

photography: Jack Brady Associates



**Above**—First laps show pole sitter and winner Mark Donahue leading in the Roger Penske Camaro. Beside him is Dan Gurney in a Cougar. Parnelli Jones follows in another Cougar (No. 78). Gurney finished third.

**Right**—Carroll Shelby discusses new Mustang honors after the race. **Below**—One of several Gurney headaches was a missing fuel cap. **Bottom of page**—Another was fractured windshield.



# Baby GRAN

THE NIP-AND-TUCK running that has characterized the TransAm series thus far continued with the "Mission Bell 250" held at Riverside. Pearson in a Bud Moore Cougar roared down a virtually empty chute to the finish, followed 82 seconds later by teammate Ed Leslie in another Cougar. Bob Johnson brought his Camaro in for third.

Brilliant though these finishes were, Cougar took only a one point lead over Mustang, but that should be enough to bother the horse and possibly recall an old parable of turtle and hare.

Jerry Titus took the pole with a 1:36.0, breaking his record last year by 5.9. Pearson took second slot in the starting grid with a 1:36.4. The course was generally faster due to a vast track improvement program costing some \$300,000, giving fifteen cars the thrill of breaking a Titus record, and affording everyone a better view of some of the 2.6 mile course.

Some other records might have been set with Smokey Yunnick's Camaro, a sleek, modified beast whose specifications had nothing to do with the SCCA rule-book. Disqualified on four points, Yunnick had pilot Lloyd Rubin turn the car around and head for Bonneville.

At the flag, Pearson stole the lead but Titus regained it at turn nine to do some fine charging for the next 16 tours until he pitted with front-end vibrations. Bill Webb's Mustang had already gone out on a rail at turn one. Nothing could be determined about Titus' vibrations and he rejoined the pack, only to return again with the same complaint, and with one more outing, came in to call it a day. Bob West's Mustang had parked with the same problem.

Bucknum had the only competitive Mustang ride left, and by now Ed Leslie had moved into third putting Bucknum at his coattails. Moffat had long since threaded his Cougar into second place, and it began to look like a Cougar wedge might come across the finish line.

Bucknum had to make a lengthy pit stop and the Cougars were gone. But shortly after, Moffat retired when a rock entered his oil cooler and Leslie slipped into second place. Meanwhile, Pearson was somewhere else crushing his pedal in grand style.

The reshuffling in the ranks was a happy fillip to Camaro, and Bob

Johnson was quick to respond, taking third place for the scoreboards.

In a way, Riverside hasn't really changed anything. Camaro is down, but that was the case before. Cougar's new lead is only good by a point, but a point is enough to increase the tension between these animals. About the only change to occur was Pearson's 94.719 mph, a new record for the Riverside books.

## Stardust

Mark Donahue was the unrivaled victor of the Las Vegas 350 when his Penske Camaro roared across the finish line with a 93 second lead over second place Ronnie Bucknum's Shelby Mustang.

The sunset meet was one of those events a gambler dreams of. For more than an hour, hard driving Parnelli Jones paced the herd in his Bud Moore Cougar, and, since he had roared off from the pole at the start, who else could win but the Jones boy? The upset came when Parnelli pitted with badly cut tires due to rubbing springs. He had to ride rough shod the remainder of the race, getting a face-saving fourth for his efforts.

After Jones had taken the lead for the first lap, Donahue wasn't exactly trailing him with ease. Ronnie Bucknum challenged the Camaro and took second place, putting Donahue, 2nd on the starting grid, now in third place. Minter then drove his Mustang into fourth ahead of Titus, Moffat and the rest of the stampede.

Minter soon bumped however, and went to the pits for some body work, later retiring with radiator problems.

With Jones out front, the action was concentrated on second place. Bucknum, Titus and Donahue all duelled for the slot until Titus finally took it and put Donahue back into third. Donahue hadn't been in a position to argue since new tires had limited handling considerably.

Again, Donahue's star was working. Titus had moved up on Jones in a rather desperate attempt to overtake him, but when less than a carlength behind, he was forced to pit with a missing engine. A wire leading to the coil had become dislodged, and once it was reconnected, the Mustang performed with a vengeance. Except that Donahue was now in second place, and Titus was more than a lap behind in the running.



Parnelli's luck began to run out as well. Fast cornering had been cutting his tires for sometime. Apparently, the rear springs were improperly set, and as the car went into leans they dug into the rubber. After the first tire change, Jones was off the lead, and after the second, it was a matter of get what he could.

Donahue moved into the number one position and might have met serious challenge from fast recovering Jerry Titus, except that the ill-fated Mustang driver made another trip to the pits, this time on flat tires.

Once Jones was down, Donahue kept a rigorous but steady pace, safely ahead of all the friction down the road. Bucknum held the long-disputed second place. Titus came in for a hard-earned third followed by the beleaguered Jones.

The order of finish gave Mustang 62 points, a one point lead over Cougar. Donahue's victory put Camaro at 51, a respectable figure but too low to possibly take a championship with only the Kent race remaining.

## Kent

Mark Donahue scored his second straight victory in the final TransAm Championship race held at Kent's Pacific Raceways track. The Roger Penske Camaro brought Donahue over the finish line for his third win in three starts of the series, with a lead of one lap and 18 seconds over second comer Ronnie Bucknum.

The TransAm Championship,

**Right—Ron Bucknum takes a tight turn in an attempt to pass. His second place finish gave Mustang the TransAm Championship.**



however, goes to Mustang for highest point accumulation of the series. Bucknum's second place finish ended the match with Cougar by acquiring an additional two points. Gurney finished third in his Cougar with a final total of 64 points for Mustang against 62 for Cougar.

Donahue won the pole after an unprecedented change of brand tires. Predicting he could drop a second off his lap time by switching from Firestone to Goodyear, he informed car owner Penske, a Firestone distributor himself, of his intent, had them changed and won the pole true to his words.

The starting grid would have looked a little more competitive had Jerry Titus not totalled his Terlingua Mustang during practice. As it was, he placed seventh in John McComb's Mustang. Bucknum was fifth on the grid with the only other Mustang in the top seven.

At the start, the Cougars of Gurney and Parnelli Jones were able to keep second and third place for 57 laps, their original grid positions.

Then the story began to change. Gurney slowed with a low tire and

had to pit, losing his place to Bucknum. P.J. came in for a scheduled stop at lap 61, but his Cougar failed to restart. A new starter was installed to no effect and his bid was over.

This left Donahue out front with Bucknum trailing. Gurney was again stopped, this time after three black flags for throwing fuel. He was able to regain third and kept it for the duration of the race. A remarkable accomplishment since he was battling a shattered windshield for more than 50 laps.

Titus had managed to ride in third position behind Bucknum for several laps, but dropped to fourth when Gurney was on the track. Titus' borrowed ride only lasted 65 laps, however, and he retired the car with a blown engine.

Even Bucknum had his worries. At lap 76 he began to have heat problems, with temperatures sometimes reaching 240 degrees. Instead of signalling the trouble to his pit crew, he continued to run fearing that if Gurney found out, he might put on steam in an attempt to make him blow his engine.

Gurney continued to gain on Bucknum during the closing

laps. Although Bucknum was pushing hard, he continued to lose speed. From a 72 second lead at lap 84, Bucknum checked in only 40 seconds ahead of pursuing Gurney.

From the very beginning, Donahue had secured himself a comfortable lead. On the first lap he had put himself four lengths ahead of Jones, and by the half-way mark he was already a lap away from Titus.

Donahue had driven a brilliant race, but he complained of Camaro's handling performance. He had been turning nearly a half-second earlier than Cougars at the third and fourth turns of this nine-turn circuit even with roadability holding him back.

Although Mustang takes the championship with complete deserv-ing, kudos must go to Cougar for having persevered against tough odds, frustrating mechanical hang-ups, and just the hot tension of having run nearly the whole season neck-and-neck against its horsey brother. Camaro ought to cheer up too, having won the last two races of the series. What a thing to think about when the snow is falling and everyone's inside!



**Left—Milt Davis passes Bernd Leckow to finish second in the Under 2 Litre class. Above—Remains of Jerry Titus' Mustang after crashing during practice the day before event. Above right—Donahue's artistry on the turn.**