

West Coast Competition Report

By JIM MOURNING

Palm Springs

SPONSORING road races is a hectic business and no one appreciates this more than the Los Angeles Region of the Sports Car Club of America. Following a series of financially disastrous ventures, the club felt they had finally found a solution to their problems for their first crack at racing at Palm Springs, long monopolized by the California Sports Car Club. But before the first entry had even been received, accusations of professionalism bombarded them from all angles.

With most of their bookkeeping being done in red ink, club officials had gotten together with Mac and Mert Haskell, operators of the air strip, and promoter George Cary. The trio agreed to supply necessary finances in return for all cash, except the entry fees, that were taken in. With the professional-amateur controversy curling the pages of the West Coast press, this was enough to ignite advocates of "pure" amateur competition.

SCCA officials refused to be stampeded. Ignacio Lozano, club president, flatly stated: "We are not in the business of promoting races, but interested only in giving our members a chance to have a little fun. We are never interested in making money. We are a non-profit corporation. We depend on our sponsors to put up the money."

The main event gave the collected fans little to enthuse over, with the exception of some excellent driving, as Carroll Shelby stroked to victory in Tony Parravano's 4.9 Ferrari. Shelby grabbed the lead on the back straight during the first lap and that was that. He finished nearly a minute ahead of the John Edgar 3.5 Ferrari driven by Jack McAfee.

Faulty carburetion helped make for a rather disappointing showing by the newly imported Italian mount.

Bill Murphy, handling his big Kurtis-Buick with more ease than has been apparent in past events, finished third.

Actually, much of the anticipated competition never got onto the starting grid. Ernie McAfee, entered in Bill Do-



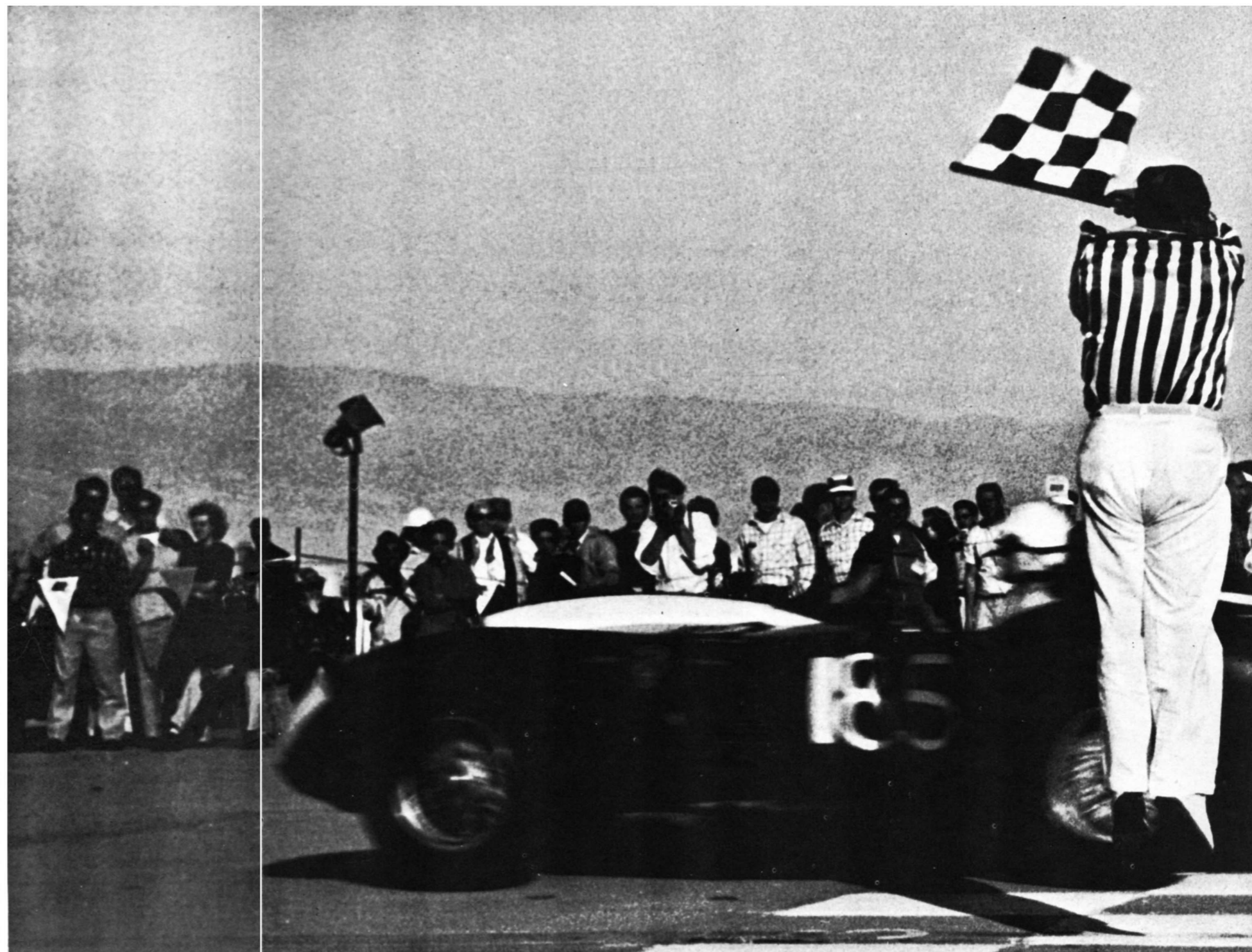
Woods held lead at the beginning but kept it only half a lap before Shelby went around him.



Kunste's victory was a surprise to most of the fans who thought Miles was just laying back until late in the race.

As Shelby crosses finish line, Al Torres gives one of his special finishing signals. Later, guards mistakenly let crowds through, clogging starting line, and causing two cars to be marked DNF until later that evening.

Photos by Art Connell





Jimmy Orr maneuvers his Ermini through a turn. Car failed to finish because of water leak. Despite fast appearance, it failed to perform as expected.



Concentration marks Phil Hill's attempt to bring Porsche Spyder through turn. Hill ran well up in the pack, despite spin out, when mechanical trouble developed.



Carroll Shelby slides Tony Parravano's 1.5 liter Maserati through turn three. Gear box failed and car went out early in race.

heney's 4.4 Ferrari, developed transmission trouble during practice and Phil Hill withdrew because of a "loose cylinder sleeve" in Johnny von Neumann's Ferrari Monza.

With much of the potent competition sitting it out in the pits, main contention to Shelby was figured to come from a pair of D-Jaguars. But shock absorber problems forced Pearce Woods out on the 18th lap and the best an improving but still lacking Lozano could do was a fifth, finishing well over a lap behind the leader.

It was the race for modified cars under 1500 cc that supplied the big surprise and nearly all the tight action during the two days as the Porsche Spydery moved into the first four spots and had a race of their own. The surprise came as the crowd, long accustomed to seeing Ken Miles finish in front, watched Jean Kunstle lead the lean Englishman across the finish line by nearly five seconds. Although Kunstle led all the way, Miles had whittled his margin to a half second at one point.

Jack McAfee, showing occasional flashes of his old form, finished third, nearly two minutes behind the leader, but over a lap ahead of the fourth place car.

Phil Hill made his only appearance of the week-end by taking his first shot at a Porsche Spyder, another von Neumann entry. He was running third when a bent shifting fork forced him out on the 17th lap.

In the event for Class C and D production cars, Rudy Cleye, the lanky restaurateur, made it five in a row with his Mercedes 300SL as a race that started as a runaway turned into a tight battle. Despite apparent difficulties that materially reduced the car's speed, Cleye was able to eke out a split second victory over Tony Settember's Mercedes 300SL on the strength of a vast edge built up during the early going.

Interest in the second race of the day was centered around the debut of the Porsche Carreras, which were pitted against the Porsche Supers, Austin-Healeys and Class E cars in an experiment in race programming. Dale Johnson finished one of the cars second, some three seconds behind winning Skip Hudson in a Porsche Super Speedster. The second Carrera failed to finish.

The opening race on Sunday's schedule brought a shock to many self-styled racing experts as E. Forbes-Robinson, Jim Parkinson and Harry Hanford took their trio of Mg-A's onto the circuit and manhandled the Porsche contingent with apparent impunity. Ed Tomerlin's Porsche Speedster was the only car able to split the combination, finishing 12 seconds behind the winning Forbes-Robinson. The car was later disqualified for a violation of technical regulations. #