

JAG Promotions

Driver's Update

May 27, 1998

Winter of Discontent

It has been a longer than expected winter in many ways. In addition to our wacky weather, a bunch of unforeseen obstacles altered the course of our original plans. We were able to continue capitalizing on our success last year in the press over the winter, as variables continued to change. Our plan was to run our second car from last year with Mark Neuhaus in the American City Racing League, and with combined sponsorship run both the ACRL and the F2000 (open wheel) championships with Carbir Race Cars. As it turned out, Mark moved on to Can-Am / World Sports Cars, and we attempted to turn our efforts to the F2000 effort. We prepared and sold Mark's chassis, and began building chassis 005 for John Lombardo. Due to several parts manufacturing delays, Lombardo ran my car from last year for the first three races, and will get his completed car next Monday. The instability of the winter led to fewer days in the car for me- we tested at Buttonwillow in a car selling attempt that resulted in the sale of Neuhaus' car, Lombardo's car, and a single cam set up car to a fellow from LA named Joe Moran. I went to Las Vegas to shake down the ACRL cars for newcomers John Lombardo and his teammate Fiorenzo Tirinnanzi (owner of the Neuhaus car). Finally, I ran a race at Mesa Marin (Bakersfield, 5/8ths of a mile oval track) with ACRL in the Fiorenzo Tirinnanzi car - more later...



Crew Chief Eric Purcell consults with 1998 ACRL 200000 champ Jeff Goins before a race.



Due to even more delays, inconsistencies with drawings, and all of the activities with the sports2000 cars just to keep Carbir afloat, the new Carbir F2000 car is still not finished - although we are much closer. At the present time, the car has 3 corners of suspension bolted to it, but there are quite a few details still to be engineered. I hope to put the car on the track within the next two to three weeks.

On the weird weather front, we had a funnel cloud directly over the shop, and a tornado touched down just a couple of miles away in Sunnyvale about three weeks ago. That was exciting.

MESA MARIN, MAY 23

I had the opportunity to get into Carbir Chassis 002, now owned by Fiorenzo Tirinnanzi for the third round of the American City Racing League, at the oval track at Mesa Marin in Bakersfield. We had scheduled a test day before the event, but due to rain and some other factors, it did not happen. I went to Los Angeles to help prepare the cars now painted in the "team San Diego" colors for John Lombardo and myself.

All of these programs are taking shape kind of late this season; John Lombardo just hired my lead mechanic from last season, Mark Cezon to run their effort for the year the week of the Mesa race. I went down to Los Angeles and met up with Mark Cezon to prep the cars on Tuesday. The cars were in John's father's shop in Valencia. (John's father is the well known drag racer "Lil' John Lombardo, and his shop was extremely impressive, right down to an 800hp '34 Ford that he was building.) We worked like mad, with the full time help of Mark Soucie, John's other crew/mechanic for the effort. It was the usual thrash to get everything done, and we left for Bakersfield on Thursday night.

Friday was the official ACRL test day. We had studied our setup from last year, and after careful analysis, Eric interpolated a new setup based on what we had learned in the past. Friday was crucial to making the cars raceable for Saturday. The setup was better, and we refined the car throughout the day- we were able to run consistently quicker than last year. Peter Zarcades crashed Friday morning, and damaged the right side fairly extensively. He had it back together for Saturdays practice. Friday was Lombardo's first time on an oval, and he took to it well. He was running 19.3 and 19.4 second laps at the end of the day. I ran a few 19.1's.

The schedule called for two practices, single car qualifying, and then the 75 lap race. Both Carbirs were quick in the two practice sessions. John was happy with his car, and made no more changes before qualifying. I made only minor adjustments before the qualifying run. The cars worked well in traffic, and we felt pretty confident about the race.

Just before our qualifying session, a stock car in a previous group lost an engine, and we were advised that two of the turns were oily. This oil played a part in the conditions for our session.

On the oval, qualifying is a single car, two lap event. The fastest of the two laps counts, and the order of cars is determined by a lottery. I drew 11th. Lombardo drew 16th (last). The oil played a large part, because the first guys out got the worst of it. Steve Romak hit the wall in his Van Diemen after pulling off a great first lap. During my run, I did alright, but I managed to find some oil during my faster lap, and slid sideways a bit and scrubbed some speed. It was still quick enough to hold the pole until the last guy to qualify (John Lombardo in my old car from last year) got out there and went quicker by .2 than me. At least I was on the front row, and the fact that it was a Carbir front row excited Brian Utt (Carbir Race Cars) who was also on hand for the race.

Lombardo would start from the pole, with me on the outside of him, John Ostlund behind, and Steve Romack directly behind me in the fourth spot. Zarcades was back in the middle of the pack.



MESA MARIN Continued

With the starting order decided, we prepared for the race. I kept knocking the winglets off of the front splitter of my car, so I spent the time before the race repairing the splitter.

RACE: We ran at sunset, before the main SouthWest tour race. There was a sizable crowd on hand for the start of our 75 lap event.

Lombardo paced the field, with Mark Cezon on his radio spotting. I had the familiar voice of Eric Purcell (my engineer / crew chief) in my ear, spotting. Lombardo got the jump into the first corner, so I slotted in behind. I had decided earlier that jeopardizing another Carbir (especially my own car from last year) was not a good idea, so I gave Lombardo plenty of racing room. Lombardo did a great job leading the field. I was surprised at how quickly he was going. I was quicker under braking in both corners, but he carried a little more speed across the middle of the corners. I got the car inside on several occasions, but I wasn't far enough up on him to be seen, and I backed out. We both did a better job of working the traffic than the rest of the field. Several times I got some great runs at him, but was caught out by slower traffic. We cruised nose to tail for most of the race - I rubbed a couple of lapped cars while staying glued to the lead car.

Before the first (and only) caution period, the two Carbir's ran away from the field, putting $\frac{3}{4}$ of a lap on the group battling for 3rd through 7th. The caution came out for massive amounts of oil on the track. One of the "Team San Francisco" cars lost an oil pressure sender, and pumped oil around the track. As the track went yellow, Lombardo slid sideways and nearly lost it as I slid around the outside of him - because the yellow had come out, I dropped back in behind. We went green after a bunch of oil dry was worked into the pavement around lap 59. It was really slick, and on the second lap after the restart, Lombardo bobbled just a little coming out of turn 2. I was right there, and drove right by. I took it easy for a couple of laps, and then put a bit of distance in the remaining laps. Lombardo finished second, followed by John Ostlund.

It was a good event, with no accidents. I was pleased that the car I was driving made it through relatively unscathed, and of course I was pleased to win the thing.

Looking Ahead:

Getting back into the car really lit the fire under me to get on with driving. Hopefully the prototype F2000 Carbir will be finished in the next couple of weeks. Tentatively, (and it looks as if it is going to happen,) I will be in a USRRC Can - Am car for the remainder of that series. I will have more details on this probably within a week. If the f2000 car is finished, we will mount a national championship runoffs effort while preparing the car for the pro series later in the season, ultimately with our eyes on next season with that project. Meanwhile, I am working on various angles of funding / sponsorship / and options with regards to moving up in the sport.

