

Carrera Panamericana 2004

Shopside, Friday, October 8th 11:00 PM

The driver has called twice and the outcome is far from certain. Port Elizabeth, NJ, U.S. Customs has yet to inspect and release the Linden Ford Falcon from their grasp. The reality leaves little room for "fudge"! We have the Shanahan/Smith Corvette and Si Ford's Mercury Comet loaded in the trailers with spares, tools and all else we need to run 3 cars for 7 days. Truck drivers Ken Olausson & daughter Rebecca, Tommy Erickson and multi year Carrera veteran Sven Eric are on board. Departure Sunday is critical if we are to have adequate time to get all this equipment very far south to Tuttle Gutierrez in time. The last car has simply got to make it. What was once plenty of time is now down to the wire...just a trick bureaucracies always seem to play on events of this type. We wait and wait and wait and worry...THEN, at 11:30 just before they shutdown for the weekend...we get our bird out of bondage...The Falcon is Free!

Tuxtla Gutierrez, Mexico, Tuesday October 19th



Tuxtla pre-race prep



Mean machine



Relaxed and ready

It wasn't easy, it never is. Truck problems and a minor collision in Texas, border backlogs and a raft of roadside gremlins are no match for our boys and the two heavily loaded VRS rigs roll into the Tuxtla Carrera fairgrounds on Tuesday as planned. Our master of the "Mexican system" Julio Tovar has found our guys at the border and eased them through all manner of Mexican Mysteries without a hitch. Brian and Murray meet up in Mexico City airport and arrive in Tuxtla on Wednesday as does Bill Shanahan, Mats Linden, Silas and Vicki Ford. Tech inspection, testing and final preparation consume Thursday and leg one of La Carrera, Tuxtla Gutierrez to Oaxaca blister the pavement early Friday AM with the support crews in hot pursuit.



Banishing pre-race gremlins

All goes well on day one with everyone in on time and Bill and Murray 1st in class and well up in overall standings for the day. Day two is much the same but day 3 sees a mishap in the very demanding Mil Cumbres Mountains that puts a damper on the Shanahan-Smith Pepsi Corvette's standing.



Bill and Murray roll into Oaxaca

Not terminal, but Vintage Racing Services manager Brian Rechiene and assistant Sven Eric spend a good while putting a complete new front suspension on the right front.



Corvette moments before



Corvette post crash



Shanahan post crash

Day 4 sees a mechanical gremlin in the form of broken studs on the Corvette while the Ford Comet and Linden Falcon soldier on. Day 5 and 6 go well with several stage wins for the Corvette and the others running well. Day 7, the last day and one that has proved difficult in the past. The flat out run up the mountains north of Monterey sees very high speeds and demanding engine loads for these well worn race cars. Further, fuel quality is always an element in this race and detonation at continuous full throttle running is a worry that has hurt many in the past.



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