

CLASSIC DRIVER

A Day at the Races: The 2008 Rolex Monterey Historics



When you've had your fill of concours and auctions, there's only one thing to do: head for the hills and take a day off at the Mazda Raceway.

Saturday's the day when visitors to the **Monterey Peninsula** find time to get some sun and high-octane action at Laguna Seca. Given a good run with the traffic, it's only 45 minutes or so away from **Pebble Beach** or **Monterey**, and a day at the races is the perfect antidote to endless speculation on correct oil filter colours or **250 GT Lusso** values.

I took the day off and, with a couple of close friends, had a whale of a time seeing racing cars that (outside the **Goodwood Festival of Speed**) you will never see in Europe.



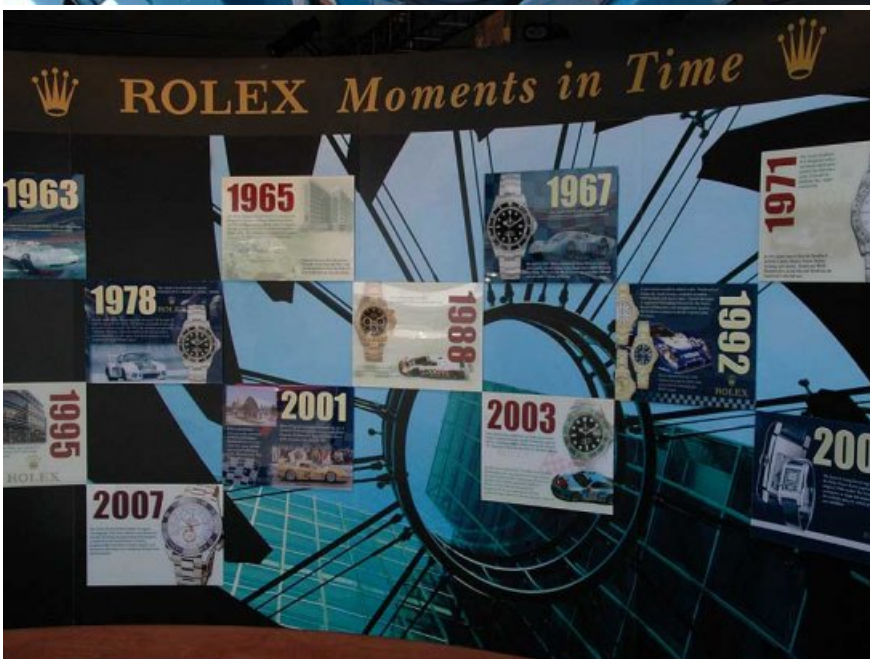
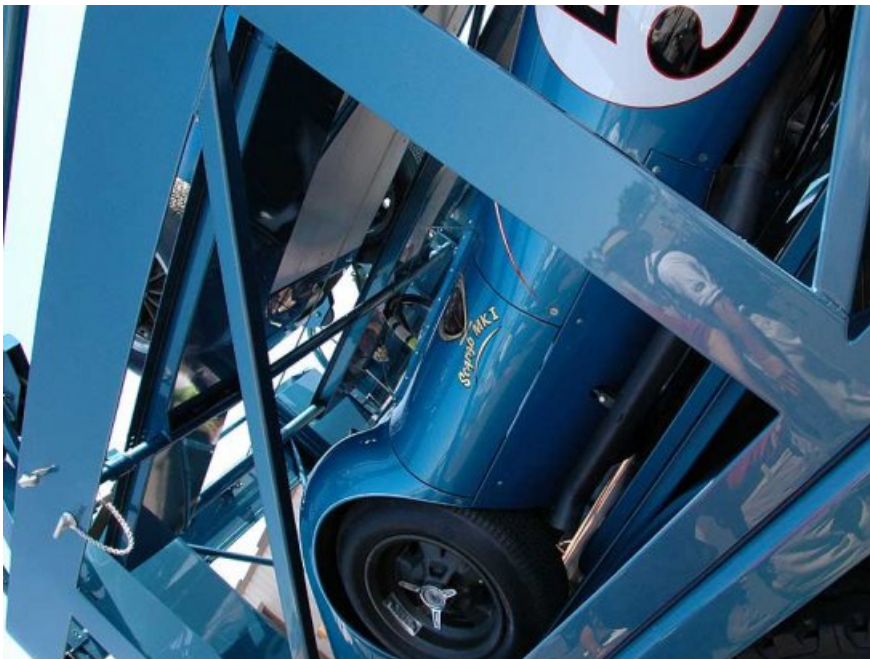
Amazingly, it was the 35th running of the **Rolex Monterey Historic Automobile Races** in 2008. 'Presented by Toyota', as they have been in recent years, the three-day event cleverly showcases the best of US racing with the top European marques so beloved Stateside: **Ferrari** and **Porsche**, together with vintage **Alfa Romeos** and **Bugattis**.

Homegrown hero **Mario Andretti**, the **1978 Formula 1 World Champion**, was honoured at this year's event. The man from Nazareth (Pennsylvania, that is) was behind the wheel of a **John Player Special Lotus** again and swung the black and gold machine round the sweeping course's curves like, well, no other.



I was impressed.

The on-track action on the Saturday comprised races for older cars (and **Indy Roadsters**), two **Formula Junior** heats (the small-capacity single-seaters being a feature this year), **1955 - 1960 Sports Racing Cars over 2500c**, **Historic Trans-Am cars**, **1966 - 1974 Historic Can-Ams**, and **1964 - 1975 FIA Sports Racers**.



The headlining race, for me, at least, was the **Trans-Am** event. You just don't see these 'stock' small-block V8s in the UK. We have the **St Mary's Trophy** at the **Goodwood Revival** that will (in its later-year incarnation) feature American cars such as **Mustangs**, **Falcons** and **Galaxies**, but nothing can compare with the Trans-Am in its early 70s heyday for rumbling door-to-door, eight-cylinder action.

To be correct, of course, a certain **J. Rindt** in a tiny **Alfa Romeo GTA** did well, and **Tony Adamowicz** won the 1968 **Manufacturers' Championship** driving a **Porsche 911**, but it's the big-capacity metal that people flock to see.



In 2008 it was **Ken Epsman**, from Saratoga CA, that played **Sam Posey** in the #77 lime green **Dodge Challenger** to **Jamey Mazzotta's Parnelli Jones** or **George Follmer** in his yellow **Bud Moore 1970 Boss 302 Mustang**.



Unlike the original series, the door-handles remained untouched, however, as the rules for competing at the Monterey Historics are strict - one strike and you are, quite literally, out the following year. That notwithstanding, it was still a tremendous spectacle and well worth the \$85 ticket price alone.



Next year's **Rolex Monterey Historic Automobile Races, Presented by Toyota** are scheduled for 14 - 16 August 2009, with **Porsche** as the official marque.



Text: [Steve Wakefield](#)

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ROLEX Moments in

OF THE MANY DRIVERS WHO EXPERIENCED THE FERRARI
ENDURANCE CARS, MARIO ANDRETTI TOOK VICTORY IN
FOUR OUT OF FIVE RACES WITH THE 312PB.

In 1971, a new chassis was built for the Sebring 12-hour race. Smaller than its predecessor the 512S, the little Ferrari was best suited for the Sebring circuit.

Andretti loved the new car. "I was so impressed with everything seemed aerodynamically right. It had all the characteristics of a Grand Prix car. It was light, it braked well, but its power down the gear shift was very quick and the car was easy to drive."

Of course, at Sebring the 512PB faced the big 3.0-liter cars, headed by Donohue's 512M which took pole. Andretti was 7th on the grid. "It was very tough to qualify against the 3.0 liter. But in the race, fuel consumption and braking were very kind. The 512P excelled in both."

Mario Andretti and Jackie Ickx led for much of the race, but the Formula-1 type transmission was not up to the job and failed mid-race.

The year 1972 was a complete triumph for Ferrari. Andretti's story of endurance racing was at its zenith when he co-drove 512PB to victory with Jackie Ickx at Daytona, Sebring, Brands Hatch and Silverstone.















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