

ARIZONA VINTAGE RACERS SHINE AT RMMR

Arizona sunshine on the Monterey Peninsula

Story by Tim Sharp / Photos by Tim and Kristin Sharp

Did the Arizona drivers bring the sun with them, or were the racing gods smiling on the Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion this year? Whatever the case, the usual morning drizzle was absent, and the sun was shining brightly on the race this year.

No Arizona vintage drivers shone more brightly than the Valley's Mike McGovern, Dyke Ridgley, Alex Curtis and Lyn St. James. They were in the thick of the competition all weekend, and two finished on the podium—quite a feat, considering that the planet's top vintage race drivers attend the Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca event each August.

Chandler's Mike McGovern led the largest contingent of Arizona drivers, in the stacked 1966-1972 Trans-Am race. Finishing third in a 1969 Boss 302 Mustang, Mike had a vicious battle with eventual winner Ken Epsman, driving a 1971 AMC Javelin. McGovern was joined by Walt Brown Jr (19th) and Craig Jackson (27th) from Scottsdale. The Trans-Am "Pony Car Wars" were the apex of road racing back when Ford, GM, Chrysler and AMC each had factory teams. Always a crowd favorite, the action packed Trans-Am race did not disappoint.

Scottsdale's Dyke Ridgley drove Rob Walton's 1960 Maserati Tipo 60 "Bird-

cage" to a well deserved podium finish (3rd) in the 1955-1960 Under 2-Liter Sports Racing class. Dyke also finished 6th in Group 3A with his 1961 Ferrari GT Berlinetta, so it was a very successful weekend for Ridgley. Scottsdale's Craig Taylor and Mike Silverman finished 35th and 36th respectively. Silverman's 1957 MGA was well driven, but had little chance against the faster Ferraris and the Alfa-Romeo SZ in this class.

Phoenix's Lyn St. James showed that she has not lost a step since her pro driving days, when she raced Indy cars and wickedly fast IMSA GTP prototypes. Placed in a giant field of over forty 1963-1972 FIA Manufacturers Championship Cars, Lyn drove Ned Spieker's two-liter 1963 Lotus 23B-BMW to a remarkable 6th place finish—remarkable because she was racing against newer Ferrari, Porsche and Chevron sports racers, most of which had 50 percent larger engines and superior chassis. Lyn also finished 11th in the

1600cc formula car race, in a 1972 March 722. Congratulations to Lyn on winning a well deserved "Overall Excellence Award" in Group 2B.

Scottsdale's Alex Curtis also had a great weekend, racing in two different classes. Driving a 1955 Mercedes 300SL Gullwing production sports car, Alex finished a well deserved 7th in this class dominated by lightweight 1947-1955 Jaguar and Porsche Specials. The race was won by Rob Manson in the Tatum Baldwin Special. Alex also won this class's "Overall Excellence Award" in the 300SL Gullwing.

Alex's little 1660cc 1935 Frazer-Nash Colmore finished a very respectable 13th in the Pre-War Group. Not surprisingly, the race was won by Bruce McCaw's powerful 1929 Bentley 4.5 liter machine. You need big power to pull the hill on the front straightaway.

In other races, Scottsdale's Eric Edenholtm finished 13th in his 1986 Toyota Celica GTO, and Tucson's Jim Cantrell fin-

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Racing legend Lyn St. James of Phoenix (#67, top) leads a pack of sports racers in Group 2B, 1963-1972 FIA Manufacturers Championship Cars, finishing 6th just 5.384 seconds behind group winner Gray Gregory of Houston in his 1969 Chevron B16.

It's easy to get out of control in the famous "Corkscrew" at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca, as proven here (second photo from top) by Fred Della Noce of Rio De Janeiro in his 1966 Ginetta G12 (#18), also in Group 2B.

Dyke Ridgley of Scottsdale in his 1960 Maserati Tipo 60 (#43, far left) leads a cluster of sports cars in Group 1B, 1955-1961 Sports Racing Cars under 2000cc, on his way to a 3rd place finish.

Alex Curtis of Scottsdale, in his red and silver 1935 Frazer Nash Colmore (#35, near left) finished 13th in the first race of the weekend, Group 1A, Pre-1940 Sports Racing and Touring Cars—the oldest and most diverse group in vintage racing.



Mike McGovern of Chandler started the Trans-Am race in 4th (above) in a 1969 Mustang Boss 302 owned by Jim Click of Tucson. Mike—Chief Instructor at the Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving—finished 3rd in a hotly contested race won by Ken Epsman of Santa Clara CA in his 1971 AMC Javelin.

This 1957 Porsche 356A driven by Andrew Prill of the UK (#152, right) only needs three wheels in the corners.

A rare 1952 Maserati A6GCS (below), one of the stunning race cars brought to Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca during the Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion, for that featured marque's 100th anniversary celebration.

ished 18th in his 1987 Corvette. Both were overmatched by the winning newer and lighter 1992 Mazda RX7-92 prototype.

Sedona's Lon Walters' 1964 Elva Courier finished 17th in its race. Chandler's John James Hendrix's 2800cc Porsche 914/6 finished 18th in Group 5A, a race won by John Hildebrand in a Camaro with a 7400cc power plant. Not exactly a fair fight.

Phoenix's Bob Hardison in his 1958 Ecidna Special bested Scottsdale's Dyke Ridgley in his 1960 Maserati Tipo 61 with a 20th place finish to Ridgley's 24, but neither driver could catch the lightning fast 1958 Lotus 15 driven by Don Orosco of Monterey in the 1955-1961

Over 2-Liter Sports Racing Class.

In the newer Can Am class, Tucson's Jim Cantrell finished 22nd in his 1969 Lola T163. However, Craig Bennett's newer 1974 Shadow DN4 had too much speed for everyone in the class. Craig checked out early and left no forwarding address.

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It's never too early to make your plans for attending the Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion next August. The Mazda Laguna Seca Raceway website has information on tickets, airports, hotels, restaurants and the many activities going on during Monterey Car Week: www.mazdaraceway.com. ■



MASERATI CENTENNIAL HONORED

While hard to believe, Maserati has been in business for 100 years. Owned today by Fiat, which also owns Ferrari, Maserati's racing roots go back to 1926, when a Maserati Tipo 26 won the Targa Florio in Italy. Maserati also won the Indianapolis 500 in 1939 and 1940 in the hands of the legendary Wilbur Shaw. More successes followed in the 1950s, when Juan Manuel Fangio won the 1957 Formula One World Championship. Other famous drivers such as Sir Stirling Moss and Carroll Shelby also raced "Birdcage" Maserati Tipos in the 1960s.

One of the wonderful things about attending the Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion each year is that you get to see the beautiful automobile display of the honored marque. This year, one could trace the remarkable evolution of Maserati race cars from the early days to the present. Watching the classic 1930s Maserati Grand Prix cars race around the track, and listening to the sweet music made by the new Maserati MC12 racing engines, is only part of the allure of the Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion. Walking the paddock and exploring the history of racing technology over the last century is just as enjoyable as watching the vintage cars race on the track. •

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