

ROAD AMERICA – 2012



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Having been entered at Road America in July for the big Can Am re-union in a Lola T70 (Featured Marque: The Lola T70! What a surprise!), I suddenly realized that I had only raced once at Road America and that some twelve months ago, so a refresher course was thought to be a good idea.

I contacted Jim Pace, race driver teacher extraordinaire, whose “home” track just happens to be Road America, and asked him if he would be available for a day to give me some teaching around the Elkhart Lake track. As luck would have it, there was a day coming up very shortly, he said, in fact next Wednesday and I could rent Pete Stolz’s Replica 1973 RSR (a car that we had sold to Pete a couple of years ago) to do the sessions in.

So on Tuesday, I flew to Milwaukee, grabbed a small rental car and got up to a local hotel by midnight, grabbed a few hours kip and then proceeded to try and find the track the next morning. A warning here to those who use Google maps; Google have, obviously, not been to Wisconsin! After getting lost, I stopped to ask the way at two separate farms but it turns out the “locals” are Koreans and don’t appear to speak much English...

Finally I located Road America, drove up to the top paddock and there was Jim, waiting beside Pete’s in-primer RSR. Pete took the first forty minute session and I took the next three. With Jim seated beside me, off we went.

Road America is a big, sweeping four mile plus circuit and it is FAST. Jim’s teaching is itself a lesson. No raised voice, steady, minimal commands. “Hard brake here”, “Soft brake here”, “Use the corn hopper as a marker to aim for”, “Use the access road as a reference for turn one”. So much so that the time swiftly flew by and I had to make hurried farewells as I dashed off to catch the flight back from Milwaukee to Atlanta and then Atlanta to Tampa.... which turned out to be not so good.

When we were approaching Atlanta, the Pilot came on the PA to announce that we were diverting to Nashville, as there was: “A huge thunderstorm over Atlanta”.

We topped up with fuel in Nashville, took off back to Atlanta but once there, of course, everyone had missed their connections. Hey-ho, I’d never slept on an airport floor before but there’s always room for new experiences, right? Wrong. I was stiff and cold and got about three hours disturbed sleep. Luckily, caught the 7.35 a.m. to Tampa and got home around 10.30 a.m. Really should have stayed at Road America for the whole afternoon.

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