

# What Is So Rare As A Sprint In June?

By Gary Witzenburg

Ho hum. Another June Sprints.

The biggest amateur SCCA event in the country; probably the biggest single racing event in the known world in terms of entries—549 actually registered at the track at last count this year. Another record. Ho hum.

Another record June Sprints crowd; 27,200 on Saturday, 32,400 on Sunday. One of the North America's finest and most beautiful racing facilities. Some of the Midwest's finest and most beautiful young ladies. Steaming food stands loaded down with spicy Wisconsin Bra-tururst. Hot barrels of melted butter brimming with fresh corn on the cob. Plenty of cold beer and hot cars, both current and vintage.

The quaint village of Elkhart Lake, with its antique train station; and Seibkin's Resort with its creaky, YMCA-like rooms but some of the best food in Wisconsin. (Why doesn't someone build a nice, modern motel somewhere nearby?)

Ho hum. Another June Sprints.

## Race One—G & H Production

The first race was G and H production, with assorted 56 Spridget and Spitfires, two Datsuns, one Alfa Romeo and one wood-frame Morgan charging into Turn One, down the hill to Two and onto the long Road America straight leading to the tight, left-hand Turn Five, little engines wound tight at 100-plus mph and sounding like a fearful swarm of locusts.

Almost inevitably, it happened. Metal-to-metal. Several cars in the dirt trying to occupy the same space at once. Out of the dust came polesitter Ed Rubenzer, recovering from a spin off the left side of the track, scrabbling for traction, re-entering the traffic in mid-pack.

Even with the fastest car in the race, Rubenzer had his work cut out to make his way back up into the heavy points, but he was trying. By the end of the first lap, he was more than 20 seconds down on leaders Mike Pinney (Midget) and Dean Johnson (Spitfire) and didn't even show in the top 20; but by lap four he was back to 17th overall. Two laps later he was 11th and 7th in class. By lap 12 he was fifth overall and 4th in GP, and in another two laps had passed Mike Yablon for third in class.

But time ran out before Rubenzer could get to HP leader Rick Crisenbery, and he was still a long way from catching Mark

## 549 Racers, more than 32,000 spectators, and two days of racing on one of the nicest courses in the country

Brakke, who had moved into second after Johnson's Spitfire had broken (while leading) at Turn One.

Meanwhile, there was no contest in HP after Anatoly Arutunoff's brief challenge of Crisenbery had ended when the two came together at Turn Six.

## Race Two—Formula Vee

The 55-car FV battle provided its usual thrills, chills and spills, with the car-to-car contact beginning at Turn One, lap one and continuing throughout the 15-lapper.

The usual multicar drafting and braking contest for the lead was still nine cars long by the 13th lap, and of the 41 racers still running at the checker, only the last six had been lapped. Lead changes (and incidents) were far too numerous to count, with the order being scrambled literally at every corner, and a guy who came by eighth one lap might be third the next, or vice-versa.

Involved in the top-10 shoot-em-up throughout most of the race were John Hogdal (Lynx), Tom Stephani (Lynx), Jerry Knapp (Caldwell), Marty Potashnik (Lynx), John Haydon (Caldwell), Larry

## Race Three—CSR, DP, BP, BS

Appropriately, the top five cars on the grid in the third event were CSRs, but it looked like a runaway was in store here with Jeff Miller's Wynnurfst Kohler a full six seconds faster than Steve Glassey's second-place Bobsy (and better than three seconds under the CSR record). But it was not Miller's day, as he rolled directly into the pits at the end of lap one, smoking heavily from terminal engine ills.

From that point on, the race was between Glassey, Randy McDaniel's PBS and Fred Schilplin's Lola, with Glassey leading until he spun off the inside of

Turn 14, handing the lead and the eventual win to McDaniel.

Fastest in DP was the venerable Datsun 2000 of Tom Brennan, who started sixth overall with a qualifying time nearly two seconds under the class record, and was not challenged for the class lead even after falling off the pace with mechanical bothers on lap nine. Second was the Lotus 7 of Chris Beebe, up from the 33rd, while Pete Bollenbach's Datsun copped third place points.

Also unchallenged was another aging Datsun, the 510 of Keith Bowman. Driving quickly, smoothly and without incident, Bowman easily bettered everything Frank Carney could put together with his brand new 200-SX to finish sixth overall and first in BS.

And sandwiched between the B Sedans of Bowman and Carney was the unlikely-looking Elva Courier of ex-Group 44 driver John Kelly, who set a new class record almost every time around in taking the EP honors.

## Race Four—Formula Ford

Although the FF bash didn't evolve into the multi-car fracas expected there was

racer. Meanwhile, Ocelot-mounted Bob Davis was moving up steadily from his 50th grid position, and on the very last lap he caught and passed Matthews for second...another typical June Sprints inspired drive.

Then there was the ding-dong CS battle between arch-rivals Bruce Nesbitt and Dick Davenport in Datsun B-210s, who began trading paint on the second turn of the first lap and didn't quit until Nesbitt finally emerged on top 15 laps later.

There was another humdinger going on in FP between MG Midget drivers Bob Criss, Neil Harrison and Bob Hubbard. First it was Criss in the lead, then Harrison, then Criss again as Harrison tangled with Hubbard in Turn 5. On the 10th lap Hubbard disappeared, leaving the bumping contest to the other daring duo. Harrison was next, spinning at 4 and finally coasting to a stop at Station 4 on the 13th lap. During this melee, Barry Hartzel had brought his Midget up from the 18th starting position to inherit second in class, but was later disqualified for an alleged vehicle illegality. That left Mike LaRue's Spitfire 2nd and John Spragg's Midget 3rd in FP.

## Race Six—SSA, B, C

Oddly enough, there wasn't a dice for the lead to be found throughout the entire Showroom Stock event, but there was plenty of racing going on for other positions, not to mention spins, creamed fenders, broken guardrails and no less than two cars upside down by the time the checkered fell after 12 laps.

National SSA champ D.J. "Fuzz" Fazekas drove smoothly off into the distance in his Datsun 280Z, just as he did in last fall's runoffs, leaving Ron Smaldone (Cosworth Vega) and Mark Behm (280Z) to fight it out for SSA honors. In the end it was Behm ahead of Smaldone, as the latter had gotten into a bumping contest with SSB leader Bill Fishburne's Saab 99.

Fishburne devastated the SSB field (in spite of Smaldone) and most of the SSA troops as well. At one point he was an amazing third overall on this "horsepower" track until Smaldone finally bumped him back to fourth on lap 8.

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the tight, left-hand Turn Five, both engines wound tight at 100-plus mph and sounding like a fearful swarm of locusts.

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This incident was the most spectacular of the countless bumps, spins, wrecks and agricultural excursions, severely damaging the cars, the guardrail and the self-control of both drivers.

Meanwhile, the remaining bunch of seven had continued the battle right to the flag, with Knapp passing Potashnik up the hill to the finish line to win by a few feet. Close behind were Smith, Wood, Kalka, Rubenzer (who was credited with the fastest lap) and Kapaun.



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### Race Four—Formula Ford

Although the FF bash didn't evolve into the multi-car fracas expected there was plenty of the usual hijinks and a super three-car race up front.

National Champ Dave Weitzenhof (Zink) came around in the lead the first time by, hotly pursued by Tony Kester (Dulon) and Bob Richardson (Crossle). After that it was mainly Weitzenhof and Kester swapping the position lap after lap with the crafty Richardson biding his time in third. After that was a gap to the equally fierce fourth-place battle between Carl Anderson's Zink and Gary Hackbarth's Dulon.

And so it went until the traditional last-lap strategy contest. Around the final turn it was Weitzenhof ahead, but now Richardson was second and Kester third. Then Richardson moved into drafting position up the hill toward the finish and it was all over for Weitzenhof.

### Race Five—FP, CS, DSR

Another multi-car, multi-class race, but with good racing going on in every class. After Al Beasley (Bobby) and Jim Boehm (Ocelot) took each other off course on the first lap, it seemed the DSR affair would belong to Archie Onwiler's Chimeira, nearly three seconds quicker than second qualifier Beasley and Jim Matthews' Quasar-Ocelot. But both Beasley and Boehm were charging back up through the field. By the second lap Boehm had caught Beasley and went by when the latter committed another indiscretion off the outside of Turn 12, and six laps later Boehm had caught and passed Matthews for second. By that time the veteran Beasley was back up to fourth, but then both disappeared simultaneously, Boehm in the pits with a flat tire, Beasley at Turn 9 with a broken

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There's a big gap in speed from SSB to SSC, so you had to look way down deep in the field to catch the action there. Turned out it was John Wojtysiak's Vega leading by several car-lengths over a spirited dice among Jim Putnam's same, Fred Stout's and Lou Gregg's Datsun 710s, and the Pintos of Fred Fiala and Tony Lee. After a good clean race (the way it ought to be), it was Wojtysiak over Putnam and Stout.

### Race Seven—A & BSR, A, B, CP

Ready for the Big One? The traditional June Sprints feature? The one where the cars go "roar" instead of "hum," "buzz" and "zing?"

No less than 62 cars in six SCCA classes lined up for the 18-lapper, with Jerry Hansen's ex-Haas/Hall Can-Am Lola on the Pole 4.5-seconds faster than Jack Hinkle's aging but mighty big-block (old-style) Can-Am Lola in the second spot. It's hard to dislike perennial winner Hansen because he's such a nice guy, but what makes him so annoying is that he not only buys up the latest and fastest cars available, he also has them prepared so well that they rarely break, and he drives so well that he rarely makes a mistake, especially at Road America.

What he does do, to try and give the crowd a better show, is sandbag in the early laps instead of just roaring off into the distance, to give the best of the less fortunates a chance to play with him and pretend that they have a chance. In this case, if there was sandbagging going on, it was definitely a good act, as Hinkle's less agile but more powerful car would follow Hansen's state-of-the-art small-block Lola out of Turn 14 lap after lap and

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# Sprints

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then just blow him away up the hill to the start/finish line. It was a good show at least until Hinkle came to mechanical grief two laps from the end.

The BSR contest was a bit more convincing, with Jim Gutfreund's Lola leading Rick Villate's likewise and Mort Platt's Chevron just behind the Hansen/Hinkle show until Villate retired on lap five and Gutfreund fell out just one lap later. That left Platt alone to fend off the Chevron of Tom Butz, who was recovering from a first-lap miscue that had dropped him to 11th from his sixth starting slot. In the end, it was Platt retaining the class win over Butz, followed one lap down by Don Wands' Lola.

Next came the impressive AP Corvette of Don Hager, who drove from ninth on the overall grid to fourth overall and first in class. At first it was a good three-car dice among Hager, Joe Pirota and Bill Morrison, with Pirota jumping into the lead on lap one and staying there until he stuffed his car into the guardrail between Turns Five and Six. As for Morrison, he hung on in third for two laps before pulling off with a massive oil leak. That left the similar machine of Doug Rippie to inherit second and Jim Barnett's ditto to scoop up third place AP points.

Just behind was a four-car dual for BP honors among the small-block Corvettes of Dick Danielson, Vern Brown and Bob Kerns and the agile but out-powered Porsche 911 SC of Stephan Edlis. Kerns managed to jump into the lead in the first lap and stay clear of the Danielson/Brown/Edlis melee, which was conducted without incident except for a minor first-lap shunt between Brown and Edlis at Turn 8. When things were sorted out, it was Brown over Edlis, with Danielson falling slightly off the pace to finish 10th overall and fourth in BP.

Unfortunately for the rest of the class, no one present could run with Logan Blackburn's very speedy CP Datsun 280Z, so there's no story to tell. Blackburn drove quickly and smoothly amid the sea of Corvettes to finish eighth overall and win the CP points going away.

steward in charge of such matters, supposedly because the water leak had miraculously gone away. That was just two minutes before the deluge hit.

So hard and fast was the rainstorm that the slick-tired formula cars began sliding off and piling up all over the course. After a couple minutes of that, Larry McNeil's FA Lola hit the Turn 12 guardrail hard enough to elicit a "Mayday" and ambulance call from the corner workers, and with that chief steward Foster Sturdevant decided to put out the checkered flag and end the race. But the checkered can only be displayed at the start/finish, and it was hung out after the leaders had already gone by to complete their 11th lap.

So you had the unusual situation that only those who managed to struggle by the start/finish after the flag had been thrown knew that the race had been called. The others were still out there on

the four-mile course thinking they were racing for position. Of course, there were waving yellows at every turn, but with so many wrecks scattered about, the drivers still splashing around didn't interpret them as a signal to stop racing.

The result of all this was that the race was scored and points (tentatively) awarded based on the last fully scored lap, which was the leaders' 10th—when Johnson had passed Cogan for first overall. But many competitors had managed to improve their positions considerably on their 11th lap, unaware that the race had been stopped and nothing would count after lap 10. So naturally, those who had gained by the bad call were busy filing protests against the decision, and those who had fallen off the road or otherwise lost positions were lined up to protest the protests if upheld.

It all would have been very comical

except that SCCA National racing has become so very serious. Few competitors were ready to concede a potential double-point Supernational good finish without a fight. At this writing, the finishing orders are still "provisional" due to all the pending protests. But SCCA officials traditionally uphold each others' decisions, so this is most likely the way it will stand:

Johnson, ignored black flags and all, will get the otherwise well-deserved FA win, followed distantly by Dave Dietrich (March) and Howie Fairbanks (Surtees). FB of course goes to Cogan (Ralt) with Dom Outcalt (March) second and Rick Koehler (Excalibur) third. FC goes to Jim Trueman's March, with second and third honors to Dan Neuman's Dulon and John Fowler's Modus, respectively. And Mike Yoder gets the FSV prize, followed closely by Tom Pomeroy and Tom Grunnah.

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#### Race Eight—FA, B, C, SV

No June Sprints weekend would be complete without rain showers and controversy, and the last race was unlucky enough to provide both. Pay attention now.

First, polesitter Dan Johnson in his "I need a ride special" FA Chevron couldn't get his motor started and was left behind as the 43-car open-wheel field began its pace lap. Then Johnson, who must have been the luckiest man alive on that day, tried popping his clutch one last time as he was being pushed away and the motor fired. So off he went to catch the tail end of the pack, which he did before the green flag fell.

Then it was a fairly normal race for several laps as the field sorted itself out into various dices for position and Johnson began charging up from the back. By lap two he was eighth; by lap five he was third and five laps later he had passed FB leader Kevin Cogan for first overall at the start/finish line.

Then the heavens opened up. The next time by, Johnson splashed along slowly back in second and just five turns later he slid to a stop off the slick track. But wait, there's much more:

It seems about the second time around, Johnson was reported spraying large amounts of fluid on the track. Another report came in, then another, and the Turn 12 workers confirmed that the fluid was water. Two more reports and another minute passed before a mechanical black flag went out. The next time around, and the next, Johnson apparently ignored the "meatball" flag and just kept on trucking.

Five more minutes passed, and then the black flag was cancelled by the race

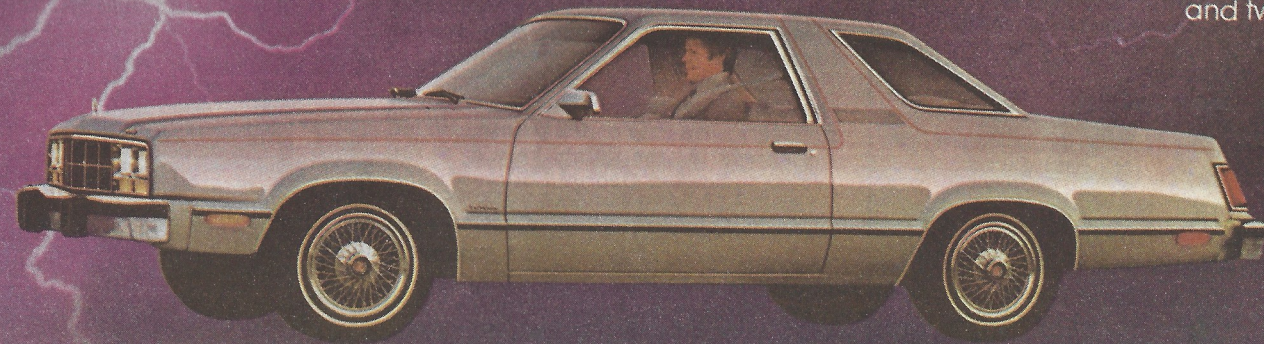
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