

SEBRING MAY 19TH, 2007



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A **very** kind man has recently bought the orange, Jagermeister-sponsored RSR replica that you might have seen in the "For Sale" section of this website. German-born, he likes Porsches and also has a **real** RSR and an RS 3.0, which I had sold to him last year. He lives part of the year in Germany, part in Virginia.

He has invited me to share the driving of both the replica (over here in the States) and the real RSR (in Europe). Our aim is to take part in the 2008 Le Mans Classic. To get an entry in that most prestigious race, you need to have done at least two races in the "Historic GT" series in Europe and the owner and I intend to race at Spa and the Nurburgring in June and August and, perhaps, at Silverstone in September. In the U.S., we are going to do HSR Watkins Glen in June and Daytona in November with, perhaps, Sebring HSR thrown in for good measure.

So last Friday I dug out my old racing gear and drove to Sebring. It's only a hundred miles from where I live, a veritable stone's throw in American travel terms. I had entered for a PBOC (Porsche BMW Owners' Club) meeting and, at \$200 for an entry for practice, qualifying and a one-hour Enduro, thought that it presented excellent value for money.

The Jagermeister RSR is being taken care of by Predator Performance of Largo and David Hinton had Scotty Pheil (who raced Dave White's Porsches for years) prepare the car. Turned out that this was a good thing, as Scotty found the RSR to have excessive negative camber in the front suspension and tuned that out. The car has got a lovely 3.6-liter engine, mated to a G50 gearbox.

After helping David, Scotty and Nick unload the cars to be tested (mainly by staying out of the way and uttering dire imprecations about what might happen if they lost their step on the loading/unloading platform some 16 feet in the air), I followed David and Scotty back down CR27, found my hotel and was soon fast asleep.

Saturday dawned and I was out of the hotel and at Sebring International racetrack by 7.0 a.m. It had been seven years since I had last been on the track at Sebring, or raced seriously, so to say that I had butterflies running around my stomach would be to put it mildly! Very quickly, it seemed, the driver's briefing (don't hit anyone, watch for the flags, stay on the black stuff, avoid the greenery) was over and our first practice session came along at 9 a.m. Together with Chris in a big block 1967 Corvette, Scooter Gable in a relatively modern BMW racecar and Mike in another 911, we were soon out on the track.

Heavens but I was rusty! I felt fairly confident about remembering the track layout but that took at least four laps to put the corners into context and by that time the field had flown by me and gone! Not only that, but a few of those newfangled "Radical" Sports-racing cars had been allowed out with us too. They are lower than the RSR's door top and lightning fast through the corners, so I spent most of the session looking in the mirrors and giving way to them, which is no way to go out and test a car fully.

However, I did discover that the RSR handled just great, with no appreciable under/oversteer, a healthy engine with lots of "grunt" (torque) and the only thing that I didn't like was that the brakes were power assisted, which resulted in them grabbing all of a sudden, usually just as you started braking. The new owner has agreed to throw the servo away and substitute dual master cylinders so that we can modulate the brakes. That, plus a big orange light wired into the oil pressure system are the only modifications I've requested. By the way, the engine is safe to 7500 rpm, so Scotty tells me but I shifted at 6800 rpm through the gears and 6500 rpm from fourth to fifth – there's no point in hanging on to the revs longer. The engine note changes from the usual Porsche flat six growl to a spine chilling blare at 5900 rpm – a definite bonus!

In the second session, I started to go a bit quicker and to remember braking points and lines from seven years ago but I definitely wasn't fast! After that session, I told the boys to put the car back in the transporter as there was nothing further to be learned about the behavior of the car and there's no point in wearing it out before we take it to Watkins Glen in the middle of next month.

One thing I am going to do though....Scotty mentioned that he ran a shifter go-kart session every Saturday near where I live, so I've booked my spot and am off at sparrow's fart on Saturday. Practice, that's what's needed!

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