

HSR with Wallace & Greensall

Lunch with Nigel Greensall and his charming partner Nikki last week – Nikki, like Nigel, is a racing champion, having won the Formula Woman title in the second and final version of that series – led to an interesting tale from the HSR Series, in the first week of December (the final event of HSR's 2009 season).

With racing (or testing anyway) kicking off now in Florida, at Daytona, it seems appropriate to relate some stories from that State – actually beginning the story at DIS, in the penultimate HSR meeting in early November (the Daytona Continental Historics). Here, Andy Wallace was down to race Jim Rogers' 2002 ex-Champion R8, with Jim Adam, in the very chassis that Andy raced in the Sebring 12 Hours that year (now prepared by one of the same Champion crew – Bobby Green).

"George Robinson's Ranch Resort R&S MkIII C was on pole, but with the Audi's traction control, I beat him away at the start," relates the former Le Mans winner, "but that car has some serious horsepower these days!"

Running without restrictors, the Judd V10 develops a rumoured 860 bhp, which must have been highly entertaining around the Speedway. Andy couldn't hold off the Riley & Scott for long, the Robinson car pulling out *"several car lengths before the Bus Stop."* But an honourable second was a fine result for AWOL and the R8.

Meanwhile, Nigel Greensall was also present at Daytona, but before the HSR event...

"I was there in October, testing two cars owned by Benton and Richard Bryan (an Argo and a Corvette) and an Intrepid owned by Ron Vaccarella. All the cars are run by Metro Racing – a great group of guys – and they also run Paul Thieme's Miller-liveried Porsche 962."

Nigel knew some of the history of this chassis: it was raced at the 1989 Daytona 24 Hours by Mario and Michael (no surname needed – it retired with a brake problem), an event won by the sister car of Bob Wollek, Derek Bell and John Andretti. Nigel was invited to have a sit in the 962 and, well, you know how one thing leads to another?

Forward a month (or so) to Sebring in early December, Andy Wallace in the Audi again. And it was wet for Saturday's one hour race.

Jim Rogers didn't want to run his treasure in the rain, and with the R8 not entered in Sunday's four hour event, it looked as though Andy had had a wasted trip.

Until, that is, George Robinson called him that evening and asked if A. Wallace would like to race his R&S MkIII C on Sunday. Two problems though: Andy had never driven the car, and he and Catherine had a flight booked from Orlando to the UK, the timing of which would mean him missing the end of the race. No problems on either count: Andy could try it out in the seven lap event on Sunday morning, and George's own jet was on hand to whisk his new partner to Orlando during the race's fourth hour.

Meanwhile, Nigel Greensall had tried the Miller 962 on Thursday, but, with the advent of rain on Saturday, Paul Thieme initially planned to 'pull' the car – but then it began to dry out. Quick change of plan: put Greensall in the car, and see if the set-up changes that the Englishman had come up with were working.

"I only drove it for the second half (hour) of the race, but the set-up was more confidence-inspiring for Paul and (usual partner) Rick Riley. That was proven in the four-hour race on Sunday, when Paul was four seconds quicker than he had been with the old set-up!"

Nigel also attributes lap time gains to use of the Racelogic camera system that he and Nikki are making use of these days. *"It's a great tool, and we'll be using it at Dubai this coming weekend,"* says Nigel.

To complete the 962 story at Sebring, the trio brought the car home after two shortish stints each in the main, four hour, race, and Greensall's partners really appreciated the damper and gear ratio changes – although they had a slight collision with a Ferrari Daytona, and then a brake light problem.

Meanwhile, Andy Wallace was right at the front of the grid on Sunday morning, for the quick sprint race, in that powerful R&S.

"Having not driven the car before, I also had to start it from pole! I kept Travis Engen's R8 behind me for two laps, until I'd got used to it, then pulled away to the win."

Does it really have 860 bhp Andy? *"I'd estimate that it has something pretty close to 800 – and it's a really nicely prepared car. Phil Bourne looks after the electronics and the t/control works really well: it really saves the car over the bumps, with all that power."*

Andy was down to start the enduro, and also complete the third hour, *"and it's really nice: when you pit, the car has to be stationary for five minutes, so you can have a good old chat with your partner! We led the race throughout, and when I left the circuit, it was looking as though we were going to take the win, but with just 10 minutes left, the paddle shift failed. That's a rare occurrence, and unfortunately when George switched to the manual shift, a bolt fell out – and he dropped to second (behind Markku Biederman and Klaus Graf, no less, in a Porsche RSR)."*

Andy didn't find this out until the following day. He sums up the race as *"a real eye opener with LMP1s mixed with all sorts of machinery including some rather low powered GTs. Closing speeds were massive in some cases but everyone was well behaved and aware of their surroundings, so it was a lot of fun."*

Other familiar faces, with good finishing positions, were Gunnar Jeannette (third) and Darren Law (fourth), both in Porsches, while Ron Zitz, Guy Cosmo, Jack Baldwin, Dennis Spencer and Forest Barber were also in the field – the latter in his familiar Grand-Am Doran, the Rolex title winner from a few years ago.

Also in the race was Chip Robinson, who'd raced the pole-setter in the '89 Daytona 24 Hours – one of the NPTI Nissans. Wasn't that the one that Arie Luyendyk had to start from the back, and then ripped through the whole field in a matter of minutes? 20 years later, Robinson was in a Miller-liveried car at Sebring, one of the Porsche Caymans. These 'baby' Porsches race in famous Porsche colours, and Guy Cosmo won the class this time, in the Lowenbrau-coloured machine.

Andy Wallace is pictured (in his '02 Champion overalls) atop the podium after the seven-lapper, flanked by Travis Engen and Aram Tourikian (also in an R&S MkIII).

Neither Wallace nor Greensall are testing at Daytona now, unfortunately, but the latter is getting ready to fly out to Dubai tomorrow for the year's first 24 hour race, where he'll race a Speedlover Aston Martin N24 in the Dunlop-backed event, with Dirk De Groof, Jean-Michel Jerome and Richard Verburg.