



#15 Peter McLaughlin, 1962 Lotus 23b;
#34 George Balbach, 1961 Porsche 356 Roadster.

photo by Walter Pietrowicz

SVRA Mid-Ohio Vintage Grand Prix

Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course, OH

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-by Larry Sanata

Geoff Tedder's Sunbeam Alpine is a far cry from the one-off he built in England to compete in gymkhana events. But it's the thrill of racing that drives the Ohio man to compete in historic racing events, like the Mid-Ohio Vintage Grand Prix in June.

"Back then, a Triumph TR3 or an MGA, or whatever it might have been, was around a thousand pounds, and that was like a million dollars to me," he recalled during his younger years in England.

"So I ended up making my own car, and I had quite a snazzy looking sports car." Using a fiberglass body and parts from every car imaginable, and available, the effervescent Turner built his own competition car.

"Eventually I sold my homemade special to a fellow with an MGTC who thought my homemade car was really the cat's whisker."

Arriving in the U.S. and working as an engineer for an English company with American business interests, Tedder began competing in SCCA. Today, after having raised a family and retiring from a longtime job, he is doing what he has always dreamt of doing again – racing.



photo by Michael Sanata

#73 Mike Spence,
1972 Crossle 20F.

Even today, he said, "Once you get on track, you don't want to stop." Although he and his 1966 Alpine finished dead last in the Group 3 event, that was fine for him. It was the thrill of being in the heat of the race.

This year's Mid-Ohio Vintage Grand Prix was marked by warm weather, clear skies and considerable competition.

In **Group 1**, a mix of small-bore production cars and one sports racer provided plenty of entertainment. Ben Sinnott in a 1964 Beach Fiat took an early lead, holding off traffic for three laps before John Sambrook in a 1970 Ginetta G15 got ahead.

Sambrook, who began the race in sixth place, held position until the sixth lap when Simon Wilson-Taylor in a 1959 Lotus 7 muscled his way around the Ginetta and took the lead. The Lotus maintained command and four laps later scored the checkered flag, followed by Sambrook and Derek Chima in a 1966 MG Midget.

Chima, a regular at Mid-Ohio, did a commendable job maintaining third place for all nine laps. Ross Bogert in a 1974 Ginetta G15 also had a great run, starting next to last, among 10 cars, and finishing in fourth place.

Brabham Formula Bs dominated **Group 2** and decimated everything else on track. Bobby Brown in a 1971 Brabham BT35 was the leader for the first lap of the nine-lap event, but was quickly overtaken on the second lap by Shelby Mershon in a slippery 1969 Brabham BT29.

During the first lap, leaders were three wide as they worked their way through the S turns on Mid-Ohio's back stretch. And the momentum increased after that. Two of the nine laps of the race were under caution after at least one car went off track.

With Ted Wentz in a 1968 Brabham BT23c, Dave Handy in a 1969 Brabham BT29 and Brown

close behind and forever pressing, Mershon seemed unstoppable. But in the seventh lap, Wentz muscled his way ahead of Mershon. It was only a temporary change in places, however, with Mershon resuming the lead in the eighth lap and claiming the checkered flag on the ninth lap.

While the faster Brabham drivers were doing their thing, another race was taking place further in the pack, with Bob Bruce in a 1980 Crossle 40F fighting off Jeff Snook in a 1968 Alexis Mk1 and a field of other open wheelers.

When the checkered flag was waved after nine laps, it was Mershon, Wentz and Handy. Best speed of the race was nearly 92 mph, set by Wentz. The average speed for the Group 2 event was 77 mph.

Altogether five Brabhams competed in the event and claimed the top five positions, with Bruce taking sixth place, followed by Snook and four others.

In **Group 3**, Denny Wilson in a 1962 Lotus 7 quickly lost his lead at the start of the race when John Schrecker in a Porsche 356 SC jumped ahead. Two laps later, Bob Colaizzi in a 1962 Lotus 7 went fast forward and maintained first place for the duration of the race, fighting off Schrecker and Denny Wilson in a 1962 Lotus 7.

Further in the pack, Mike Zappa in a 1962 MGB, Tim Sager in a 1972 Fiat 124 and Charles Kates in a 1961 Lotus 7 never relinquished their sixth, seventh and eighth positions, respectively, while others battled for position.

After nine laps, Colaizzi claimed the checkered flag followed by Schrecker and Wilson.

Only a few cars were on hand for the combined **Groups 4 and 5** – Bill Luken in a 1963 Lotus 23b, Max Heilman in a 1958 Jaguar XK150 and Paul Gelpi in a 1963 Bobsy SR2/3.



photo by Walter Pietrowicz

#14 Todd Treffert, 1961 MGA.

The first lap went to Heilman, followed by Gelpi and Luken. But positions changed quickly afterwards, with the faster Luken dominating the remaining eight laps of the race. In the end, it was Luken, Heilman and Gelpi.

American muscle dominated **Group 6** at the rolling Mid-Ohio course, an event populated with Corvettes, Camaros and a handful of Fords and Porsches, not to mention one Audi S4.

Peter Klutt in a 1969 Corvette led the race from beginning to end, but was challenged every inch of the way by the likes of John Farano in a 1971 Corvette and Dennis Olthoff in a replica GT40.

Mid-pack, the race was something far more interesting. Andre Ahrle in a Cobra 427 and Curt Vogt in a 1966 Shelby GT350 battled from beginning to end, exchanging positions again, and again, and again. As the sounds of American metal echoed through Mid-Ohio's hilly track, Jim Bradley in a 1967 Camaro Z28 and Sean Ryan in a 1970 Camaro Z/28 were at it lap after

lap doing their best to tame the serpentine Mid-Ohio track.

When the checkered flag was dropped, first place honors went to Klutt, followed by Farano and Olthoff. Altogether, six Corvettes, five Camaro Z/28s, three Shelby GT350s, two Porsches and one Audi, Cobra and replica GT40 were on hand for the event.

In **Group 7**, David Porter in a 1985 Swift DB2 made quick time of the nine-lap event after jumping ahead of John Kramer in another Swift DB2 at the very start of the race. Kramer pushed hard to regain the lead and was pursued every lap of the race by Richard Duffey in a yet another Swift DB2, with Jack Ruscilli in a 1986 Ralt RT5 not far behind.

While Duffey maintained his third place position, Ruscilli and Jim Lenehan in a 1982 Swift DB2 exchanged positions lap after lap. At the end of the day, however, bragging rights went to Porter, followed by Kramer and Duffey.

In **Group 8**, Les Gonda, a favorite at the Mid-Ohio Vintage Grand Prix in his 1973 MGB-GT V8, had his hands full keeping pace with Fritz Seidel in his 1969 Porsche 911S. After taking the lead, Seidel never lost his advantage, despite Gonda's best efforts, and claimed the checkered flag.

David Bland in his 1969 Porsche 911 never relinquished his third place berth, after starting in sixth place, although behind him Dan McChesney in a 1973 Porsche 911 and Ed Magner in a 1994 Oldsmobile Achieva kept things interesting as they dived from one end of the Mid-Ohio course to the other.

Lots of close racing marked this event, which ended with Seidel in first place, followed by Gonda and Bland. Jim Lenehan in a 1971 Datsun 240Z had a great showing, starting in 18th place and finishing in 11th.

Legendary Datsun racer Bob Leitzinger, the father of contemporary race car driver Butch

Leitzinger, was on hand in a Datsun 510 – beginning in eighth place and finishing in eighth place.

Shelby Mershon in a 1997 Lola T97/20 took first place honors in **Group 9**. More interesting, however, was the sparring that went on between Mark Brannon in another Lola T97 and Dan Mershon in a yet another T97.

After holding second position for five laps, Brannon seemed certain to finish second. But in the sixth lap, Dan Mershon pulled ahead and held position for the remainder of the race, while Brannon fell back.

When the checkered flag was dropped, first honors went to Shelby Mershon, followed by Dan Mershon and Travis Engen in – of course, another Lola T97/20.

Engen had a better day in **Group 10** when he claimed first rights in a 2005 Audi R8. He was followed to victory lane by Alex Welch in a 1974 Porsche 911 RSR, Jim Hendrix in another RSR and Shelby Mershon in a 2002 Cadillac P1. So much for vintage racers.

In the **S2000** championship race, a bevy of 1985 Swift DB2s were top winners, driven by David Porter, Richard Duffey and John Kramer, respectively. Porter never relinquished the lead, but Kramer and Duffey dueled endlessly, with Duffey getting ahead of Kramer in the sixth lap and holding on until the final ninth lap.

Five cars competed in the **Trans-Am** feature race, with Ed Jensen in a 1967 Camaro Z/28 leading from start to finish. Joe Maloy in a 1968 Datsun 510 and Skip Bryan in a 1972 BMW 2002 exchanged position, in exciting fashion, a number of times before Maloy broke loose. When the checkered flag was waved, it was Jensen, Maloy and Bryan.

The **Datsun-Nissan** feature race included a wild assortment of cars from the manufacturer,



#78 Max Heilman, 1958 Jaguar XK 150; #15 Peter McLaughlin, 1962 Lotus 23b; #39 Herb Wetanson, 1959 Aston Martin DB4 Zagato.

including 510s, 2000s, a 1200, 1600 and the 280 ZX of Bill Erdman that took the checkered flag.

Bob Leitzinger led at the start of the nine-lap event, but was overtaken by Jim Lenehan in a 1972 240 Z, who held first place for only two laps before Leitzinger jumped ahead. Leitzinger, in a pristine 510, showed the stuff that enabled him to become a legendary Datsun racer in the '60s and '70s, as he stormed through the turns of Mid-Ohio.

But it was the muscle of a 1983 280ZX, driven by Erdman that changed the course of the race. After passing Leitzinger in the sixth lap, Erdman completed three more laps before claiming the checkered flag. At the conclusion of the race, it was Erdman, Leitzinger and Lenehan.

In the **Enduro 1 Buckeye 100**, it was Fritz Seidel in a 1969 Porsche 911S in first place followed by David Bland in a 1969 Porsche 911 and Peter McLaughlin in a 1962 Lotus 23b.

In the Classic Motorsports Small Bore Enduro, George Balbach in a 1961 Porsche 356 took top honors followed by Skott Burkland in a 1969 Porsche 911 and Vic Smirmants in a 1961 Porsche 356.

In the **Enduro 2 Jim Trueman 100**, it was Travis Engen in a 2005 Audi R8 followed by Ralph Thomas in a 1985 Argo JM19C and Derek Harling in a 1977 Lola T91/50.



#71 Denny Wilson, 1962 Lotus Super 7; #70 Vic Skirmants, 1961 Porsche 356B Roadster.

RACE RESULTS

GROUP 1

PL CL DRIVER/CAR

- 1 1FP S. Wilson-Taylor/59 Lotus 7-Climax 1:56.411
- 1 1GP J. Sambrook/70 Ginetta G15 1:56.682
- 2 1FP D. Chima/66 MG Midget
- 2 1GP R. Bogert/74 Ginetta G15
- 3 1GP R. Mied/62 Triumph Spitfire
- 3 1FP C. Comer/59 AH Sprite Mk 1
- 4 1FP B. Engle Sr./66 Datsun Roadster

- 4 1GP T. Baumgardner/57 MGA
- 1 1DSR B. Sinnott/64 Beach Fiat 1:51.079
- 5 1FP D. Brown/67 MG Midget

GROUP 2

PL CL DRIVER/CAR

- 1 2FB S. Mershon/69 Brabham BT21 1:29.454
- 1 2FA T. Wentz/68 Brabham BT23c 1:29.385
- 2 2FB D. Handy/69 Brabham BT29
- 3 2FB B. Brown/71 Brabham BT35
- 4 2FB J. Quadracci/69 Brabham BT29

- 1 2CF B. Bruce/80 Crossle 40F 1:40.384
- 1 2FF J. Snook/68 Alexis Mk 14 1:42.666
- 2 2FF M. Spence/72 Crossle 20F
- 2 2CF W. Hollingsworth/78 Crossle 32F
- 3 2CF G. Hale/77 Zink Z10
- 3 2FF J. O'Connor/71 Winklemann WDF3
- 5 2FB T. Engen/70 Chevron B17b

GROUP 3

PL CL DRIVER/CAR

- 1 3CP B. Colaizzi/62 Lotus Super 7 1:43.299
- 2 3CP J. Schrecker/64 Porsche 356SC
- 3 3CP D. Wilson/62 Lotus Super 7
- 4 3CP A. Wright/62 Lotus Super 7
- 1 3EP T. Treffert/61 MGA 1:47.000
- 5 3CP M. Zappa/62 MGB
- 6 3CP T. Sager/72 Fiat 124 Spider
- 7 3CP C. Kates/61 Lotus Super 7
- 8 3CP D. Rosenthal/66 Sunbeam Tiger
- 1 3DP G. Little/71 Porsche 914/4 1:57.542

- 2 3DP B. Pickerill/70 Porsche 914/4
- 2 3EP G. Tedder/66 Sunbeam Alpine
- 9 3CP V. Skirmants/61 Porsche 356B Roadster
- 3 3EP B. Treffert/61 MGA
- 10 3CP D. Tillinger/67 Datsun 2000 Roadster

GROUPS 4, 5

PL CL DRIVER/CAR

- 1 5FM B. Luken/63 Lotus 23b 1:47.849
- 1 4CM M. Heilman/58 Jaguar XK150 1:49.227

- 1 4DM P. Gelpi/63 Bobsy SR2/3 1:52.936

GROUP 6

PL CL DRIVER/CAR

- 1 6AP P. Klutt/69 Chevrolet Corvette HDTP 1:32.068
- 2 6AP J. Farano/71 Chevrolet Corvette HDTP
- 1 6R D. Olthoff/66/0 SPG GT40 Mk II 1:31.976
- 2 6R A. Ahrlé/65/0 Shelby Cobra 427
- 1 6BP C. Vogt/66 Shelby GT350 1:35.956
- 1 6TA S. Ryan/70 Chevrolet Camaro Z/28 1:35.512
- 2 6TA J. Bradley/67 Chevrolet Camaro Z/28
- 3 6TA E. Jensen/67 Chevrolet Camaro



#76 Alex Rorke, 1969 Datsun 510.

- Z/28
- 4 6TA S. Viviano/69 Chevrolet Camaro Z/28
- 2 6BP G. Moore/66 Shelby GT350
- 3 6BP C. Comer/66 Shelby GT350