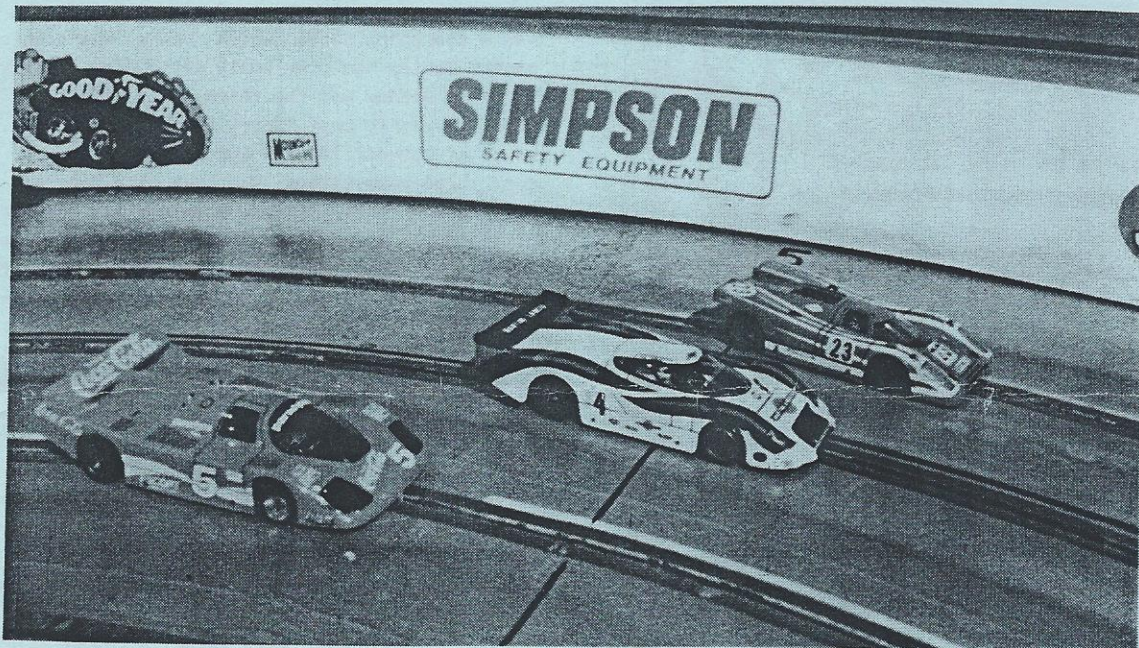


THE RACING NEWS

***** AN OSSM PUBLICATION ***** NO. 6



DENNIS DUDLEY TAKES OSSM WIN NUMBER THREE IN CLOSEST RACE YET!!



One-tenth of a lap was the margin of victory for Dennis Dudley in the fifth race of the OSSM CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES on February 11th at PELICAN PARK SPEEDWAY. A full report on this exciting race follows.



REBEL 500 DRAWS STATEWIDE INTEREST

PACER

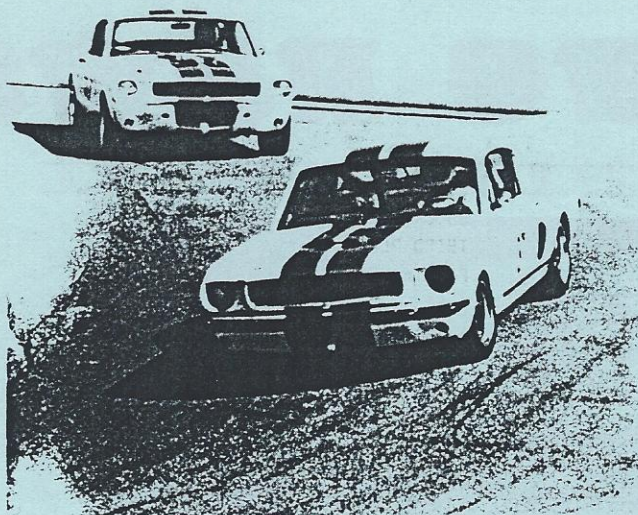
* GREAT RACING IN WILSONVILLE! *

Frank Crane Jr., Lee Dundas, Jerry Palfanier, and Doug Haynes all tasted victory at the February 24 PACER event at LEE DUNDAS RACEWAY.

The full story on the closest finish of the year follows below!

The "Over The Hill Gang" from Bend and the "Ol' Slimers" from Portland say "LET'S RACE"! The starting grid for the REBEL 500 was filled in less than one week! Two squads of "Racin' Rebels" from Eugene are lined up to defend their endurance racing crown in the 500 minute contest.

This year's REBEL 500 will feature 1/24th "VINTAGE NASCAR": 1949-1957 American Stock Cars. The 2nd annual race is scheduled for Saturday, April 8th at PELICAN PARK SPEEDWAY in Eugene.



***** OSSM CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES: RACE FIVE *****

A 13 car field of sharp looking 1/32 RTR racers took the green flag for the fifth race in the OSSM CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES at PELICAN PARK SPEEDWAY in Eugene on February 11th. Series points leader Dennis Dudley set the pace in the first round of qualifying with a 220.3 lap total. His score established a new track record for four five-minute heats. Dudley also set a new single-heat mark with a run of 55.6 laps in his bright red DeAtley Corvette. Doug Haynes was second quickest in his "Rath's" Corvette with 216.8 and Doug Beddow was third in his "New Man" Porsche 935 at 214.4. Fourth fastest qualifier after the first round was Randy Troy with 213.0 laps in his red and white Nissan Z car.

In the second qualifying round, the only driver among the top four to improve his previous score was Troy. He moved up to third position with a 216.4 lap effort. John Andersen ended up in fifth position. After switching to his back-up car, Andersen improved his first round score by almost six laps. However, he fell just short of taking the fourth qualifying spot and pushing Doug Beddow out of the "A" Main. Qualifying a surprisingly strong sixth in a tough field of competitors was Eugene newcomer Corbin Dickinson. In his first race ever, he showed tremendous potential by out-qualifying series veterans such as Bob McFarland and Frank Crane Jr.

John Andersen walked away with his second "B" Main victory in the last two OSSM races. He virtually dominated a strong field with a 212.7 lap total. Dickinson showed that qualifying was no fluke by taking second with a solid run of 207.1 laps. Only three-tenths of a lap separated Jon Thompson's quick Nissan Z at 202.6 from Bob McFarland's gorgeous silver IMSA Corvette at 202.3 laps. Andersen's romp in the "B" main gained him his third entry this season in the "Dash for the Cash"!

The "A" Main featured the closest duel between three drivers on OSSM history. Dennis Dudley, Doug Beddow, and Doug Haynes battled for every inch throughout the twenty minute event. It came down to racing luck and lane advantages in each of the four heats. In the first five-minute heat, Haynes edged Dudley by five-tenths of a lap with a score of 55.4 to 54.9 laps. Doug Beddow was right behind with 53.5, while Randy Troy struggled to a 51.1 in the difficult red lane. Haynes extended his lead to one full lap over Dudley with 111.1 to 110.1 in the

second heat race. Dudley actually finished third in this heat as Beddow posted a score of 55.4 laps in his fastest run of the day. Haynes' winning total in the second heat was a scorching 55.7, which broke the single-heat track record Dudley had previously set during qualifying.

Doug Beddow won the third heat with a 54.7 run. This score moved him past Dudley into second place. After four hours of competition and hundreds of laps of racing, the top three competitors, who have also been the top three OSSM racers this season, prepared for the last shoot-out of the day. Haynes had 163.9 laps, Beddow was just one tenth behind at 163.8 laps, and Dudley was five tenths back with 163.3 laps. Randy Troy was just a little off the pace with a 157.7 total.

At the green, Dudley jumped out to an early lead. Beddow held second with Haynes right behind, just looking for a way by. Side by side, Haynes' Vette and Beddow's Porsche tangled going into the tunnel and both came out of the slot. This allowed Dudley to extend his lead to a little over half a lap. The gap between Dudley and Haynes then held steady for lap after lap. Twenty laps, then thirty laps ticked off and Dudley's lead remained the same. Unable to match the leader's pace from the red lane, Beddow gradually fell back. Suddenly Dudley crashed! The miscue gave Haynes a chance close to within three or four tenths. Both racers knew that even though Haynes was behind, with a six-tenths advantage going into the final heat, he was still ahead in the overall totals. Just when it looked as though Haynes was about to pick up his second OSSM victory in a row, he skittered out of the slot coming off the banking. Terrific corner marshalling had the blue and white Corvette back in instantly, but Dudley gained back the ground he had lost in his crash plus another precious tenth of a lap. As the checkered flag waved and track power was shut off, Dudley's "Budwiser" Vette coasted over the start/finish line. The nose of the car stopped less than two inches after it crossed over the line, giving Dudley one last tenth! His margin of victory in the fourth and final heat race was seven tenths of a lap over Haynes and 2.2 laps over Beddow.

Although the fourth heat was the only race in the "A" Main that Dudley won, his score was enough to move him from third at the start to first place by just one-tenth of a lap! The final lap totals for twenty minutes of racing were 218.3 to 218.2! Beddow finished third, less than two laps behind the leaders with 216.4, and Troy came home fourth with 210.7 laps. It was truly an outstanding race and clearly the most competitive OSSM "Main Event" of the year!

The "Dash for the Cash" capped off a near perfect day for Dennis Dudley as he ran away from John Andersen in the ten-lap sprint race. He then selected the envelope containing the \$25 top prize! Andersen's consolation was winning the Concours d'Elegance trophy with his white and blue "Best Western Motels" Corvette. It was a close contest with tough competition from Doug Beddow's white "New Man" Porsche and the IMSA Corvettes of Frank Crane Jr. and Bob McFarland.

OSSM RACE RESULTS

<u>Driver</u>	<u>Qualifying</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>Points</u>
DENNIS DUDLEY	1*	1	22
DOUG HAYNES	2	2	16
DOUG BEDDOW	4	3	14
RANDY TROY	3	4	12
JOHN ANDERSEN	5	5	10
CORBIN DICKINSON	6	6	8
JON THOMPSON	7	7	6
BOB McFARLAND	8	8	5
FRANK CRANE JR.	9	9	4
DAVE STONE	10	10	3
ROY LANGENHENNIG	11	11	2
MIKE NABER	12	12	1
JOE BETTIS			

* 2 Bonus Points

Going into the final race of the season, Dennis Dudley's position on top of the points standings appears secure with a 22 point lead. However, second place is clearly up for grabs since Doug Beddow, who has consistently shown an ability to win the Concours and take valuable bonus points, is just five points behind Doug Haynes. The fight for fourth place is even closer with John Andersen holding a slim two point advantage over Randy Troy. Just six points covers Frank Crane Jr., Lee Dundas, and Bob McFarland in sixth, seventh, and eighth positions respectively. And, only three points covers ninth, tenth, and eleventh positions!



OSSM SERIES POINT STANDINGS

(After Five Races)

<u>Position</u>	<u>Driver</u>	<u>Points</u>
1.	DENNIS DUDLEY	100
2.	DOUG HAYNES	78
3.	DOUG BEDDOW	73
4.	JOHN ANDERSEN	52
5.	RANDY TROY	50
6.	FRANK CRANE JR.	31
7.	LEE DUNDAS	28
8.	BOB McFARLAND	25
9.	HUGH BECK	16
10.	JOE BETTIS	14
11.	GARY GOSSETT	13
12. (Tie)	GLENN HEATH	10
	JON THOMPSON	10
14.	CORBIN DICKINSON	8
15. (Tie)	CHRIS SNYDER	2
	GAYLON GROSCHE	2
	ROY LANGENHENNIG	2
18. (Tie)	HUGH ELSWORTH	1
	BART CURRIE	1
	MIKE NABER	1

A season points fund of over \$600.00 in gift certificates from EUGENE TOY AND HOBBY will be shared among the top ten finishers. The breakdown of prize money is as follows:

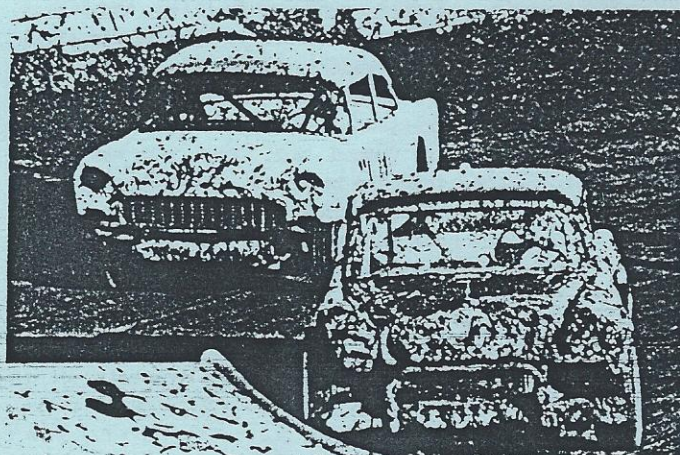
FIRST PLACE	\$250.00
SECOND PLACE	\$100.00
THIRD PLACE	\$80.00
FOURTH PLACE	\$60.00
FIFTH PLACE	\$40.00
SIXTH PLACE	\$30.00
SEVENTH PLACE	\$25.00
EIGHTH PLACE	\$20.00
NINTH PLACE	\$15.00
TENTH PLACE	\$10.00

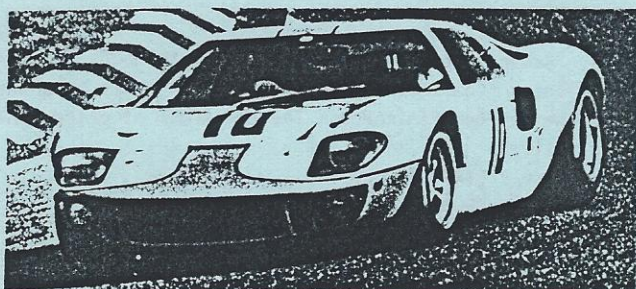
With the points standings so close among the top ten positions, the outcome of the final race on March 11th at LEE DUNDAS RACEWAY could have a significant impact on how many racers will finish. Season prizes will be presented at an Awards Ceremony to be held prior to the REBEL 500 on April 8th.



**** CAPITAL RACEWAYS WEDNSDAY NIGHT RACING SERIES ****

Frank Crane Jr. hosts HO scale racing at his home in Salem every Wednesday night. Newcomers are always welcome. CAPITAL RACEWAYS is a beautiful, realistically detailed hand routed wooden track. Banked turns and tight chicanes provide plenty of action. Practice begins at 6:00PM with racing at 8:00PM. For more information call Frank at 390-2669.





***** HOT COMPETITION IN WILSONVILLE PACER RACE! *****

Frank Crane Jr. kept the Crane family tradition of winning races going as he scored his first PACER victory in the ultra-competitive Euro-Toy class. The win was especially sweet for Frank due to the presence at the event of his father Frank Crane Sr. One of the true pioneers of 1:1 scale auto racing on the west coast, Frank's dad raced a variety of exotic sports cars, including a Ferrari 250 GTO, everywhere from Riverside to Kent during the Fifties and Sixties. It was a real honor to have him visit one of our races!

Crane's two-tenths of a lap victory over Dennis Dudley tops off a season of steady improvement for the Salem competitor. The Euro-Toy race was a typical PACER brawl with extremely close racing in virtually every heat. However, there was one heat race that was truly remarkable. It featured the closest finish possible on the long track at LEE DUNDAS RACEWAY in Wilsonville!

Jerry Palfenier, Hugh Beck, and Dennis Dudley took off flying at the start of the race. Palfenier's "Cook-Woods" Sauber Mercedes grabbed the early lead with Beck and Dudley just inches behind. Dudley's "Group South" Tiga stalked Beck's beautiful green "Folger's" Cougar GTP for a couple of laps. He was trying to find a way past without getting nerfed in the process. It looked like he could make it in the sweeper leading onto the main straight, but the cars touched and Dudley's red Tiga headed off toward the retaining wall. Beck then turned his attention to catching Palfenier's gorgeous gold Sauber. Meanwhile, Dudley began to reel them both back in after his off-course excursion. Gradually the gap between all three cars closed to within just a few feet. Dudley attacked Beck's Cougar again; with time running out he was even more desperate to find an opening. Again Beck gave him the fender. This time it was in the short chute just after the hairpin. Superb turn marshalling had Dudley back going again almost immediately, but he was still about ten feet behind the leaders. Dudley was driving like a man possessed (or like one that had just been nerfed twice!), and again he closed back up on the lead pair. Suddenly Palfenier's car jumped out. Beck, who was right on his tail, slammed into the back of the Sauber at full speed. One car went left and the other went right; through the middle came Dudley, and he zoomed into the lead. Both crashed cars were back racing almost instantly, but less than a lap later time ran out. All three cars finished in the same tenth, within about four feet of one another! It was a great race to watch, with the closest finish recorded this season!

Close finishes were the rule of the day as Lee Dundas and Jerry Palfenier battled to a tie in the 1/24 NASCAR class with 36.7 laps apiece. Bob McFarland was just two-tenths behind with 36.5 laps. In fact, a mere seven-tenths of a lap separated the top five competitors in PACER's hotly contested hard plastic division!

In the 1/32 RTR class, Doug Haynes just edged John Andersen by two tenths to claim his first PACER victory of the current season. Winner of the last RTR event, Bob McFarland grabbed third place from Dennis Dudley. Fourth through eighth position were covered by less than six-tenths of a lap at the finish. With the scores that close, just one crash could have cost as much as five positions in the final results!

One race remains on the 1988-89 PACER calendar. Scheduled for March 24th at LEE DUNDAS RACEWAY in Wilsonville, it promises to be an exciting conclusion to a great season of PACER racing!

PACER: RACE FIVE
(Unofficial Results)

1/24 EURO-TOY RESULTS

Position	Driver Name	Number of Laps
1.	FRANK CRANE JR.	43.2
2.	DENNIS DUDLEY	43.0
3.	LEE DUNDAS	41.9
4.	GLENN HEATH	41.2
(Tie)	HUGH BECK	41.2
6.	GARY GOSSETT	40.5
(Tie)	BOB McFARLAND	40.5
8.	DOUG HAYNES	40.2
9.	LARRY COCKERHAM	39.9
10.	JOHN ANDERSEN	39.5
11.	BOB NOURSE	38.0
12.	JERRY PALFENIER	37.9
13.	JERRY WEDDLE	25.1

1/24 NASCAR RESULTS

Position	Driver Name	Number of Laps
1.	LEE DUNDAS	36.7
(Tie)	JERRY PALFENIER	36.7
3.	BOB McFARLAND	36.5
4.	HUGH BECK	36.2
5.	GARY GOSSETT	36.0
6.	DENNIS DUDLEY	34.9
7.	GLENN HEATH	34.2
(Tie)	FRANK CRANE JR.	34.2
9.	LARRY COCKERHAM	32.2
10.	DOUG HAYNES	31.9
11.	JOHN ANDERSEN	31.3
12.	BOB NOURSE	30.4
13.	JERRY WEDDLE	19.7

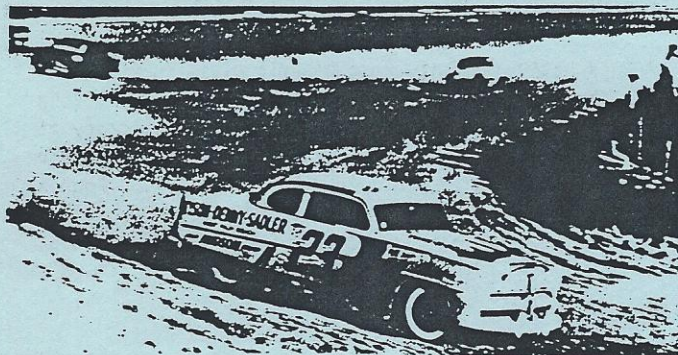
1/32 RTR RESULTS

Position	Driver Name	Number of Laps
1.	DOUG HAYNES	37.4
2.	JOHN ANDERSEN	37.2
3.	BOB McFARLAND	36.9
4.	DENNIS DUDLEY	35.9
5.	FRANK CRANE JR.	35.8
6.	LARRY COCKERHAM	35.6
7.	GLENN HEATH	35.4
8.	LEE DUNDAS	35.3
9.	GARY GOSSETT	33.8
10.	JERRY PALFENIER	33.0
11.	HUGH BECK	32.8
12.	BOB NOURSE	28.7
13.	JERRY WEDDLE	22.7

PACER

REBEL 500

*** FOR VINTAGE NASCAR ***



JNJ
HOBBIES

***** THE REBEL 500 *****

Enthusiasm for the class of cars and the event has been remarkably high since the announcement of the REBEL 500 in the last issue of THE RACING NEWS. Days after the announcement, the first entry arrived from "THE OVER THE HILL GANG", a team from Bend consisting of: Tom Street, Dennis Wells, Randy Limbeck, Matt Soloman, and Chuck Smith. Everyone is anxiously looking forward to meeting and competing with these Bend racers. The REBEL 500 should provide an ideal opportunity to make contact with the "Parallel Universe" that exists in central Oregon.

The Portland OL' SLIMERS was the second and final team to enter the race. Their team is comprised of veteran competitors, Lee Dundas, Bob McFarland, Gary Gossett and Glenn Heath.

The remaining team positions will be filled by Racin' Rebels teams. The Eugene competitors will conduct their own qualifying "Event" to determine which drivers will compete on the two teams.

The 500 minute endurance race is scheduled for April 8th at PELICAN PARK SPEEDWAY and will feature 1/24 plastic bodied 1949-1957 American sedans: "VINTAGE NASCAR".

The event will be run on a traditional endurance race format with four teams consisting of three to five members. Driving stints will be 28 minutes with 2 minute scheduled pit stops. Individual trophies for team members will be awarded along with a team trophy and a Concours d'Elegance trophy.

***** NEW SOURCE FOR "SCALE" DECALS *****

In the last issue of THE RACING NEWS, the address for Fred Cady Design was mentioned. Cady is an excellent mail-order source of competition-oriented decals. Since then, another source has been discovered and these decals should be available directly from your local hobby shop.

The Marco Polo company, a major hobby distributor, has just issued its new catalog. It contains a listing for JNJ Hobbies, which has been reprinted below. JNJ appears to have a super selection of 1/24 NASCAR decals. Decals for cars currently raced such as Davey Allison's Havoline T-Bird and great vintage cars such as Ned Jarrett's 1963 Ford are available. The EUGENE TOY AND HOBBY is now waiting for its first shipment of these new decals to arrive!

1/24 NASCAR Decals

JJ 86-107	#3 Wrangler Monte Carlo	3.25
JJ 86-108	#7 Kyle Petty 7-11 Ford 86	3.25
JJ 86-109	#7 Kyle Petty 7-11 Ford 84-85	3.25
JJ 86-111	#71 Dave Marcis Helen Rae 86	3.25
JJ 86-113	#4 Rick Wilson Cap't Cody Olds	3.25
JJ 86-114	#35 Quincey's Steakhouse Ford	3.25
JJ 86-115	#75 Joe Ruttman Pet Dairy	3.25
JJ 86-116	#75 Hodgdon MCSS #21 Purolator	3.25
JJ 86-117	#67 Pannill Knits Ford 86	3.25
JJ 86-118	#71 K&K Ins. Spl 1967/75	3.25
JJ 86-119	#22 Golden Prod. Dodge 1970/72	3.25
JJ 86-120	#42 & 43 Conv. Numbers	3.25
JJ 86-121	#98 Valvoline Pontiac	3.25
JJ 87-122	#71 Lifebouy MCSS	3.25
JJ 87-123	#52 Turtle Wax Pontiac/MCSS	3.25
JJ 87-124	#1 Bulls-Eye BBQ MCSS	3.25
JJ 87-125	#75 Natlonwise Pontiac	3.25
JJ 87-126	#75, #50 & #83 Conv. Numbers	3.25
JJ 87-127	#7 Zerex Ford	3.25
JJ 87-128	#70 Rumble AC Pontiac	3.25
JJ 87-129	#22 Southeastern Ford 1963	3.25
JJ 87-130	#25 & 35 Conversion Numbers	3.25
JJ 87-131	#90 Red Baron Pizza Ford	3.25
JJ 87-132	#1 Bulls Eye BBQ MCSS 1986	3.25
JJ 87-133	#22 Young Ford 1963/64	3.25
JJ 88-134	#28 Havoline T'bird 87-88	3.25
JJ 88-135	#21 Clitgo T'bird	3.25
JJ 88-136	#30 All Pro Chevy-Plds 1987	3.25
JJ 88-137	#6 Finky's Chevy 1987	3.25
JJ 88-138	#17 K-Mart Chevy 1986	3.25
JJ 88-139	#2/#3 Wrangler Pontiac 81-82	3.25
JJ 88-140	#3 Wrangler Chevy 1984	3.25
JJ 88-141	#11 Ned Jarrett Ford 1963	3.25
JJ 88-142	#28 Fred Lorenzen Ford 1963	3.25
JJ 88-143	#26 Curtis Turner Ford 1963	3.25
JJ 88-144	#21 Panch/Lund English Ford 63	3.25
JJ 88-146	#29 Nelson Stacy Ron's Ford 63	3.25
JJ 88-147	Front Fender Decals	3.25
JJ 88-148	#52 Eureka Monte Carlo '87	3.25
JJ 88-149	#2 Kroger Monte Carlo '87	3.25



JJ 88-136 #30 All Pro
Chevy-Olds 1987



JJ 88-134 #28 Havoline
Thunderbird '87-88

The REBEL 500

***** "FIREBALL" AND "BANJO" *****

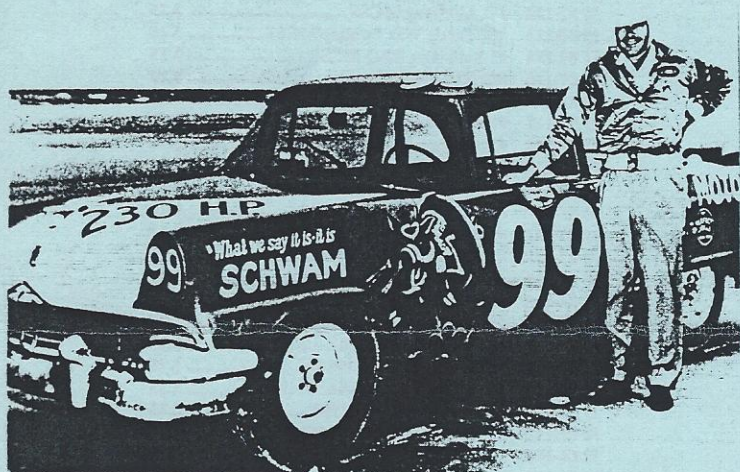
(The following is an excerpt from "CALE" written by Cale Yarborough with William Neely.)

Fireball Roberts was a funny man. He wasn't much on practical jokes, but he was funny if you got to know him. It's just that he was a private person and didn't let too many people ever get to know him. It didn't do a whole lot for his popularity because people didn't understand that he was pretty much of a loner. But he was the best at one-liners of anybody in racing. He crashed one time, and while he was walking back to the pits, a guy ran up to him and stuck a microphone in his face--they do it all the time--and, I'll tell you, nobody wants to talk at a time like that. But this guy said, "What happened out there, Fireball?"

Fireball glared at him. "I CRASHED. It IS possible to crash out there, you know."

And one time, when he was flying his plane back from Mexico, he stopped at the Texas border for fuel and the usual customs check. The official looked over his papers and said, "Everything seems to be in order, Mr. Roberts. Did you bring anything back with you?"

"Christ, I hope not," Fireball said.



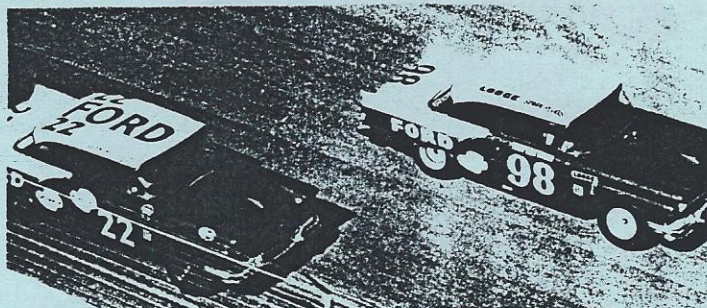
And I'll have to say that Banjo Matthews wasn't far behind in the hell-raising department. I'll also have to admit that I was part of it, from time to time. Here's a good example.

We were running a Firestone tire test at the Charlotte Speedway one week and had gone to a little barbecue place for lunch, a few miles from the track. Banjo drove one car--a Ford--and one of the Firestone engineers drove the Chevy. I was in Banjo's car.

We raced all the way to the place and back, which is what we did every day. Everywhere. I mean they were rental cars. We always raced clear back to the double tunnel, at the track, and that's where the race ended.

The first one there was the winner. This time we were side by side. A tie? Not yet. The Chevy went through the right side of the tunnel, and Banjo went through the other side--the exit side.

"Sure hope there's nobody commin', Cale," Banjo said. Thank God there wasn't.



There's a high bank, about sixty feet up, on the other side of the tunnel, which definitely is not wide enough for two cars. To make matters worse you have to make a hard right turn to get to the road. Both cars made the right turn. They slammed together time after time as they raced up the hill. Banjo was on the cliff side. At the top of the road there was a telephone pole, and we were headed straight for it.

"You're gonna hit that pole, Banjo," I said.

He didn't say a word. He was still going wide-open.

"BANJO, you're gonna hit that pole," I yelled.

Nothing. Full speed.

"BANJO!" That's all I got out. Blam! He centered the pole. The crash threw us both out of the car. The accelerator stuck on our car and it hit the Chevy, sending both cars into a hurricane fence. I got up and felt around a little to see if everything was there, and I looked at Banjo, who was sitting in the dust. His glasses were hanging off one ear, and he was bleeding all over.

"I told you we were going to hit that pole," I said.

He looked at me with a completely dazed expression. His eyes were spinning in his head. "What pole?" he said.

After we got him all patched up he called Hertz and told them that he needed another rental car.

"What's wrong with the one you have?" the girl asked.

"The radiator's leaking," he said.

"What happened?" she asked.

"I don't know. It just stopped," he said.

1988-89 OSSM SEASON SUMMARY

DRIVER	RACE 1	RACE 2	RACE 3	RACE 4	RACE 5	RACE 6	TOTAL
1. DENNIS DUDLEY	22	22	18	16	22		100
2. DOUG HAYNES	16	10	14	22	16		78
3. DOUG BEDDOW	3	16	32	8	14		73
4. JOHN ANDERSEN	12	8	12	10	10		52
5. RANDY TROY	6	12	6	14	12		50
6. FRANK CRANE JR.	5	6	4	12	4		31
7. LEE DUNDAS	14	-	8	-	-		28
8. BOB McFARLAND	10	5	5	-	5		25
9. HUGH BECK	8	-	3	5	-		16
10. JOE BETTIS	-	14	-	-	0		14
11. GARY GOSSETT	4	3	2	4	-		13
12. GLENN HEATH	-	-	10	-	-		10
JON THOMPSON	-	4	0	-	6		10
14. CORBIN DICKINSON	-	-	-	-	8		8
15. CHRIS SNYDER	2	-	-	-	-		2
GAYLOW GROSCHE	-	2	-	-	-		2
ROY LANGENHENNIG	-	-	-	-	2		2
18. HUGH ELSWORTH	1	-	-	-	-		1
BART CURRIE	-	-	1	-	-		1
MIKE NABER	-	-	-	-	1		1
21. JERRY PALFANIER	-	-	0	-	-		0
LARRY COCKERHAM	-	-	-	0	-		0

by Joe Scalzo

THE MEXICAN ROAD RACE

It was a torturous marathon starting in the tropics. The temperature varied from 94° to near freezing. But the weather was the easy part.

IN THE TWENTY YEARS that I have been writing about racing, and in the almost thirty that I have been following it, I have yet to come across a competition as extraordinary, adventurous, and as outrageously dangerous as the old Mexican Road Race: two thousand miles of speed in five days, with the unbelieving eyes of an entire nation watching.

Here was a torturous marathon starting in the tropics, and in the first seventy-two hours the temperatures might vary from ninety-four degrees or better to within two degrees of freezing. The climate was one of the lesser challenges. The road—the Pan American Highway—contained elevation shifts of from sea level to ten thousand feet in the worst of the mountains. Paved with tire-destroying volcanic ash, in most of the two thousand miles it was little more than two lanes wide. Few or no guardrails existed in the tall mountains, and even though more and more soldiers were mobilized by the army to hold back the millions of spectators, crowd control during the five year history of the Mexican Road Race was almost nonexistent. Peons and soldiers were not the only things hit by hurtling race cars. Quite a number of unmindful burros, dogs, and cattle meandering across the road died as well, and in at least one famous incident a buzzard flew through the windshield and, still flapping, out the rear window of a Mercedes traveling at one hundred and forty miles an hour. Drivers and their navigators perished with predictable and awful regularity, too.

Stock cars as they are known today were unknown then. They carried little in the way of safety features. And even if such life-saving things as full cockpit roll cages, tires with inner liners, and crash-proof cells for gasoline tanks had been available they couldn't have been used. A major reason why the Mexican Road Race justified itself was as a test ground for vehicles which actually were stock.

Among the one hundred and twenty-three of them which took part in the 1950 inaugural were the marques Mercury, Nash, Lincoln, Packard, Cadillac, Ford, Cord (that's

Cord), Oldsmobile, Buick, DeSoto, Hudson, Chrysler, and even a Chevrolet Powerglide driven by a candidate for the mayoral post of the city of El Paso, Texas.

Colombia, Venezuela, Guatemala, and El Salvador all had citizens driving in the race, and one Manuel Luz Meneses had as his affiliation the Republic of China. But Mexicans and in particular Americans accounted for the majority of starting places. What they may have lacked in reputation (really big-name drivers prudently and unanimously passed up Mexico in the beginning after the winner of the 1950 Indianapolis 500, Johnnie Parsons, was told "none" in response to his question of how much blood plasma officials had on hand), they made up for in spirit. They were a colorful bunch. Included among them were Curis Turner and Bill France, who were co-driving an enormous Nash, a big torpedo boat, one of the most ungainly vehicles ever built; a Cadillac sponsored by a mysterious Italian, Tony Parravano, and raced by two Southern Californians named Jack McAfee and Ford Robinson (four years later they appeared in one of Parravano's Ferraris but crashed on the first day killing Robinson), and a hodgepodge of dirt, road and drag racers.

All of them fell before the onslaught of a cream-colored Olds 88 with white sidewall tires co-chauffeured by a former baseball player named Elliott and a teenage-looking resident of the state of Oregon named Herschel McGriff. McGriff and Elliott were too inexperienced and green to worry about the continuing pressures from the twin Cadillacs of Tom Deal of Texas and Pikes Peak hill climb champion Al Rogers. And they were lucky enough to get away with racing on factory second tires McGriff had invested a whole twelve dollars for. A horse fell down in the road directly in front of them once, but a swerve by McGriff missed the prostrate animal. "I drove til I'd get tired, and then I'd take a nap so Elliott could spell me for an hour or so," McGriff once told me. "Both of us knew so little about racing we even forgot to check the Olds' oil level at night."

McGriff was never a factor in any of the remaining Mexican Road Races (he did, however, gain a reputation in early southern NASCAR meets as being one of the few drivers able to give Lee Petty a real race; and away from racing McGriff amassed a personal fortune in the Oregon lumber business and today has a son and son-in-

law who are potent forces in western stock car meets), but his place was taken by professionals who regretted the race's colossal danger but succumbed to its adventure and challenge. In 1951, two factory Ferraris from Italy took one, two, but other finishers included the formidable likes of Troy Ruttman (fourth); Marshall Teague (sixth); and, way back in sixteenth, the tremendous charger Tony Bettenhausen.

Tromping on the oversized throttle pedal of a boxy Chrysler, Bettenhausen, never one to show fear, consistently horrified his intrepid passenger, an affable chap named Metzler. Blown tires and other breakdowns slowed Bettenhausen too often for him to finish higher than sixteenth, but when he was traveling as fast as the Chrysler could go, which was one hundred and forty-two miles an hour, he had the horses to scare both winning Ferraris. In an issue of *Speed Age* magazine is a riveting account of Bettenhausen in Mexico. Going full tilt across a river he saw a dog in his path just as the dog saw him. Neither hesitated. Bettenhausen continued charging and the dog jumped off the crossing into the river. Another tight squeak occurred when Bettenhausen elected to pass another car just as it went into a spin while going over a railroad crossing. The car spun to the right, Tony passed to the left, and just then the Chrysler's glove box door sprang open bombarding poor passenger Metzler with spare spark plugs while Bettenhausen laughed uproariously.

Nineteen fifty-two, 1953, and 1954 were the years of the Lincolns and the amazing men of Team Lincoln. Bill Stroppe and Clay Smith, the brains and creators, but couldn't avoid being overshadowed by the giants employed to drive the Lincolns: Chuck Stevenson, Johnny Mantz, Walt Faulkner, Jack McGrath and the notorious individual who may have been the greatest in the history of Indianapolis, Bill Vukovich.

Claiming the distinction of living through two brain-numbing years of riding with Vukovich in Mexico was a tough, salty-tongued French-Canadian named Vern Houle. Houle thrived on the experiences. Today, when hardly anyone talks about or apparently remembers the old Mexican Road Race, it is not surprising that few know who Vern Houle is. One colorful story has it that his father was involved in the bootleg era. Houle, who as a child lived in northside Chicago, was familiar with the

warehouse were, on February 14, 1929, seven men were stood up against a wall and machine-gunned. "I was there the day after the St. Valentine's Day Massacre," Houle told me, "and, hell, they hadn't even cleaned it up much. You could still see where the blood ran down the gutter." He has been away from racing for years now, but when contacted at his home in Grant's Pass, Oregon, he talked saltily and at length about racing with Vukovich and Mexico.

"(Bill) Stroppe knew Vook better than I did," Houle began. "All I was, was the guy who did the transmission work on the Lincolns. And I suppose the only one who had a needle as long as Vook's. Vook gave it to everybody, but I liked him even though other guys seemed to think he was tough to get along with. He was hard on cars. For instance, in 1953, only one Lincoln dropped out of the race on account of one of my transmissions breaking—Vook's and mine.

"Vook was a big name at the time because of Indianapolis. He was never really a super stock car driver, though. And he was a helluva lot harder on our practice cars in Mexico because he practiced the roads so much. But who cared what happened to a practice car anyway? The only reason we brought it along was to use it up.

"Vook used it up. He practiced for days and hundreds of miles and I rode with him. We were two loners. Every time Stroppe would call a meeting of drivers and navigators Vook would shrug and nod at me and we'd take off and go practice. Practice as fast as we could go."

I inquired about the number of incidents he and Vukovich experienced while practicing.

"Incidents? You mean things happening? All the time. *Constantly*. We had some wild rides. I was already considered crazy for riding with Vook in the race but practicing was worse.

"At one time or another we hit damn near everything but people—dogs, birds, even a school bus once. It was coming across a narrow bridge with red lights flash-

ing and Vook never stopped. We went across that bridge, hit and glanced off the bus and kept going. Nobody got hurt. When we got back to where all the other Lincoln drivers were staying that night, the left side of the car was all smashed. Everyone sort of laughed and said something about Vook being at it again.

"Hell, that wasn't as big a deal as the time we got done practicing and came back to the motel with a dead buzzard stuck on the Lincoln's hood. Sumbitch must have had a wingspan of eight feet.

"We hit it on the Tehuantepec straight, one of the fastest parts. Lots of things happened to us there. One time Vook was day-dreaming and when I looked ahead the road was filled with pigs. A farmer was taking them from one side of the road to another. Still Vook kept going. Normally I never criticized his driving unless I thought he was going too slow, and then I'd reach over and plant my left foot on top of his throttle foot to speed him up. When we were 50 yards away I had to speak up. 'What the hell do you think those are?' I asked him. 'White balloons?'

"He came awake and pitched that Lincoln into a 360 degree spin. When we stopped all the pigs were gone. I never knew where.

"Vook had a hell of a time in Mexico. He couldn't handle the food any better than I could. I was sick all the time. We stopped in Durango for something to eat and the restaurant brought us a dead chicken that still had its tail feathers. Vook said, 'Here's where we have some fun.' He went to the car and got his electric razor, came back in, and we shaved the chicken.

"If he'd have concentrated on it more, he could have been as good in a stock car as he was at Indianapolis. He could drive. At the end of the Tehuantepec Straight was a corner that couldn't be made at more than thirty miles an hour. Vook got into it at one hundred, and we made it.

"Riding with him was a matter of holding on, and trying to help him by looking at my

map and navigating. He was all business. The year that Clay Smith rode with Troy Ruttman, Clay was always complaining about Rutt taking his hands off the steering wheel to wave at spectators. Finally he said, 'Ruttman, you do the driving. I'll do the waving.'

"Racing to Vook was a win or die proposition. The first day of 1954 we got into a section where it was pouring rain, and he must have passed a dozen cars in the wet. He used up the road and then some. He must have spun out five times. And yet we still came in second, only a minute behind Ray Crawford.

"One thing that our Lincolns always had was nice safety equipment. Safety belts for both the driver and navigator, and first aid kits in the glove box. Roll-over bars mounted right to the frame. I always told the other mechanics that the stuff was so good, it was too bad nobody got a chance to use it. Well, early the next day, going through the mountains, Vook caught sight of Crawford's car. He let out a yelp—'There's that S.O.B.' He never liked Crawford. And he went all out to catch him.

"In one of the worst places for it to happen, our Lincoln jumped off the road backwards and started down a sheer cliff. I figured it was my last ride. Stories that got started later had it that just as we started to go, Vook glared over at me and said, 'O.K., Vern, you drive.' Unfortunately those stories aren't true. Vook never said a thing. On the other hand, if he *had* said something, that's exactly what it would have been. That's the kind of humor he had.

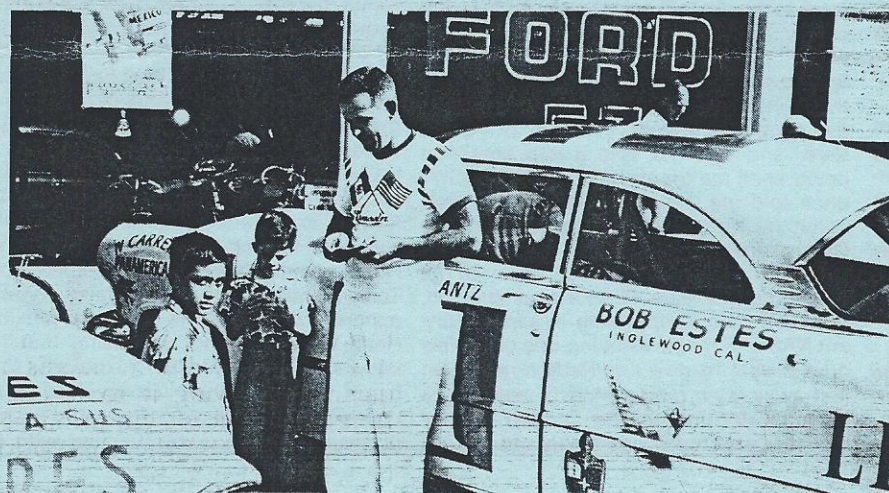
"One door got torn off, so did the trunk, and sliding down that mountain all I saw was dirt and dust everywhere. We landed on our wheels. 'Hey, you sumbitch, you O.K.?' I yelled, and he was, except that he'd hammed his neck.

"We'd landed on a ledge, and it was a hundred or more feet to the next ledge, and we had to climb out of there *carefully*. We got back to the road and somebody gave Vook a ride into Mexico City. I hitched a ride with a chain-smoking Ferrari driver, an Italian who couldn't speak English, but who gave me a ride that scared the hell out of me more than riding with Vook ever did."

Nineteen fifty-four was the last year of the Mexican Road Race and of Team Lincoln. I asked Houle if he ever saw Vukovich, who was killed at Indianapolis the following May, again.

"Just once," he replied. "I was on the pit crew of Walt Faulkner's car in the 500 and we had an alcohol fire during one of the stops that burned my arms. They took me to the infield hospital and while I was there the ambulance with Vook arrived. He'd crashed to avoid Rodger Ward's car on the backstraight. They wheeled him right past me.

"I thought it was ironic," Houle said. "You know, I was probably the only one who ever rode with Vukovich in a race. I was the only one who ever got to see him drive." Houle said, "And both of us somehow were in the same hospital together at the end."



Bill Stroppe who set up the racers signs autographs at a nearby Ford dealer with Johnny Mantz' car.