

# SPA 1000KMS – AUGUST 17TH TO 19TH, 2007



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After not finishing at the Nurburgring in July, George Tuma and I arrived at Spa to find that Brun Motorsport had not finished repairing the "old" engine in our RSR, and so had slotted in one of their engines they just happened to have lying around! This was a beautiful piece (see photo) with clear fiberglass intake stacks, air cleaner and newly made slide throttle fuel injection. Siggie Brun assured me that it "is a 3-liter only, but will rev to over 9,000(!) We've set the rev limiter to 8,500 for safety(!)" I assured him that I had no intention of exceeding 7,800 rpm but in the heat of battle, I confess to using 8,000 rpm!





Upon arrival, the very first person that I met, unloading his 1973 RSR from its trailer, was my old friend Mauro Borella from Milan, Italy. Mauro and I go back a long way, sometime around 1987, when I first went to Monza to take part in a Porsche race at Monza. At that time, Mauro was running a very beautiful 1973 Martini-painted RSR and simply drove away from me, such was his driving skill. That he did so again in our race was no surprise! The paddock gradually filled up with a full fifty-two cars, a great entry, but then again, Spa is a fabulous track, not for the faint hearted but for the real racer in anyone. I recommend it to any racer, unhesitatingly. I can say the same about the CER series too, there were several Lola T70s entered, a solitary, very quick GT40, a Porsche 908/4 turbo, an Inaltera, driven by Jean-Claude Andruet and seemingly hordes of RS/RSR Porsches, with Chevrons of the B16/19/36 variety and Lola T212 and T290, together with the very quick DFV-powered T280. Pad this out with two Le Mans Renault Alpines (one with Jean Redele-designed four cam V8), a Broadspeed Ford Escort, a Cologne Capri and even a solitary Ferrari 275 GTB (plus a couple of Group 4 De Tomaso Panteras) and you can see that the racing of rare, original 1966-79 Sports and GT cars is flourishing in Europe.





I got my first drive in the RSR on Friday morning, come first practice and found the engine wonderful. The way it sang up the rev. scale was a pleasure to listen to and the car handles very well. The problem for everyone was that after just five laps, the session was red flagged after a Chevron B16 went and had rather a large accident at the end of the main straight, thankfully without injuring the driver. Overnight, seemingly, the car was repaired and took part in the race on Saturday, the driver, Michel Quinou, finishing third in class!

Friday afternoon saw George belted into the RSR and out the pack went onto the track but, after just one lap, the rains arrived in strength and, apart from a few brave souls who continued to slide around, that was the end of that session. I was watching (under cover!) from the pit wall and marveled at a very well driven 1967 "big block" Corvette, piloted by Herve Dumas, who literally threw the beast through the first left hand part of the daunting Eau Rouge bend sideways! Oh, to have the confidence and car control to achieve that.





On Friday night, Mauro, George and I enjoyed a sumptuous meal in Spa, the chef cooking everything in full view, but you don't really want to hear about that...

Saturday morning saw the next qualifying session and this time it was dry throughout, allowing George to get to grips with the RSR and post a time for the race. Poor Mauro didn't put enough fuel in for the session, necessitating him having to run back to the garage for a quick five gallons. (He said that, after carrying a Jerry can full of fuel back, one of his arms was longer than the other!)

We then had to wait several hours for our one hour race, which started at 5.20 p.m. Another old friend, Ulrich Trispel from Germany, had by now arrived and so we went and sat in the grandstand in order to watch the ELMS cars that would be racing in Sunday's Spa 1000 kilometer race, qualify. It is truly staggering to see today's prototypes accelerate down the hill from the hairpin at La Source and take Eau Rouge. No photo can ever do justice to the sheer steepness of the hill leading down to the first

bend of Eau Rouge, nor show the climb that faces a driver as he negotiates this fearsome set of blind bends. Even the modern prototypes braked as they entered Eau Rouge EXCEPT for the diesel powered Peugeot coupes, which whistled almost soundlessly through the curves, never braking or lifting. An astonishing display of downforce of the car and commitment by the drivers. Somehow, I feel Audi will have a real fight on their hands at Le Mans next year, and I can only encourage Audi to join in the ELMS series, in order to further develop the R10. Remember, you need all the power you can use up Eau Rouge, as the straight afterwards is all uphill to the first right hander at Les Combes and your exit speed from Eau Rouge governs your speed up the straight. In practice, I could only get 7,400 rpm by the time I had to brake for Les Combes in practice but in the race, this went to 8,000!



Our plan was for me to do nine laps before coming in to hand over to George, with a sign from the pits at eight laps to direct me in. Well, when it came to the race all that went out of the window! George had qualified the RSR on the outside row of the rolling



start, with Mauro on the inside, just behind me. As the pack was released, I went to the inside at La Source but Mauro craftily pulled out and drove around the outside of me! Damn! I chased him and Alain Gadat in his Le Mans class winning RS 3.0 for several laps but the narrower bodywork (and better driving!) of the two other Porsches ahead of me told and they steadily pulled away with me doing all I could to catch them. Around lap nine, waving blue flags signaled the leaders lapping me and I suddenly realized I had done quite a few laps and it was probably time for me to pit. I looked at the car's clock and saw I had under two minutes to fit into the pit "window" and went like hell around, drove into pit lane and started looking for our guys. Of course, I managed to arrive just as our other two cars did and so there was chaos as I unbuckled and almost



fell out of the car to let Karl, our mechanic, get George in and buckled up. I then discovered I had done eleven laps and the young lady who was signaling me told me she'd waved it furiously at me but I'd never seen it, so concentrated was I on the dice I was in. Slapped wrists all around methinks.

We wound up eleventh in class, which is not bad (I think!), considering the strength of opposition in the class, including five BMW Procar M1s, a 935(!) and the two Panteras, to say nothing of the other RSRs.

A quick glass of champagne at the prize giving, help Mauro to load up his RSR and then I scooted back to Brussels to catch my flight home. Most enjoyable! Silverstone's next, in September. It's a circuit I did many times in the past, so SHOULD be able to remember most of it. Watch this space.





































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