

Fall, 2016

Restoring the Spirit to Vintage Racing

NEWSLETTER



Hurricane in Savannah

Roebling Road Raceway,
Bloomingdale, GA
September 10-11, 2016

By Bob Spruck
MotorMouth/south

The Vintage Drivers Club of America held the fourth of its six annual events at the unique Roebling Road Raceway in Bloomingdale, GA, a few miles west of Savannah. Unique in many respects, the track is owned by the Buccaneer Region of the SCCA as a non-spectator track and is operated by people who race. That means you can't buy a ticket to get in and watch the races. You have to be a racer or crewman to get a wristband that will allow you to cross the track into the infield. The driving surface itself is 2.02 miles long and 33 feet wide with 9 turns or 12 turn configurations. There are no hills or blind corners, but it does have two double radius turns, one of which is off-camber. Tricky! This does not mean it isn't challenging, however. Its visibility and flatness provide for a safe training facility while every one of its turns is unique and extremely challenging. There are no barriers except the concrete wall along the front straight that separates the track from the hot pits. That means plenty of flat, grassy, and sandy runoff areas, sand traps and berms. It has one long straight and everything else is just one turn right after another. That's probably why it is in use more than 300 days a year for professional testing, filming, track days, driving schools, and club events. There are no bleachers or other spectator oriented amenities, but there are new bathrooms, an enclosed pavilion where food is available, electricity, automated fuel service, a spacious tech shed with scales, a three story timing and scoring tower, a classroom, and lots of shade provided by the Spanish moss encrusted oak and pine trees in the grass and sand paddock. Although Buccaneer Region has been hosting races since 1959, there have been a lot of improvements lately, including new paint, berms, signage, and the aforementioned restrooms and unattended fuel station. New track management has done a great job to make this a comfortable location as well as a great driving experience.



VDCA's September event is a two day format and includes four half-hour sessions (two practice sessions, qualifying, and a feature race) for each of four race groups. In addition, everybody is eligible to run the half hour Gimmick Race and the one-hour Endurance Race. That adds up to three and a half hours of track time in two days. Plus, VDCA always shares the weekend and the costs with another group—this September the *Phil Wicks Driving Academy MINI Cooper Driving Experience* enjoyed seven half-hour track sessions for its Novice and Advanced Groups. On-track contretemps in either group were

few and far between which made for full sessions and no delays. Sure, we had the usual mechanical problems, but they were not catastrophic, and everybody was able to make it back to the pits and not disrupt the racing.

The Feature Races began with Group 3, the under 2 liter production cars. Jack Poteet knows his car, a 1962 Morgan 4/4 and the track real well and ran away from the field for a flag-to-flag win. Tom Coryn kept Sterling Heath (1971 MGB GT) behind him in his 1965 MGB for a while until Bill Vanderford blasted by in his Miata for second. Yes, Miata! These cars are now 26 years old and the 1600 cc versions are now vintage eligible, at least in VDCA.

Groups 2/5/7, the Sports Racers and open wheel cars, was up next. Mark Gompels drove his Royale RP38/42 to a flag-to-flag win despite Robert Hibdon giving him a close race for three laps before he surprisingly had to retire. Fortunately, it was a minor problem, as he came back to dog Bob Woodman in the Enduro on Sunday. One of the more interesting things about this Group was the presence of Garry and Jane Tapp. The couple brought Garry's 1969 Winkleman WDF1 Formula Ford and Jane's Merlyn Mk-17 FF all the way from Dillon, CO. Roebing and VDCA was their first stop of five planned races on an East Coast tour that includes races at NJMP, VIR, Mosport, and Watkins Glen. They have 30 years of vintage racing, sharing their Corvette for many years before they switched to the FF's fifteen years ago. They really liked the track, saying it is faster than it first looked and that it is very technical and requires lots of concentration to drive fast. They also appreciated the fine southern food and the wide selection of beers and wines at the Saturday night party. It seems like vintage racers have pretty much the same values and expectations all over the country.

The Feature race for Groups 1 & 9 buzzed onto the track next and included production cars under 1300cc's and Formula Vees. Because of the short format, there were none of the usual Pre-War cars this time. Casey Haddock races a beautiful Legrand MK 18 D Sports Racer. It has only 750cc's but weighs nothing, revs high, and is driven well by either Casey or his father. Because of its diminutive size, it was placed in Group 1 rather than in Group 2 with the other SRs. Had he been in Group 2, he would have been only thousands of a minute behind first place. As it was, he established a big lead from the green and finished far ahead of P2 which was Mike Jackson in his Shadowfax FV. Neil Sullivan (Lynx FV) was third. The ubiquitous Bugeyes and Spitfires brought up the rear, but enjoyed some good racing none the less. Attrition seemed to descend on this group as we saw sheared flywheel bolts, spun bearings, and rockers that didn't rock, rotors that didn't rotate, and lifters that didn't lift, and SUs that ate screws. And that was only amongst the Bugeyes!

The last Feature race of the day was that for Group 6/8, the large displacement production cars. Dave Bacher put his multi-colored '72 Corvette on the pole with Bob Woodman's plain white and much smaller Porsche 911 right next to him. Think David and Goliath, eh? Just like the story, David triumphed by a significant margin. A second lap pass held the positions to the end and it was Woodman, followed by Bacher, with Henry Costanza's 240Z in third. Ernie Bello in his always quick Opel Kadette GT/E circulated in third until he had to retire to the paddock just before the end.

VDCA always has a gimmick race at the end of the first day's racing that affords the opportunity to drive a short race with cars from other groups and to have some fun. The "gimmick" changes each time and the formula for this weekend's Hurricane Sandy Race was one of the most complicated, guaranteeing that it would be pure luck rather than strategy that would determine the winner. The gimmick was to try to be the first car past the start/finish line after the number of minutes it would have taken Sandy to do 15 laps around the 2.02 mile course. The "X" in the equation was the top speed of Sandy, unbeknownst to everyone except Mike Jackson. The answer worked out to 15:48.6 minutes and Casey Haddock in the Legrand DSR was less than 1 second off. Maybe he knew the "X." He did mention in his victory speech (after the presentation of the only award VDCA ever gives out) that after all, he is an engineer. But most of us, even the other engineers in the group, attributed his win to good luck. Becky Labat continued her contribution of a bottle of wine for the award he received. It must have been too good a vintage for Casey to spray on the audience as they do in Formula 1 because he took it home with him unopened.

Sunday morning's early warm-up sessions weren't too exciting, as is the plan after all, but were more than compensated for by the one hour Enduro squeezed in before the quiet time. As was expected, Robert Hibdon (1986 Swift S2), Bob Woodman (1974 Porsche 911), and Henry Costanzo (1973 Datsun 240Z) dominated and finished in that order. But the excitement was in the details. Hibdon and Woodman were shown on the lap charts as making four passes as counted at the start/finish line. But from a turn three vantage point, they alternated leading every two laps for the entire 39 lap duration, almost like they had a prior agreement. Woodman swore when asked after the race that there was no collusion and that he was driving as hard as he could. It sure was exciting wondering who would be leading the next time they came by and where they were passing although there were a few clean passes observed in the tight turn 4. Oh to have been a drone and to have followed them around the track for their every turn and every pass. After a three lap parade behind the pace car to clear an errant BMW that didn't manage to exit turn one on the racing line and the mandatory 5-minute pit stops for fuel and rest, the race resumed without further incident. Still lots of passing up front until the flag flew with Hibdon barely in the lead. Stan Heath and son Sterling shared dad's MGB roadster, Sterling saying he had to get used to the open cockpit breeze after campaigning his MGB GT for so many years. They finished in good shape, ready to go on individually for the afternoon races.

All in all, it was a good weekend (except for those with the aforementioned mechanical messes). A short, fun, low-key event, typical of the VDCA experience. The Oyster Roast and Pig Picking *Season Finale* at Roebing Road in December will provide the opportunity for yet more cars, more laps, more food and drink, and, hard to believe, more fun.

VDCA's Annual Season Finale



ENTRY: December 9 --11, 2016

Register on line with MotorsportReg.com or use this Pre-Registration form
Please fill out one entry for each car and additional driver entered

Driver name: _____
 Second driver – must submit a separate entry form for tech sheet. No additional charge, but current membership required.

Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Day Phone: _____
 Eve Phone: _____
 Cell: _____
 E-mail: _____

Member#: _____ Ex.Date _____

Owner/Entrant: _____
 If different than driver

Car Make/Model _____
 Year: _____ Class: _____

Displacement: _____ Color: _____
 Tires. Manuf: _____ Type: _____
 Front size: _____ Wheel Width: _____
 Rear size: _____ Wheel Width: _____

Transponder # (required) _____

All drivers must be VDCA members

All entrants must complete a car registration form if one is not already on file

*Emergency contact _____ Phone: _____
 Will be at track (check if "yes") *must be a legally qualified representative

Please check all that apply

Membership \$ 50 ()
 Pre-Registration \$300 ()
Must be received by Friday, Dec. 2nd
Snail mail, FAX or E-mail

At-Track entry \$350 ()
 Second car, different group \$200 ()
 extra crew (2 included with entry): ea \$ 25 ()

Amount enclosed \$ _____
 Check # _____
 Received by _____

Car number requested: list three options
 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
 —New Member Applicants only—

Competition license issued by: _____
 License number: _____
 License/Medical expires: _____

Mail entry and payment to:
 Vintage Drivers Club of America
 13505 Running Water Rd
 Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33418-7933

Mike Jackson, Race Director
 Phone 561-622-7554 FAX 561-228-0552
vdca@earthlink.net

List crew (2 free); minors under 12, no charge

1. _____ 3. _____ (\$25)
 2. _____ 4. _____ (\$25)



A Note from Your Race Director

I hope to see lots of you at RRR this December. As most of you already know, it is a great event with lots of track time and a very clubby feeling at this user-friendly track. Once again Sue and Tim Slater are springing for the oysters on Saturday night, and Frank of Papa's BBQ will be cooking all day long in preparation for our feast. Come help us celebrate the last race of the vintage racing season anywhere in the east half of the United States.



With the end of the season and the rapidly approaching holidays, what a great time to take a look at all of your safety items to see what you might hope to have as a gift this year. Helmets get old and the SA2015's are in good supply at all price levels. Seat/shoulder/submarine belts don't last forever. Many race organizations only allow them to be in service for 5 years and one vintage organization (that shall remain unnamed unless you ask me personally) only allows 2 years. Plus, while no organization requires regular replacement of driver suits, they don't last forever either. Me? Well, my suit has been washed so many times you can nearly read through it. So, let this be a hint to a certain registrar/newsletter editor/webmistress/etc. Subtle enough?

2016

Palm Beach Classic

with FL Reg SCCA
PBIR
Nov 12 - 13

Season Finale *Pig Pickin' and Oyster Roast*

Roebling Road
Dec 9 - 11

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