

Think outside the oval

Written by Ron Dale
Sunday, 24 June 2012 20:28

This past weekend the 944 crew of racers took to the famed Infineon Raceway(Sears Point) one weekend before the NASCAR boys, and put on a show for the pro's. Five cars showed up for what was shaping up to be a hot weekend at one of the most challenging tracks in the world and we prove to be mostly up for the challenge.



Saturday qualifying was cut short to two laps due to a red flag crash so times were not good but determination was high for the 5 o'clock race start. Steve Lewis and Jim Foxx were one, two separated by 2/10ths, followed by Jerry Whitteridge, and Ron Dale(me). Ken Huey qualified but a prior commitment made him put Ken Myers from IO port racing in the car for the race. Ken is an accomplished veteran racer who's business sells great racing products at great prices and he is a part time 944'er so look him up for any parts you need.



The start was a barn burner with Jim taking a small lead over Steve, and Me and Jerry duking it

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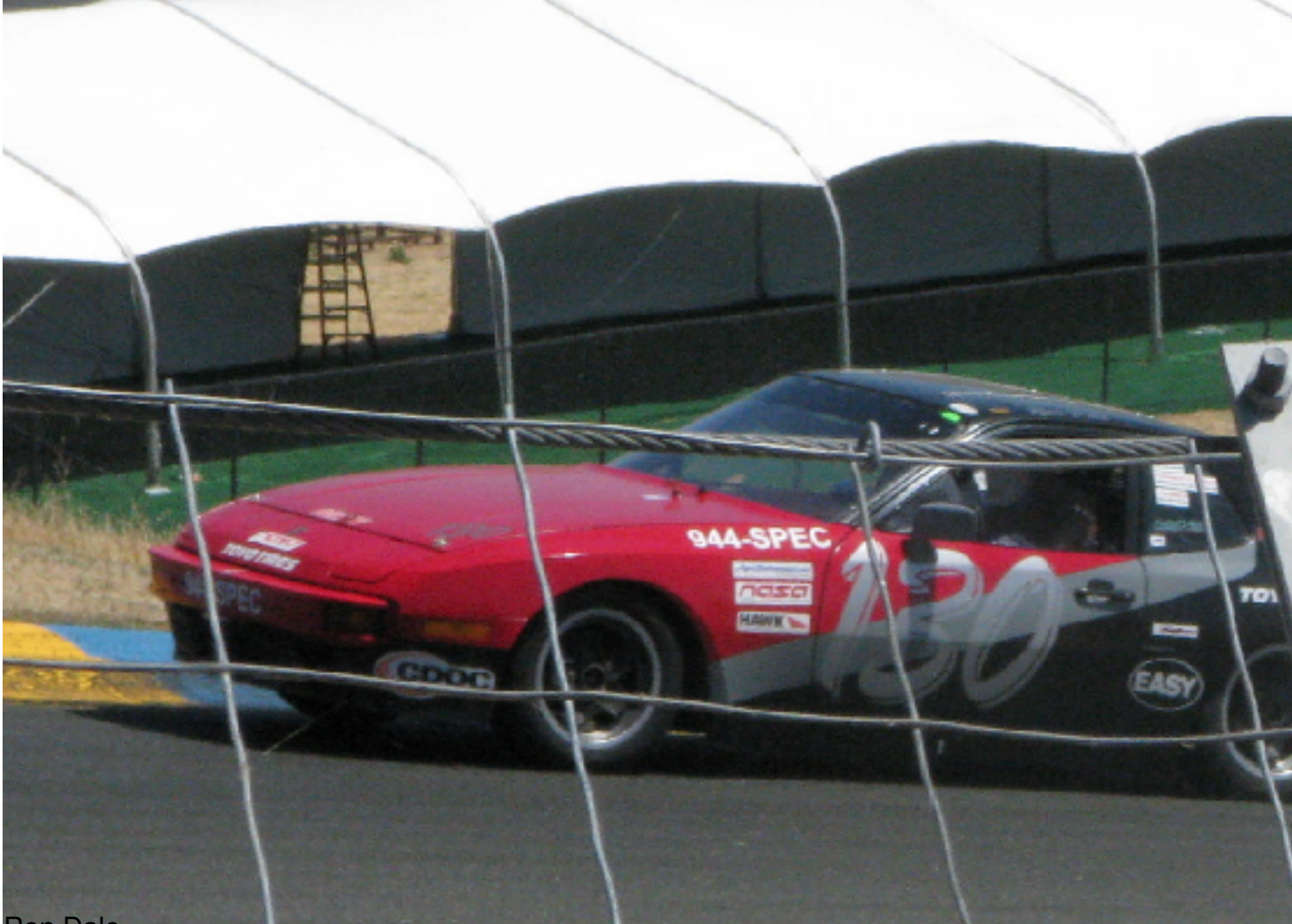
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out. I stuck my nose inside Jerry going into turn 4 and he gave me just enough racing room to make it a clean pass. Ken Meyers pressured us from behind and got past Jerry, who was struggling with grip all weekend and eventually came in early with a mechanical. I set sail for the leaders and kept them in sight when Jim, feeling the pressure of Steve behind him, made an ill advised pass attempt on a Boxster going into turn 11. He dove to the inside, locked up all 4 tires and slid. I saw my chance and pushed hard to get by Steve but Infineon is a track that rewards skill over bravado and he has it in spades. All I could do is keep him in sight and hope for a miracle. What I got instead was a whirlwind of driving fury in the form of Jim Foxx. I got a call on the radio saying he was coming back through the field like he was on fire, and if you have ever raced with Jim, you know you don't want him behind you when his blood is up. I put my head down and hustled the car but that only led to mistakes. He caught me on the last lap at turn 7, got inside me but went a little wide. I was determined not to be bullied by the Big Dog this time so held the gas down flat and we went side by side through the famed esses where nobody goes two wide. Jim gave me plenty of room but pulled a small advantage out of 9 leading into 10 and the braking zone of 11. I went through 10 faster than ever before, sliding sideways like a sprint car all the way into the dirt and made up enough space to make turn 11 interesting. I was hoping for a mistake and Jim didn't disappoint! Jim is 10/10ths at all times and under braking he stepped it up to 11/10ths, going wide of the apex leaving me room inside but I carried a little too much braking into the turn and got sideways exiting, ruining a chance for a side by side finish. Great racing!!

Sunday was a quick schedule, starting with 8 am practice and ending with 11 am race time. During practice I started losing gears so brought it in. I lost all forward drive right in front of my paddock spot. After burning my arm on the exhaust, I found the shift linkage bolt had backed out again and got it fixed in time to make the last half of qualifying, getting one hot lap good enough for third following Jim and Steve. Jerry led Ken to the green in fourth and fifth respectively. The start was another wild one! Going full tilt into the uphill turn two(Is there a turn one?) on cold tires, Jim lost control and slid off fast into the tire barrier nose first. After a few corners with no red flag I knew he was ok but I also noticed there was no yellows or safety truck flags so that meant Jim is back on course and coming! Sure enough my wife said on the radio he was very fast and looked angry. Steve put in flawless laps and stretched a big lead over Jerry, Ken and I. He was in sight of me but just. Jim was setting the fastest laps of the weekend and soon caught all of us but Steve.

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