

Lapping It Up



ACM's answer to The Stig, Big Chris, heads off again on the One Lap Of America with his heart set on a class win.

Words: Chris Smith Photography: Chris Smith, Brent White and Bryan Humphries



So the month of May came around quick this year, and after some phone calls and emails between Brent White (owner of Brendspeed), Brock Yates (organiser of One Lap of America) and myself, we decided to run the event again. Firstly we had to appraise the car after running it last year, to work out what we could do to improve its performance and handling, and its stopping... We ran the car last year when it was two weeks old, and for a brand-new model this means that aftermarket parts were non-existent. We looked at the options and what had been produced for these cars since and were sure we could come up with a winning combination, but as ever these events always seem to happen at the last minute for us so we had to move quickly. We looked at the issues which we came across previously - the brakes, clutch and handling. The brakes

were easily sorted as braided lines were available, and also some Stoptech rotors. These were fitted as well as a braided clutch line; the factory rubber items are fine for the road, but the continuous hammer around a track led to brake fade and non-selection of gears in the later stages of driving. The handling was a little harder to sort but Brendspeed did wonders, the sway bars being replaced with motorsport items and the springs being replaced with lowered and stiffer ones while the shocks were also substituted with uprated items. Gas Monkey Garage were kind enough to be our main sponsor again which meant the Mustang had to be in Dallas the week before the start so it could be wrapped in the new livery. "Gas Monkey Motorsport" is now run by the Gas Monkey Energy Drink subsidiary and sponsors the Top Fuel, Pro Mod and

Below: Capone and John Dillinger's hideout, The Barbee Hotel

Indy Car which it now runs. Brent and I were in Dallas on Monday before the start to take care of PR with Richard and Aaron. Tommy at 360 Wraps had done wonders with the new design and it looked stunning. The fans



outside GMG were loving it, the 'Stang looked uber-cool!

A few weeks before the event I had been in Sweden with Richard at the Elmia Car Show and ran into two Swedes with a passion for racing. They were going to do the Gumball or something similar so I told them about the One Lap, and they said if I could get them a car and insurance inside of two weeks then they would attend. I called Brent and he sourced a brand new 2016 GT which was fully loaded. Inside of four days the car was treated to a Roush/Ford Motorsport blower kit, uprated braking and a one-piece aluminium propshaft. Christopher and Christian were over the moon, they had a brand new 'sleeper' to compete with. Although we had helped some new-found friends out, we had inadvertently given ourselves some more competition - we hoped the Swedes were not 'ringers'! They needed a team name to compete under, and due to their background "Team Swedish Mafia" fitted nicely.

We had a stop-over in Memphis and drank some beers. The Swedes introduced Brent and I to Jagermeister and the next morning



I wished they hadn't. The run from there to North Webster, Indiana, was memorable, and trying not throw up was the norm for the first four hours.

The next day the car was prepared and then a new calibration from Roush came in, one which gave us more torque at lower end and

Above: Brendspeed food outing at The Barbee Hotel
Below: Catesby Jones in his highly modified GTR
Bottom right: Porsche 944 with LS V8 power

made for a smoother graph. The car managed 625hp at the wheels, approx 747hp at the crank, not bad for a 5.0 out the box, and now with 20k on the odometer.

Continental tyres were fitted courtesy of our North American contact and we were over the moon →

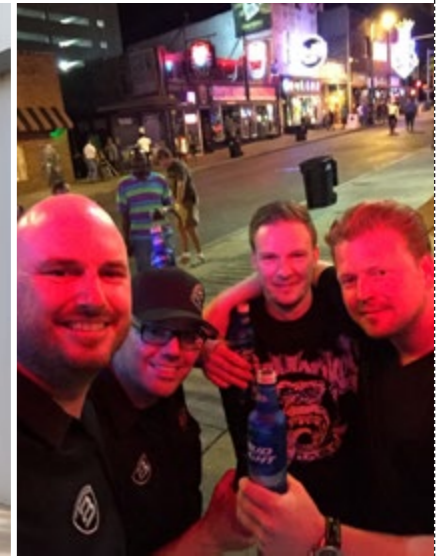
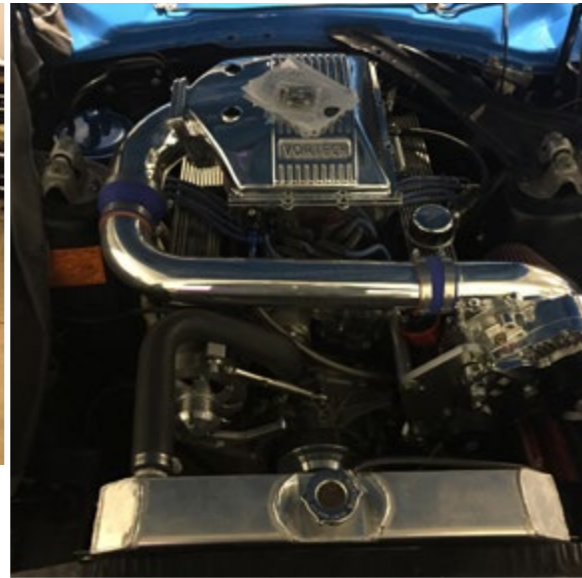




as they gave great results last year. We finished up and Brent told me he had spoken to an old friend who ran the local airport - he had the main runway closed down so I could enjoy some high speed runs and get a feel for the car before the event. It was epic! I ran the car to the limiter in fifth recording 147mph, sixth is an overdrive but it still climbed to 162mph before the runway ended, not bad considering the 3.73:1 gears

in this Trak Pack rear end. It started to rain but we carried on testing through a series of esses which were on a separate part of the facility, as, in the One Lap, we race no matter what the weather or conditions. It was a great success and I felt happy we were dialled in.

On the Friday afternoon Team Gas Monkey/Brenspeed and Team Swedish Mafia headed out from Brenspeed HQ to South Bend for the



statutory Friday night drinks and piss-taking that takes place between each team - in a jovial manner, of course. Lots of the old faces were present, stories of more horsepower and new land speed records being set in preparation for the event were getting faster and faster as the night went on. In fairness, I had drunk a bunch and am sure that Brent's car was capable of a five-second quarter by the end of the night.

Getting up after these Friday nights before the start is always fun, but as I get older they take their toll a little harder. The car was packed and we went straight to Tire Rack HQ a few

miles away. We had to get the car tagged and race suits checked by the staff, and have our tyres branded so the organisers knew they had lasted the week. What followed was Brock's annual speech, the one which tells you not to speed on the highway, and be helpful toward your competitors in the event they might require it. We scoped out the other cars in our class (SSGT2 Big Bore) and recognised old faces, and new. Tracy Ramsey who pipped us to the post last year was back with his Nissan 370Z, a few upgrades in tow, and we knew he was a serious chap who always drove like he stole it. Scot Chapman, a man who

Top left: Left to right, me, Richard Rawlings, Brent White, Aaron Kaufman
Above: Team Swedish Mafia in their freshly built GT from Brenspeed
Facing page top: Ford Maverick With Boss 351 and blower!
Facing page bottom: Brenspeed GT with Procharger set up...

spends his time working at Roush as their chassis man, was wheeling his '06 Mustang with mods as far as the eye could see, Mike Weising had an '05 Pontiac GTO with a breathed-on LS motor, and uprated everything... Mustangs, Corvettes and even an SRT8 Challenger were all in our pack. My favourite old face was Jim Roberts from Pennsylvania. He has a C5 that is always quick, a car he has developed over many years, and "Jim-Bob" knew how to drive it! The field was varied with different applications but were all contenders in the class.

It was 3pm, and time for the first event, the Wet Skid Pan, which was apt as the heavens had opened and the use of the facility's sprinkler system didn't seem to be warranted. I sat in the Mustang and prepared, turning off all traction/stability controls and waited for my turn. We managed to come in first in our class with the car producing fantastic grip and handling, and 14th overall, beating a Mitsubishi Evo and an R8 around the track. Brent had done his homework; the car was a peach, giving the all-wheel drive cars something to think about... but would it last eight days and 3,500 miles with many tracks in between? Catch us next month to see us run across many States and compete at some of the US's ultimate tracks! **ACM**

