

# CER – SILVERSTONE, UK – SEPTEMBER 11TH TO 13TH, 2009



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It's been a year since I last raced in a CER race in Europe and, coincidentally, that was at Silverstone, to where I returned last weekend to team up with old friend George Tuma and the boys from Brunn Racing for the one hour support race of the "Silverstone 1000 kilometers" race for Le Mans type cars. George and I were lucky to have Kieron looking after the RSR, an English Porsche racing mechanic who I remembered as an apprentice at Neil Bainbridge's shop in Aylesbury in the 1980s!

I flew into London Heathrow on Thursday and drove up to Silverstone to sign on and then drove a few miles further to stay with my elder daughter in Alcester, Warwickshire, a quaint old town where I used to live many moons ago.

Friday saw me back at Silverstone and what an array of cars! There were no less than fifty-one entries with another six cars hoping that an official entry or two would fail in practice. Entries came from France, Britain, Germany, Italy and, representing the USA was Bobby Rahal in a Lola T294 and....me!

It was good to see lots of old friends and the atmosphere, as always, was excellent.



Practice started at 10.30 on Friday morning and George and I split the thirty minute session, each getting in about six laps before the session was over. Silverstone is a fast place, Keke Rosberg posting a lap at an average speed of over 160 mph many years ago in an F1 Williams. From the start, it's a mad dash down a fast right hander, Copse corner, which is taken in fourth gear. From there, you accelerate up to Maggots, which is a tight, decreasing radius right hander, calling for hard braking before turn in. Then it's a left-right-left sweep exiting onto the Hanger straight. It's important to get a good exit through the last left hander to get a good exit here, as that governs your speed on the straight.

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At the end of the Hanger straight is Stowe corner, a third gear right hander, which sort of spits you out in a direct line to a short straight, which ends in a ninety degree left, then it's a quick right and down into Bridge bend, which in particular is of the "keep your foot in it - Oh my Gawd" variety (you rush downhill, under the bridge and then go hard right uphill again) and, as it is swiftly followed by a tight left hander, hard braking is called for, which tends to unsettle the car. Then it's a couple of slow lefts, a seemingly interminable right handed hairpin and then accelerate as fast as the car will go and you're onto the pit straight rushing down to Copse again.



Friday afternoon saw George deciding to let me drive all of the thirty minute “Qualifying 1” session, whilst he would take the Saturday morning “Qualifying 2” session. As things turned out, I bet he wishes he had reversed that order, for I had a relatively free thirty minutes, except for one short red-flag time when we were forced to wait in the pits whilst a car was moved from an inconvenient spot.

When I went out again, all went well until the Matra 670 of Rob Hall clipped my front right wheel arch as he hurtled by. Luckily, there was only very minor damage (a small scratch!) on the RSR but the impact detached the Matra’s air box, forcing him into the pits! The closing speeds between the sports-prototypes and the GT cars have grown immeasurably since last year.





Then back to Alcester, great party time at two pubs (drinking lemonade, of course!), bed at past midnight and then back to Silverstone on Saturday where George would take the morning session and the one hour race was scheduled for the afternoon.

Poor George: I wandered off to Copse to watch the cars through there but they only went through it three times, before a Chevron sprang an oil leak and liberally coated the circuit, so that was the end of that session!

Come the race and George said: "I will be in after thirty minutes" and off the pack went at 3.55, according to my watch. For once, I didn't don my helmet and gloves immediately, thinking: "You've got plenty of time, it's hot, don't get ready until five minutes to go." Of course, I was caught out. Kieron suddenly shouted: "He's coming in!" and I flailed around putting on helmet and gloves. Luckily, all went well and I was in and belted up as the second hand on the clock held in front of the car ticked around to the sixty second mark. Promptly as it hit sixty, yours truly was accelerating down pit lane and out onto the circuit. Everything being nicely warmed up by George, I could give it the gas straight away.

I had a very enjoyable race. The only person to pass me in our class was Bernard Moreau, who is a very good driver and who has one of the slipperiest, best prepared 1973 RSRs I've seen. I had a great dice with a car that I had know very well, the ex-Peter Gregg 1974 Brumos Porsche RSR 9057 that I had sold some years ago and he made several determined lunges at me but never succeeded in getting by. Just when I thought he was going to pass me, he disappeared from view and I had a glimpse in the mirror of him spinning off across the gravel just before Bridge corner. For a dreadful moment, I thought that I may have had something to do with this "off" but it turned out that he had been knocked off by a prototype.

So I overtook some cars and was passed continuously by the sports-prototypes and then suddenly it was all over, the checkered flag was waving and it was time to wave at the Marshalls and drive steadily back to the pits. Sadly, it was to find that we had received a three minute penalty due to changing drivers early. I reckoned we would have finished fifth in class instead of dead last but that's life and it's another big "thank you" to George and the lads for letting me take part in this very prestigious series. Who won? Bobby Rahal, of course.



Now then... A hydro race in Louisiana and then Daytona and Sebring to round out the season....































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