

Lap Dogs?



Our very own Big Chris Smith and Brent White hit the road - and track - in the first half of the One Lap Of America.

Words & photography: Chris Smith



The Saturday morning was upon us, the car was safety inspected and checked to make sure it fell in line with the class we had entered. So how did anyone know if their car was worthy to participate? With a Gas Monkey decal of course!

After inspection the event kicked off with the wet skid pan. Tire Rack's facility has its own course in front of their HQ building ready to go, and once you're on the track they have equipment that will measure your lateral G. Brent wheeled the car for this gig and tried his best to get the car round without breaking traction, a seemingly impossible task with rear wheel drive and over 700 ponies to play with. The smaller, more agile cars were in front of us from the off, but it didn't matter, I had the same experience in the Camaro the year before, which I knew we could rectify later.

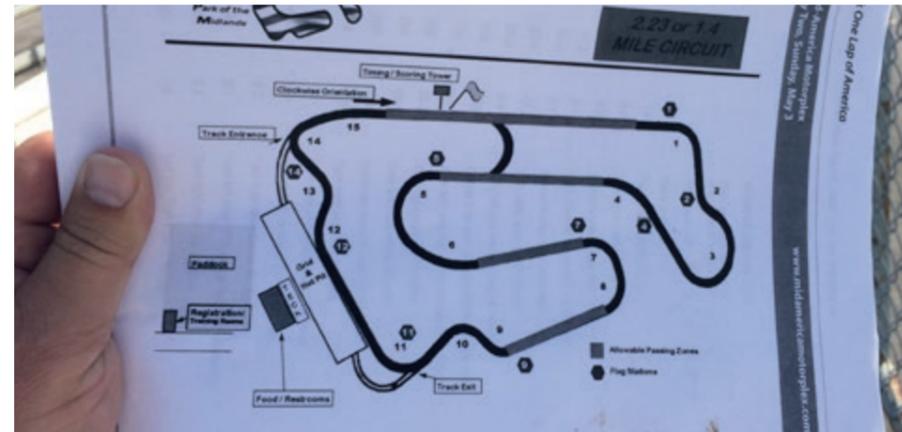
We headed west to Raceway Park of the Midlands, or "Mid America" as it's also known. It's a great track,

2.23 miles of flatness with plenty of turns and a good straight, well over a quarter mile. We left Tire Rack in South Bend, Indiana, and headed to Pacific Junction in Iowa, a mere 550-mile leg. Brent and I had never raced together before so we were both wondering how the other would shape up. There were two sessions at this track that day, morning and then noon. We unpacked the car completely (which became the daily ritual) and got the car ready, checking fluids, tyre pressures, turning off Traction Control procedures etc. Brent tracked the car in the morning and had a glitch with the charge cooler for the blower - one of the hoses had popped out of its mount and meant there was no circulation so the intake charge temperature was high enough to hinder the performance. We had an hour over lunch rectifying this with a single zip-tie and then I took it out for the afternoon session. The difference



was massive, and we managed to come in third in class. The air temp was quite warm so the track was sticky, the car cornered well and ate up the straights nicely.

Lunch at Mid America is interesting to say the least (check out the menu), as I've never had "Gizzards"



before... nor will I again! We left the track around 4pm that afternoon and headed towards Colorado. High Plains Raceway was next on the list, and if you've ever been to Cadwell Park in Lincolnshire then you'll get the picture here, mass elevation in several directions and plenty of blind crests. The elevation is tricky with mass losses of power, just enough to make you think that someone has dropped a plug wire off your car as the altitude dicks with your performance no end! The thing I found key from the previous years on this gig was to walk the tracks - if you can muster the energy to arrive early each morning to give yourself the opportunity to do a recon lap, you can learn a lot about your next run in the car. We decided to take some Razor scooters with us, and I have to say that everyone looked at us like dicks on the first day wondering what the hell we were doing on these things, but after three days of blasting past others on foot, more and more scooters seemed to appear! I think Wal-Mart must have been selling them - we should have been on commission.

The car felt great first time out. It started out a little damp that day but soon became dry, and I knew from running here in 2012 that the brakes would take a beating as there were a lot of turns. Brent and the crew had already removed the fog lights from the car and fitted it with one of their brake duct kits which gave an awesome cooling circuit straight to the discs over stock. The car would reach just over 140mph on the main

straight and get a little out of shape on the turn in thereafter, but it didn't matter, it drove like a champ... The afternoon session went well!

We finished up and headed to Denver that afternoon for some BBQ that Tire Rack had kindly laid on for us. Even though the afternoon went well I still managed to get too much heat into the stock fluid so we needed to fix that problem. We managed to talk a Goodyear Tire Centre into →





letting us borrow his ramps - at this point I have to tell you that this is where the "pub" stories start on an event like this, as you get to meet some interesting people to say the least! Late in the afternoon we came across Jeremy and Gordon. Gordon I swear was the reason Cheech and Chong was filmed - he sat in the car to pump the brake pedal while we did the fluid change to DOT5 Synthetic and fell asleep half way through the

job. When I raised my voice in a nice way to wake him, he flew out the seat shouting that "These seats are so f**kin' comfortable!" and explained how he was going to get his wife to buy him some for his car. We laid an egg there and then; this guy was nuts! Yep, Gordon was a true hero, and operating on a different wavelength than most others. It made for an interesting hour and a half I can tell you, at least it did for him when he



went walkabout for an hour to find a 13mm spanner and came back with a bottle of hard liquor, "You guys drink, right?"

The fluid change was a success and we headed to Pueblo Motorsports Ranch. We got some good rest that night as it was only 109 miles to get there, but we got up the next morning to the worst rain of the trip. It was brutal, the track had standing water everywhere and the heavens were still adding to it. Brock held a drivers meeting and we all agreed to race, but a single lap was planned instead of the three hot ones on the roster. The question was shall I go around on a scooter in the heavy rain or not? A lot had opted out on this but I thought sod it. I looked like I had gotten out the bath when I got back, but it was worth it. I guess living in the UK has its perks even when you think it doesn't, as it turns out driving in the rain was a good gig for us, and we finished 11th overall and first in class!

The rain lifted after we left leaving a really nice afternoon weather wise. We headed out from Denver and across New Mexico for a 670-mile leg to Texas, none other than Texas Motorsports Ranch. In fairness, if you ever get the chance to do a road trip in the States, make this a leg of it! There is nothing out there, straight line roads, stunning scenery and a lack of the law, so an "enthusiastic" pace is quite the norm if you want to get from A to B in the same day. We crossed the State line into Texas and Brent used his laptop to find us somewhere to eat. If you're not careful you'll fall into the trap of living on Subway sandwiches



courtesy of every gas station you stop at, and by the third day you're ready to have your stomach removed... and your ass.

We kept switching out after each tank of fuel ran dry, so that would be after the two-hour mark... ish! We were trying to make Dallas that night for some food and drinks at the GMG Bar & Grill but alas we got back too late, and ended up in a motel at midnight just a stone's throw from the track, ready for the morning's run at TMR.

(Above right) The way you keep your breakfast warm in Colorado is to use a Supercharger! (Above left) Seriously quick C5 Vette. (Left) Christie from Gas Monkey Garage returns from a blast with Brock Yates!

We set off early that morning, got gas and headed into the pit of the track. It was going to be a hot one. We had the short course in the morning and then the slightly longer section after, then in the afternoon they would combine them both and put us around the full gig at 3.1 miles per lap. It was stellar!

In the morning the car was awesome, shorter bursts of power and speed with some tight turns and crests on the menu, but the afternoon was different. The fuel level had dissipated, and with the longer bends the car suffered from fuel starvation, even with three-quarters of a tank, an ass twitching moment when you're mid-corner and the power just dies at 90+mph. Once out of the corner the power came back. We knew then that the 2015 suffered like the older models in this respect, but what it needed was a GT500-style fuel system that could handle the job on the track, though on the street it was fine.

Christie from Gas Monkey came down to the track and Brock took her around the circuit in Mr Angry's 2015 Challenger Scat Pack car. She was all smiles upon her return, promising to attend a track school as she had enjoyed it so much. I think Brock did too!

The afternoon was short-lived in the sun, we had an extra gig to attend and had to leave after 2pm to make North Star Dragway. Surely this was the event that we would excel in, I mean 700 ponies, a manual box and the sun shining? Pick up next month's copy of American Car magazine to find out. Oh, and stay clear of tornadoes in the meantime! **ACM**

