

The Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion

Michael Rockich

The Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion took place August 12-15 at the Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca. These annual races feature cars from nearly every epoch of motorsports racing history. They cater to the weekend race car enthusiast and driver. The Reunion covers four days, and more counting the Pre-Reunion the week before. Over 600 historic racing cars with drivers representing 13 countries took to the track. Formula One was well represented also. The Historic Grand Prix (HGP) organization was involved in bringing 34 authentic Formula One cars to the Reunion.

This year the races paid special tribute to 79 year old Dan Gurney, a driver and manufacturer who has impacted motorsports probably more than any other American. Gurney's son Alex was present to tour the circuit in the Gurney-Westlake Eagle V-12 to honor his father. Dario Franchitti also participated in this tribute lap driving a Birdcage Maserati that Gurney had raced. Over his glittering career Gurney completed 312 events in 20 countries, winning 51 of them and mounting the podium 98 times.

Even Formula 1 was not untouched by Gurney as he won seven races, as well as posting seven Indy Car wins, five NASCAR victories, and endurance race victories at Le Mans, Daytona, Sebring, and Nürburgring. Gurney was present to wave the Green Flag to start the Trans-Am race.

Among notables attending were Vic Edelbrock Jr. and Christi Edelbrock his daughter of aftermarket performance parts fame. They were two of the drivers in the field and also signed autographs. In 1938 Vic Edelbrock, Sr., one of the founders of the American hot rod movement, founded the Edelbrock Corporation which his son Vic now heads. Another celebrity, television and film actor Patrick Dempsey, attended to race his 1992 RX7-92 Mazda GTP.

Every race car that appeared on track could also be viewed in the paddocks close up, including the historic F1 racers, and the unlimited Can Am cars. Rare race cars were notably present including the unique Tyrrell P34 Formula One six-wheeler, and the legendary Porsche 917. Even the recently minted super exotic Bugatti Veyron was there with its 16 cylinders in an "X" configuration boosted by four turbochargers, and a price tag exceeding one million.

A long stroll through the Paddocks can be rewarding. Lots of knowledge can be gained on a variety of subjects there. Owners, friends, and mechanics are willing to share what they know, at the proper time of course. For engine buffs one mechanic explained that twin turbochargers as opposed to a single unit helps reduce rotating mass and lag time from throttle to boost. A European mechanic, speaking good but accented English, rapidly lectured on the trade offs of multiple spark plugs per cylinder versus multiple valves, and the complexity of valve actuation when greater than four valves per cylinder are employed. For those aspiring to race here someday, the wife of an owner/driver explained how she herself was taking race car driving lessons in one of several driving schools available.

A possibly overlooked aspect of the reunion are the car corrals. Don't forgo a walk through them, as these corrals are well populated. Cars are grouped by make, often with very large turnout. Several uncommon cars were noted including an F40 Ferrari, and a De Tomaso Mangusta boasting very forward styling for its day, and even now. Finally, do not forget the numerous vendors' stands which address many needs.