



# THE SUDDEN SEDAN

## Take Out the Appendix And Discover a Sporting Stocker

BY JIM WRIGHT

**W**HAT'S THAT you say? Going to the sporty car races to watch the stockers run? You must be out of your mind!

Not really, because, all of a sudden, slam-bang, stockers are very much *IN* at the sports car races. Until just last year the sedan classes were, for the most part, just another of those necessary evils that were a part of every race program. Nobody really paid any attention to them—other than the participants and their immediate families. As is the case with some of the other lesser production car classes, sedans were just something the fans were forced to endure between the modified battles. When the starting flag dropped on one of those races it was fried chicken time as far as the spectators were concerned.

But no longer. When the sedans go—everybody watches and forgets the fried chicken. In terms of action, color, and all-important spectator appeal,

the sedans (or stockers, if you prefer) are second only to the big-bore modifieds. And sedans are even starting to press the modifieds a little.

Sedan racing always has been popular in England and on the Continent, but that is as it should be because the fans were watching the kinds of cars race that they drove on the streets, which made it a lot easier for them to identify with the machinery. The average American fan wasn't identifying well with the Jaguars, Minis and other foreign types that were making up the starting fields for races on U.S. soil. Race management lumped all the sedan classes together and there never were more than two or three cars in each class. Very dull competition was the result. Once in a while the fans were treated to the novelty of a Mini

gobbling up a big 3.8 Jaguar Saloon, but a little novelty goes a long, long way.

The sedan racing revolution in America was implemented when Holman & Moody entered a pair of well-prepared Studebaker Larks at Sebring a few years ago. They looked good—while they lasted. At least they looked good enough to get some people thinking along these lines. A little pressure was applied on the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) and its board of governors, rather reluctantly at first, agreed to place a little more emphasis on its sedan classes by adopting rules that would allow a few of the American cars to compete.

Rather than invent their own rules, SCCA decided to use existing FIA rules, with the idea that there would be an interchange of action between this country and Europe. These rules are set forth in the infamous Appendix J to the International Sporting Code. ▶



AT RACEWAY weigh-in, a Mustang is checked to determine if it falls within poundage limits. Fastback GT-350, however, doesn't run in sedan classes since it hasn't been homologated with FIA. Appendix J stipulations put Mustang notch-backs and most U.S. compact cars on the grid in Group Two.

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Just to say that Appendix J is confusing is saying the least. It's not so much what Appendix J says as what it doesn't say. Out of the confusion has come a semblance of order. The original rules offer 13 classes, broken down by cylinder capacity. SCCA has taken four of these to govern its sedan classes. They are designated A (engines over 2-liters—60.5 cu in./liter—with a maximum displacement of 5 liters or 305 cubic inches), B (1.3-2 liters), C (1.0-1.3 liters), and D (under 1 liter). SCCA specifies a maximum wheelbase of 116 in. This allows the majority of U.S. compact and intermediate sized cars to compete—provided the factory or some other interested party has bothered to fill out homologation papers on said car and has filed them with FIA.

The classes are governed by either of two sets of rules or limitations: Group One and Group Two. No one runs in Group One because this calls for *strictly* stock automobiles. Under Group Two, builders are allowed quite a few modifications to make the cars more competitive and raceworthy.

Engines can be rebored a maximum 1.2 mm (0.047 in.), providing the resulting increase in displacement doesn't put the car into the next class,

or in the case of class A cars, if displacement does not exceed 305 cu. in., compression can be raised by almost any method, including changing the shape of the piston. Ports can be smoothed and larger valves can be fitted. Carburetors can be replaced with larger units, provided they will bolt directly onto the existing intake manifold without using an adapter, and providing their number doesn't exceed the number listed by the manufacturer. Headers are allowed and the mufflers can be replaced by straight pipes. Camshafts and valve springs are free choice items and aren't limited to those offered by the manufacturer. Tires also are in the free choice category, but they must fit existing rims without modification. The rules also allow various other changes in suspension and other parts of the car. The modifications listed are just a few of the major ones. Anyone who is seriously considering sedan racing (and a lot of people apparently are) should first arm himself with a copy of Appendix J and a copy of the homologation papers that were filed for his particular model of the notch-back Mustang has been homologated, but not the fast-back. It can be tricky and if

the would-be racer prepares something not allowed in the rules that car is O-U-T.

AMERICAN CARS currently seeing action are the Ford Mustang and Falcon, Dodge Dart and the Plymouth Barracuda. In addition to battling each other, they also get plenty of competition from the smaller, less powerful, but more agile foreigners such as Ford Cortina and Alfa Romeo GTA. Not only does the American fan get a chance to identify with an American car, he also is offered an opportunity to have his fires of national pride stirred up.

Factory help isn't exactly unknown in the sedan field. It's not as open as it is on the NASCAR circuit, but it isn't any secret that Shelby-American offers aid to a few of their customers, and Dodge and Plymouth do the same for a few of theirs. At this point, none of the competitors are direct "factory" cars. The foreigners probably receive even more help. The Alfa GTA is an expensive car to start with and preparation can almost double the cost.

The sedan class hasn't reached NASCAR-like proportions as yet, but it could. This could be either good or bad. So far, SCCA's decision to emphasize sedan racing has paid off in several directions. It's most noticeable at the box office. Sports car racing in general had been going steadily downhill. It just wasn't offering the spectator what he wanted to pay to see. The big pro events managed to do all right, but the regional and divisional club-type



events were floparoons. The sedans are pulling people back and it could be that as a spectator attraction sports car racing can regain the prominence it held back in the mid and late fifties. Maybe even surpass it.

As a race organization, SCCA tends to be a little stuffy and conservative. But every once in a while it experiences periods of awareness that are positively astounding. The group made a move in the right direction this year by forming a pro circuit for the sedans. Called the Trans-America Championship, the circuit consists of a series of eight races ranging in length from three hours up to twelve hours. The class breakdown for this series is limited to under 2-liter and over 2-liter cars.

The first event was a four-hour race at Sebring, Fla., held the day before

the 12-hour race. This was won by an Alfa GTA. A Dodge Dart driven by Bob Tullius finished second overall, first in class. The Dart could have won, but it spent a considerable time in the pits. Plymouth Barracudas were second and third in the over 2-liter class. The second race was held June 12 at Wentzville, Mo., with a Mustang co-driven by Bob Johnson and Tom Yeager the winner. Plymouth now leads the battle for the manufacturer's trophy. Darts and Mustangs are tied for second place. The remaining races in the pro series are scheduled at Bryar Motorsport Park, Loudon, N.H.; Virginia International Raceway, Marlboro, Md.; Smithfield, Texas, Sept. 11; Riverside, Calif., Sept. 18; and Las Vegas, Nev., Oct. 2.

So far action has been intense at these pro events and it promises to be-

come even more so as the cars draw nearer that final race in Las Vegas.

Right now sedan racing's greatest participant appeal stems from the fact that a guy can get into competition for a fairly reasonable cash outlay. At least it's reasonable as far as the cost of racing is concerned, none of which is very cheap. Next year promises to be even better. SCCA will no doubt extend the highly successful Trans-America series. In addition to Darts, Falcons, Barracudas and Mustangs, there probably will be quite a few Mercury Cougars and Chevrolet Camaros in competition. Racing these kinds of cars on a road course makes a lot more sense than does stock car oval racing and also has more *natural* crowd appeal than sports car racing. This may be the birth of a new era in American racing. ■

**SEDANS RACE** with two or more classes competing at the same time, as is evidenced by the British Ford Cortina nipping at the heels of an American Ford Mustang with approximately twice the piston displacement underhood.



**AN OVER-2-liter Dodge Dart** rounds a hay-baled bend with an under-2-liter Cortina in hot pursuit. Plymouth Barracudas and Alfa Romeo GTAs are other popular competitors in the SCCA-sponsored Trans-America Championship circuit.

