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Sonoma Historic Motorsports Festival Starts Tomorrow

Quiet Sonoma Valley Roars with Cool Vintage Cars

SONOMA, CALIF. (June 4, 2010) – California's serene Sonoma Valley, typically reserved for sip-and-savor winery tours, has come alive with the roar of vintage race cars. Today, 375 entries in the [Sonoma Historic Motorsports Festival](#) practiced and prepared for this weekend's racing at [Infineon Raceway](#), certain to be a treat for connoisseurs of everything sophisticated and fine.

"We have hosted an historic event in the wine country for 24 years," said Steve Earle of General Racing, which organizes the historic races, "but this is a new event. It's bigger and better."

Bigger means an increase in number of cars by more than 30%, which in and of itself takes the Sonoma Historic Motorsports Festival to a whole new level, adding more color, more excitement as 13 competition groups--identified by era dating from pre-World War I to the 1990s--take to Infineon Raceway's 2.52 mile road course. In addition to watching the cars in motion and getting up-close-and-personal with drivers and their cars in the paddock area, spectators will enjoy a rare opportunity to preview three extraordinary cars delivered by the event's hospitality sponsor [Gooding &](#)

[Company](#), the internationally celebrated automotive auction house. The cars--a winning 1956 Maserati 200 SI raced by Sir Stirling Moss; an award-winning 1951 Ferrari 340 America from the estate of devoted enthusiast Mr. Gil Nickel; and a stunning 1949 Talbot-Lago T-26 Racing Monoplace that won the 1950 Paris Grand Prix-- will be auctioned at Gooding & Company's Pebble Beach Auctions in August.

A Gentleman and a Driver

Though the cars are the stars, on many occasion a star arrives in the form of a driver. One such driver at this year's Sonoma Historic Motorsports Festival is John Morton from El Segundo, Calif. Morton's love for motorsports began as a teen when he and his father attended his first road race at Road America in 1957. His impression from that weekend was such that he resolved to race cars one day. In 1963, he purchased a Lotus Super 7, followed by a Lotus 23SR the following year. He went on to join Peter Brock's Datsun team, which won the Trans-Am 2.5 liter Championship in 1971 and 1972. His early success in Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) racing led to impressive drives in Formula 5000, Can-Am and IMSA GTP, and after nine attempts at Le Mans, John snagged victory in 1994.

"I have a real affection for the history of racing and at these vintage races," said Morton when asked what it's like to get into these old cars after having such a distinguished professional career in motor sports. "I get to participate in history. "

For the next couple of days he will be one busy guy racing not one but three vintage race cars in three different race groups. On Saturday June 5th he will drive the 1964 Lotus 23SR now owned by Tom Griffiths. This is the very car John bought in 1964 and raced in SCCA until 1968. On Sunday he will drive the beautiful 1958 Scarab SR that John saw Lance Reventlow and Chuck Day race that year and is now entered by Miles C. Collier for John to drive. He'll then rush to the next race group to drive the 1964 Sunbeam Tiger entered by Buck Trippel.

"Racing here at Infineon Raceway with General Racing is always one of our favorite events of the year," said Morton. "It's a fun event and always so well organized. I think Infineon Raceway is the most demanding race course in the country. I don't see how those NASCAR guys can drive on a hot day that long on this track. This is the toughest track for driver fatigue; you are always busy, and there is just no rest."

The Car that Never Was

Sometimes great concepts are conceived but not completed for decades, like Dick DeLuna's 1917 Hall-Scott, which he will race here. In 1917, a certain Colonel Hall planned to build his Hall-Scott racer for that year's Vanderbilt Cup Race, but because the United States entered World War I that year, the factory had to turn all its efforts to building engines for military bi-planes, thus the car was never built.

"This car was created based on original plans and drawings that we were able to get hold of," said DeLuna, adding that it is based on a 1917 REO frame with an inner frame that drops the engine down so the driver can see. "All the running gear is 1917 REO with a 1 to 1 ratio rear end. With a 125 horsepower engine at 1200 rpm and a three-speed transmission we have had this car up to 89 mph. It has a steel frame and all-aluminum

body. The brakes are only at the rear with the emergency brake on the drive shaft, which aids in stopping.”

When asked how his Hall-Scott handled the turns at Infineon Raceway, DeLuna said, “It’s a bit like driving a big truck out there, so when I come in my shoulders hurt. Also, because it operates at such a low rpm it’s hard to hear, and if you don’t watch your rpm gauge and speedometer, it can easily get away from you. It takes a lot to turn this car and after five or six laps the brakes start to go away, so you have to start using the emergency brakes. It’s a real fun car; I have taken it to the Goodwood Festival of Speed in England, and it was a real crowd pleaser.”


Like a fine wine that needs to be aged, the 1917 Hall-Scott was finished in 1999 and took 82 plus years to come of age.


“I think the Sonoma Historic Motorsports Festival is great,” said DeLuna. “Steve (Earle) does a fantastic job and will turn the Sonoma Historic Motorsports Festival into one of the premier events of its type in the country.”


Highlights for Fans: Among the other attractions for fans at the [Sonoma Historic Motorsports Festival](#) will be a special Celebrate Sonoma Day on Saturday, chat sessions with drivers and organizers, and the Wine Country Pavilion, which will feature some of the best food and wine Sonoma and Napa have to offer, with noted Bay Area chef Victor Scargle headlining. Another highlight of the weekend will be the Sonoma Valley Race Car Festival on Saturday evening, which will feature 30 of the event’s vintage vehicles on public display during a wine and food tasting at the Foley Family (formerly Sebastiani) winery at 389 Fourth St. E., from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The cars will have created a separate spectacle on their parade from Infineon Raceway to the venue. The event benefits the [Speedway Children’s Charities](#), and tickets (\$35) can be obtained from Infineon Raceway or at Sonoma Plaza on the evening of the event.


For tickets, visit www.infineonraceway.com or call 1-800-870-RACE. For additional information on the Sonoma Historic Motorsports Festival, visit <http://www.sonomahistorics.com/>.

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 Dick DeLuna's
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 John Morton and
1964 Sunbeam
Tiger_credit
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Finnegan.jpg
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 John Morton
driving 1958
Scarab
SR_credit Mike
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