the front tires are hot and I’m on it. Going up the hill between Turn 6 and the Corkscrew, I’m accelerating hard, nearly blind in the fog. The twin-turbo six is making *huge* power in these conditions, and my shift points are earlier. I can use fourth more often now that I have confidence in it, but it still pops out of gear.

At roughly 135 mph, two shapes materialize ahead. A second later, they look like 911s. After another second, it’s hard to

Ranson Webster in his #42 935 K3 (top, left) worked from 19th place to finish fourth. Rusty French won the race in his #9 935 K3 (top, right), after a couple incidents took out the front-runners. Saturday’s qualifying session was very foggy (middle); van Overbeek still took pole. Steve Schmidt in the Corkscrew in his #41 Porsche (bottom, left). Kees Nierop pilots the Kremer 934 (bottom, right).

the gas while pointed straight. If I can get heat into the rears, all I’ve got to worry about is going off straight — so at least I’ll see what I’m about to hit! At Turn 3, I turn in aggressively, scrubbing the front tires to put some temperature into them, too. By being aggressive about getting heat into the tires, you make the car safer, sooner, which allows more time at speed in the session to make changes and get accustomed to things. I’m ready to go by the end of the out-lap.

Accelerating up Laguna’s fastest straight is like riding a rocket. Exiting Turn 11 in first gear, I crest the kink called Turn 1 in fourth! The acceleration never wanes, and soon I’m passing cars like I’m lane-splitting on a motorcycle in bumper-to-bumper traffic. By the end of the 20-minute session, I’ve lapped several cars.

First and second objectives achieved: The Fabcar 935 feels great, and I have a feel for the freshened gearbox. It shifts perfectly and far easier than it did last time. There is one issue, though: It jumps out of fourth gear anytime I have to back out of the throttle for traffic, which is often. When it does, I’m left freewheeling in the fastest part of

war stories to prove it — Ike makes notes and says he’ll get to the bottom of it. Andy and Chisolm, assisted by Rich Walton, Ron Gruener, and Scott Levine of JWE, jump into action and carefully inspect the shift linkage. In the end, they don’t find anything obvious. Just a few tweaks are needed — but will it be enough?

In Friday’s second and last practice session, the gearbox feels better but still jumps out of fourth. Back in the pits, the crew fears something internal is preventing positive engagement. Then a guy with a police-spec mustache and a pink hat walks up. It’s Jerry Woods — the JW in JWE, a guy who worked on 935s in their glory days. He’s supposed to be on holiday this weekend.

“Hey guys, what’s going on?” Jerry asks as he approaches our huddle. When we tell him, he directs his guys to get the car in the air so he can take the gearbox apart for inspection — without batting an eyelid.

Wandering back an hour or so later, I see Jerry standing over a makeshift table, calmly inspecting the gearbox’s internals with a critical eye. Prior to disassembly, he suspected the fourth-gear synchro had

identify them in my rearview mirror. The speed differential out here must top 50 mph, in fog! After one more lap, I decide it's time to park it and head in — not knowing where we stand. We're on the pole.

Entering Turn 4 on Bruce Canepa's bumper for the first time in our 20-minute race, I have a run on him — but his 935 pulls two car lengths on me by Turn 5!

Closing back up under braking, I go to power early, which I'm comfortable doing with Jerry's 935 engine because he builds engines that deliver power linearly. Because I'm able to get on the power earlier, I'm alongside Bruce on the way up to Turn 6. Once Bruce is on boost, though, he's easily past me. It's a matter of power.

third, except for this: I'm able to get underneath Bruce on the way into Turn 11. It's a replay of the start, but this time I've got a nose on him headed up the front straight. It doesn't matter. By the top of the hill, all I can see is the orange glow of his turbos.

Dogging him, I get a much better run through Turn 6 and am able to stay closer for longer on the way up the hill. Out of Turn 6, the track bends slightly to the left headed up the back straight. The braking zone begins on a hill, but, in the middle of the brake zone, you crest the hill and veer right as the track flattens, before the 90° left turn drops you into the Corkscrew.

Bruce brakes earlier and, since I'm close, I decide to take a run at him. Just as he crests the hill and jogs right under braking,

per lap just being overly careful in traffic.

Coming out of Turn 6, I see a long line of cars racing up the hill. I pass four, maybe five cars. Up ahead I see the last car I was planning to pass, my new friend Steve from the bar in his '74 RSR. Anticipating he'll jog right in the braking zone, I go left, which puts me on the inside going into the Corkscrew — the same move I used on Bruce.

I blow past Steve, then focus on finishing my braking and setting up for the Corkscrew. The human mind must move quickly, because, as I pass Steve, I feel very light contact. But, looking in my mirror, I see poor Steve spinning like a top! Turning left into the Corkscrew, I realize my right rear tire is flat. Our race is run.

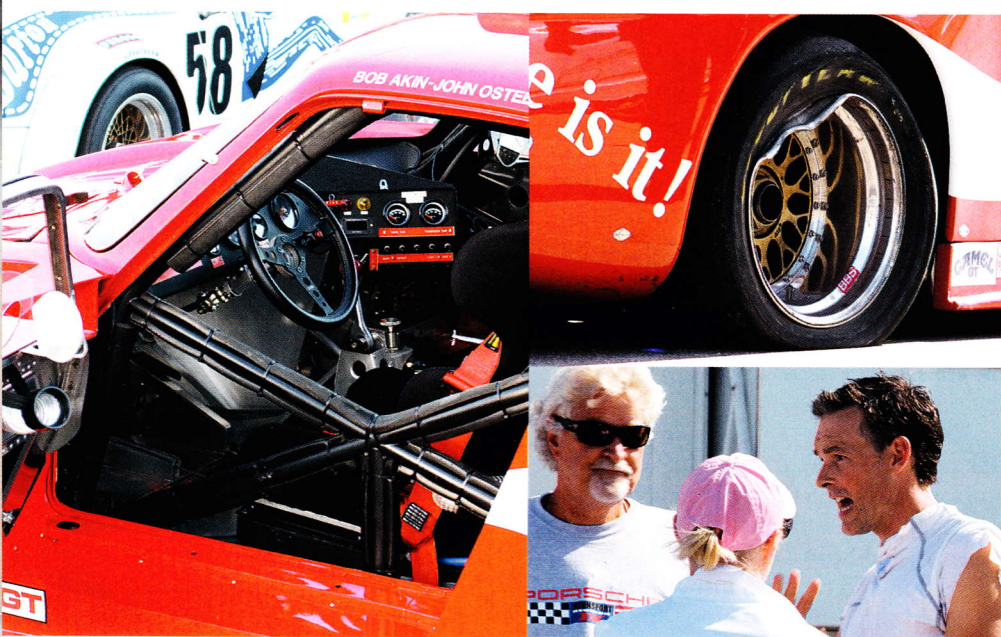
Pulling into the pits, I jump out to see a bent rim half and a tiny scratch on the 935's lower rocker. Weird. Luckily, Steve was able to continue sans windshield. During his spin, air rushed into the cockpit and blew his windshield out, a reminder of why modern racing cars have windshield tabs. When Steve comes in, I look at his 911 but there's no body damage — other than the slightest scratch on a wheel arch, one that Steve notes actually *will* rub out.

After talking with him and reviewing the in-car video, I can only conclude we were so close that, when Steve turned right, the trailing edge of his left front wheel/tire poked out *just* enough to catch my right rear, causing my flat and his spin. A lot of commotion — fortunately with little damage.

In the end, I apologize to Steve because it is the overtaking driver's responsibility to pass cleanly and because I feel badly about disturbing his race. I also feel badly for Jim, Jerry, Rich, Ron, Scott, Andy, Chisolm, Ike, and the others who worked long hours to see the #05 935 shine among its peers. I feel like I've let them down. There was no prize money, and nobody's job was on the line. Racers, however, are racers, regardless of their skill level. Everyone, in every race group at Rennsport, was doing their best and things happen despite best intentions.

Feeling sour on the whole affair, I'm about to leave the paddock when I hear my name being called. It's Jerry Woods. "That was *the coolest* four laps I've seen with these cars since the eighties!" he exclaims. "That was *AWESOME!*"

Hearing similar sentiments from Jim Edwards and others whom I admire and respect in the days after Rennsport Reunion, I realize that the Coca-Cola 935 shined in the eyes of those who matter. And, after all, *that's* what Rennsport is all about. ■



PHOTOS DAMON LOWNEY

The Last 935 keeps its driver well-protected with a substantial roll cage. Damage was limited to the right-rear wheel and tire. Jim Edwards, left, and van Overbeek, right, discuss the on-track incident.

Prior to the race, Jim Edwards encouraged me to turn the boost up to 1.2 bar if needed — for another 200 hp. We've been running 1.0 bar all weekend and have easily been fastest until now, but the second lap is a repeat of the first: I'm all over Bruce in the corners and under braking but don't stand a chance on straights.

On the third lap, I half-heartedly reach for the boost knob. Then it dawns on me: *How much is too much? Is it a half turn, a full turn, or....?* I turn the knob to the right about an eighth of a turn, but it feels like all I'm doing is taking the slop out of the cable. I don't notice a difference in straight-line speed, but I never touch it again.

The fourth lap is nearly a repeat of the

I shoot by on his left, setting me up for the drop into the Corkscrew. I need to pass him here if I want to stay ahead, because I'm stronger through Turns 9, 10, and the approach to 11. I make a clean pass.

It's over...or so I think.

The next couple of laps are uneventful. Bruce's 935 gets smaller and smaller in my rearview mirror and Rusty French's third-place 935 is nowhere in sight. As I'm passing and already lapping cars, I can tell that driver intensity is higher than it had been in practice. I come across cars in clumps of two, three, and five, with each focused on its respective race — trying to pass or trying not to get passed. Relative to a pro race, I figure I'm giving up three to five seconds