

March Madness at Laguna Seca, cont'd

Schader's Streak Continues American City Racing League Season Opener

Laguna Seca - Monterey, California
March 31, 1996
by Bill Freed

After winning the final two races of '95, Bob Schader opened '96 American City Racing League season without missing a beat, taking a 6.7 second victory at Laguna Seca over Team San Jose's Lee Lucas (Saturn/Red Line Oil Swift DB-5/Purcell) and Jeff Glenn (Bank of The West/KJWL Swift DB-5). The Team San Diego driver pushed his PPG/Valvoline Lola past polesetter Peter Zarcades of Team Las Vegas, capturing an early lead in the driver's standings, while City Team honors went to San Jose for its 2-3 finish. Joe Gioski of Team Woodland (Washington) won the Sports 2000 class in a Tiga.

Qualifying

Daeco Fast 5 qualifying saw Zarcades (Penzoil Swift DB-5) establish quick time with a 1:31.131 on Laguna's reconfigured 2.238 miles, modified in the off season to provide larger pits for the IndyCar crowd. Second was Schader, posting a 1:31.84, the only other driver in the 31's. Jeff Glenn qualified third at 1:32.263 while San Jose teammate Lee Lucas annexed fourth with 1:32.374. Making his first-ever appearance in the Fast 5 was Team Santa Barbara's Brad Krause, posting 1:33.084 in his Kinko's sponsored, Cameron-McGee prepped Lola.

Joe Gioski of Team Woodland took the Sports 2000 pole in a Tiga, followed by John Ostlund of Team Fresno (KJWL/Alistar) and Ian Wood of San Diego (IWE Rear Ends Only/PPG/Valvoline) in Swift DB-2's.

Race

ACRL's opener was the inaugural pro event at the remodeled California circuit, and birthday boy Peter Zarcades led fourteen cars to the green using SCCA Pro Racing's new start procedure that makes the polesetter pace the safety car in pit lane. Zarcades held point only to Turn 2, where Schader moved past as a result of a good start. Lucas, running a Steve Jennings engine and sporting new aero tricks from crew chief Eric Purcell, passed both Zarcades and Glenn on the inside, finding himself second before the end of the opening lap.

As the ever-aggressive Lucas took the lead from Schader in Turn 2 on the second lap, Glenn and Zarcades were having an outstanding braking duel in Turn 11. Zarcades dived under Glenn in an attempt to re-take third spot, and Peter hit the binders just a bit too late — and with help from dirt on the track, he spun off. Unfortunately, Zarcades' return to the track resulted in a collision with Las Vegas teammate Leo Sismani, who was running 5th at the time. By lap 3 the running order settled with Lucas, leading Schader, Glenn, Krause, Lee, Werner, Paul and rookie Buddy Dold in Super Sports 2000, while Gioski led Ostlund (Team Fresno) and San Diego's Ian Wood in the Sports 2000 division.

Schader's Lola, prepped by Jim Lachenmaier and Margraf Racing, began to work its Hoosier tires really well, and Schader set fastest lap on the 6th circuit, at 1:32.406. "By then, third gear went away," said Lucas, who relinquished the lead only after trying to lap Laguna on three speeds. Further back, Glenn nursed fading brakes in 3rd, as Krause's Lola stayed fourth just adrift of Glenn. Rick Lee (Reno) and Jim Paul (Long Beach) held sixth and seventh, while Dold dropped back from brake gremlins. Gioski and John Ostlund continued a major scrap for leadership in Sports 2000, with Ian Wood and Joe's father, Leo Gioski at the tail end of the field.

Although Zarcades retired with a stuck throttle and deranged front suspension, Leo Sismani fought back from 13th place for Team Las Vegas. Despite flapping bodywork, Sismani charged through the field to an eventual 6th place, battling high-speed understeer and "oversteer every place else." Roger Werner of San Diego wisely decided to retire his Swift late in the race, due to engine problems that oiled down his rear tires and sent him spinning.

Schader held off the field until the checker on lap 18, establishing both the driver points lead and his position as the ACRL driver to beat. San Jose looks strong in both driver and

City Team championships, while Gioski, Wood and Ostlund look set for a season-long tussle in Sports 2000. With the anticipated return of 1994 series champion Margie Smith-Haas (Team San Diego) and 1995 rookie contender Chris Ronson (Las Vegas), the series' next race at the Mesa Marin oval on April 27 should be very competitive.

Sanchez Wins PE deWitt, Griffiths, Landrum, Allen, Clayton, McHugh, and Bright post wins

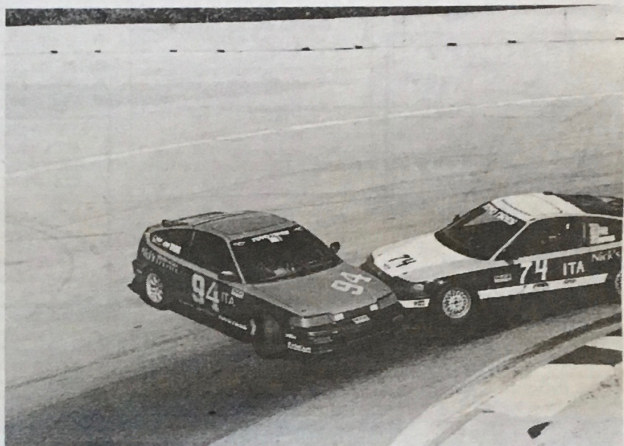
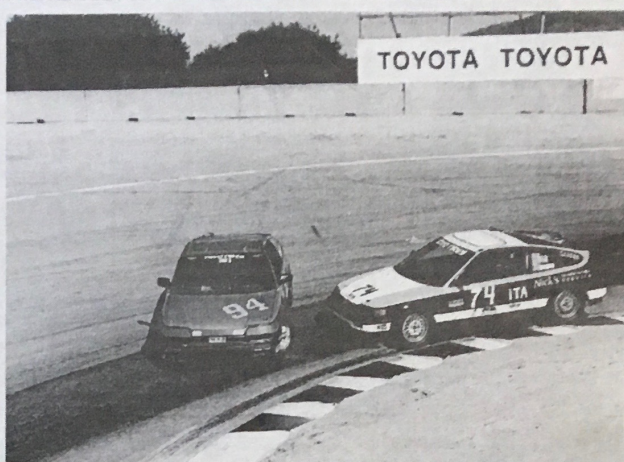
A total of 24 cars took the grid at the Group 5 race at the Laguna Seca March Madness on March 31. Roy Ray of Marina picked up the pole position in the group and in PE in his Bruce's Tire Camaro. On the way to the front of the grid he also picked up a new qualifying record on the new layout at Laguna. When the flag dropped, ray took the early lead with Israel Sanchez, Jr., of Sunnysvale in a 300ZX right on his tail. In third place, and in striking distance for the lead was Lars Giersing of Oakland in a 944T. As the front runners came out of the corkscrew on the backside of Laguna, Sanchez slipped around Ray with Giersing in tow, putting Sanchez in the lead and Giersing in second. As they came out of Turn 11, the three front runners were putting some ground between them and the rest of the pack. On Lap 2, Don Rider of Livermore in an ITD Alliance went off in Turn 6 with a throttle cable problem, causing the pace car to come out for two laps as the emergency crew cleared the track. On the re-start, the three leaders held their positions until they came around to Turn 11 headed for the start finish line. Giersing went wide in the turn allowing Ray to pick up the second place slot. Just before the halfway mark in the race, Ray made a pass out-powering Sanchez out of Turn 11 to take the lead having just made a pass on Giersing for second. Ray held the lead for a short time being passed again by Sanchez for the lead, as the two front runners began to put some space between themselves and the third place Giersing. Sanchez held the lead for the remaining 8 laps to take the win in PE, second place went to Ray and Giersing held on to third.

The ITD battle between Al Dorsett of Redwood City and Tom Clayton of San Jose became a race to watch from the start. Clayton started second in the field of ITD's behind Dorsett, who picked up a track record in qualifying. For the entire race it was apparent that the two cars were evenly matched and the race would be based on driving skill. Clayton spent the first ten laps trying to find a way around Dorsett, and was unable to find one. Every time they to drivers came into Turn 11 Clayton tried an inside move, hoping to force Dorsett wide in the turn that had made so many drivers spin that day, but Dorsett held the line. On Lap 11, Clayton finally found a way around Dorsett and picked up the lead with Dorsett right on his tail. Clayton spent the next 5 laps doing everything possible to hold off Dorsett, and was successful. Clayton picked up the ITD win along with a race record, and Dorsett took a close second. Ken Richter of Santa Rosa picked up third for the day.

Lynne Griffiths of Menlo Park Ran a strong race to pick up and SSB win in her new Toyota MR2. She also picked up a new qualifying and race record in the process. Second in SSB was Marcy Crawford of Hayward, third in class went to Richard Anderson of Santa Rosa.

The PB win went to Clint deWitt of Sacramento. Allan Hamilton of San Jose took second in the class after picking up a new record in qualifying and the early lead, but on the re-start, lost the lead to deWitt and was unable to regain the position.

An uncontested win in class went to David Allen of Cupertino in SGT after working out brake problems after qualifying. Pat Landrum of Fremont picked up an uncontested win in T1, as did Russ McHugh of Sunnysvale in SSC and novice driver Anthony Bright of San Jose in PA.



Theroux spins heading into the corkscrew battling for the lead with Beckwith at Laguna Seca. Photos - John Beckwith

Jorgenson picks up an F440 win Harris battles for FV win

Jeff Jorgenson of San Jose placed himself in the front on the Group 1 pack with a new qualifying record and used that advantage to pick up a wire to wire F440 win. Jorgenson got the early lead as the flag dropped with Joe Rozelle of Modesto in tow in the second place slot. Just before the recording of the second lap, a mishap at Turn 11, one of many that day, brought out the pace car for two laps and took out the second place qualifier Don Clar of Pleasant Hill. On the restart, Jorgenson again took the lead followed by Rozelle in second and John Cardott of Morgan Hill in third. Jorgenson held the lead for the remainder of the 16 lap race picking up the F440 win for the day. Rozelle held on to second, and Cardott picked up third.

Formula Vee was, as usual, quite a battle for the win. Scott Shelly of San Francisco was the fast qualifier in the class, but was forced to follow the pace car into the pits before the start due to mechanical problems. This left the early lead to Randy Harris of San Mateo with Americo Cabral of Santa Rosa in second. After the 2 pace car laps, Harris again took the lead, but wouldn't be able to hold off Cabral for long. On Lap 5, Cabral made a pass on Harris for the lead. On Lap 6, Dan Mieskalski of Livermore picked up the third place slot over Brent Milner of Salinas and had Harris in his sights. The race then became a three-way battle for the lead with Milner, currently in fourth still in striking distance. On Lap 10, Mieskalski overtook Cabral for the lead, and held it for two laps. Cabral again took the lead on Lap 12. All four front runners had a shot at the lead for the next 4 laps, but Cabral held off the advances until the last lap. Harris managed to find a way around Cabral to pick up the win, with Cabral taking second. The battle for third went to Milner, and Mieskalski picked up fourth.

Theroux comes out on top in ITA Hartzel runs strong to ITC win

The second in what promises to be a tight battle for the ITA Regional Championship took place at the Laguna Seca March Madness race on March 31. In what is becoming known as the Theroux/Beckwith/Killips show, Nicholas Theroux of Redwood City took the pole and the early lead and Scott Killips of Belevedere jumped past John Beckwith of Oakland for second at the start. On Lap 4, Beckwith made a move in the hills of Laguna Seca to overtake Killips for the second place slot, and set his sights on Theroux. As they started to hit lapped traffic, Killips dropped back a bit out of the fight for the lead. Just after the halfway mark, Killips had regained the lost ground, but lost it again by going wide into Turn 11. On Lap 14, Beckwith came side by side with Theroux past the start finish and had Theroux by half a car length. Theroux regained the lead by Turn 2, and held on to it to finish in first place with Beckwith right on his heels. Beckwith picked up second for the day and Killips followed in third.

Barry Hartzel of Monterey was the fast qualifier in ITC picking up a new track record, and held the front position from wire-to-wire. The real fight in ITC was for the second place slot between Ali Naimi of San Jose and Richard Apodaca of Campbell. Apodaca held the second place slot for the first two laps over Naimi. At the halfway mark, Hartzel had about a six car length hold on the lead with Naimi in second, but Apodaca was right on his heels. Apodaca kept up with Naimi, looking for a way around at every turn. On the last lap, Apodaca came side by side with Naimi across the finish line, but it was Naimi by half a car length for second, Apodaca picked up third.