

CHANGE A FOOT AFTER THE 36TH ROLEX MONTEREY HISTORIC AUTOMOBILE RACES

The big news at the Monterey Historic Automobile Races this year came at the end of the weekend, as a significant case of politics boiled over, impacting the future of the event (or ultimately not impacting it, they seem to say)

A flurry of press releases began arriving on Sunday, the last day of the event, first announcing that the Sports Car Racing Association of the Monterey Peninsula (SCRAMP) would take over producing the historic races at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca in 2010, and that General Racing, Ltd. was out. "This has certainly been a long and rewarding relationship with Steve Earle and General Racing," said Gill Campbell, CEO and General Manager of Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca. "SCRAMP has always admired Mr. Earle's creation, which has brought historic car racing to the enthusiast on such a level."

Steve Earle, General Racing Ltd. president, issued a statement in response on Monday, saying that General Racing, which had created and produced the Monterey Historic Automobile Races® (he pointedly includes the ®) for 36 years, would indeed no longer be doing so. Earle described SCRAMP's program as a new event. Many feel that Steve Earle and the long-running Monterey event have made historic automobile racing what it is in the US today.

David Love of San Rafael CA, a 74-year-old racing veteran who has driven his 1958 Ferrari 250 Testa Rossa in all 36 runnings of the race, reminisced that in 1967 a half-dozen friends gathered with their old sports cars to have what they called a mechanical picnic. The next year, "we rented a local track for \$100 and divided the cost between us," says Love. "Steve Earle heard about it, came out with his GTO to see what we were up to, and that's how we met." It didn't take long for Earle to envision a proper road race to coordinate with the timing of the Pebble Beach Concourse d'Élegance, but he knew it

would not be allowed on public streets, as many vintage events are, so he chose the track at Laguna Seca as the ideal venue.

The track, however, was established in 1957 and has been operated since its inception by SCRAMP, a not-for-profit organization which has donated more than \$12 million to communities around the Monterey Peninsula and to volunteer groups that help put on the races.

As early as fall 2008, Earle says he was advised that the terms of agreement between General Racing and SCRAMP were no longer economically viable. Unable to come to a new agreement, General Racing announced they would allow SCRAMP a one-time use of the name Monterey Historic Automobile Races for the 2010 event.

General Racing meanwhile announced that they would continue their own tradition at the Wine Country Classic at Infineon Raceway in Sonoma CA in early June 2010. "I truly believe that we have brought something special to the community of Monterey," said Earle, "as an event of world renown and the generator of substantial revenue for the local economy and the charities to which SCRAMP contributes. The purpose of General Racing, Ltd., is and always has been to encourage the restoration, preservation and use of historic, sports and racing cars... for the enjoyment of participants and enthusiasts alike."

By later that same day, Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca officials had announced that August 13-15, 2010, would be the dates for the 37th Monterey Historic Automobile Races. "Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca's mission will be to maintain the integrity, authenticity and prestige of the Monterey Historic Automobile Races, while enhancing the enjoyment factor for the fans, participants and sponsors," said Campbell.

The event has been one of the cornerstones of the Monterey Peninsula's Classic Car Week and is at the pinnacle of Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca's track calendar.

By the middle of the following week, Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca officials had announced a new Selection Committee for the 2010 races, including Steve Earle.

Use of the Monterey Historic Automobile Races® name, as well as details of General Racing's plans for Sonoma next June, had not been clarified by press time. Tickets for Monterey 2010, however, go on sale November 17, 2009, available at 800-327-7322 or www.mazdaraceway.com.

Full 2009 entry lists and race results are available at www.montereyhistoric.com. ■

VINTAGE WHEELS, NEW WHEELS AND TWO WHEELS AT LAGUNA

PORSCHE SHOWCASES HISTORY AND FUTURE AS THE FEATURED MARQUE

At the 36th Rolex Monterey Historic Automobile Races, held at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca (August 14-16), the sound of over 450 race cars was complemented by the 2010 Porsche Panamera Gran Turismo making its North American debut. In addition to the 145 Porsche racers entered by their owners (one-third of the 450-plus field), Porsche showcased the Panamera on the world-famous race track and also provided display vehicles on site, including four special cars with significant American connections, on loan from the new Porsche Museum in Germany. (The Panamera also made a debut appearance at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Élegance.) Jay Leno was on hand to drive the Panamera Turbo.



DUCATI

Ducati was at the Monterey Historic Races for their first time, unveiling a "Martini Racing" liveried Superbike in honor of Porsche. They also had their 200hp, 366-pound Desmosedici RR MotoGP race replica on display.

Ducati reminded us that Arizona is an important market for them, with the first showroom in the world to be completed under their new retail design program to be Ducati Scottsdale, set to open by the time you read this.

FISKER

The Fisker Karma Plug-in Hybrid made its public driving debut during the Monterey Historic Races on Saturday, just 19 months after being unveiled as a concept car, the first-ever appearance of a PHEV on track at the event. The Karma PHEV is a full-size luxury sedan with seating for four, yet has a range of 50 emission-free miles on a full charge of its lithium-ion battery, and a total range of 300 miles with an on-board generator turned by an efficient 260hp Ecotec engine. Two 201.5hp electric motors send traction through a single-speed differential, enough to hit 0-to-60 in about six seconds with a top speed of 125mph. (The Karma was also on display at Concorso Italiano, alongside the Karma Sunset hardtop convertible concept. The Sunset was on display again at the Pebble Beach Concours.) ■

The new four-door Porsche Panamera (top left) was flown via 747 from Germany to its debut at Monterey. Photo © Dirk Michael Dekbar, courtesy Porsche AG.

Porsches navigate the Corkscrew at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca. Photo: Kyle Burt

Ducati unveils Martini Racing liveried Superbike in honor of Porsche as featured marque.

The Fisker Karma Plug-in Hybrid made its driving debut on the track during the races.

MOBILE UPLOADS

