

## DEL MONTE TROPHY RACE GROUP

Celebrating the Pebble Beach Road Races



### Velocity Invitational

#### Race 1 report, Saturday November 11, 2023

Marcus Bicknell reporting live, well, “live” as in watching the live stream from across the pond.

**Velocity Invitational**, a world-class motorsports and lifestyle event <https://velocityinvitational.com/>, returned to its roots November 10-12, 2023 at Sonoma Raceway in Northern California. Our brave boys were there too, dealing with the ice-cold climes of Northern California’s Wine Country. Although, Jim, what were you thinking? Jim Alder did not drive all the way in his Jaguar XK120 from Reno, Nevada. That’s only 199 miles (less than to Laguna Seca, who knew), but we fear that the Jag was not yet in running order. Jim graced the commentators’ booth by walking all the way instead, and we appreciated his physical fitness and his insights.

The Del Monte Trophy Race Group cars ran with Velocity Invitational’s **Group 1 - 1947 – 1956 Sports Racing Cars & Production Sports Cars** so Cooper, Talbot Lago, Maserati, Porsche and Aston Martin represented in the field of 22 cars. Now we are so privileged to have these extraordinary racing cars on the grid, many of them which raced at Pebble Beach in the 50s... that’s **the origin of the Del Monte Trophy group** as that was the name of the trophy at Pebble Beach. The race organiser asked Rob Manson in advance how big the hauler was for transporting his 5 hot rod road racers to Sonoma; Rob made her day by pointing out that they all come on open trailers behind pick-up trucks and that five of them is a record for pick-up from Rob’s Carmel Valley home. Now surely, these vehicles would have gotten to Pebble Beach by trailer... or driven there by road under their own power as Jim Alder still does from Reno.

**Practice and qualifying.** On Friday it was newcomer to our group’s cabal Tony Garmey driving Rob Manson’s white 1953 Tatum GMC Special #25C who got on the pace at 2:01.552. That was over three seconds a lap faster than the next man Don “Slim” Pepperdene in Rob’s #9c 1953 Kurtis 500S Dodge. How did Tony manage that extraordinary time? Well, does it help if I tell you Tony comes from New Zealand like his hero Bruce McLaren, raced Formula Fords in Europe and has been a long-time custodian and engineer for some of some of the most historic collections in North America? Garmey has a long history with British sports cars and is widely acknowledged to develop the highest performance Triumph and MG engines in racing. But he’s not immune to the temptations of the big-bore babies; he owns a 62 Corvette and a 620 Lola FSV. If you need further convincing watch him drive the Tatum in four wheel drifts in some of the Sonoma turns; check out the race 1 stream, link below. How did Tony get the drive? He put Rob in touch with the owner of the blue Simca Barlow which he then acquired and is racing today at Sonoma.

**Paddock Patter and in the pre-grid assembly.** The Tatum has often been driven by our good friend and Tatum-meister Dave “DZ” Zurlinden. But health does not permit him to be with us at Sonoma. We and the Tatum wish him speedy recovery.



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Of note on the grid... #6 Charles McCabe 1956 Cooper Bobtail who is starting in a lofty 6<sup>th</sup>; Denis Bigioni in the light blue #11 1948 Talbot-Lago T26C Grand Prix car; #814 Kevin Adair 1955 Elva Mk I; 77C Rob's friend Gilbert Hakim debuting in the dark blue 1949 Baldwin Mercury Special (practice prior to this weekend? Naaah.); and #X15 John Mote Jr. in his "new" 1954 Sorrell Kurtis Special (check it out at <http://dmtrg.com/2023/07/21/john-mote-sorrel-kurtis-special-gmc/>).

So after practice on Friday this is how our plucky boys line up, with their practice times.

1	Tony	Garmey	1953	Tatum	02:01.6
2	Don	Pepperdene	1953	Kurtis	02:04.9
3	Alex	MacAllister	1955	Jaguar	02:05.4
4	Jay	Streets	1952	Streets	02:06.6
5	John	Buddenbaum	1950	Parkinson	02:07.0
6	Charles	McCabe	1956	Cooper	02:09.6
7	Kevin	Adair	1955	Elva	02:17.5
8	Denis	Bigioni	1948	Talbot-Lago	02:19.7
9	Nick	Price	1953	Jaguar	02:20.1
10	David	Nelson	1955	Triumph	02:22.5
11	Robert	Davis	1953	Siata	02:24.8
12	John	Mote	1950	Allard	02:25.2
13	John	Mote Jr	1954	Sorrell	02:27.2
14	Uwe	Biegner	1953	Porsche	02:31.8
15	Rob	Manson	1951	Barlow	02:32.7
16	Jonathan	Kitchen	1954	Aston	02:33.6
17	Stefano	Natoli	1953	Fiat	02:37.9
18	Timothy	Barnes	1951	Jaguar	02:38.7
	Gilbert	Hakim	1949	Baldwin	
	James	Alder	1952	Jaguar	
	Wesley	Abendroth	1955	Chevy	
	Ned	Spieker	1957	Maserati	

The grid interviews reveal that Don "Slim" Pepperdene, Rob Manson's brother-in-law, has drawn the short straw and is driving the 1951 Barlow Simca Special with an engine way below 2 litre, struggling for power and "not suited to this circuit". But it's lovely to drive and Slim is secretly proud to be racing this car for the first time since 1961. His matching pale blue race suit is a coincidence, surely not, Slim. Rob has opted to take the controls of the red #9C behemoth 1953 Kurtis 500S Dodge starting near the front of the grid; he thinks Slim's long-time experience in Formula Ford makes him a "momentum driver", i.e. use the brakes as little as possible and keep the speed up. That's what's needed in the little Simca, so Slim is the test driver. Rob will drive it in the feature race tomorrow.



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The #54 dark green 1954 Aston Martin DB2/4 Mk1 is driven by Jonathan Kitchen while Paul Kitchen looks on the interview. #16 1953 Fiat 1100/103 has Stefano Natoli at the wheel, ready for a chirpy interview too... favourite part of Sonoma is Turn 11. Timothy Barnes gets a chat with the live interviewer too (thank you Taylor); he's in his 1951 Jaguar XK120 experimenting in vain with different tyres this weekend. Never mind, his wife and kids just love the Velocity Invitational and everything that is laid on for the non-drivers.

### **The Saturday Race 1, the "Qualifying Race"**

As the field rolls towards the start the commentator points out that eight of the top dozen cars are Californian road race specials, cars made here to combat the wave of European cars, Jaguar, Triumph, Allard, Aston Martin, Ferrari and Maserati. Tony Garmey has the Tatum as a tiger ready to pounce, stable and quiet on the track, the brakes and tyres already warmed up. Rob Manson is on his left in the red Kurtis.

Quickest onto the throttle is John Buddenbaum from 5<sup>th</sup> in the Parkinson Jaguar. Jay Streets' in-car camera shows the white Jag bobbling up three-abreast alongside #6 Charles McCabe's 1956 Cooper Bobtail and the yellow #15C 1952 Streets Manning Special driven by Jay Streets, son of the car's builder. John has to back out of there as they go into the first turn. Phew. Then McCabe accelerates past him on the straightaway and John's in fifth again. Woaw, Rob has got past Tony for the lead. Up the hill Jay is on Tony's back, thrusting the Manning's open wheels left and right.

By the end of lap 1, #23 Alex MacAllister in his 1955 Jaguar D Type in Ecurie Ecosse colours has got past Buddenbaum, looking meaningful and on the pace. Alex has a look at Jay ahead of him. To these Goliaths at the front there is a David aiming a sling short at them... #6 Charles McCabe in the 1956 Cooper Bobtail is right on the back of the leaders.

As they turn into the pits straight, Tony Garmey outbrakes Rob and the Tatum is in the lead. Tatum, yes, brakes... surely you have seen the numerous photos of this car locking up the fronts on the approach to the Corkscrew at Laguna Seca... they work fine. MacAllister ("look at that opposite lock adjustment of the over steer" exclaims the commentator) is past Streets. What great racing from these fine drivers in priceless race cars from the fifties. These boys are giving it some stick, the top six still covered by a tuppenny postage stamp.

In the pack behind the biggest gain is by Gilbert Hakim debuting in Rob's Baldwin Special, up to 11<sup>th</sup> from the back of the grid. Oh my goodness I forgot to tell you about the travails of the dark blue Baldwin in practice earlier in the week. Would the Ford/Mercury Flathead V8 with three Stromberg carburettors run properly; no it would not. Petrol feed, carburettors, magneto checked, all to no avail. Over a period of two days in vain until a very intelligent SVP of Engineering (Deputy and Director of Catering, Bonhomie and Human Support) leant



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Otherwise the order is not dissimilar to the grid order...

Garmey	Bigioni	Abendroth
Manson	Davis	Biegner
MacAllister	Price	Spieker
Streets	Hakim	Pepperdene
Buddenbaum	Mote Jr	Kitchen
McCabe	Nelson	Natoli
Adair	Mote	Barnes

#138 Timothy Barnes, 1951 Jaguar XK120, appears not to be running. Then within another lap McCabe pops up ahead of Buddenbaum.

You can watch Sonoma’s Race 1 video stream, packaged by the Goodwood folk, at <https://www.youtube.com/live/Kkl49Yjmo7U?si=a1uBQ7wd3fODoZCj>

...and two laps from Jay’s Streets Manning at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDYOU92g3ul>

Don’t miss John Buddenbaum putting a front foot forward at 22 seconds, racing for fourth place, and McCabe’s skilful pass at 1 minute 10; the live stream misses that action but you can see it on Jay’s footage. Streets hangs on to McCabe for a couple of laps and then overtakes him again to finish the race 4<sup>th</sup>. So the top six are still lapping as a bunch, great to watch. #814 Kevin Adair in his 1955 Elva Mk I has dropped off the back and is mostly on his own. I’m sorry they treated you like that Kevin. Aah but #11 Denis Bigioni has got his 1948 Talbot-Lago T26C onto your pace, very smooth in the hairpins, and he comes through to take 7<sup>th</sup> at the finish.

9<sup>th</sup> is 21 Nick Price in his 1953 Jaguar C Type but will he hold on to the position, such is the attention of #14 Robert Davis in the 1953 Siata 208s going like a rocket.

Gilbert Hakim 1949 Baldwin Mercury Special, John Mote Jr. 1954 Sorrell Kurtis Special , Wesley Abendroth 1955 Chevy Mistral, Ned Spieker 1957 Maserati 200SI and John Mote 1950 Allard K-2 Prototype are having a whale of a time running in close order in the mid field. The drone cam on the stream picks them, up nicely, although your present and humble scribe feels he can see the cars, drivers and action better from the trackside shots; Velocity Invitational video director please note.

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As they come up to the line after 17 minutes and 8 racing laps, Alex MacAllister's 1955 Jaguar D Type is still breathing down the neck of Tony Garmey in the 1953 Tatum GMC Special but they finish with the Tatum ahead and both drivers saluting the crowd and each other. #29 David Nelson in his charming 1955 Triumph TR2 avoids being lapped by the width of a Tatum tyre-tread.



Here's the finishing order:

Garmey	Adair	Mote
MacAllister	Price	Nelson
Manson	Davis	Biegner
Streets	Hakim	Kitchen
McCabe	Mote Jr	Natoli
Buddenbaum	Abendroth	Barnes
Bigioni	Spieker	

Check out the times and details at

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tKkLkJddtjZF39HOOsBQ2Gsbl20aqqzU/view>

Slim Pepperdene managed six laps in the Barlow Simca so he was only 2 behind the winner. James Alder was listed as a Did Not Start; he got the car to Sonoma and into the DMTRG paddock display on a flatbed tow truck – and he was commenting on Race 2 tomorrow.

You can see the full list of entries, as published before race day, at

<https://airtable.com/appdJL2IJV9cldWVe/shrirqUJwLPJYRIRd/tbl26W7Z15SID08xp>

Written by Marcus Bicknell on November 15, 2023 updated November 17