

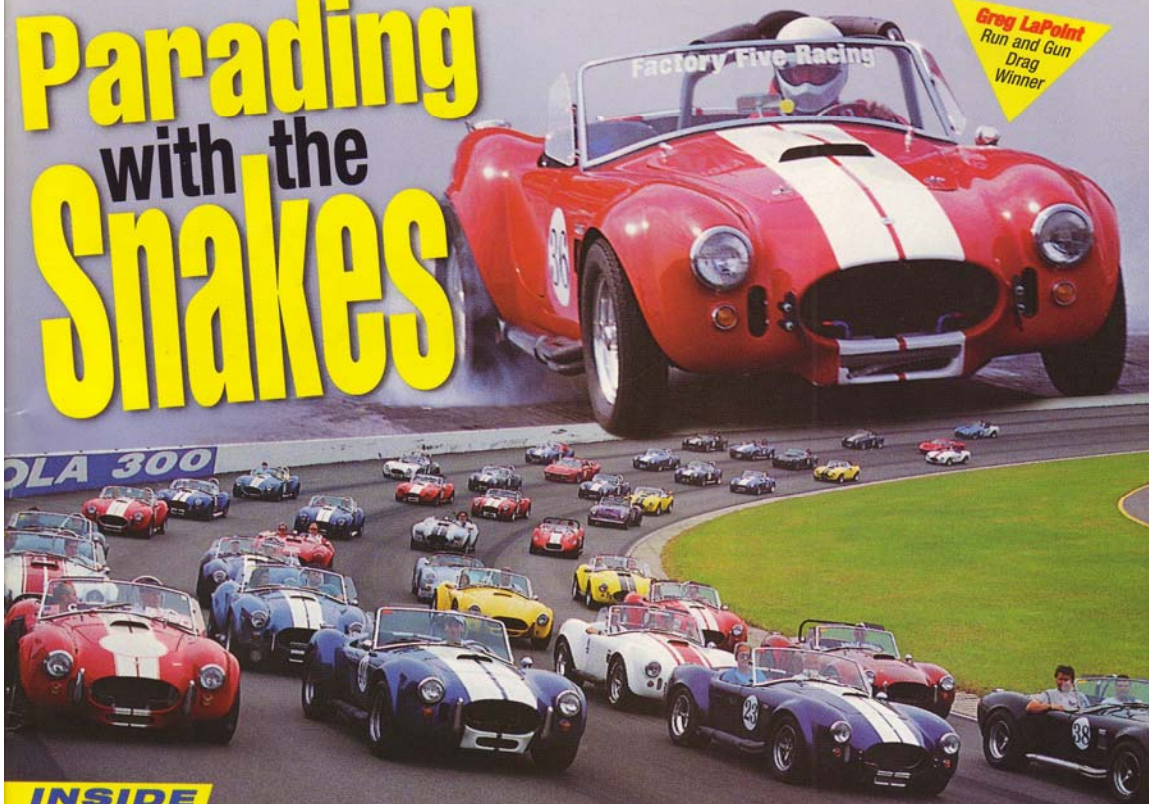
**SPECTACULAR** RUN AND GUN '98!

# KIT CAR

## ILLUSTRATED

THE LEADING MAGAZINE FOR COMPONENT CAR ENTHUSIASTS

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Snakes



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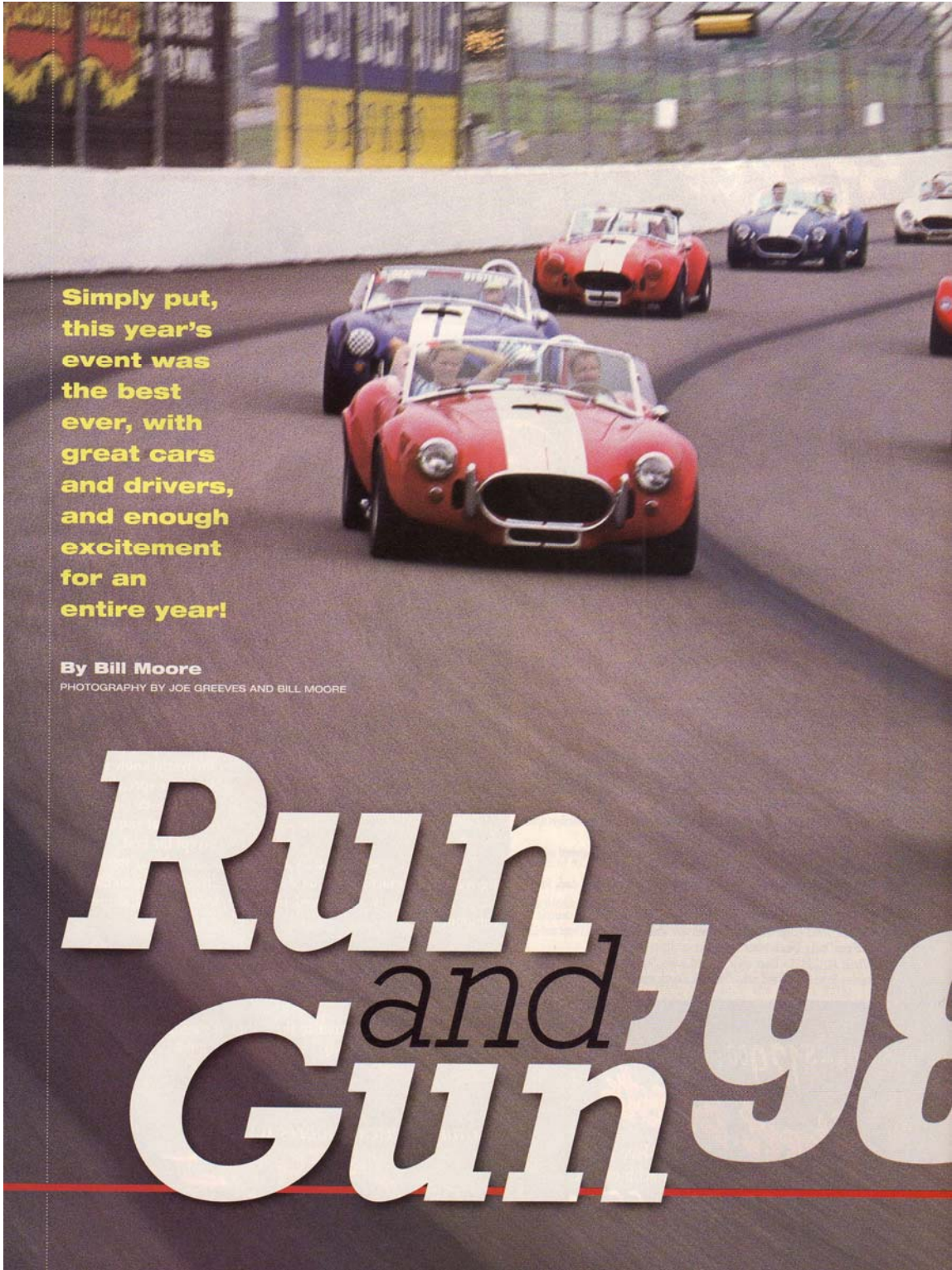
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**Simply put,  
this year's  
event was  
the best  
ever, with  
great cars  
and drivers,  
and enough  
excitement  
for an  
entire year!**

**By Bill Moore**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOE GREEVES AND BILL MOORE

# *Run and Gun '98*





**KIT CAR**  
ILLUSTRATED

Capping off the first two days at Gateway International Raceway, everyone got a chance to participate in pace laps around the 1.5-mile oval.



# Run and Gun '98

Wayne Turpin, who spearheaded the group of Fast Friends, which conducted the event, made a good point about how the Cobra replicas have been accepted. "A couple of years ago the Shelby club didn't want to have anything to do with us — but now that we outnumber them, they love us because they need us to help pay the bills." And, while we certainly would like to see more Porsche, Lotus, Ferrari and Lamborghini replicas competing with us, we're happy to have the Cobras. So, don't bother writing to us about the glut of Cobras.

Despite the fact that we knew many of the drivers and cars from previous years, you never know exactly where to point your cameras.

**Despite the fact that we knew many of the drivers and cars from previous years, you never know exactly where to point your cameras.**

If you went on past performance, you'd have to say that Chuck Beck and his hotshoe driver, Eric Noble, were favorites for Top Dog Overall. A year ago at the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course, Eric had turned in a banzai run to capture fast speed around the track. But, who would be waiting this year to knock him down a peg or two?

Dennis Olthoff, in a high-powered Superformance Cobra replica, was one. Lucas Rea, in a lightweight Everett-Morrison Cobra, was another. Rich Pickles, who has been coming on like gang-busters the past few years, had a shot. Keith Rohrer, and a bright red E.R.A. car, was another threat. Oh, and those guys who run Factory Five Racing, Mark and Dave Smith, were others, along with the guys from Midstates and Contemporary.

But, who would it be? And maybe — just maybe — it would be someone new. Maybe someone we didn't know anything about; someone who would steal the show. Would we have photos of them at the end of the event?

We like surprises. Don't you?

On Sunday afternoon the Fast Friends, who always seemed to be together with



Gene Ettl and his girlfriend, Mary, give us a wave during pace laps. Oh, they're driving a sharp-looking Midstates Cobra replica.



Keith Rohrer gives Mark Turpin a tour of the track in the lovely E.R.A. roadster.



David Smith shared this Factory Five Racing Cobra with his brother, Mark, through thick and thin.

Wayne Turpin (Pickles, Rohrer, Fred Eckhauser, Jack Selby and others), were running the registration and tech inspections in the parking lot out back of the Holiday Inn in Collinsville, Illinois, with their wives. Don Shank, the president of the Greater St. Louis Kit Car Club, was helping out, along with Debbie and Jim from the race track. As is usually the case, everyone chipped in to help while Joe Greeves and I wandered around and fired off Fuji color film.

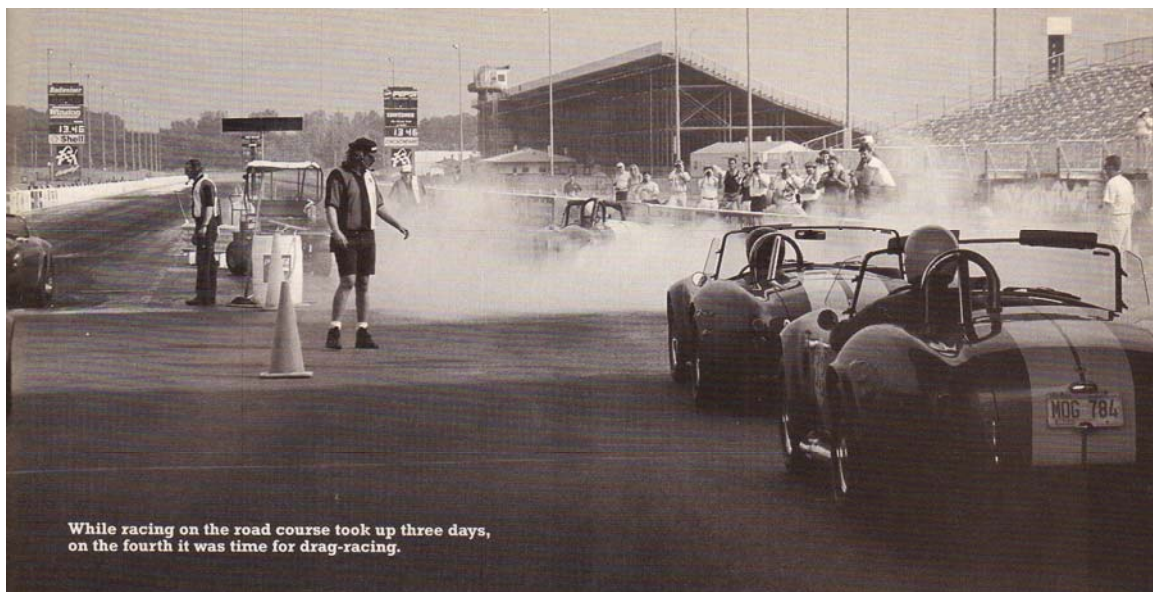
But, the annual question of where to point those cameras was just as critical this year as in other years. So, we concentrated

on the cars. Gary Proia arrived from Fort Myers, Florida, with a black Everett-Morrison Cobra that looked evil. Like lions drawn to Christians, entrants shuffled up to it, to appraise it and its driver. When Warren Mosler and Shane Lewis roared in with a black Cadillac El Dorado, the curiosity of entrants was aroused.

"Hey, did you see the Cadillac? It has two Northstar engines in it, one in the front, one in the back."

We hustled over to it. No, it sure didn't look like a kit car, but you had to give them a nod for innovation. How would it handle?





While racing on the road course took up three days, on the fourth it was time for drag-racing.



In the moments before taking the car out for his second timed run of the day, Noble gets his helmet. Ultimately, he would fall short.

Would it be fast — with two 300-horsepower engines — in a straight line? We'd find out.

In any case, the guys in Cobras weren't really concerned with someone sitting in the lap of luxury. They had hauled their cars from across the country to be here. There was Gordon Levy and his partner, Craig

Anderson, who had hauled their Factory Five Racing/Gemini Racing Cobras from Phoenix. On top of that, Gordon was going to share his car with Dick Smith. Dick — who hails from Fresno, California — just happens to be the guy who drove an original 427 Cobra to an A-Production National



When technical questions arose, or a ruling had to be made, Wayne Turpin — as our resident attorney — was ready with a decision.

Championship back in the '60s, and in doing so, had gone 198 miles an hour at Daytona. Take that, you guys in the Eldo!

Joining owners Dave and Mark from Massachusetts was a band of Factory Five Racing employees who work for the brothers as much for the kick of it as they do for the



# Run and Gun '98

money. After all, they must be getting a good deal on Cobra kits, and the company's penchant for showing up at road courses and autocrosses breeds skilled drivers. Oh, and they had cajoled (without much effort) nine customers to come along for the fun. One of those customers was Greg LaPoint, whose supercharged car was fastest last year down the drag strip. No one was really betting against him this year!

From Oklahoma, Larry and Linda Mercks arrived to share a Lone Star 427. And while they had one car against many, they were certainly having a good time. And, remember, that's a key focus at these events!

Dennis Olthoff was leading the six-car Superformance assault this year because his dad, Bob, was too busy back in North Carolina selling Cobra replicas. Olthoff, by the way, is from South Africa originally and in 1994 he was third in class in that country's

**Dennis Olthoff was leading the six-car Superformance assault this year because his dad, Bob, was too busy back in North Carolina selling Cobra replicas.**

amateur Wesbank Saloon Car Championship. In 1995, he was second overall in the Wesbank Modified Saloon Car Championship. So, yes, he knows something about racing!

Bob Kallio, who has always supported our event, was on hand with nine Midstates cars and customers — many of them first-time participants. Bob held their hand, worked out any problems with his low-keyed approach, and then rushed back to Hooper, Nebraska, to keep the flow of his Cobra replicas going. Experienced guys in Midstates Cobras like Jackie Nittler, George Anderson and others, would continue the trophy hunt in his absence.

Burt Burtis, and his lovely mamma, Ginger, were on hand to support Burtis Motorworks and Contemporary Cobras. And there were plenty of Contemporary Cobras. John Ciacchi — Big John — was there for some bonding with his son, John Junior. Jim and Mike McCann were also on



**Rick Merz hurtles around the track in his GTD GT40 replica.**



**Dick Smith, the old warrior who owns an original 427 Cobra, chats things over with replica owner Gordon Levy, on the right.**



**Here's a look at the garage area. For \$50, the crews had a neat and tidy place to work on their cars. Ultimately, it protected everyone from one brief shower.**

hand, with both cars being spectacular automobiles, and Mike's being the 289 FIA car the company debuted two years ago at our Run And Gun in Norwalk, Ohio. This time, it had a supercharged engine under the hood.

John Spina and his son, Justin, were on hand with their Everett-Morrison Cobra, showing off new, improved headlights, and tinkering with the V-6 Buick engine through a laptop computer.

John Leliever, and his daughter, Sarah, were on hand to lead the Johnex Motorsports charge. Reg Noble, John's right-hand man, was joined by Bill Unwin, Paul DiGiovanni and Andy Bortolotti. Oh, and Vic Regalado came along to help out in the engine department.

You know, these Canadians had hauled all the way down from Toronto, and as in other years, they are the most laid-back people east of California. Inevitably, we would find them



# Run and Gun '98

Continued from Page 50

at the Holiday Inn's delightful bar each evening. Heck, we found them there the first evening, when they regaled us with hairy tales of their trek to St. Louis, including the fact that they had narrowly escaped disaster when a Lincoln Towncar has slid across the highway right in front of them, upside down on its roof! We laughed, and grabbed for another chicken wing from the happy hour buffet.

Ed Combs and his wife, Diane, were on hand with Jay Kowalik, in their Dodge Viper-powered Classics by Elite Classic Roadsters Cobra. While we may keep you in suspense about some of the other awards and trophies, we must tell you right here, right

***They regaled us with hairy tales of their trek to St. Louis, including the fact that they had narrowly escaped disaster when a Lincoln Towncar had slid across the highway right in front of them, upside down on its roof!***

now, that we handed them our Editor's Choice Award for hard work and innovation. This thing was a cross between awesome — and a truck. Of course, the V-10 engine goes not only into the Viper, but also into a Dodge truck — so it emits a strange sound. At least, it's strange coming from a Cobra!

David Salkowski, who won Top Dog laurels when we ran the event at Indianapolis Raceway Park, has been trying to get back for the past four or five years. And despite the fact that he would always spend more money than his wife thought proper on the E.R.A. Cobra, it would always blow up just before our event. This year he was back, but he would wage a constant battle with the car to keep it running to perfection.

And while Cobras dominate — because Cobra replica sales dominate — there were other cars in attendance. Bill Bonadio was with us from Tulsa. He had brought his Dio Tipo 61, a cross between a Birdcage Maserati and a Lister Jag. He was thrilled by the total experience, and said, "I thought the track was fabulous. That was the most fun I've ever had at one place!"

Steve Syrdal, from Classic Roadsters, was



Several Johnex Motorsports Cobra replicas pay the price for high speed — high octane fuel.

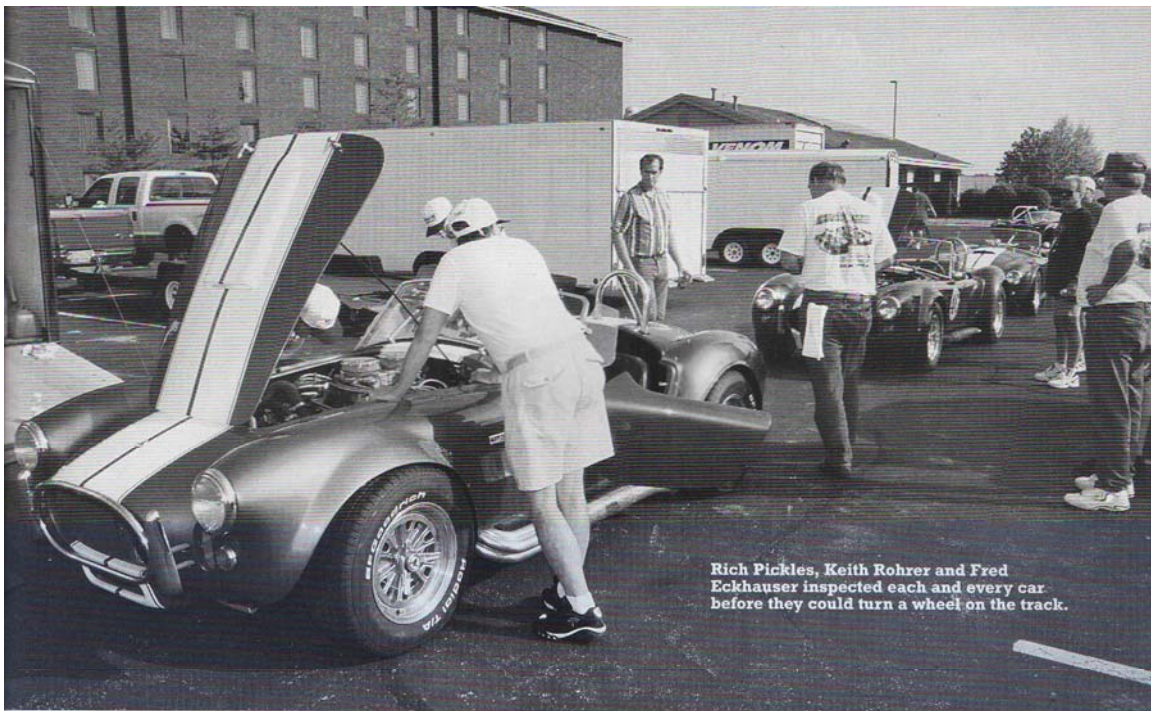


At registration, Keith Rohrer puts on his number while his wife, Cherie, and Rick Merz look on.



Filling in all the forms was part of the registration process for everyone.





Rich Pickles, Keith Rohrer and Fred Eckhauser inspected each and every car before they could turn a wheel on the track.



Here, after setting fastest time around the road course in his Superformance Cobra, Dennis Olthoff gets a kiss from his mom.



On the first morning, Ed Combs and his rig were among the first to appear at the track. Here, the team's V10-powered Classic Roadsters Cobra is unloaded.



Early on the first day, Formula Atlantic driver David Pook, and track representative Jim Probst, ran several driver's meetings.



John Spina and his son, Justin, fine-tune their Everett-Morrison Cobra with a laptop computer.



# THE WINNERS

## Top Dog Winners

### Road Racing

No. 24, **Dennis Olthoff**, Superformance Cobra

### Drag Racing

No. 36, **Greg LaPoint**, Factory Five Racing Cobra

### Overall

No. 3, **Gary Proia**, Everett-Morrison Cobra

## Road Racing Class Winners

### A Street Prep

No. 1, **Keith Rohrer**, E.R.A. Cobra

### B Street Prep

No. 15, **Mike McCann**, Contemporary 289 FIA Cobra

### A Pro

No. 3, **Gary Proia**, Everett-Morrison Cobra

### B Pro

No. 24, **Dennis Olthoff**, Superformance Cobra

### A Street

No. 57, **Jay Kowalik**, Classics By Elite CR Cobra

### B Street

No. 17, **Craig Anderson**, Factory Five Racing Cobra

### 4-6 Cylinder

No. 34, **John Spina**, Everett-Morrison Cobra (Buick V-6)

## Drag Racing Winners

### Quick Eight Winners

#### Pro A

No. 41 **George Anderson** (Midstates), beat No. 13 **Mark Rich** (Midstates)

#### Pro B

No. 36 **Greg LaPoint** (Factory Five) beat No. 51 **Mark Smith** (Factory Five) Street  
No. 1 **Keith Rohrer** (ERA) beat No. 27 **Bob Turpin** (Contemporary)

#### Bracket 1

No. 51 **Mark Smith** (Factory Five) beat No. 55 **Tom Scamon** (Beck Spyder) Bracket 2  
No. 2 **Shane Lewis** (Mosler Twin Star) beat No. 22 **John Ciacchi III** (Contemporary)

#### Bracket 3

No. 40 **Mark Selby** (Classic Roadsters) beat No. 3 **Jackie Nittler** (Midstates)

#### Bracket 4

No. 2 **Neil Smalley** (Affiliated GTD) beat No. 43 **Paul DiGiovanni** (Johnex)

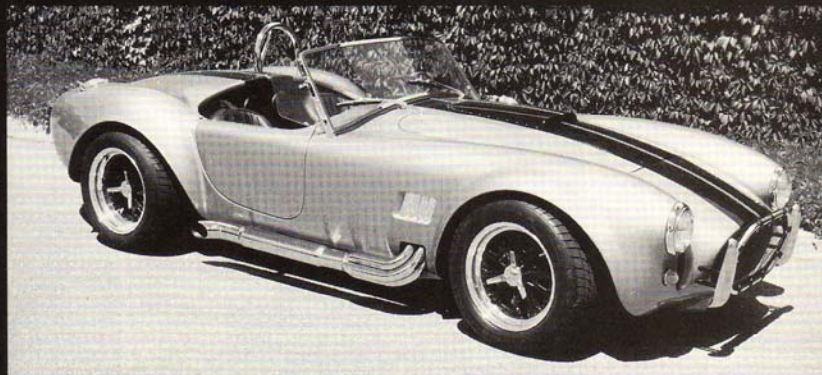
### King Of The Hill

No. 51 **Mark Smith** (Factory Five Racing)

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# Run and Gun '98

Jim Colman demonstrates why Cobras dominate — they're fun!

"I had gone out the afternoon before with David Pook in the pace car," he said. "The turn is a decreasing radius, and Pook told me I could go faster there. As the turn decreased, the car started drifting. When the outside tires got on the grass, it snapped sideways. When I hit the tire barrier, I really didn't think it would be bad — but it was like being hit with a baseball bat!"

That was not the end of the team's effort, though. The car was quickly evaluated. The roll cage had done its job. The frame and suspension were okay. The lightweight body, though, was cracked and crumpled. But, the team helped right the car, and once it was towed to the Factory Five location in the

**"As the turn decreased, the car started drifting. When the outside tires got on the grass, it snapped sideways. When I hit the tire barrier, I really didn't think it would be bad — but it was like being hit with a baseball bat!"**

garage, the team — including three engineers — went to work with gray racing tape. But, more, they checked every element of the frame and suspension. One part, manufactured in-house at Factory Five, was bent, and Mark Smith hand-carried it to a local fabrication shop to have it replaced.

Then, the team wanted to take the car out immediately,

but we weren't about to let that happen. First, it would have to pass a technical inspection. Wayne Turpin and Rich Pickles made sure it was safe, but decided it would not run again until the final moments of the competition — just in case it wasn't completely right. Any failure, you see, would cause a delay in our program, not to mention endangering the two drivers.

Dave and Mark agreed to that proviso, and at the end of the day, Mark, being supportive of Dave, took the car out and ran a first-lap time of 1:18, which was considerably slower than his best practice time — but not bad for a tough emotional day! Because David was in a car with warmed-up tires, he turned 1:17.

Even at that point, Factory Five had displayed the kind of *chutzpah* that all racers



John Spina hustles past in his Everett-Morrison Snake.



Bob Jordan looks intense as he blasts by.



Bob Turpin hurtles down the drag strip in his Midstates Cobra.