



DAVID BOYD

PRO RACING '86: ESCORT ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

OBSSESSION

Hard Work And Hard Driving Are Keys To Escort Endurance Success

BY MAC DEMERE, ELIZABETH SUMMAR, CHRIS SYFERT AND TIM CLINE

Those in the sports news biz like turning points. We like to tout an interception, a slam dunk or even a base on balls as "The Turning Point"...the instant The Big Mo changed hands. Coaches and players have learned to humor our oversimplifications. Creative athletes fabricate Turning Points of their own.

But those on the inside know that the *real* Turning Point often occurs days, weeks or even months prior. Take the 1986 Escort Endurance Championship Super Sports. Its *Real* Turning Point happened in the early summer of 1985.

In 1985, Bakeracing severely underestimated the competition and lost the first four showroom stock endurance races. Kim Baker likes to lose about as much as, say, Joe Paterno or Mike Ditka. At that point, Baker devoted full time to the Showroom. Stock program, hired several full-time crewmen and, get this, borrowed \$50,000—a "small business loan" loan—to run the final two '85 races.

Not only did Bakeracing win those last two races of 1985, it set a high, fast-running standard for 1986 and, most importantly, repaid the loan.

Except for glitches at Sears Point and Nelson Ledges, Bakeracing steamrolled the 1986 Escort series. It won four of six races to win the team title and take the *SportsCar* Drivers Cup for drivers Bobby and Tommy Archer. Bakeracing was also instrumental in earning Chevrolet the Manufacturers Championship. It also gave Goodyear four of its five SS wins.

"We're obsessed with winning," says team owner Baker, who finished third in the driver standings. "We are definitely not the best funded team in the series. Most of the effort is privately funded...by me. We exist on the winnings."

"We win with hard work from dedicated people. We've got the quickest, best-trained pit crew and our drivers are as good as any in the series."

Bakeracing's season didn't exactly start on a high note. At the Sears Point opener, the team's lead car lost a differential seal and the second car was written off against the Sears Point pit wall. But the team came back strong at Portland. After equipping the team's test car with a new driveline and suspension, Bobby and Tommy Archer used the team's "Damn The Fuel Mileage, Full Speed

The real Turning Point of the '86 Escort series occurred in the middle of 1985 when Kim Baker got mad.

Ahead" tactics to take a come-from-behind victory.

"We developed the 'run fast' strategy in 1985," says Baker. "We watched Morrison-Cook run slow and win races, so we decided to make them fight for it."

"Now, the Porsches force us all to run fast. If we don't run flat out, they will get away. With as many cars charging as there are now, *somebody* is going to make it to the end without a problem. Also, we found out that you can drive a Corvette flat-out for 24 hours...if you're aware of the brakes."

NO MORE DAMAGED CARS

At the third race of the season—the Nelson Ledges Longest Day—the team's lead car was severely damaged in a crash before it reached the start/finish line. The team soldiered around with a damaged radiator until the car expired.

at Nelson," says Baker. "We ran out of bad luck." The team would not lose again. Also, after Nelson, Baker gave a team order to his drivers: "No more damaged cars."

"I told them that, above all, don't hit any other car," says Baker. "I think we got one tire mark at each Mosport and Mid-Ohio and nothing in the other two races."

At Road Atlanta the team, with the Archers and Baker driving, simply ran away from the competition. Mosport was the team's hardest victory. Not only had they not tested at the track, neither Baker nor fourth driver Mitch Wright had ever driven the track. But again the team set a hard-charging pace that the others were forced to match. And, while Bakeracing avoided the pitfalls of running qualifying times in the dark, the challengers crashed by the wayside.

Bakeracing's on-the-edge philosophy worked "real good" at the Mid-Ohio finale, says Baker. With *Road & Track* editor John Dinkel joining Baker, the Archers and Wright behind the wheel, the team charged away from the opposition, once again watching the others crash in their wake.

There's no good news for Escort competitors.



Last year's champion Morrison-Cook team could only come up with one win to finish second in the team standings.



Rippie-Anderson won the season opener and took two seconds, but dropped to third in the final points.

Not only will Bakeracing be back in 1987, as you read this the team is running its two new test cars in Phoenix. And its two race cars should be ready by mid-January.

THE OTHERS

Despite winning four races, Bakeracing barely edged 1985 champion Morrison-Cook for the title. Morrison-Cook's No. 98, with Don Knowles, John Heinricy and Bob McConnell driving, won at Nelson on BFGoodrich's Comp T/A R, took second at Atlanta and finished third at both Sears (Knowles/Heinricy) and Mid-Ohio (with a full house of Ron Grable/Bobby Carradine/Stuart Hayner/McConnell/Heinricy/Knowles).

Rippie-Anderson Motorsports opened the season with a win at Sears Point with Parker Johnstone and Bill Cooper driving and took seconds at Nelson (Johnstone/Cooper/Andy Pilgrim/Ron Nelson) and Mid-Ohio (Johnstone/Cooper/Pilgrim/Mark Dismore) to take third in the team points.

The Carlsen No. 7 Porsche 944 Turbo scored most of Porsche's points in the Manufacturers race and earned fourth in the team standings. Its best finish was a second at Mosport (Jon



The Carlsen Porsche drivers always charged hard but never won a race.

Milledge/Drake Olson/Price Cobb). Rick Hurst Racing's No. 44 Porsche 944 Turbo nearly pulled off a win at Portland with John O'Steen and Bob Strange driving before falling to second. However, Hurst's No. 45 finished fifth in the points and the 44 was sixth.

Powell Motorsports took seventh, ninth and 16th in the final points, with a second at Sears Point (R.K. and Chris Smith/Peter Lockhart) and a third at Mosport (Rich Ceppos/Richard Spenard/Mike Engelage/Ron Fellows) its best finishes. —Mac DeMere

SSGT

As the most overall competitive class in the series, SSGT held many surprises. It seemed someone different would step to the forefront at each race either to falter or totally dominate.

After winning the first two races, the Yokohama-shod Delta G Porsche 944 (non-turbo) of Barney Gardner, Geoff Provo and Gregg Doran left the series. Then the No. 11 Carlsen Porsche 944 scored back-to-back wins at Nelson and Atlanta on Goodyears. Driven by Paul McIntosh, Kees Nierop, Larry Bleif, Bruce MacInnes and Scott

Reflections of Wet Reeboks

The 1986 Escort Endurance Championship is over but the memories live on, the triumphs endure and the failures or, shall we say, "miscalculations" remain vivid. Those of us involved can reflect back on endurance racing at its best: the freezing wind and rain at Sears Point and Portland; the 104-degree black tar in Atlanta; the monsoons during night practices at Mosport and Mid-Ohio; the aroma of the truck driver just disembarked from his rig after a four-day tow; the frustration of a totally lost timing and scoring crew after 23½ hours of racing; and the squishy feel of wet Reeboks after a wade through the pit swamp for another cup of coffee. Endurance racing: a collage of sturdy hardware, brilliant logistics and fanatical teamwork.

—Elizabeth Summar



GEOFFREY HERWITT PHOTOS

Despite serious problems, the Carlsen SSGT team didn't give up and wound up winning Nelson and the crown.

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Maxwell, the Carlsen team also took seconds at Sears, Portland and Mosport and won the SSGT team title by 709 points while McIntosh took the SSGT SportsCar Drivers Cup. The combined performance of Delta G and Carlsen gave Porsche the SSGT Manufacturers Championship.

The new two-car Saleen Autosports team, with help from General Tire, put together a very impressive drive for the championship. With virtually no experience in endurance racing, the Saleen Mustang team learned their lessons well after experiencing a few "miscalculations." The designer of the car, Steve Saleen, was joined by Rick Titus, Lisa Caceres, Skeeter McKitterick, Tom Winters, Alice Ridpath and Desire Wilson behind the wheel. The team ran at the front and qualified on the pole twice. Everything came together for the team at Mosport with a hard fought win. Saleen Autosports finished second and fourth in the team standings, Saleen and Titus tied for second in the drivers points and Ford finished



DAN J. BOYD

At Mosport, Saleen Autosports gave Ford and General Tire their first Escort victories.



Team Shelby came back from a two touchdown halftime deficit to win the SSA team, manufacturers and drivers titles

second in the manufacturers battle.

The most successful Pontiac entry was the No. 18 Razzberry Team of Gene Michaux, Mike Roberts, Dave Rose and Steve Durst. Despite more than their share of off-road and mechanical problems, this tough entry took third in the team standings.

The final race of the season brought a new contender: the Firestone-shod Bill Mitchell V-8 Hydromatic Camaro fielded by Special Vehicle Developments. Drivers Buddy Norton, Bill Warner, and Shawn and Larry Hendricks took a win in the only race they entered.

MPS Motorsports entered a Nissan 300ZX Turbo halfway through the season. Drivers Izzy and Luis Sanchez, Martin Dieperink, B.S. Levy and Peter Cunningham collected a pole position in the rain at Mosport and finished second at Mid-Ohio.

—Elizabeth Summar

SSA

When the referee blew his whistle to start the 1986 SSA battle, Dave Wolin's Team Mitsubishi and Chrysler's Team Shelby squared off for as tough a battle as those seen on any NFL Sunday. Two strong teams with plenty of bench strength (each had two cars) and a roster of drivers

and crew to match any in the series.

Defending champion Team Shelby returned with its winning combination of Neil Hannemann and Jack Broomall in their blue Shelby on Goodyear tires. Coach Pete Gladysz paired Tim Evans and Garth Ullom in a new white car in deference to a superstition about red cars.

Opposing coach Wolin recruited GT3 National Champion Dave Vegher and Ray Kong to join returning starters Mike Rutherford and Peter Farrell in the Toyo-shod turbocharged Mitsubishi Starions.

After winning the coin toss and electing to defend the West Coast goal for the season openers, Mitsubishi got its offensive strategy in gear at Sears Point. The team qualified first and third and ran one-two except during the exchange of fuel stops. However, with five minutes remaining in the six-hour event, one of the Mitsubishis was bumped off the track, out of the race. Rutherford and Kong were the clear winners, with the Evans/Ullom Shelby second and Broomall/Hannemann third.

After taking the pole in the wet at Portland, the Evans/Ullom Shelby held off the Mitsubishis until the fuel stop sequence. However, Farrell/Vogher took first, Rutherford/Kong second with the Shelbys third and fourth.

At Nelson, the defensive lines for each team suffered disabling car injuries. The second Mitsubishi



The Toyo-tired No. 87 Mitsubishi won at Sears and Nelson, sandwiching a win by the No. 88 sister car.



The Quantum Honda CRX Sis were never the fastest in SSB, but they kept running and running and running...

Tire Wars: A Good Year

It was a good year for Goodyear in the 1986 Escort Endurance Championship. The company took 12 of 24 class victories, including five of six in the prestigious Super Sports class. Goodyear was the only company to score class wins in all four categories. In addition to dominating SS, Goodyear took three wins in SSA and two wins each in GT and SSB. In addition to its dozen wins, Goodyear took 10 seconds, four thirds and 11 pole positions.

But Goodyear wasn't the only company to score impressive results. Yokohama, BFGoodrich, Toyo, General and Firestone also scored victories and Bridgestone took two top

three placings.

Yokohama took two wins in GT and three in SSB, as well as four SSB pole positions. Toyo took three SSA wins and one SSB victory, as well as three poles.

BFGoodrich's lone victory was an overall win at Nelson Ledges. However, BFG took three SS pole positions and finished second twice and third four times in SS.

General's one win came in SSGT at Mosport and Freddy Baker put General on the overall pole at Nelson. Firestone's only top three placing was a SSGT win at Mid-Ohio. Bridgestone took two thirds and SSGT pole position. —Mac DeMere

lost an engine but the crew replaced it in the paddock, a special halftime show for the fans. Also, the blue Shelby, with former competition swimmer Hannemann driving, was bounced into the swamp and could not be pulled out. Hannemann never expected to use his aquatic background in the Escort series. He would later withstand a number of frog-related gags from his teammates. The race was won by Mitsubishi with Rutherford, Kong, Vegher, Charlie Downes, Bob Sweet and John Norris listed as the drivers. Shelby was second (Ullom/Evans/Larry Parmele/Doug Shepherd... who resisted all prior experience and stayed on the pavement all night). This would be the only race all season where Mitsubishi and Shelby did not fill the top three positions.

At a blistering Atlanta weekend, Wolin's practice strategy included leaving the track for the hotel pool and returning in the evening to work in slightly cooler conditions.

Trailing by 80 points at the halftime of the season, the Team Shelby coach must have made a rousing locker room speech, because, at Atlanta, his squad became the aggressor, scoring the team's first win (Evans/Ullom). That cut the Mitsubishi lead to 64.

At Mosport, Shepherd became offensive coordinator for the No. 53 car and his competitive philosophy would make Mike Ditka look passive. The No. 53 (Evans/Ullom/Broomall) quickly lapped the SSA field and continued to pull out nearly a lap per hour on its competition, finally finishing 16 laps up on the second place Mitsubishi. This gave Team Shelby the lead in the team points race, but it still trailed in the manufacturers and drivers points.

At Mid-Ohio, a spin in the rain put the lead Shelby three laps back early. However, by quarter distance it was back in first place with their teammates running along close behind. The Evans/Ullom/Broomall entry went on to win handily.

At the final gun, Team Shelby had won all the SSA titles: the Manufacturers Championship, the team title and the SportsCar Drivers Cup for Ullom and Evans. Team Mitsubishi was less than one percent behind in total mileage, a margin that a 45-minute pit stop would have wiped out.

Rutherford and Kong tied for third in the drivers



The Yokohama-shod Quantum team won the manufacturers title for Honda and finished 1-2 in team points.

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cup with Vegher fifth and Broomall sixth. In fact, the top 11 drivers in the points were either Shelby or Mitsubishi drivers. —Chris Syfert

SSB

If the classes at the back of the field were designed for the low bucks private entrant, SSB was a total failure. However, if the purpose of the Escort series is to get lots of manufacturers involved, then SSB was very successful indeed.

At the beginning of the season, the biggest change in the class was to move all of last year's SSC cars into SSB and eliminate SSC. That meant the killer Honda CRX SIs immediately became the favorites—mainly because they beat all the SSB cars in nearly every race in 1985.

The Quantum Racing Hondas (Larry Cress, Bruce Short, Donna Sue Landon and Doug Peterson drove one car and Ron Haase, Scott Gaylord, Lance Stewart and John Green were in the other) sometimes looked like little automated roller skates as they lapped hour after hour, never missing a beat. But these were outstanding cars entered by an excellent team. The team won at Portland, Nelson and Atlanta, with seconds at Portland, Nelson and Mid-Ohio.

Honda drivers claimed the top five spots in the SportsCar Drivers Cup with Gaylord and Stewart on top and Donna Sue Landon just two points back (the best finish in any class for a woman). Quantum took both first and second in the team points and Honda won the SSB manufacturers title.

Peugeot (Jon Woodner, Janet Guthrie, Peter

Farrell and Steve Potter) was back with the 505 Turbo that had finished fourth in SSB the year before. But this time the French sedan was overshadowed by one of the new players on the block—the Overton Racing Volvo 740 Turbo Wagon. From the very beginning, the Volvo (Joe Overton, Jeff Alkazian, Len Frank, Joe Rusz and Rich Taylor) was fast and competitive. It was interesting to watch both the Volvo and the Peugeot get faster and faster, lower and lower and corner flatter and flatter as the season progressed.



The Volvo 740 Turbo wagon qualified fastest three times and almost won at Road Atlanta.

The CGJ/Phoenix Scirocco didn't show up until halfway through the season, but it won the final two SSB races.



Spare Champagne

While cruising the back straight on the victory lap at the Mid-Ohio finale, the championship-winning Team Shelby entry passed a bottle of champagne with the SS-winning Bakeracing entry. Team Shelby was so organized it even had spares of champagne, too. —Chris Syfert

