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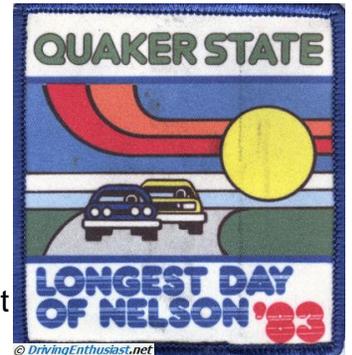
Ford Develops the Mustang SVO at Nelson Ledges June 18-20 1982 and June 25-26 1983



Introduction

Ford did an extraordinary thing back in the early 80s - and very few people know about it anymore. Engineers from the Mustang development team took their engineering prototypes to Nelson Ledges to accelerate development by racing them in a 24-hour endurance event. Ford wanted the experience of the endurance "test", good or bad, and understood that racing offered an absolutely unique environment that their own test labs couldn't match.

These were the days of people like Donald Peterson - who created the relationship with the Bondurant school and jump-started the company we knew and loved back then. The events of those few years - the revitalization of the Mustang, the creation of the SVO, and the establishment of the SVO (now "FRPP") parts catalog - very nearly single-handedly created the entire performance aftermarket phenomenon that we take for granted today. Even though the Mustang SVO was ultimately a marketing and sales failure, it established a chain of events that directly led to the establishment of a permanent line of Mustang performance cars - starting with SVT. More importantly, to me, it established that Ford could do "it" - create an all-around balanced car with a complete performance repertoire - not addressing acceleration but more importantly focusing on braking and cornering dynamics. Ford coined the phrase "Form follows Function" for the Mustang SVO and that sums up the new philosophy.



Ford took the experience gained and improved the cars in many ways (as they did years later with the SVT Contour and SVT Cobra).

The **Quaker State Oil Longest Day of Nelson** (Ledges) was a (semi-) SCCA--sanctioned 24-hour endurance event for showroom stock type cars. It was a very popular race for many years - and only had to end because of the sad condition of the track. But there was a very important difference between the usual SCCA "showroom stock" race and this one: it was a ground breaking first-ever 24-hour endurance event, and it also included a unique class for factory-entered prototypes. This event eventually spawned several others around the country, including an entire IMSA series, but was still unique because of the prototype class.

The driving force behind the event was Anne McHugh - a force of one. She led the event for years and years, well past the call of duty.

Background: The SCCA Showroom Stock class was created for specific cars, in "showroom" condition. This meant the absolute minimum of racing preparation (roll cage, brake pads, etc) - and no performance or

suspension modifications. The prototype classes, however, were completely different - the car didn't even have to exist (yet - or so the SCCA believed. Some of the prototypes that were entered would never actually exist in production) and it could only be entered by a manufacturer or their agents only.

I was an SCCA-licensed Grid Marshall in these and other events for several years. That meant that I was responsible for a number of pits during the race, guiding the race cars in and out, making sure they were safe when they left, and putting out any fires when they came in. At the Longest Day events in 1982 and 1983, I was responsible for the pits of the Mustang SVOs. As a Mustang owner, racer, and long-time enthusiast you can only imagine what they meant to me.

I spent a lot of time working at this type of event at both Nelson Ledges and Watkins Glen. I really enjoyed participating in 24-hour endurance events while they were popular in the eighties (even the weekend at the 'Glen when it snowed)!

1981

For the 1981 Longest Day of Nelson Ledges race, Ford took the extraordinary step of inviting teams from Car & Driver and Road & Track magazines to drive two of their engineering prototypes of the upcoming Escort EXP. This brave step established a rivalry for the couple of years these two magazines competed. Some of the editors had already been driving in SCCA "showroom stock" racing, and this offer was probably irresistible. Both teams competed, then wrote glowing articles about the new attitude at Ford. Unfortunately, the EXPs themselves repeatedly lost wheel bearings and other parts.

1982

In 1982, Ford offered the magazines an entirely different type of car for the event. Instead of continuing to ask the magazines to race economy cars, Ford would offer them prototypes for a car that was planned to be offered in 1983 (but was delayed until 1984). It was a Mustang, but with a very different engine and suspension. It was intended to be an extraordinarily balanced and much more sophisticated type of Mustang.

I worked in the pits for over two days straight - all the practice and qualifying runs as well as the 24-hour race. Why did I want to subject myself to this? Simple: it got me next to the race cars and drivers. In fact, I was assigned (for both years) to the area immediately in front of the Ford pits. The rules were really loose back then - I even got to assist (on the periphery) with a couple of parts swaps in the middle of the night.

In a typical 24-hour event, I worked two 8-hour shifts, attempted to sleep (tough to do with race cars screeching around the track non-stop!), and spent the rest of the time walking around the track to watch the race and observe the SVO. In the second year, I made the mistake of swilling Jolt Cola to stay awake and literally spent several days in a row awake. That stuff scares me!

I also worked a couple of the 12 and 24 hour IMSA showroom stock endurance races at Watkins Glen and witnessed the next stage of the battle between Ford and GM thru the '87 timeframe. The Camaros and Firebirds kept up the fight, and it was all over when GM decided to race the Corvette in these classes. Despite technical problems, GM soldiered on and overcame them, while Ford basically gave up after the demise of the SVO. Saleen took the torch, and ran very well for a few years on what was basically SVO technology.

These endurance events were fantastic to attend and participate in. Unfortunately they are few and far between these days.

Ford engineers had been enthusiastic about the potential of small high performance engines for years. For the 1979 model year, Ford introduced an all-new Mustang with an optional (and unprecedented) 2.3 liter SOHC turbocharged 4 cylinder engine. The car quickly became known for it's extraordinary handling and balance. The level of finesse the car offered - compared to the old Pinto-based Mustang - was completely new to the Mustang audience. How would customers react to a car that was much more sophisticated than anything they had known? Very well, and the new '79 sold in huge numbers. A 302 c.i. V-8 was also offered,

but was only marginally faster in straight line acceleration. Worse yet, it suffered from noticeably poorer handling due to an extra 200+ pounds over the front wheels. Ford felt they were on the "right track" with this new direction. Giving the looming tightening of the emissions and mileage regulations, this new direction was leading edge thinking.

Unfortunately, reliability became an issue with the turbocharged 4-cylinder. Not because the basic engine architecture wasn't up to the task, but because the state-of-the-art in those days didn't yet include fuel injection - a vital bit of hardware for an engine that would see cylinder pressures and temperature considerably increased. With a few very basic tuning changes, the carbureted engine continued to be sold through the 1981 model year (1982 in Canada) while the next steps in the evolution were prepared.

For 1983, the turbo engine received several changes, including the first application of Ford's new port fuel injection system. This system, similar to the Bosch L-Jetronic system, offered new levels of improved drivability as well as the ability to tune the engine for much better emissions characteristics than could be achieved with a crude carburetor. Carburetors had been in existence since the turn of the century, and while they had been refined to a high degree, they always offered a fuel-air ratio compromise at some point in their range of airflow. This wasn't going to be acceptable to drivers whose expectations were being raised by increasingly more sophisticated imported cars, nor would it provide the exact control over the air-fuel ratio that would be required to meet upcoming emissions standards. Fuel injection was the only possible route so help solve these requirements. For a turbocharged engine, it was the only possible way to approach the drivability, performance, and emissions compliance targets.

Ford would offer two variations of this engine - a basic turbocharged engine that would be an option in the GT, and a "knockout punch" version that would be the only engine offered in an all-new model of Mustang. The model would be named after the new group that created it - Special Vehicles Operation or "SVO".

The SVO was intended from the start to be a world-class sports coupe. There wouldn't be any thought given to relying on rear drum brakes, or to tuning the car for drag racers. Large 4-wheel disk brakes would be standard, steering feel would be significantly improved, and gear ratios would be chosen that would result in excellent acceleration, but wouldn't limit real-world use. Ford realized that it would be difficult and expensive to make the very "pedestrian" Mustang chassis and body into what they really wanted - but they took the leap anyway.

Unfortunately, many different realities within Ford worked against the realization of this vision. There wouldn't be any financial justification to create any significantly different body panels, much less anything truly exotic. Many parts would have to be shared with the upcoming Thunderbird Turbo Coupe - itself an even more radical departure from the norm - including the new Borg Warner T5 5-speed transmission (with ratios designed to move a heavy car off the line, not needed or ideal for the much lighter Mustang).

Some of the more advanced ideas were very difficult to put in production. Ford had planned to introduce the new "aero" headlights on three of it's cars. Unfortunately, the government and industry groups responsible for defining the new standards made a decision so late that only the Mark-VII could afford to implement the new headlights. The Mustang SVO and the T-Bird were both designed for these lights from the start, but would have to wait until later production to get them because of budget and scheduling requirements.

The engineers at SVO also wanted to rearrange the foot pedals in the car. They had a very difficult time. Ford engineering normally mandates certain distances and relationships for the three pedals. The SVO engineers had to apply for an exemption to be granted, then had to justify the extra cost to tool up for the new equipment. This change was critical because the SVO engineers knew that the satisfaction of the owners would be critical to establishing the sort of reputation they wanted for their car.

The prototypes were crude, built with many off-the-shelf parts as well as some cobbled parts that were never intended or even feasible for certification and production (such as the front-mount intercooler - given the necessary piping it could never pass crash testing) . In order to test the cars - and public reaction - Ford

brought two identical prototypes (and many spare parts) to Nelson Ledges for the 24-hour endurance race in June 1982.



This picture illustrates the prototype nature of the 1982 SVO race car. Several things of note in this picture:

- Jack Roush built the engines for both cars, along with backup spares.
- The turbo mounting and intake manifold were nearly at the production level. However, the throttle body was not.
- Note the intercooler tubing. The intercooler itself was mounted integrally with the radiator - and neither one was sufficient. This design created an enormous turbo lag, and also wouldn't survive in a crash. The intercooler would have to be moved before production.
- Note the two hoses leading down to the turbo from the firewall - these were intended for cooling and probably weren't very effective - but they did indicate a problem that Ford was aware of
- Battery location. The under-hood layout was beginning to evolve in the FOX Mustangs. The battery was moved to the right side, where it remains to this day, although in this iteration it was sideways instead of lengthwise.
- The remote oil filter. Since the 2.3 engine was derived from an earlier engine (that certainly was never envisioned for a Fox Mustang), Ford was stuck with the stock location of the oil filter.
- The power steering pump reservoir fill extension. This was a trick Ford learned from the earlier efforts of it's engineers in showroom stock racing. The fluid in the power steering pumps would heat up so much that after "extended operation" it would boil over into the engine compartment. While Ford later added a simple cooling loop, this problem was never entirely fixed until the SN-95 redesign.



Close-ups of the intercooler routing. Due to crash standards, this arrangement could never be used in production. Yet given the basic layout of the engine compartment and the length of the front end, there were very few alternatives. The production solution was an intercooler mounted directly over the turbo, fed by a hood scoop (which at higher speeds, vented air in the wrong direction).



A view from the drivers side. Note:

- the elbow going downward into the intercooler. It was cobbled together here (note the tape), and certainly could never survive even a mild crash. For production, it would be important to design a level of survivability: many customers would attempt to drive the car away from a crash for repair and a broken intake line would leave the engine open to destruction.
- the radiator was approximately half the width of the engine compartment. This was also a compromise to allow the intercooler to face directly in the airflow. This was also never intended for production.
- the large master cylinder. Because of the new 4-wheel disc brake system, a new master cylinder was needed to supply the proper pressure to all 4 disc brakes.
- the extension to the power steering reservoir fill tube. Ford knew even then that boiling power steering fluid was a major issue. This was a trick to increase the size of the reservoir so that when the fluid inevitably boiled, it wouldn't go over the top. This is a fix many of us used on our own cars, although Ford never made a production change.



This is another view from that side, showing the prototype intake manifold. A considerable amount of work had gone into it's design, which was so efficient it outlasted the use of the 2.3 liter engine in the Mustang. Note the tiny radiator - it would prove to be a negative factor in the survivability of this car in the race.

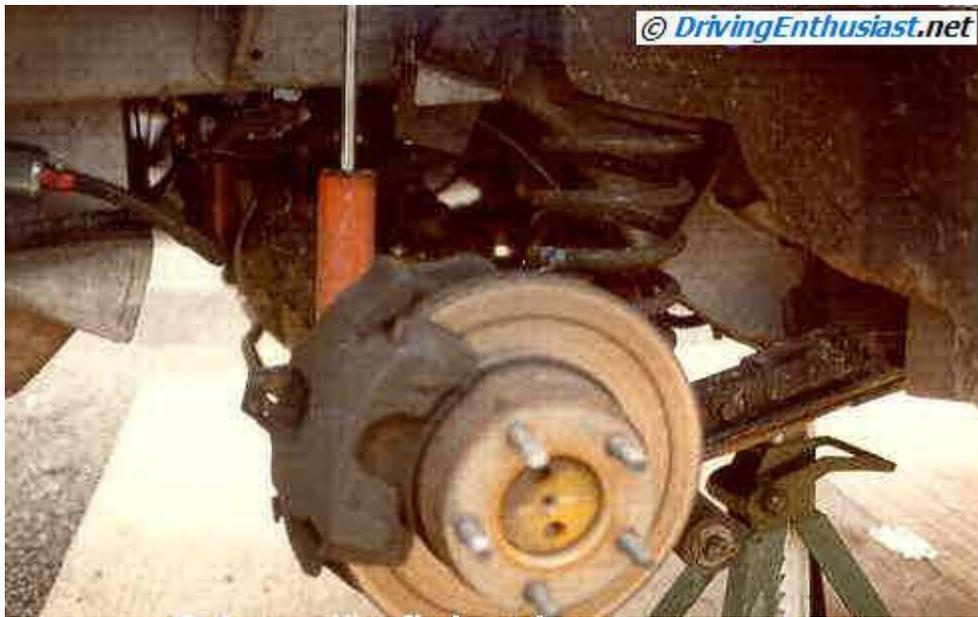
At this point, the body of the car was entirely stock. While a fully-dressed prototype would certainly have existed inside the Ford design studio, it certainly couldn't be shown to the public this early before production.



The prototypes were built from base 4-cylinder cars, and featured the lowest level of trim on the inside. They did use the 79-82 style "Cobra/GT" style nose with a hood scoop for intake clearance.



The prototypes used sand-cast 16x7" aluminum wheels with European Goodyear Eagles. These wheels were very early prototypes and didn't have cooling slots cast in them (another item which would prove to be a factor in the race). This casting process wouldn't be used in production but according to my talks with the Ford engineers the wheels were believed to be sufficient in strength for the event. You'll notice they seem to have just a little bulge outwards in their design.



One of the more promising features in the car was the 4-wheel 5-lug disc brakes. The prototypes used an off-the-shelf Lincoln Versailles system, including its 9" axle and limited skip differential. This particular differential and the Versailles brakes weren't intended for production, a more appropriate set would be used, but it was all that was available at the time. This picture also shows the prototype fuel injection lines and filter. Note the traction bars that were used in the '84 cars.



Both cars faired well in the event, although they both required an engine change in the middle of the night. The prototypes used stock engine blocks -the stronger block and internals intended for the SVO weren't yet available. Both also suffered from front brake and wheel bearing problems, although not to as severe a degree as the GTs did in the same conditions.

The Longest Day was such a great race to attend - you got to see things that you wouldn't imagine would be a problem. Many different cars fell apart in very creative ways! One particularly bad example was the 4-door Peugeot entry. It flexed so bad the windshield kept popping out of the car. Another was the Maserati 2-door coupe - it flexed so bad it's frame-mounted gas tank tore open.





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The prototypes showed some extraordinary speed and handling attributes, in marked contrast to the V-8 Mustangs. Mustang enthusiasts who attended were extremely enthusiastic about the possibility of buying such a car!



Here a prototype is passing one of the Pintos entered in the event. Imagine the difference in evolution between the two cars shown in this picture - the Mustang that this new "Fox" generation had replaced was itself based on the Pinto!

Ford Pintos were a true warhorse in Showroom Stock racing - they were around for years and were apparently very hard to kill. They were a great beginner car in SCCA Showroom Stock racing. I once knew a person who had leased a Pinto, installed the roll cage and other required equipment, raced the car for a couple of seasons, and then returned it to the dealer - even though it had crashed and repaired several times!



The #23 Road & Track car in the pits, as the evening begins.



Unfortunately, due to the late night engine changes, both cars finished dead last in the event. The Car and Driver car completed 667 laps, and the Road & Track car completed 661. The winning car, Porsche 944, finished 960 laps. But the concept was proven, the point was made, and the prototype SVOs ran extremely well.

1982 Results

Overall Pos.	Car #	Pos. in Class	Class	Team	Sponsor	Car
1	21	1	Proto	Porsche-Audi Motors, Bedford	Porsche-Audi Motors, Bedford	Porsche 944
2	28	2	Proto		Guldstrand Engr.	Camaro Z-28
3	16	3	Proto	Team Cobra	Goodyear Tire & Rubber	Mustang 5.0L

4	67	4	Proto		Crestmont Toyota	Toyota Celica Supra
5	15	5	Proto	RR Racing	KC Hilites	Datsun 280ZX Turbo
6	2	6	Proto	The Z Shop of Atlanta	Nissan Motor Corp.	Datsun 280ZX Turbo
7	8	1	SSA	Ted Schumacher Racing	TS Imported Auto Wrecking	Triumph TR-8
8	42	1	SSB	Cumberland Valley Motors Racing	Cumberland Valley Motors	BMW 320i
9	36	7	Proto	Myers Ford/Docs Racing	Myers Ford, Hartville, OH	Ford Mustang 5.0L
10	5	2	SSA	The Z Shop of Atlanta	Nissan Motor Corp.	Datsun 280ZX
11	68	8	Proto	Hayashi Racing	Hiyashi Racing, USA	Toyota Celica Supra
12	47	2	SSB		Redline Racing	Alfa Romei Veloce
13	7	3	SSB	Harmony Racing	TS Imported Auto Wrecking	Triumph TR-7
14	44	1	SSC	The People's Choice	Tod AMC	AMC Gremlin
15	73	2	SSC	BTC Racing	Buckeye Tire Co.	Ford Pinto
16	11	3	SSC	Mabrito Racing Team		Fiat X1/9
17	48	3	SSA	pdf Racing	RAM Racingm Kent, Ohio	Mazda RX-7
18	76	4	SSB	Quad Cities USA Racing Team	Goodyear Tire & Rubber	VW Rabbit
19	12	4	SSA	American Spirit Racing	Mazda Motors of America	Mazda RX-7
20	22	5	SSB	The Rqubar Company	Goodyear Tire & Rubber	Dodge Charger 2.2
21	57	6	SSB	Team Tambourine (1)	Rupert Safety Belts	Mazda RX3-SP
22	72	4	SSC	Comc Rac ing	Centrl Ohio Mechaqanical Contract.	Ford Pinto
23	2	9	Proto	American Spirit Racing	Mazda Motors of America	Mazda RX-7 GSL
24	49	7	SSB	Cumberland Valey Racing		Triumph TR-7
25	27	8	SSB	Team TBA	The New Chrysler Corp.	Dodge Charger 2.2
26	17	5	SSC	Lighthorse Brigade	Al Rosso Ford-Mercury	Ford Pinto
27	9	6	SSC	Henry Mearig, Inc.	Henry Mearig, Inc.	Fiat X1/9
28	33	9	SSB	Mother Bakin's S.K. & Racing	Sewickley Porsche-Audi	Auti Coupe
29	3	5	SSA	Screwy Stewy's Clinton Ford	Clinton Ford	Ford Mustang
30	55	10	Proto	Mido Racing Team	Mid-Ohio Imported Car Co.	Mazda RX-7 GSL
31	4	7	SSC	River Road Racing Team	Mattress Warehouse	Dorf Fiesta
32	24	10	SSB	Briody Racing Team	Peugeot Motors of America	Peugeot 505
33	0	11	Proto	Car and Driver	Car and Driver Mag.	SVO Ford Mustang
34	23	12	Proto	Road & Track	Ford Motor Company	SVO Ford Mustang

1983

Now lets jump forward a year. The summer of 1983 brought Ford much closer to Mustang SVO production. All the major details were worked out and the car was all but ready for production. Nonetheless, Ford brought a single prototype Mustang SVO in near production form to Nelson Ledges in June to test final calibration - and perhaps to establish the start of a great reputation!

The prototype was actually the 1982 Road & Track SVO prototype rebuilt to production spec. Ford used it's standard engineering contracting firm, Industrial Concepts Engineering (ICE) (or was it Prototype Automotive?) to build the car. Major visual differences from production included aero covers on the headlights (actual aero headlights would be delayed until mid-year 1985 due to dragging Government regulations) and a set of 1979-spec Indy Mustang Pace Car Recaro seats. Otherwise this car was rebuilt to full production appearance including the famous SVO biplane wing. The wheels this year were final production spec, with the cooling slots that were missing from last year's sand-cast (and heavy!) prototypes.

This event was too important for magazine editors to drive since it was a shake-down of the final production car, so Ford's own engineers would drive. Ford employees (with SCCA licenses) teamed up to drive the car this year. The lead driver was Ron Smaldone (who in 1984 won an SCCA national championship at Road

Atlanta) and team members included Larry Campbell, Dale Pazekas, Tom Kersey, and Larry Rehagen. The car would be entered under the banner of RPS Racing. Ford execs were very much in attendance. Helicopters were flying more in, Jack Roush was there, and we were told that Don Peterson was waiting by the phone for the good news.



The "competition" also made an appearance this year. Through a back-door effort, Dick Guldstrand was contracted by GM to bring an IROC Camaro prototype to the event. It was big, bright red, wore the latest Goodyear Eagle VR50 tires (not yet available in production to the public), used non-production headlamp covers, and was impressive looking. However, the team cheated like crazy. It was noted several times during the event that every time the car conjured up a burst of speed to pass somebody on the back straight, the windshield wipers were going like crazy. It turned out that a water injection system had been devised to allow more spark advance, but somebody forgot to disconnect the wipers!

As an SCCA Pit Marshall, I couldn't show any favoritism. There wasn't even any question of that. So when the Guldstrand car came flying into the pits on fire, I gave it a blast from the fire extinguisher to help put it out (this car would catch on fire several more times during the event). It was important that Dick's team lost the race fair and square!

Porsche factory engineers flew in from Germany to take personal care of their 944 Turbo prototype. They didn't even speak English! A car which wouldn't go into production until 1985. Their car was slower around the course than the SVO, to the very visible enmity of the entire Porsche team. They would take their revenge against Ford later in the night.

There were also several factory-sponsored teams in the stock classes. The Peugeot team, for example, had a 4-door car that flexed so badly that it popped out its windshield several times during the event. They were most often seen in the garage bonding yet another one in place. The Maserati team brought a very fast bi-turbo, but it was also extremely flexible and twisted so badly that its gas tank split open. Many teams had to change engines during practice, qualifying, and during the event!

Since Road & Track and Car and Driver were without Ford rides this year, Innes Ireland of Road & Track managed to get a factory prototype Mitsubishi Starion Turbo at the last moment. His co-drivers were John Dinkel, Tom Winters, and Bob Bergstrom. There were three prototype Starions running this year (one would roll in the middle of the night). An accident in last-minute preparation left the Innes Ireland Starion without back glass, which the rules required. A nearby fan rented them their RX-7 glass, which fit well enough (thanks to the old-standby of racing tape) despite a helpful gap at the lower edge. And fell right out of the car later in the race.

There were a total of 49 entrants this year. The top five qualifiers were running the new Goodyear Eagle VR50 tires. This was without a doubt going to be a great event!



The prototype was fully production ready, and in final body trim except for the headlamp covers and leftover chrome trim on the doorframes. The Mustang SVO qualified at the top of the prototype class, and also had the pole for the event. It was noticeably the fastest entrant on the course, and it was very clear that a lot of development progress had been made in the past year.

Note the headlight covers - Ford had intended to offer "aero" headlamps, which would be the first in production offering in the United States, but the U.S. Federal Government regulations permitting them were held up. Intending to offer them in production, but at this early prototype point unsure of their legality, Ford had to backtrack and offer these covers until the 1985.5 SVO finally received the aero headlamps that were designed for it.



Here again we see an SVO pass an earlier Pinto. Psychologically, these two cars were probably about 20 years apart!



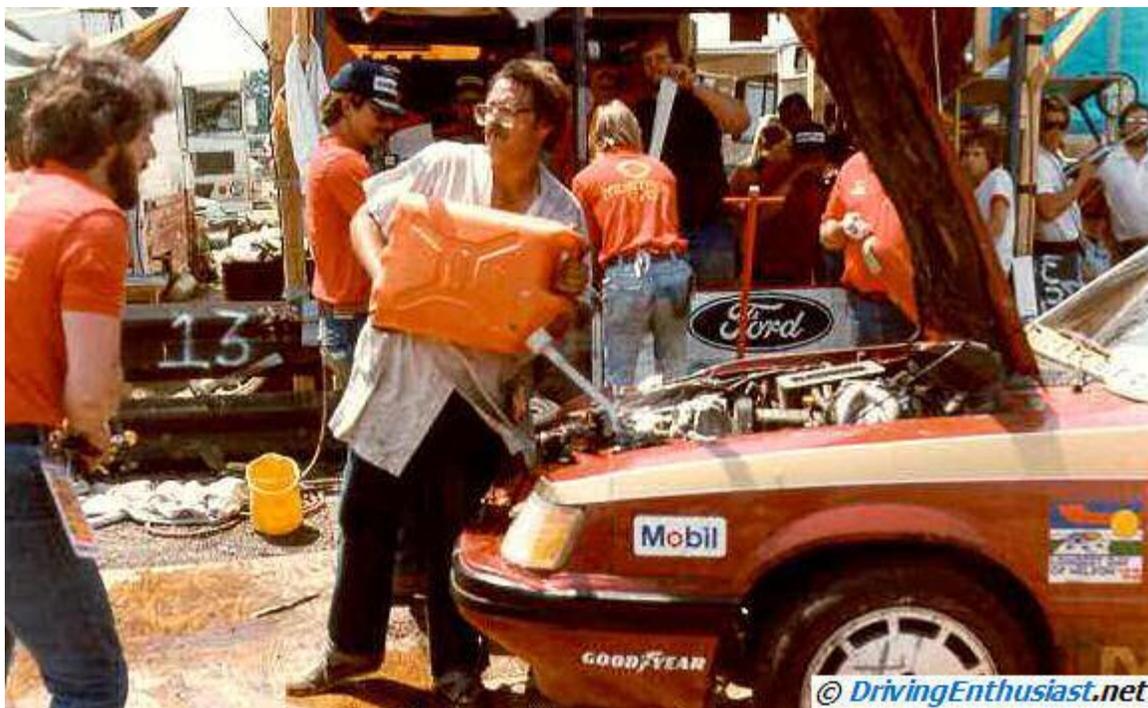
There were several other Mustangs entered in the event in addition to the SVO. Ford brought a prototype '83 GT in the form of an '82 GT with a 4-barrel carb added (via the back-door kit that Ford briefly sold through some dealers). Here we can see the GT getting one of it's very frequent brake changes in the middle of the event. The SVO had far superior brakes - both in ability and longevity. It was clearly the car to have.



The prototype GT wasn't nearly as fast as the SVO - not even close. Nonetheless, it ran a fairly consistent race and passed it's "forebears" rather easily.



The GT prototype team is shown here changing drivers and checking the engine. The GT was severely hobbled by the factory-issue TRX tires it was forced by the rules to use. The only other choice would have been the production 14" 70-series tires (one team tried those and failed miserably). This was a lesson the Mustang GT product development folks took to heart and finally responded to in 1985.



As the race wore on, it became clear the cooling problems weren't as bad as the prior year. They weren't fully resolved, either, but the cars keep running anyway. The final production SVO would have the best cooling system in the entire run of the FOX Mustangs.

Aftershock: in order to stay awake for two days straight, I brought along a supply of Coca-Cola and a new drink that had just hit the market - JOLT Cola. After two 2-liter bottles of JOLT, I had no problem whatsoever staying up for two days straight - and then driving 350 miles to get home. In fact I had no problem staying awake until the following Wednesday! At that point I had been awake for 5 straight days, and somehow finally managed to get to sleep. Was it the SVO, or the JOLT Cola? I don't know for sure, but I don't ever want to try this combination again!

Note the production engine here, with the final location of the intercooler. It was important to Ford that the engine be in its production trim here. It would have been easy to crank up the boost for more horsepower, but

this wouldn't have yielded the production reliability information Ford wanted. Ford, unlike others, ran a production-intent prototype.

The prototype did suffer from fuel pickup problems from a lack of baffling in the gas tank. There was also a problem in the fuel filler neck seals. Ford cannibalized several rental cars for parts during the event.

I had an '83 GT at the time (an especially lousy Mustang), and had volunteered my car to Ford to cannibalize whatever was needed. Fortunately, the time never came. I did attempt to make a deal with Glen Lyall, one of the chief engineers on the Mustang team, for the trick dual exhaust (prototype for the '85 GT). Glenn tried very hard to send me home with the prototype part... but couldn't get it past his handlers. He did promise to send me a couple of Team Mustang SVO shirts... and I'm still waiting to this day! Glen???



The cars were otherwise nearly flawless. For the Mustang enthusiasts at the event (and I had the front row seat - literally working with these people in the pits), this was incredible.

The SVO was doing very well and the tension was high. Ford knew it had a winner on it's hands. The SVO just kept passing everybody. The car was simply tremendous.

Background: the SVO team was dressed in special team shirts for the event. I tried to get my hands on one after the event, but everybody wanted them as a souvenir. It would be great to see somebody duplicate these shirts!



Another quick pad change and double-check. The Pit Marshall in the foreground is Jack from the SCCA DC Region.

Background: the reader can't possibly imagine the excitement felt by Mustang enthusiasts at this event. The SVO was literally the answer to our hopes. Ford was finally on the verge of producing a Mustang with a whole new level of sophistication and intelligence. There wasn't even any question of buying a conventional Mustang GT (or anything else) after seeing this car in action.



Night came and the SVOs were still running strong. I took this shot in the middle of the night, during another driver and brake pad change.

You'll notice how the teams have built structures around and over their pits. These held lighting out over the pit. In the daytime, the pits looked like a shanty town. There was so much gas spilled on the track that the asphalt melted and became permanently soft. This didn't help the sad condition of this otherwise great track.

But when you ran in an event like this, you weren't concerned with the track condition or appearances, only how well your team was doing.

Now it was time for disaster to strike. In a very controversial move, in the 21st hour with the SVO in the lead, Porsche ordered it's drivers to knock the Mustang off the track. This almost meant the end of the event for the SVO, although the SVO team was able to tape up the car and continue running. The Porsche was disqualified after the race due to it's being under spec weight, a disqualification that the Porsche people spent cubic dollars fighting.



The SVO team worked hard to literally tape the car back together. Leaks in the radiator were plugged, the entire front end was taped back together, and the car came back out to finish the event. Even though the Porsche team had succumbed to a very un-sportsmanlike trick, the SVO was an obvious winner and the class act of the event. The SVO team was ecstatic, the many new fans of the car were cheering wildly! And the SVO had earned a 2-place finish overall, despite the crash and precious time lost fixing the car the point where it could be driven again.

33 cars were running at the end of the event. The Guldstrand Camaro took 1st place, the hastily-repaired SVO 2nd, and the Porsche 944 Turbo 3rd. The Porsche was later disqualified due to be cheating - it was under weight and against the rules. Another example of cheating by Porsche with a car that once in production (2 years later) cost twice the price of the SVO.