

Bellefontaine Hill Climb Revival

Race Report

The inaugural Bellefontaine Hill Climb Revival took place over the weekend of August 23-25, 2019 in Logan county Ohio about 100 miles northeast of Greater Cincinnati. The Bellefontaine Hill Climb roared back to life with 90 entrants taking part in the competitions that also included a Time Speed Distance Rally and an Autocross.

Originally part of the SCCA National Championship circuit, the Bellefontaine Hill Climb was a favorite event in the heart of the most competitive division in SCCA. Surrounded by other nationally prominent races at Lockbourne Air Force Base, Akron Airport, Louisville Fairgrounds, Stout Air Force Base, Grayling Field and Peru Indiana the Hill Climb drew top competitors to the Mad River Valley. Even after the permanent circuits were built at Mansfield and Warren Ohio, Brownsburg Indiana, Waterford Michigan and elsewhere the Bellefontaine Hill Climb continued to contribute National Championship Points into the late 1960s.

Sanctioned in the early days by the Ohio Valley Region SCCA, the Western Ohio Region WOR took over in 1959 and conducted the Hill Climb until its untimely demise in 1974 as a result of the Arab Oil Embargo and contrived "Gas Crises." During its history the Bellefontaine Hill Climb hosted many champion drivers including Don Sessler (Porsche & Sunbeam), Roger Penske (Corvette), brothers Bob & John Kuhn (Corvette, Crosley, OSCA and Birdcage Maserati), Reg Howell in a Cooper Formula 2 car borrowed from John Surtees, and other notable champions.

The first revival drew a myriad of enticing British machines including Jaguar XK120, Lotus 20/22, MG TDs, Triumph TR3, Austin Mini Cooper, Big Healeys and Sprites. Non British marques included Porsche, Alfa Romeo, Shelby Mustang, Camaro SS, Datsun, two classic Ford Hot Rods, a BMW Drift Car, non Shelby Mustangs, The Acura Pikes Peak Team, Honda S600, Fiat 850 and the fastest vintage car on Corkscrew Hill a Yenko Stinger Corvair. The Logan County Coroner entered his 1947 Jeepster with "three on the tree" for the most unusual car.

The most popular cars were Austin Healeys with three Big Healeys contesting for the win, BCCGC member Bernie Grabow in his 1966 3000, Don Klein in his early 3000 and Jake Jacobs in a Nasty Boy 100 with Chevy power! Sprites were prominent with BCCGC member Tom Cole taking the Winner's Circle Trophy for fastest Sprite, fifth fastest up the Hill. Jeff Porada and Nancy Bacon won the WOR Trophy for best combined finish in all three speed events: Bellefontaine Mayor Ben Stahler presented the trophy after Jeff and Nancy ties for the win in the TSD rally and scored well in the Hill Climb and Autocross. BCCGC Activities Activator Skip Jackson enjoyed his runs up the hill in his genuine 948 cc. Bugeye Sprite-he duked it out with the Fiat 850 Spider and Honda S600 in the tiny displacement category. All had a fantastic time charging from the bottom of the Mad River Mountain Valley to the top of the ridge!

Over 500 unexpected spectators came to the Hill Climb, there were cars parked all over at the base of the Hill. One of the marshalls came to get me at the Ski Lodge where we were paddocked and described the scene as "....like Woodstock with Sports Cars..." The Logan county Sherriff did a fabulous job with traffic direction and crowd control and has endorsed our return for Revival II in 2020.

Following the Hill Climb was the "Buffet, Beverages and Boasting Party" at the Mad River Mountain Ski Lodge; the conversation was hearty surpassed only by the Boasting about how fast we all could've been! The TSD Rally ended at the party, with all the cars returning from their journey through Logan County, all the teams remained friendly and no divorces were sought following the competition. John and Jay Olman in John's MG TD were declared the winners in a closed contest with Jeff Porada and Nancy Bacon in their Bugeye. The boasting increased when the rally, organized by the Ohio Valley Region Porsche Club of America, concluded!

The event concluded on Sunday with an Autocross organized and Sanctioned by the Ohio Valley Austin Healey Club. Truthfully this was the best autocross I have attended in decades! The Honda America Racing Team brought 5 cars from nearby Marysville and added immensely to the festivities. The Bellefontaine Police Department got into the act with a Police Cruiser, both entities giving rides to other competitors and spectators after the competition

during “Fun Runs.” More modern cars were invited to join the autocross with late models including Firebirds, Acura, Miata, Toyota and probably some others I have forgotten.

The awards ceremony had the cars displayed on the first concrete road in America, dating to 1891, alongside the renovated Logan County Courthouse. Everyone in Logan county was gracious and pleasant, supporting the event and urging us to come back in 2020, we agree it was a HOOT!

European Auto Specialists LTD, Zakira’s Garage, Superior Acura of Dayton Safety Fast Restoration, Colletti Motorsports, Diehl Insurance, Cornfield Customs and Forgeline Alloy Wheels supported the event heartily, we thank them for their contributions. In an interesting twist of fate, Jim Schardt won the Hill Climb in his Yenko Stinger Corvair, his son David Schardt founded Forgeline Wheels! Jim ran in the first chapter of the Hill Climb in the 1960s and 1970s, it was good to be back, and as Mel Brooks said “It is Good to Be King!” even when you are King of the Hill!

The find photos and interact with the entrants and participants join the Bellefontaine Hill Climb Revival Group on Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/Bellefontainehillclimb/>



Austin Healey Sprite in 1970 Hill Climb



Tom Cole's Sprite in 2019, fifth fastest up Corkscrew Hill, Winner's Circle Trophy Winner



Skip Jackson blasts up Corkscrew Hill in his 948cc Bugeye, nobody had more fun than Skip!



John Olman in his 1953 MG TD, he thoroughly enjoyed his first competitive adventure!



John Coutant upheld the honor of Triumph, look for his video on YouTube.



Bernie Grabow hustles his gorgeous BJ 8 through woods on Corkscrew Hill.



Your Author brought his Alfa Romeo back to Bellefontaine after a 56 year hiatus. The car has Lucas ignition and Girling brakes, so it is a little bit British.....